

Reflection Point

Theme: Loving our Neighbour is loving Jesus

This Faith In Action session has been produced by the St Vincent de Paul Society. The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) is a Catholic international volunteer organisation whose members work with anyone in need in their local community – the homeless, the elderly, prisoners, struggling families, people who are sick and lonely. Young people are an important part of the Vincentian family. We are all called to be like Jesus by helping people, becoming their friend and working with others to make a difference. Find out more and view our school resources by visiting svp.org.uk/youth-svp

Objectives: *Explore Jesus' example of active love and what 'neighbour' means.*

Understand *how following Jesus' example means taking responsibility for the wellbeing of others.*

Reflect *upon what it means to love a neighbour and how your actions affect them.*

Each reflection point should include:

- Reading a passage from the New Testament
- Exploration of the Church's Story (teachings from the Catechism and/or the Pope, research into the life of a saint)
- The opportunity for the participant to reflect on their personal experience
- An activity
- A time of prayer



Starting Point: (2min)

Gather the group together, and begin the session with the Faith in Action Prayer.

God our Father,

We thank you for the gift of love which you give to every person in the world. We thank you that because of your love, we are never alone and should never feel afraid.

We thank you for the gift of faith which allows us to know you, one God, three persons. We thank you that because of that faith, the whole of our lives are directed to living for other people.

Through your son, Jesus Christ, our friend and brother, you show us how to love.

Give us the strength we need to live lives of love and faith, so that the world might come to know your son more and more through our actions and words as we seek to live lives which help to build your kingdom here on earth.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen

Opening Reflection & Good News: (30min)

- You will need a ball of wool and the group to be stood in a circle.
- The first person takes hold of the end of the wool and unwinds some of the ball.
- They say their name and something about themselves (favourite food, football team, pizza topping preference, how many siblings they have etc).
- If other people in the circle are the same e.g. also have 2 brothers, they put their hand up.
- Holding onto the end of the wool, they throw the ball creating the first connection and part of the web.
- This process is repeated until everyone is connected and at the end there should be a large web in the middle of the circle.
- Whilst still in the circle invite participants to share their thoughts and feelings on the activity.
- How easy was it to build the connections? Did they find out anything that surprised them about someone in the circle?
- Today's FIA session theme is "Loving our neighbour is loving Jesus."
- There was one particular piece of scripture where Jesus explains to us who our neighbour is.
- In groups they can turn over the sheet (appendix 1) and in groups write down the name of the bible story, what happened and as many examples as possible about why this bible passage is an example to us of how to love our neighbour in a practical way.

The story is the Good Samaritan. Some of the key themes they might pull out are: Helping someone who was struggling, the Samaritan was the least likely to help, took them somewhere safe, gave money and resources, came back to check they were ok even though he didn't know them.



The Church story: (3min)

Share [video](#) introducing the St Vincent de Paul Society.



The SVP have a saying that when they take a food parcel they also take the table cloth. What do you think they might mean by this?

It's about going the extra mile doing the less practical bits that make someone feel valued, and loved.

Listen or read together the story below and consider how the SVP members who visited Michael and his family went the extra mile. (10min)

Michael is 7 years old. He came to England with his Mum and his two older sisters who are 9 and 10. They had a very long and difficult journey from their home in Ethiopia, a country in East Africa.

When they arrived in England they were granted Asylum, this means that the British government understood that it would be too dangerous for them to return to Ethiopia, where there is war happening, and gave them safety in this country. The family were given a flat to live in with some basic furniture. With little English and limited money they were lonely and the world they were living in was frightening.

The St Vincent de Paul society (SVP) visited Michael and his family at home, having been given their details by a local centre supporting refugees and asylum seekers. The SVP members took some food and clothes to the family but whilst they were visiting, they saw that the children had nothing to play with. Whilst trying to talk was difficult because the family didn't speak English very well, Michael was able to express that he liked football, he mentioned the player Mo Salah, which gave the SVP members an idea.

On their next visit to the family they bought a football, and a football shirt with the name Mo Salah on the back. Michael was thrilled and he put on the shirt and kicked the ball around the flat and whilst his Mum was a little worried about the ball being kicked in the flat, she smiled to see her son so happy. The SVP members have befriended Michael's family giving them support and friendship in their new situation. They give practical help like food, clothing and toiletries, and they are helping the family to learn English, but it is the friendship that definitely makes the most difference.

My Story: (10min)

Placed all around the room are quotes (**Appendix 2**) from people who have made an impact on the world for putting their faith in to action. Have a wander around the room and read the quotes, then go and stand next to the one that you are drawn too. Why have you picked that one? How does it relate to our theme today on loving your neighbour?

Response: (30min)

The SVP meet together regularly in groups all across the world. They pray together and they look at their local community. They think about the concerns that exist and then try and do something positive to influence that situation.

In groups can you think of a group of people in your local community who might feel lonely, worried or in need of support? Where are the places where help is needed or given? Is there a small action your group could do to bring some joy and a smile to the local community. It could be small actions like raising some money to buy sweets for the local care home, a litter pick around the school or church, or a collection of second hand clothes to take to the local shelter or charity shops.

