

The Apostle of Charity

“Charity is the cement which binds communities to God and persons to one another” (St. Vincent de Paul). This teaching of St. Vincent de Paul was an important aspect of his life. Although he was never rich, St. Vincent was always generous in love towards everyone. Because of his generous heart, many people were drawn to St. Vincent, enabling him to share God’s love with them. St. Vincent de Paul also opened hospitals and established religious congregations to serve the poor. By living a life of humility and compassion, St. Vincent de Paul greatly impacted the time and place in which he lived.

St. Vincent de Paul was born on April 24, 1581, in Pouy France. He grew up in a peasant household consisting of his parents and five siblings. At an early age, St. Vincent felt called to be a priest. He was ordained on September 23, 1600, after he graduated from the University of Toulouse. Although St. Vincent originally wanted to become a priest to provide for his family, he realized that the personal relationship with Jesus was the most important aspect of priesthood. St. Vincent often traveled, making a trip to Rome. While in Rome, he continued his studies, became a pastor, served as a tutor, and provided spiritual direction. From that point on, St. Vincent de Paul spent his life evangelizing and preaching until he passed away on September 27, 1660.

Throughout his life, St. Vincent de Paul was a great example for the people around him. Kings, queens, and people of great importance often befriended him because of his kindness and humility. Not only did St. Vincent de Paul show great compassion for people of importance, but he also took a special concern for the poor. While living in France, St. Vincent would walk the streets of Paris giving hope to the poor, nursing the sick, and providing what little he had to the beggars. Conveying God’s love through acts of compassion, St. Vincent de Paul strived to be a saintlike example for his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Although St. Vincent de Paul is usually depicted as a humble man, he was also a great leader. He opened hospitals for the poor and established religious congregations. One of these religious congregations is called The Daughters of Charity. This was the first non cloistered religious institute of women. They devoted their lives to serving the poor through works of charity. Today there are almost 17,000 Daughters serving 95 countries all over the world. Another one of these religious congregations called the Congregation of Mission, is a society of priests and brothers established for preaching missions to the poor and training seminarians for the priesthood. By conveying leadership, St. Vincent de Paul founded important religious congregations that greatly impacted the world.

Throughout his life, St. Vincent de Paul brought many people closer to the Catholic Faith. Using his education and knowledge, St. Vincent would preach to convicts and the poor sharing God's love and forgiveness. During his early years as a priest, St. Vincent de Paul served as a spiritual director. Another one of St. Vincent de Paul's works included teaching seminarians at a retreat about the most indispensable duties of a priest. Along with bringing other people close to Jesus, St. Vincent de Paul himself grew closer to Jesus. In these many ways, St. Vincent de Paul guided many people to the Catholic Faith.

Over the course of his life, St. Vincent de Paul left a positive influence on the people of his time. By striving to live virtuously, St. Vincent de Paul showed others how to grow closer to Christ. Caring for the sick and poor, acting with compassion towards everyone, and spreading the Gospel, St. Vincent de Paul worked hard at doing his duties. Although St. Vincent de Paul lived over four hundred years ago, his example still influences the world today. Organizations inspired by St. Vincent de Paul, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society, are thriving today. By getting involved in these inspired organizations and by showing compassion to everyone, you can do as St. Vincent de Paul said, "Let us do our duty well, let us go straight to God, let us work to become very humble, very patient, very mortified, and very charitable" (St. Vincent de Paul).

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