

In 1628 Vincent organized retreats for ordinands (those about to be ordained priests) at Beauvais and in 1631 he organized similar retreats in Paris. These retreats were the beginning of the modern seminary system in the church.

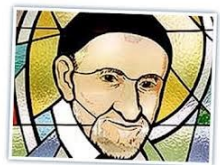
In 1633, with Louise de Marillac, Vincent co-founded the Company of the Daughters of Charity

to help the Ladies of Charity in their service of the sick and the poor—doing the harder work to which the Ladies of Paris were not accustomed or suited. They were given official approbation in 1655 by the Archbishop of Paris.



In 1633 Vincent began giving Tuesday Conferences for newly ordained priests as a way of continuing their education.

Louise de Marillac worked with parish based Confraternities with women whose members became known as the Ladies of Charity. A Confraternity called Ladies of Charity was established in 1634 at the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris by Vincent as a development of his pattern of establishing Confraternities to meet local needs. It was directed by Vincent. In 1971 these charities were renamed the International Association of Charity (AIC).



In 1638 Vincent began work with the foundlings (abandoned infants) in a rented house outside the city of Paris.



Vincent de Paul died in September 1660.

He was beatified in 1729 and canonized a saint 16 June 1737. In 1885 Pope Leo XIII proclaimed St. Vincent patron for all works of charity founded by St. Vincent anywhere in the world.



Another social relief group that grew out of the Confraternities was the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a group of Christian lay persons who offer person-to-person service to the poor. It was founded in 1833 by Frédéric Ozanam in Paris.

The Vincentian Family continues to grow worldwide with branches like the Vincentian Marian Youth founded in 1847, the Miraculous Medal Association founded in 1909 and the Vincentian Lay Missionaries founded in 1999. Every organization that takes on the charism of St. Vincent to serve the poor is a true Vincentian!

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The Life of St. Vincent

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St. Vincent was born in the town of Pouy, Gascony (renamed St. Vincent de Paul in 1828) in southwest France in 1581.



St. Vincent went to a local school at first and then attended secondary school in the neighboring city of Dax. Afterwards he attended the University of Toulouse, receiving his B.Th. degree in 1604. Vincent was ordained a deacon in 1598 and a priest on 25 September 1600 at Château-l'Évêque by the elderly bishop of Périgueux. Vincent set out to make his way in the world with ambitions of obtaining a benefice (financial support) to fund him and his family; this was the customary way to achieve income in those days. Details about the years 1605-07 are missing from Vincent's life. There is a story that during this time he was captured by Turkish pirates and sold into slavery but most historians of Vincent's life do not accept this as historical fact. Vincent moved to Paris in 1608 and came under the influence of Pierre de Bérulle, a leader of religious reform in Paris; he became Vincent's spiritual director. Bérulle arranged for Vincent to become pastor of a parish in Clichy, a small village near Paris. Vincent loved the experience. In 1613 Vincent became tutor to the household of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondy, a wealthy and influential family in France. Vincent became Madam de Gondy's spiritual director. With her assistance Vincent began giving missions on her estates.



From 1615-17 Vincent resided at Folleville and gave missions in the rural parishes surrounding these properties.

In 1617 Vincent heard the confession of a dying peasant at Gannes near Folleville; the peasant related to Madame de Gondy his joy in being freed from sins that he had kept hidden so many years. On 25 January, at the parish in Folleville, Vincent preached on the need for general confession (later Vincent considered this sermon to be the first sermon of the Mission, the beginning of the Congregation of the Mission or Vincentian Fathers and Brothers). The response was so overwhelming that Vincent had to get help from other priests to hear the confessions. This experience was part of Vincent's transformation to care for the poor. On 29 July Vincent was named pastor at Châtillon-les-Dombes and Buénans. In August 1617, as he was preparing for Sunday Mass, a parishioner brought news of the illness and destitution of an entire family in the parish. He preached on their need, and that afternoon the people responded in overwhelming numbers by bringing them food and supplies, too much for the family to absorb. Vincent was gifted at organization. He called a meeting of interested women, and urged them to put order into their generosity by taking turns to help the family.



With rules drawn up by Vincent, they established a group which became the first Confraternity of Charity, established to "visit and care for the sick poor."

From 1618-19 Vincent continued giving parish missions in various dioceses. He founded more Confraternity of Charities and in 1619 began ministering to the convicts serving as galley slaves.



He was appointed Chaplain-General of the Gallies in Paris; he was able to stop many abuses to the galley slaves.

The Confraternities quickly grew throughout France. Vincent had a gift for inviting lay

people to get involved in service to the poor.

In 1624 Vincent gathered priests to give parish missions to the rural poor. On 17 April 1625 Vincent formally founded the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentian Fathers and Brothers) for evangelizing the poor country people on the property of the Gondy's. In the same year he met Louise de Marillac. In time they became very good friends.



Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M. writes, "Vincent turned the church upside down. He put the poor on top, with the rest of us in service and support, being evangelized by them and evangelizing them.

Constant attention to seeking a just society necessitates solidarity, and solidarity is in the center of all Vincentian values."

