How did the SVP start?

While studying at university, Frédéric Ozanam (now Blessed Frédéric Ozanam) was asked, "What is the Church doing to help people in need in our community?" This challenge stayed with him. Soon after, he noticed a poor family struggling to stay warm. He quietly left firewood on their doorstep, and later returned to visit and befriend them.

This small act of kindness sparked a bigger vision. In 1833, Frédéric and a group of friends founded the Society of St Vincent de Paul to offer practical support and friendship to people facing poverty and hardship.

Their belief—that even small actions can create lasting change—continues to guide the SVP's work today.

- The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) was founded in 1833 in Paris by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, a young university student inspired to help people in need.
- The SVP takes its name from St Vincent de Paul (1581–1660), a Catholic priest known for his lifelong work caring for the poor and founding charitable organisations.
- St Louise de Marillac (1591–1660), a close collaborator of St Vincent de Paul, co-founded the Daughters of Charity, pioneering new ways to serve the vulnerable.
- Rosalie Rendu (1786–1856), a Daughter of Charity, played a vital role in inspiring and supporting early SVP members through her work in the poorest areas of Paris.
- These founders and saints shaped the SVP's practical, compassionate, and non-judgemental approach to helping those facing poverty, loneliness, and hardship.
- Today, the SVP continues their legacy through thousands of volunteers across England and Wales, working in local communities to offer friendship, support, and hope.