

# WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

November 14, 2021



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul  
2021 CAMPAIGN GUIDE

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# PRESENTATION OF CAMPAIGN

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The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul provides material help such as non-perishable food, clothing, accessories, & furniture to more than 350,000 fellow Canadians in need annually. This includes assistance to refugees, immigrants, and to residents of northern communities.

This year marks the Society's 4<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Poor (WDP) national campaign. In this year's Pope Francis message<sup>1</sup>, he calls us to action. Pope Francis' sets the context with:

*The poor will always be with us, yet that should not make us indifferent, but summon us instead to a mutual sharing of life that does not allow proxies. The poor are not people "outside" our communities, but brothers and sisters whose sufferings we should share, in an effort to alleviate their difficulties and marginalization, restore their lost dignity and ensure their necessary social inclusion.*

Then, Pope Francis really raises the bar with:

*There seems to be a growing notion that the poor are not only responsible for their condition, but that they represent an intolerable burden for an economic system focused on the interests of a few privileged groups. A market that ignores ethical principles, or picks and chooses from among them, creates inhumane conditions for people already in precarious situations. We are now seeing the creation of new traps of poverty and exclusion, set by unscrupulous economic and financial actors lacking in a humanitarian sense and in social responsibility.*

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<sup>1</sup> [Pope Francis message](#)

And with:

*Serving the poor effectively moves us into action and makes it possible to find the most suitable ways of raising and promoting this part of humanity that all too often is anonymous and voiceless, but which has imprinted on it the face of the Saviour who asks for our help.*

The question that Pope Francis is ultimately asking:

What path of justice must be followed so that social inequalities can be overcome and human dignity, so often trampled upon, can be restored?

The National action campaign on *Safe, secure and affordable housing is a human right* launched on February 7, 2021, the feast day of Blessed Rosalie Rendue, is aligned with Pope Francis' message, that everyone deserves to have safe and adequate housing for their families.



This 4<sup>th</sup> year WPD national campaign is an opportunity to collectively raise the visibility of the SSVP in Canada, and to appeal to potential benefactors, to let them share the gift of assisting persons in need. Who would be in a better position than the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) to promote the World Day of the Poor? That special day is also a great opportunity for the Society to:

- increase the visibility of SSVP activities;
- make known the mission of the SSVP and the culture of encounter;
- foster closer ties between Vincentians and other parishioners;
- recruit new members; and
- conduct campaigns to raise funds or collect non-perishable food items in support to Vincentian work.

You will find in this guide a description of the tools accessible to you, as well as a few campaign blueprints that could be useful to your conference, store or outlet.

# CAMPAIGN TOOLS

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The team offers you material that you may use as is, or adapt according to your needs.

Available with this guide:

- Campaign blueprints, for a conference or store/outlet;
- Text for a parish speech;
- Text for a parish bulletin;
- Prayer card;
- Press Release.

Available electronically and distributed with this guide:

- Poster:
  - letter format (8 ½" x 11")
  - legal format (8 ½" x 14")
  - tabloid format (11" x 17")

In PDF format: to print, adding your contact information, or to order from the National Council, who will add your contact information on the PDF document and send it to your selected printer. (We suggest Staples / Bureau en Gros.)

- PowerPoint presentation about the campaign with animation in a loop.
- Video of the national housing campaign objectives.

# CAMPAIGN BLUEPRINTS

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Adapting the campaign in each conference or council is very important, in order to reflect local realities. Following are two basic blueprints for a successful campaign.

## ACTIVITIES IN A PARISH

- Determine what actions to undertake in your parish/parishes:
  - Fundraising (using envelopes placed in church pews)?
  - Collection of non-perishable food items?
- Coordinate with particular or central council to place an ad in local newspapers or on local radio;
- Organize a meeting with the pastor;
- Print the campaign poster (from National Council);
- Identify where to display campaign posters;
- Print collection envelopes for fundraising;
- Place a notice in the parish bulletin;
- Plan for an SSVP member to address parishioners after masses;
- Place envelopes on benches and/or add containers to collect non-perishable food items.

