

# Who We Are and What We Do

## The Vincentian Family

### Our Mission, Alive in Our Members

Any organization calling itself “Vincentian” must extend Vincent’s dream to its own time and place. All of us are inheritors of St. Vincent’s legacy and vision. The challenge before us, as with every generation, is to choose whether Vincent’s vision will be a piece of history or a living, breathing mission alive in its members.

### Common Purpose

The Vincentian Family is made up of religious congregations and lay associations, that were either founded by St. Vincent de Paul or that follow his charism of service to the poor. Common elements found in each group in spite of their diversity and uniqueness:

All the groups recognize Vincent as their founder or inspiration

A common mission of evangelizing and serving the poor

A common lifestyle and a concrete form of service to the poor

A common incarnational spirituality, which means that I experience God in an encounter with the poor, and that I serve and love God in the service of the poor.

### Overview of Major Branches of the Vincentian Family

The [AIC](#) (International Association of Charity or “Ladies of Charity”) was founded to honor Jesus and His Blessed Mother, and to assist the sick poor corporally and spiritually.

The [Congregation of the Mission](#) (Vincentian priests) to evangelize the poor by word and works, and to help in the formation of the clergy.

The [Daughters of Charity](#), to be servants of the poor, seeing Jesus Christ in the poor and the poor in Christ.

The [Society of St. Vincent de Paul](#) to deepen the faith of its members and to uplift the poor from their miseries.

The [Sisters of Charity Federation](#) to respond to the cries of poor and marginalized persons.

The [JMV](#) (Vincentian Marian Youth) to animate a missionary spirit in young people; to live and pray like Mary, with simplicity and humility, taking on the spirituality of the Magnificat.

The [Miraculous Medal Association](#) to venerate Mary conceived without sin, for the sanctification of its members, and to aid the poor.

[MISEVI](#) (Lay Vincentian Missionaries) to foster, facilitate, and sustain the missionary presence and work of the laity.

There is a wealth to be found in the diversity of the Vincentian Family. We are called to love God “with the sweat of our brow and the strength of our arms.” We strive to listen attentively to what God is trying to tell us, through the voices of the poor and marginalized, and allow ourselves continually to be evangelized by them.

## **Major Branches of the Vincentian Family**

### **Introduction**

The Vincentian Family includes any associations of the laity or religious who have St. Vincent de Paul as their founder, patron, or inspiration.

### **Ladies of Charity (1617)**

St. Vincent de Paul was a parish priest when a woman told him of a local family in need of help. Vincent spoke of the family during his sermon, and there was an outpouring of charity from parishioners. He thought, shouldn't these good women give themselves to God to serve the poor permanently? Soon the ladies formed an association in which each would take her turn in serving the poor corporally and spiritually. The Ladies of Charity are now known internationally as the [AIC](#) (International Association of Charity). In the U.S. they are known as the [Ladies of Charity](#).

### **Congregation of the Mission (1625)**

The [Congregation of the Mission](#) is a community of Roman Catholic priests and brothers founded by St. Vincent de Paul for the evangelization of the poor and the formation of the clergy. Vincentian priests and brothers total over 4000 worldwide and serve in 86 countries.

### **Daughters of Charity (1633)**

Vincent de Paul, a French priest-reformer, and Louise de Marillac, a widow, established the Company of the Daughters of Charity as a group of women dedicated to serving the poorest of the poor. Prayer and community life were essential elements of their vocation of service, with a spirit of humility, simplicity and charity. Today, the [Daughters of Charity](#) are an international community of over 19,900 Catholic women ministering in 91 countries.

### **Sisters of Charity (1809)**

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton founded her community at Emmitsburg, Maryland. Her desire to give her life to works of charity led her to adapt a Rule from the Daughters of Charity. Today the [Sisters of Charity Federation](#) has around 4,000 members in 13 Congregations in the U.S. and Canada who trace their roots to St. Elizabeth and/or to St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac.

### **Society of St. Vincent de Paul (1833)**

The [Society](#) is an International Catholic lay organization which offers person-to-person services to the needy and suffering in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

### **Association of the Miraculous Medal (1847)**

Mary gave the Miraculous Medal to the world for the poor, the suffering of the whole world, who are without hope. Mary sees Christ in all her children, especially the poor. Through the [AMM](#), Mary continues to reach out to her poor children with her motherly love.

### **Vincentian Marian Youth (1847)**

The [Vincentian Marian Youth](#) came about under the influence of the apparitions of Our Lady of the [Miraculous Medal](#) to [St. Catherine Labouré](#). Its purpose: “To form members to live a solid faith following Jesus Christ the evangelizer of the poor. To live and pray like Mary, with simplicity and humility, taking on the spirituality of the Magnificat. To arouse, animate and sustain the missionary spirit of the association, especially through missionary experiences to those who are poorest and to youth.”

### **Lay Vincentian Missionaries (1999)**

The [Lay Vincentian Missionaries](#) association is the youngest member of the Vincentian family and came about from the heart of the Family in 1999. Its goal: to foster, facilitate, sustain and coordinate the missionary presence and work of the laity in the missions of the Vincentian Family.

