

This resource 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**

JANUARY: St Aelred, St Angela Merici & St John Bosco

The Friendship Builder, The Possibility Seer & The Chance Giver

12 January — St Aelred of Rievaulx

27 January — St Angela Merici

31 January — St John Bosco

January. Christmas is packed away. The lights come down. Someone discovers the last chocolate nobody wanted. (Probably a strawberry cream!) And we're back to normal. But here's a question: Does the kindness get packed away too?

It's easy to be generous at Christmas. January is when it gets interesting. Money's tight, life gets busy and good intentions quietly disappear. But love was never meant to be seasonal. And these three saints remind us: **Don't just care. Do something.**

St Aelred of Rievaulx lived nearly 900 years ago. He believed friendship was one of the ways we discover God's love. For Aelred, friendship wasn't just about having people around us. It was about helping people belong. **And there's a difference.** You can be surrounded by people and still feel completely alone. Sometimes we don't deliberately leave people out. We just get comfortable with our own little crowd.

Aelred reminds us that friendship isn't just something we enjoy. It's something we can offer. Sometimes the holiest thing we can do isn't particularly impressive. It's remembering a name, making a phone call or moving our bag off the empty chair and saying, **"There's room here."**

St Angela Merici lived in Italy in the 1500s. She noticed that girls, particularly those from poorer families, were often missing out on opportunities to learn and grow. And Angela wasn't having that. She believed that education, encouragement and faith could change lives. She founded the Company of St Ursula, from which the Ursuline family grew, and inspired generations of people to help young women discover their gifts and their worth.

To this day our Ursuline friends, continue Angela's wonderful legacy of education, service and helping people flourish.

Angela understood something we sometimes forget. You can't always see someone's potential by looking at their circumstances.

Sometimes people don't need us to do everything for them. **They need us to believe in them, encourage them and give them the opportunity to shine.** Because a little encouragement can go a remarkably long way and who knows what someone might become when another person says, "I believe you can."

St John Bosco spent his life working with young people who were poor, struggling or already written off. Where others saw trouble, Bosco saw possibility. He gave young people a space to belong, learn, laugh and discover their future. Bosco understood something we still forget.

People are more than their worst day. More than their mistakes. More than their reputation. And thank goodness for that. Imagine being judged forever by the daftest thing you've ever done! Sometimes people just need someone who can still see who they might become and that matters at every age. Because none of us is finished growing, changing or needing another chance.

Reflection Questions

1. Angela believed in helping people discover their gifts. Who has encouraged you to believe in yourself? How could you do the same for someone else?
2. All three saints noticed something and acted. What situation makes us think, "Someone should do something about that"? Could that someone be us?

Optional personal challenge: This week, where could you give someone a chance, look beyond a first impression or an old mistake?