## ACTIVITIES IN A STORE OR IN THE COMMUNITY

- Determine what actions to undertake in the store(s) / community:
  - Fundraising?
  - Collection of non-perishable food items?
  - Door-to-door collection
- Coordinate with particular or central council to place an ad in local newspapers or on local radio;
- Identify where to display campaign posters;
- Print the campaign poster (from National Council);
- Promotion near cash registers;
- Set up a computer with a presentation (PowerPoint in loop mode);
- Print relevant or relayed documents to customers/clients to take home (leaflet, collection envelope, etc.)



## TEXT FOR PARISH SPEECH

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Father \_\_\_\_\_, and my dear friends in Christ. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am very pleased to be able to talk to you today, on behalf of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, for the \_\_\_\_\_ Conference. I wish to thank our priest, Father \_\_\_\_\_, for allowing us this opportunity to address you, our faith community.

At the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, on November 20, 2016, in his apostolic letter, entitled *Mercy and peace (Misericordia et misera)*, Pope Francis invited us to celebrate the World Day of the Poor on the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. This year, we celebrate that special day on November 14<sup>th</sup>. According to the Canadian government, one million, nine hundred thousand Canadian families struggle every day to make ends meet – and that was before the COVID-19 crisis came on us.

It is just a few weeks before we celebrate what promises to be a Christmas like none of us have experienced – celebrated while separated from friends and family and shrouded by concern about an uncertain future. The uncertainty we all feel is magnified for the marginalized we serve for whom uncertainty is a normal condition. We must do more than usual to help the least fortunate among us. For more than 170 years, thanks to your generosity, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has been distributing Christmas hampers or organizing community meals. Such gestures of compassionate solidarity help less fortunate people to emerge from isolation, and allow them to experience wonderful moments of joy. Not only do we give food, we interact with them on an equal basis as our friends.

In the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, our tradition is to avoid judging and to serve people with love, respect, justice and joy. In response to Pope Francis' appeal, we invite you to work with us and lend a hand, either by participating in our *guignolée* or in our collection of food supplies. In this very busy period, we always need volunteers and, of course, financial help is always appreciated as well. This year, we need your help more than ever. You can obtain more information and you may donate to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul team in our community, or directly via the National website, [ssvp.ca](http://ssvp.ca).

Thank you for your attention! I wish all of you a very nice Sunday.

## TEXT FOR PARISH NEWSLETTER

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November 14<sup>th</sup>, the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, is the World Day of the Poor. Your Society of Saint Vincent de Paul invites you to help our less fortunate brothers and sisters, especially at this uncertain time. We encourage you to lend a hand by participating in our *guignolée* or in our collection of food supplies. In this very busy period, we always need volunteers and, of course, financial help is always appreciated. You may donate to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul team in our community, or directly to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, via the national website, at [www.ssvp.ca/donation](http://www.ssvp.ca/donation).

# PRESS RELEASE

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With the cold weather approaching, charities all across Canada prepare for the busiest time of the year. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) in Canada is using November 14th 2021, which Pope Francis declared The World Day of the Poor, as a day in which we are encouraged to consider those less fortunate than ourselves and to give generously what we can.

Canadians in need struggle to buy their children winter clothing and afford the increased costs of heating their home. The COVID-19 response has just increased the burden on us all, but it is felt most keenly by the already marginalized. This is why even more people than usual turn to organizations like the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) for help. Some people who may be too proud to ask for help are forced to by all the added stress of winter and year's end. The desire to provide for their family causes them to humble themselves and seek help. We live in a country where a winter coat is not a luxury and where persons in need may have to choose between food or warmth.

In the coming weeks the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul invites you to consider your own good fortune and how this good fortune allows you to assist persons in need; with a donation of money, clothing, household goods, or time you can help us make a difference in the community. SSVP strives to treat the poor with dignity and respect regardless of personal creed or background; we ask you to do the same. Encourage others to donate. Take a moment to speak with a needy person. Buy a coffee for a person shivering on the streets.