## **Complete Vincentian Family Tree**

### **The Family Tree Project**

In this project, Sr. Betty Ann McNeil, DC traces in exact detail the roots of the entire Vincentian Family worldwide. The project shows that ninety-nine founders designated Vincent de Paul as patron of their institute, and that seventy-nine founders chose or adapted the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity for their new establishment. Dozens of members of Saint Vincent's own communities have themselves become founders. [Click here](#) to download a PDF (6.4 MB) of the full text of the Vincentian Family Tree.

### **Complete Listing of Entire Vincentian Family Worldwide**

[Click here](#) to view the complete listing of the hundreds of Catholic Religious, Lay Associations, and Non-Catholic groups founded in the charism of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise. Their spirit has been incarnated in institutional expressions around the globe.

## **Where We Serve**

### **Locations**

#### **Ladies of Charity**

For all worldwide locations, go to this [AIC International Map](#). For associations in the United States, go to the [LCUSA National Listing](#).

#### **Congregation of the Mission**

For an interactive world map, visit [this link in the Vincentian Wikipedia](#). For a list of provinces worldwide, go to [this link](#). For a map of United States Provinces and contact information, go to [this link](#). For detailed maps of each province, try these links:

[New England Province](#)

## [Eastern Province](#)

## [Western Province Confreres](#)

### **Daughters of Charity**

For an interactive map of worldwide locations, go to [this link](#) (click on any of the continents for further details and contact information).

### **Sisters of Charity Federation**

For a list of the women religious congregations who belong to the Federation, visit [this link](#). For specific maps showing ministry locations for each congregation, try these links:

#### [Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati](#)

#### [Sisters of Charity Halifax](#)

#### [Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception](#)

#### [Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth](#)

#### [Sisters of Charity of Nazareth](#) (scroll down to see the map)

Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth – [full time ministry locations](#) – [volunteer ministry locations](#)

Sisters of Charity of New York – [Education](#) – [Health and Human Services](#) – [Social Services](#) – [Pastoral Services](#) – [Ecological Concerns](#) – [international locations](#)

#### [Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill](#) (scroll down to see the map)

Sisters of St. Martha – [Motherhouse](#) – [Other Links and Retreat Houses](#)

### **JMV (Vincentian Marian Youth)**

The JMV has around 200,000 members in 80 countries around the world. For an organizational chart, visit [this link](#). A United States national office is not yet established, though there are groups in [Southeast Missouri](#) and [Los Altos Hills, California](#).

### **MISEVI (Vincentian Lay Missionaries)**

[Vincentian Lay Missionaries](#) are men and women ages 21-35 who feel called to spend 4-6 weeks serving the poor while working alongside the Daughters of Charity in Africa. VLM live with or near the Daughters of Charity or the Vincentian Priests at all sites.

## **Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

For worldwide organization and contact information, visit [this link](#). For a list of United States Councils that have websites, visit [this link](#).

## **Locations for Entire Vincentian Family**

### **Worldwide Family, Listed by Country of Origin**

Visit [this link](#) for a complete searchable listing of Vincentian Family groups, by country of origin and year founded.

## **Ministries & Featured Projects**

### **Traditional Vincentian Ministries**

#### **Missions**

Vincentians are obliged to attend to the salvation of souls anywhere that God calls us: above all, in places where there is a greater need and where workers for the Gospel are lacking. The 21st century missionary paradigm does not just envision established Churches sending personnel to the so-called young Churches; rather, it sees evangelization as beginning whenever a missionary leaves his or her own culture and crosses a human frontier (geographical or social) to announce the Gospel in a new culture. The missionary not only proclaims the mystery of Christ, but is evangelized too as he or she accompanies others in the process of discovering the Spirit of the Lord already acting in a local Church or culture. We see this as a way of living that not only does the world deeply need, but that leads us to happiness as well.

#### **Prison Ministry**

The St. Vincent de Paul Society encourages its membership to get involved locally in this very special ministry. Vincentians make thousands of visits to inmates each year, minister to the families of the incarcerated, and help in the rehabilitation of recently released convicts.

## **Parish Ministry**

Vincentian priests serve as pastors, parochial vicars, as well as staffing a host of ministries in parishes around the world. While some parishes are located in very impoverished areas serving the direct needs of the physically poor, others respond to those same needs by calling others to participate in the mission of service and evangelization. Many Sisters of Charity are involved in pastoral ministry as chaplains, parish associates, vicars and pastoral care workers. The Daughters of Charity are involved at the parish level in catechesis, RCIA programmes, preparation to receive the sacraments, accompaniment of bereaved families, coordinating or supporting the people in those parishes which do not have a resident priest; and visiting people in their homes especially the house-bound.

## **Education**

Education continues to be an important choice in the life and work of Vincentian Family priests, Brothers, and Sisters. The Vincentian Family Colleges and Universities emphasize higher education as a means to engage cultural, social, religious, and ethical values in service to others.

