



THE VISITOR

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Dear friends,

As we approach the feast of Easter, we are reminded of the profound impact of women in the narrative of Jesus' last moments on earth. From Mary, His mother, who stood by Him at the foot of the cross, to Mary Magdalene, who was the first to witness His resurrection, women played pivotal roles in our Lord's passion, death, and resurrection.

In reflecting on women's active participation during the birth of Christianity, we also honor the role of women in the early stages of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Just as women were integral to Jesus' ministry and the spread of the Gospel, women have been instrumental in the foundation and growth of our organization. From our co-founding member, Blessed Sister Rosalie Rendu, whose dedication to serving the poor inspired Frederic Ozanam to establish the Society, to the countless women who continue to serve in our Conferences and communities today, their contributions are immeasurable.

As we celebrate Easter and the renewal it offers us, let us also celebrate the contributions of the many women in our organization and beyond. Their compassion, strength, and dedication embody the spirit of Christ's redeeming and merciful love, inspiring us to continue our mission of serving those in need.

Join me in reading about how some women changed the course of the world by bringing it closer to God's Kingdom through what we know today as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. That and more in this, the March edition of The Visitor.

Wishing you all a blessed Easter season.

Yours in St. Louise de Marillac,
Ricardo

"I am entirely yours, most holy Virgin, that I may more perfectly belong to God. Teach me therefore, to imitate your holy life by fulfilling the designs of God in my life." – St. Louise de Marillac

Ricardo

Ricardo Luckow
Executive Director

REFLECTIONS FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

March is Women's History Month, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has some incredible women as its Patron Saints and Founders. Let's learn about three of these inspiring women who are still spiritually guiding and protecting us today!

St. Louise De Marillac (1591 – 1660). St. Louise was born into an aristocratic French family and

was a young wife, a mother, and a friend of St. Francis de Sales. By age 34 she was widowed. Around this time, she met St. Vincent de Paul. St. Louise joined the Confraternities of Charity, a group of lay, aristocratic women started by St. Vincent to help nurse the poor and look after neglected children. Eventually, St. Louise was inspired through prayer to take on a greater role in this type of work. Together with St. Vincent, they founded a new religious order of women, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. This new order consisted of vowed, young peasant women who were better suited to serve the poor due to their same social status and intrinsic experience of poverty.

St. Louise's rented home in Paris served as the first house of The Daughters of Charity. In the 16th Century, women's religious orders were typically not active but instead cloistered. Religious women lived enclosed lives of intense prayer set apart from the wider community.

The Daughters of Charity broke this mold by actively serving the poor and sick in their homes and in the community while also maintaining a deep prayer life. They organized services in hospitals, orphanages, prisons, and institutions for the elderly and mentally ill. By the time St Louise died at age 68, the Daughters of Charity had over 40 houses throughout France. The order still exists today with over 14,000 religious women worldwide.

St Louise said, "Love the poor and honor them as you would honor Christ Himself." She was canonized in 1934 and is the patron saint of Christian social workers.

Blessed Rosalie Rendu (1786 – 1856) Blessed Rosalie joined the Daughters of Charity at age 15 in France just following the French Revolution. She was a devoted Sister throughout her life. In 1833, Blessed Rosalie was serving in the Mouffetard District of Paris, one of the poorest and most violent neighborhoods, during a cholera epidemic. It was at this time that a young 20-year-old college student, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, sought her out for guidance, knowledge, and experience.

He, along with five college friends, was founding a new lay organization, "The Society of St. Vincent de Paul," following in St. Vincent de Paul's footsteps and spirituality. They wanted to serve the poor but needed practical advice and direction. Blessed Rosalie filled this need and proved to be an invaluable resource to the fledgling Society of SVdP.

Blessed Rosalie's early advice to the new Society of SVdP included, "Be kind and love for love is your first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you bring them." Blessed Rosalie was beatified by St. John Paul II in 2003.

St. Catherine of Laboure (1806 – 1876) St. Catherine was only 9 years old when her mother died. Following the funeral service, St. Catherine said to the Blessed Virgin Mary, "Now, dear Lady, you are my mother." She entered the Daughters of Charity at age 23 in France where she remained until her death at age 70. St. Catherine had visions of both St. Vincent de Paul and the Blessed Virgin Mary during her lifetime. On November 27, 1830, St. Catherine had a vision of Mary during which she saw the words "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

St. Catherine also saw an image of 12 stars encircling Mary and rays of light coming from Mary's hands and toward the Earth. (These rays represented graces flowing through Mary to the faithful). The vision then rotated and St. Catherine saw a large M surmounted by a cross with the sacred heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary underneath. Mary requested that this image be put on a medallion and promised that "All who wear it will receive great graces." Thus, the Miraculous Medal was created. It has since been worn by millions of Catholics and many miracles are attributed to it.

St. Catherine's vision of the Miraculous Medal also played an important role in the proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception declared on December 8, 1854. It is still celebrated today as the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, one of only six Holy Days of Obligation on the 2024 Catholic Church Calendar. The Immaculate Conception is also an SVdP Feast Day! From the founding of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Blessed Frederic Ozanam had a great devotion to Mary and declared Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception as the Patroness of the Society.

St. Catherine of Laboure was canonized in 1947 by Pope Pius XII. Her body is incorrupt and today remains encased in glass under a side altar of the Chapel of Our Lady of Graces in Paris, France.

SOS COLLABORATION CONTINUES

SVdP continues with a collaborative endeavor in which we partner with two other organizations to help friends in need with various aspects of getting back on track in life. That effort is called the SOS Collaboration.