In [City/Town Name] X people live in poverty and, of these people, X are children. Each year the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul: [Council/Conference] works year-round to help feed, clothe, and console these people. We hope that you will consider donating and volunteering not just in honour of the World Day of the Poor, but year-round to help your friends and neighbours in need

To make a donation, volunteer, or learn more contact [Preferred Local Contact Method].

To make an online donation directly to your local SSVP or to National, visit [www.ssvp.ca/donate](http://www.ssvp.ca/donate) or call 1-866-997-7787 to learn more about donating to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

# SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

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## WHEN JUSTICE AND PEACE SHALL KISS

Given that adequate housing is an issue of social justice, it might be helpful to look at the concept of justice in the light of the need for a home for all.

Psalm 85, one of my favorite biblical passages in terms of justice, can serve as an opening prayer for this reflection: Steadfast love and faithfulness shall meet; righteousness and peace shall kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

This psalm provides us with a clear message: working for justice is our best response to God's love for us and for all of God's creation. This reminds me of the bumper slogan - If you want peace, work for justice. We are invited to make justice spring up from the earth so that peace can reign down from heaven. More particularly, in the light of the theme of a home for all, we are invited as Vincentians to make the issue of inadequate housing a priority for our efforts to help the poor.

Needless to say, the psalm inspired the title of this reflection: When Justice and Peace shall Kiss. What is interesting in that passage is the dynamic, two-way flow of energy that is rooted in a covenant relationship with God as described in 1 Jn 4:11 "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another," and v. 19, "We love because God has loved us first." God's love takes the initiative, and we respond to that love.

In the psalm, we see the downward movement of steadfast love, goodness and righteousness, and the upward response of faithfulness, peace and obedience, expressed by the words, "making a path for his steps." The underlying message is the same – justice is our best response to God's love for us and for all of creation.

The prophet Amos, in chapter 8:4-7, uses language that could not be stronger in decrying the injustices of his time by especially the civic and religious leaders. He is clear that God condemns those who are dishonest and cheat the poor, trample on the needy, suppress the poor country people, tamper with scales, fix prices and take advantage of the poor and dis-advantaged. Surely, Amos would speak out against the injustice of so many people in our world who lack a roof over their heads, who have no place to really call home, while the homes of the wealthy are growing bigger and bigger in size, becoming even mansions housing smaller and smaller families.

The prophet Isaiah, in chapter 58, has God speaking even stronger and even more relevant words to Israel and to us: Thus says the Lord: Is this not the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly.

In April of 2009, Zenith, the news service out of the Vatican released a social analysis that provides food for thought in capturing much of the injustice in the world today as follows:

1. The poverty of so many people, brothers and sisters of ours, who live in misery and know nothing other than suffering and exploitation.
2. The even greater poverty of not knowing Christ that, according to Mother Teresa of Calcutta, is “the first poverty of people,” and of which no corner of the earth is exempt.
3. “A structure of sin” that seems inevitable and impossible to eradicate from the complex world in which we live.
4. Aggression against life from conception to its natural end.
5. The crisis of the family, irreplaceable basic cell of a healthy and prosperous society.
6. Cultural and moral relativism, which makes one lose the sense of the search for truth and its existence.
7. The unbalanced and myopic relationship with nature, at times wildly exploited, and, paradoxically, at times “idolized” and the object of greater attention than that given to the human being.
8. A scientific and technological development that goes ahead, at all costs and in any direction possible, without giving thought to the reality that the ethics of human behavior must impose limits.
9. Brothers and sisters who continually suffer religious persecution and die as martyrs in many places of the world for witnessing to Christ.
10. The aggressiveness, hostility and censure reserved at times for the Pope and the Church in the proclamation of the Gospel message of truth and love.
11. The economic crisis that has hit entire countries and seems to eradicate the horizon of hope of so many people.

While Zenith does not specifically include homelessness and a lack of adequate housing in its list, we could almost make this issue a twelfth one to round them out to an even dozen.