## **Health Care**

In our health care ministry, we serve those at their most vulnerable. It's important to treat them with the dignity they require at that moment in time. The Charity of Christ urges us to: recognize our own value and the value of others (Respect), provide care with gentleness and kindness (Compassion), act with integrity, clarity and honesty (Simplicity), support those who lack resources for a healthy life and full human development (Advocacy), be resourceful and creative (Inventive to Infinity). A number of major hospitals and health care systems in the U.S. are run by or sponsored by branches of the Vincentian Family. In other cases, the focus is no longer on hospitals per se; Sisters can be found in nursing, health care and retirement center administration, holistic health and alternative therapies, nutrition consulting, reflexology, massage therapy, psychology and therapy.

## **Direct Service and Social Services**

Vincentians from all branches including the St. Vincent de Paul Society conduct many projects and programs in direct service of the poor, marginalized, elderly, children, migrants, and victims of war or natural disasters.

Source: [Seton Medical Center \(Mission Statement\)](#)

## **Recent Initiatives**

### **Systemic Change Projects**

Over the last several years, Vincentian Family leaders have called for a focus on Systemic Change. Many Systemic Change strategies flow from the Gospels and the Vincentian Tradition:

Involving the poor themselves, including women and young people, at all stages: the identification of needs, planning, implementation, evaluation and revision;

Having a holistic vision with an integral approach toward prevention and sustainable development;

Placing particular emphasis on self-help and self-sustaining programs, with a special view toward addressing the root causes of poverty.

Since systemic change is multifaceted and involves much collaborative activity, such projects are a good opportunity for the various branches to work together and also to cooperate with groups beyond our Family.

### **Youth Projects**

There are many Vincentian Youth associations, mainly volunteer groups of young lay people (for example the [Colorado Vincentian Volunteers](#) or the [Gateway Vincentian Volunteers](#)), or communities of faith, service, and evangelization (such as the [Vincentian Marian Youth](#)). For more links to Youth groups, see the [Related Links](#) section of this page.

### **Microfinance**

The Vincentian Family has been using microfinance as an effective response to the global challenge of extreme poverty. For examples see the [G.L.O.B.E. project](#), the [Philippine Homeless People's Federation – Community Savings and Loan Program](#), and [Zafen \(Microfinance for Haiti\)](#).

### **Collaborative Projects**

The members of the Vincentian Family place increasing emphasis today on collaborative projects.

## Issues We Care About

### Priority Issues

#### Hunger

The rural poor are most likely to suffer from hunger. Often it takes just a few simple resources for them to be able to grow enough food to become self-sufficient. These resources include quality seeds, appropriate tools and access to water. Small improvements in farming techniques and food storage methods are also helpful. Small-scale farmers should be given the opportunities and education they need to produce enough food and income to feed their families. Our natural resources need to be properly managed to ensure the land is not being over-used. Those without any land can be even hungrier: widows, orphans, the elderly, refugees. The wealthy eat first: grain, soy and other commodities are fed to animals to produce resource-intensive meat and dairy for the industrialized world, while the hungry lack the financial means to compete. [\[1\]](#) The Vincentian Family focused on hunger in a special way during their two-year Campaign Against Hunger.

#### Water

The availability of clean, fresh water is one of our most important issues. Our Sisters in particular have campaigned for water rights in many ways.

#### Sustainable Living

The Vincentian Family believes that we are all called to stop the devastation that humans are inflicting on the planet. We are committed to a way of living that values interdependence and the sacredness of the earth.

#### AIDS

AIDS destroys communities, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Orphaned children, whose parents died from AIDS, are suffering the consequences of the epidemic. Millions have to care for their ill parents, brothers and sisters, or have lost their loved ones, teachers, and others providing basic human services. The Daughters of Charity

collaborate with the Community of Sant'Egidio on the [D.R.E.A.M. project](#), whose special focus is to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS from a pregnant woman to her newborn child.

## **Human Trafficking**

The International Daughters of Charity have taken an official position against Human Trafficking. The Daughters are involved at a local level to respond to human trafficking through existing networks and by providing direct services whenever possible.

## **Access to Basic Health Services**

Part of our mission is to improve access for persons of low income or without health insurance to primary care and preventive health services. We are committed to stopping the inequities in access to healthcare between rich and poor, urban and rural, and from nation to nation. For example, [Seton Institute](#) supports the primary healthcare work of Catholic Sisters in the least developed countries.

## **Haiti**

The Daughters of Charity, Sisters of Charity, and Ladies of Charity have served in Haiti for many years. The Congregation of the Mission also has two houses in Haiti. As part of our 350th Anniversary celebration, the Vincentian Family initiated [Zafen](#), in partnership with Fonkoze, a Haitian microfinance institution, to empower sustainable economic development there.

## **Migrants**

In the U.S., the Daughters of Charity and other branches work locally in direct service with immigrants, and nationally to promote reform. Based on our person-to-person experiences, we see how the enforcement of laws and policies needs to be aligned with humanitarian values.