Those other organizations are Skyline Recovery Pittsburgh, which houses persons who have previously been incarcerated or struggling with addiction, and Off The Floor Pittsburgh Furniture Bank which provides furniture at a significantly discounted price. Alongside them, SVdP hopes to increase our ability to help friends in need.



[READ MORE](#)

BREAKING NEWS!

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Council of Pittsburgh is again waiving pick-up fees for couches and loveseats in March because the number of neighbors-in-need are exceeding our inventory. If you have a couch or loveseat that is free of rips, stains, tears, pet hair, and not broken, please call 412-321-1071x2 to set up a delivery with Cindy.

A CALL TO GENEROSITY: COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

We hope this month's newsletter finds you rejoicing in the significance and contemplation of the Lenten season. If you haven't already, you should receive our critical Lenten appeal in your mailboxes soon.

We hope you open the letter and read why your support is so important to our neighbors in need. In this letter, we appeal to you to count all the blessings you experience in your life daily. It is so easy to take for granted a good night's sleep on a comfortable bed, or a good cup of coffee or tea every morning. Not to mention vacations, physician visits, good meals—whether dining out or in.

Please do not discard the appeal before you consider its contents. You received this mailing because of your compassion, benevolence, and love for those in need. Please consider what your blessings mean to you and give as generously as you can—a gift meaningful to you—to help someone else count their blessings. If you would like to make an online donation now, [please click here](#).

All of us at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Council of Pittsburgh appreciate you and your service to others. Please consider making a gift this Lent or beyond in support of our collective efforts to bring solace and relief to our friends in need.

DID YOU KNOW?

"Twinning," or sharing funding between conferences or from the central office, has been a longstanding practice within SVdP. It is increasingly the case that conferences in areas with the most human needs are the ones with the least funding available to meet those needs. At the administrative level, twinning funds were historically sustained by incoming revenue from SVdP Thrift Stores and warehouse recycling operations.

Lately, net income from these business operations has decreased, while the needs in certain areas of our Council are growing. While donors provide some funding supporting direct assistance, typically these are restricted funds for specific purposes, that inhibit our ability to be agile and responsive to the needs of individuals and families in our communities.

To ease this situation, the Council of Pittsburgh has created the Regional Emergency Direct Assistance Fund (REDAF). This fund, through the support of private foundations and individuals, provides resources of up to \$1,000 per case to assist our friends-in-need through local conferences.

Requests for supplemental emergency funding are frequent. Conferences in low-income areas with high demand for service frequently rely on this additional support to mitigate crises among their community members. Often, these are one-time emergency costs, enabling people to stabilize the circumstances threatening housing security, whether it be rental assistance or the cost of repairs on the vehicle they depend upon to earn an income.

Conferences can tap into the REDAF resources by contacting Karen O'Keefe at kokeefe@svdppitt.org or 412.321.1071x1203 to begin the application process. It is very simple and can provide relief to those in dire circumstances.

SAVE THE DATE

The Vincentian Family Gathering is on April 6th at St. Thomas More Church. Join fellow Vincentians to listen to the Voice of Youth—local students from Duquesne University, LaRoche University, Seton Hill University, and Junior Ladies of Charity—as they present the program Today's Hope for Peace. Registration materials will be available, so please mark your calendars now. You will not want to miss this special day of sharing concerns, hopes, needs, and current actions in service. Registration information will be distributed to Conferences soon.

READING CORNER

The Science of Well-Being by Dr. Laurie Santos

Dr. Laurie Santos, a professor of psychology at Yale University, developed a groundbreaking course called "The Science of Well-Being" to address the growing epidemic of stress, anxiety, and unhappiness among college students. The course is designed to teach students how to lead happier and more fulfilling lives by understanding the principles of psychological well-being.

Dr. Santos's course challenges common misconceptions about happiness and offers evidence-based strategies backed by scientific research. It covers topics such as the importance of social connections, the role of gratitude and kindness, the impact of mindfulness and meditation, and the significance of setting and achieving meaningful goals.

Due to the overwhelming demand and interest in the course (it is the most popular course in history at Yale), Dr. Santos made it available to a wider audience through Coursera, an online learning platform. The [Coursera version of "The Science of Well-Being"](#) is free and offers the same content as the Yale course but in a format accessible to anyone, anywhere in the world.

Participants have the flexibility to learn at their own pace and engage with course materials through video lectures, readings, quizzes, and practical exercises.

Through this course, learners gain valuable insights into the science of happiness and acquire practical tools to enhance their well-being and overall quality of life. Dr. Santos's work has had a profound impact, not only on her students at Yale but also on millions of individuals worldwide who have benefited from her course on Coursera.



Vincentians came together in the afternoon of Friday, March 15th at St. Ursula's Church in the North Hills to pray Vincentian Stations of the Cross together. Thanks to SVdP Diocesan Spiritual Advisor, Fr. John Forbidussi, who led the Stations, and Vincentian, Tom Timmons who helped organize the event! For all who attended, it was a reverent Lenten remembrance of our Lord's Passion steeped in Vincentian Spirituality.



Beaver / Lawrence District Council had an annual event at the Brighton Rehab and Wellness Center during the Christmas season to spread holiday cheer to disabled and senior residents. Each Conference brought at least 10 gifts for residents and several dozen cookies. District President, Fred Papps dressed as Santa to distribute presents and was assisted by Vincentians, some wearing elf hats! Around 100 residents were uplifted through this Vincentian festivity!

**YOUR DONATIONS HELP US
SERVE OUR NEIGHBORS**

DONATE TODAY

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR GREAT DEALS IN OUR STORES + STAY UP-TO-DATE ON WHAT WE'RE DOING TO HELP OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED EVERY DAY!





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