In the December 10, 2014 edition of the Prairie Messenger, a Catholic newspaper in Western Canada, Terrence J. Downey, president of St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, which I attended as a university student, wrote an article pointing out that

in Canada all references to the common good have disappeared. He creatively uses the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”) of Pope Francis as a prism for his very pertinent and thought-provoking observations.

Statement by statement, along with some statistics, he points out how many of the thoughts expressed by Pope Francis on the importance of the common good, the need for politicians to broaden their horizons, the need to address issues affecting especially the poor, beg to be addressed.

Well known retreat master, the late Fr. John Fullenbach, points out that we must distinguish between charity, and a social development apostolate. Charity is caring for the victims of society. Christian concern for others, or social development, is geared to work for the removal of the unjust causes of victims. Both are important, but different. The ministry of St. Mother Theresa of Calcutta, helping victims of poverty and injustice, is not the same as that of Dorothy Day, who not only helped victims of poverty, but also tried to address the causes of poverty and injustice, which tends to disturb the status quo even within the Church (making them a bit harder to canonize).

In Jewish theology, two activities embody these two differing theologies and their ensuing ministry: *devekut*, which means “clinging to God” or contemplation, and *tikkun o’lam* which means “repair of the world” or the work of justice.

“Clinging to God” and “repair of the world” are two sides of the same coin. Having an integrated spirituality without either element is impossible. The mystic St. Hildegard of Bingen understood the need for this balance. She saw the world as charged with God’s glory and human beings as entrusted with special responsibility for its wellbeing.

In the light of these insights, and given the practical need for housing in our society, as well as our Vincentian interest in and involvement with social justice, former school principal and Oblate lay associate Dan Freidt, shared with me a helpful schema that might serve as a backdrop for us. Written by Constance Fouré, it is entitled *Moving From Charity to Justice* and lays out five steps on a continuum.

While there is a natural hesitancy on the part of many to embark on this journey, as planning a Christmas meal is much more rewarding and less challenging than meeting on welfare reform, these five stages form a natural growth pattern for individuals, organizations such as ours, schools and parishes. Each of them carries its own possibilities and challenges.

### **Stage One: Collections**

The first stage focuses on collections: Christmas food baskets, monetary contributions for distant countries, gathering clothes and food for a thrift store or community. Collections bring real relief of immediate needs, and serve a very practical purpose. Our North of 60 project would fit into this category. However, collections usually offer minimal opportunity to form a bond with recipients, even as we strive to make that happen. This stage also can lead to “compassion fatigue” and the need to monitor developments as we become more known and new needs emerge.

### **Stage Two: Direct Service**

Direct service is the familiar work of sandbagging during a flood, serving meals at a soup kitchen, or providing child care at a shelter. It generally involves volunteers going out to a community and directly addressing needs.

These activities push people out of their comfort zones, and often put participants in close contact with people whose world is different from their own. In some instances, these experiences can be life-changing, as when a group of high-school students spend time helping build a home in a country like Haiti. For many, ongoing service opportunities can be grounding experiences that renew an awareness of their relative privilege and strengthen the commitment to help. Direct service can break down stereotypes and widen one’s circle of compassion. Structured reflection can greatly enrich these experiences and provide a bridge to make the activity a truly Catholic experience.

Sustained programs involving consistent sessions over a period of time can increase the participants familiarity with and commitment to a particular community or agency. Developing an on-going relationship with selected populations or agencies improves the likelihood of personal investment.

### **Stage Three: Service for Empowerment**

This stage engages volunteers in actions that empowers its recipients by offering them new skills and experiences. Participants may provide tutoring in English as a second language, computer or GRE skills. They can coach a team of developmentally challenged adults or be mentors for children who lack positive role models in their lives. The Oblates in Kenya began a water project to bring water down a mountain to needy villagers in the valley, but did this in collaboration with the local people, who now run the project on their own.

Service geared toward empowerment enables people to take greater charge of and pride in their lives, and has a natural impetus towards breaking down the distinction between “giver” and “receiver.” Action toward empowerment involves a greater level of commitment and engagement on the part of volunteers, and usually requires a higher level of skills. Although it brings about more lasting change, it does not yet risk controversy, nor does it tackle the structures that create the inequality in our world.