After some group discussion time, allow groups to feedback their ideas about what they will do before the next meeting.

A closing prayer:

Loving God,

May those we seek to help and support with our works
see in our caring a glimpse of your great love for them.

Aware of our own limitations, may we listen carefully,
between the words and beyond the appearances,

help us not to judge, so that we might be able to understand and serve those we meet in love

Amen



St Vincent
de Paul Society
England and Wales
Turning Concern into Action



“All of us need to experience a conversion in the way we see the poor. We have to care for them and be sensitive to their spiritual and material needs. To you young people I especially entrust the task of restoring solidarity to the heart of human culture.

Faced with old and new forms of poverty – unemployment, migration and addictions of various kinds – we have the duty to be alert and thoughtful, avoiding the temptation to remain indifferent. We have to remember all those who feel unloved, who have no hope for the future and who have given up on life out of discouragement, disappointment or fear. We have to learn to be on the side of the poor, and not just indulge in rhetoric about the poor!

-Pope Francis-



“Nature makes trees put down deep roots before having them bear fruit, and even this is done gradually.”

- **St. Vincent de Paul** -



“Hunt down poverty in order to give humanity its dignity.”

- **Blessed Rosalie Rendu** -





"If you judge people, you have no time to
love them."

-St Teresa of Calcutta-



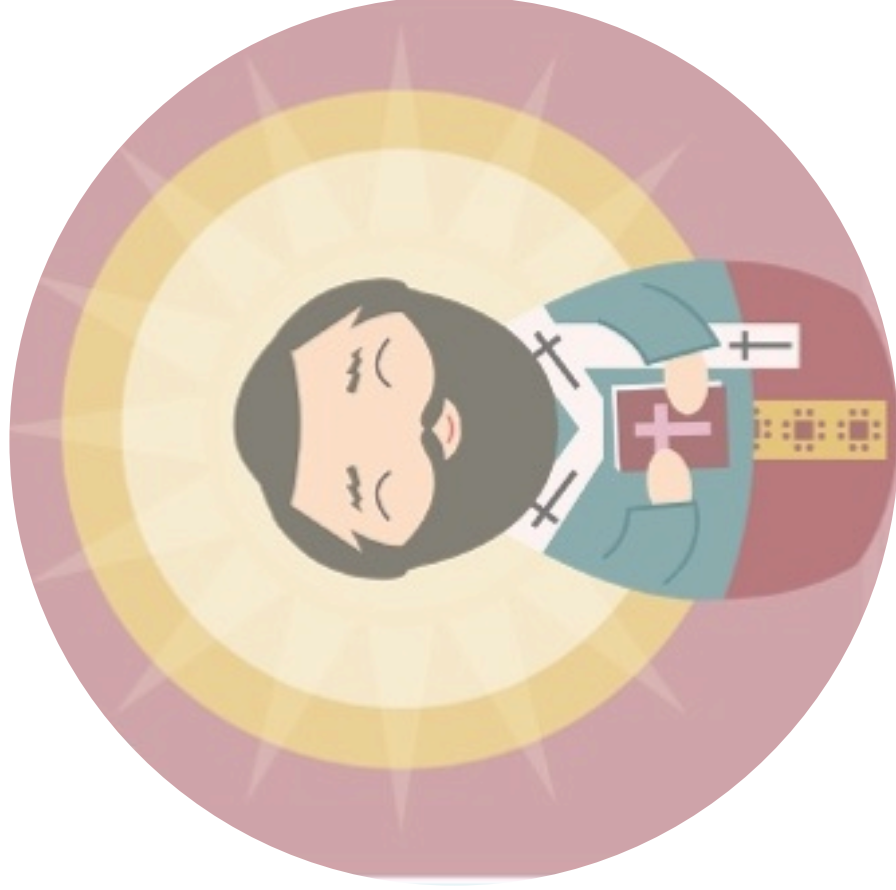
"Let us remember Paul VI's words:
'For the Catholic Church, no one is a
stranger, no one is excluded, no one is
far.' Indeed, we are a single human
family that is journeying on toward unity,
making the most of solidarity and
dialogue among people in the
multiplicity of differences."

-Pope Francis-



“Exploitation occurs when the master considers his workers not as a partner nor even as an assistant, but as an instrument out of which he must extract as much service as possible at the smallest possible price. Yet the exploitation of a man by another man is slavery.”

-Blessed Frédéric Ozanam-



“The bread you store up belongs to the hungry; the cloak that lies in your chest belongs to the naked; the gold you have hidden in the ground belongs to the poor.”



-St Basil the Great -





“Make it a practice to judge persons and things in the most favourable light at all times and under all circumstances.”



-St Vincent de Paul-



“I beg you not to think of the distance between us. Rather, think of us as strongly united, incapable of ever being separated, because separation is impossible in the close union created by holy charity.”



-St Louise de Marillac -



“Be kind and love. For love is the first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and love more than all else you can bring them.”

-Blessed Rosalie Rendu-



“Knowledge of the poor and needs is not gained by pouring over books or in discussions with politicians, but by visiting the slums where they live, sitting by the bedside of the dying, feeling the cold they feel and learning from their lips the causes of their woes.”

-Blessed Frédéric Ozanam-