Though limited, these first three stages are both valid and necessary, as urgent needs cannot wait for structures to change, and they provide the path of conversion most people need towards commitment to social justice. Generally, an awareness of the need for action comes from some kind of experience among people in need, and then awareness grows of the causes behind that need.

#### **Stage Four: Reflection and Analysis**

Service has much more power to change hearts if it moves into providing structured reflection and analysis for the participants. Structured reflection also serves to build a bridge towards a justice perspective.

Journaling is a helpful tool, helping participants focus on their emotional response to their experiences, and toward developing social, organizational and problem-solving skills. Developing a justice perspective requires a more penetrating type of reflection which seeks an understanding of the structures creating the need for this on-going service – not just rescuing bodies floating down a river, but unearthing the reasons why there are bodies floating down a river.

This fourth stage involves teaching participants to analyze the situations they encounter through direct experience or through the media, and to discover the causes of the inequities they observe. It is a complex process, demanding mentors with the skill and knowledge to guide the conversation. It begins to make the shift toward an awareness that may challenge participants’ way of life and assumptions. It should be undertaken with care.

#### **Stage Five: Advocacy for Structural Change**

This fifth stage takes the brave step of engaging in political action. It includes actions like writing letters, mounting information campaigns, protesting and meeting with legislators.

Advocacy is a natural outgrowth of the first four stages, and many of us are just beginning to explore this stage. The first four stages provide the inspiration and new awareness which prompts political action. Organizations cannot deliver the complete message of



Catholic social thought without somehow addressing the issue of advocacy. This territory is new and demands competence and the appropriate spirit.

The challenge for us as Vincentians, who excel at the first stages, would be to use this schema as an invitation to little by little move towards the last two stages of reflection, analysis and advocacy for structural change with regard to the pressing issue of inadequate housing for all. What is it in our society, government and church that needs to be addressed to help us all move in that direction?

As a way of concluding this reflection, I would like to share with you a strategy for the long haul. Unfortunately, I cannot remember where this list comes from, or how it came my way, or if part of it is my own thinking:

1. Restore the role of the humanities in the field of higher education
2. Practice the principle of non-violence and reconciliation
3. Pressure governments to work for the common good
4. Foster dialogue, not exclusion
5. Reach out to the marginalized (the widows, orphans and foreigners of our day)
6. Be prophetic – speak your truth to power
7. Try to balance economy and ecology
8. Live Matthew 25 to the full
9. Balance action with contemplation
10. Resist the false gods of possession, prestige and power

Hopefully, some of the above thoughts or all of them, can serve to stimulate some creative thinking and action on our part as Vincentians as we address the issue of adequate housing for all.

*Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie, OMI, Spiritual Advisor  
National Council of Canada*

# PRAYER FOR THE WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

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God of Abraham,  
Everywhere we go we see Lazarus.  
But we also see so many doors,  
doors that separate us from Lazarus.

Lord, teach us to open those doors  
To Lazarus, to the poor,  
to help them find  
a just share of your bounty.

This World Day of the Poor,  
help us all turn to those outside our door,  
to bless, heal and comfort them.

Help us to build a world together,  
where the poor are strangers to none,  
and the very chains of poverty are broken.  
Amen.

*(Adapted from Catholic Relief Services)*

# COVID-19: PREVENTION AND PRECAUTION

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For any person-to-person contact, it is always preferable to err on the side of caution and ensure safety for everyone, and to not encourage any volunteers into action if they feel unsafe or have prior health conditions that could put them at risk.

Prevention and precaution are in order in this constantly changing situation, even if it may appear to be stabilizing. It is important to listen to the advice of public health experts:

- a. Wear a mask;
- b. Wash your hands often and thoroughly;
- c. Avoid touching your face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands;
- d. Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- e. Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched (e.g. phone, binder, etc.)
- f. Stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill;
- g. When sick, cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and then wash your hands;
- h. Practice social distancing.