



Feast Day Marks New Milestones

On 27 September 2022, almost 350 Vincentians, families and friends gathered at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd for the Feast of our patron, St Vincent de Paul. The Mass was celebrated by his Eminence, William Cardinal Goh, Archbishop of Singapore.

It was indeed a time of celebration because with the easing of COVID-19 measures, we were finally able to mingle with our fellow-Vincentians as well as welcome 57 new Vincentians, and the new President of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (National Council of Singapore).

During the homily, Cardinal Goh emphasised that the most important question that Vincentians should ask is, "What makes you different from other humanitarian organisations?" Fundamentally, we are on a spiritual mission to save souls. We are not simply concerned about satisfying

their bodily, material and physical needs. Our greater concern is the salvation of their souls, happiness, in the fullness of life with God. SSVP's mission is expressed in a concrete way, through your love, through your service to the poor, and most importantly at the end of the day, it is not about conversions but bringing people to encounter Jesus' love and mercy.

SSVP also distinguishes itself by our 'personal touch'. He asserted, "The people who are in need, you call them 'friends', they are not cases, they are not clients...it is through your love, through your personal contact, through journeying with them, through visiting them, you truly bring about a real healing,



you become the presence of God." And lastly, Cardinal said to measure how fruitful our mission has been, we need to see if our membership has increased and if those we helped have come back to help others. By these measures, the Society is indeed on the right path. 

New SSVP National Council President is Commissioned



Vincentians elected Ms Lucy Cher to be the new President of the Society of St Vincent de Paul's National Council during its Annual General Meeting on 27 May 2022. Ms Cher, who is also concurrently the President of the Conference of Queen of Peace, was formally presented by Ms Florence Tan, the outgoing National Council

President to Cardinal William Goh. During the commissioning ceremony, Ms Cher was presented four symbols by Cardinal;

1. a Bible (to know the love of Christ revealed and taught in the Holy Scriptures and be guided by the principles of the Gospel);

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2. a lighted candle (a symbol of the light of Christ, a light of hope to those in darkness, a beacon to those who are lost, and encouragement and warmth to those who have been rejected);
3. a loaf of bread (a reminder of the vocation to give help to the poor through loving service);
4. SSVP's The Rule Book (a sign of the President's authority and responsibility)

In Ms Cher's first address to the Society, she thanked Ms Florence Tan and the outgoing National Council Team for their leadership, commitment and dedication in the last six years. To all Vincentians, she said, "We come from all walks of life, different professions, ages and

varied experiences. There is much talent and diversity. We need the active participation of each person called to act ... with hearts ignited with the Vincentian Spirit of love, service and humility. Let's bring our energy, passion and creativity. Step up to serve together to be the Salt of the Earth and Light of the World."

Warm Welcome for 57 New Vincentians

It was a moving sight to have the new Vincentians gather (picture below), reciting in unison with all Vincentians, the Vincentian Pledge, promising to make Christ's Law of Love prevalent among all, practising spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

It was also heart-warming to see many young faces among the new Vincentians this year, including 10 youths from the Conference of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour (pictured above right with other Conference



Vincentians). They collectively shared, "Joining SSVP was born out of our desire to serve the community. With the chance to not only help distribute necessities but also to get to know our Friends-in-Need (FIN) on a deeper level especially during events. We found that SSVP spoke to our desire of getting to know the friends we help on a personal level and show them more love and care in our time together."



Long Service Appreciation Awards to Five Special Recipients

50 years of service - Ms Lucy Tan.

"In the kampong, FINs were living in attap houses sometimes with the roof all tumbling down. There were all these loose wooden planks, that's how they lived then. So, we had to go in ourselves, help fix their roofs and whatever was broken in the house, we had to re-build it." - Ms Tan, one of the founding members of the Conference of St Louise de Marillac, recounted how Vincentians had to literally build homes 50 years ago. She also followed the footsteps of her father, a Vincentian.

25 years of service - Ms Mabel Lim, Mr Peter Ng as well as married couple Ms Elizabeth Fernando and Mr Richard Sabastian.

"They must come with hearts prepared to serve the poor. I did not expect to stay for 25 years, all my children were also surprised." - Ms Elizabeth Fernando, a former Friend-in-Need, came from a large family with seven children. SSVP's support helped the family improve their circumstances until they no longer needed aid when her older siblings started work. She joined SSVP together with her husband, Mr Sabastian.



Five long service appreciation awards were also presented by Cardinal Goh. Left to right: Mr Peter Ng, Ms Mabel Lim, Ms Lucy Tan, His Eminence William Cardinal Goh, Father Eugene Vaz, Ms Elizabeth Fernando and Mr Richard Sabastian.

Embracing Faith

“I want to have my cataract operation quickly, so that I can see Jesus clearer.” – John, newly baptised SSVP Friend-in-Need (FIN).

During the COVID-19 period, Vincentians from SSVP Conference of the Holy Spirit discovered that many of their elderly non-Catholic FINs were interested to find out more about the Catholic faith.

This epiphany spurred the Conference to take evangelism to the next level, motivating them to take a bolder and more pro-active approach. They were unfazed by the many challenges presented as many FINs were illiterate, physically weak and not very conversant in English or Mandarin.

With the blessing of parish priest, Father Kamelus Kamus, CICM, Vincentians invited interested FINs to attend a weekly catechism class imparting the basic essentials of the Catholic faith in Hokkien and Cantonese.

To create a more comfortable and convenient setting, the classes were conducted in the home of a FIN. The Conference enlisted the help of Mr Andrew Goh to kick-start this initiative, with Vincentians taking over about four months after learning the ropes. Our Vincentians also took on the role of companions, sharing their own personal experiences and walking with the FINs on their faith journey. These classes usually worked up an appetite and would be followed by makan lunch sessions.

It was a humble start when the classes commenced in March with three attendees but by early June it was heartening to see that the group had grown steadily to about 10 FINs of which seven, mostly in

their 70s and 80s, became faithful regular attendees.

By late June, the Conference felt ready to move the venue to Church so that classes

could be enhanced and conducted with audio-visual aids. For their convenience, FINs were provided with transportation to and from Church.

Said Mr Stephen Ho, one of the Vincentian companions, “The FINs are attending the classes regularly despite their mobility and language limitations, this shows their keenness in wanting to know the faith. Their fellowship and bond with each other grew as the weeks progressed. This has shown that they believe in Jesus and has made me more eager to share my faith with them, especially in teaching them to pray and get closer to Jesus.”



On 3 September, two FIN attendees, Peter (above left) and John (above right), were baptised. They were joined by their fellow FIN attendees who celebrated with them during the ceremony. Many of the other FINs are also close to making the same life-changing decision. It was



also very moving to witness how many of them came forward to seek blessings from Father Peter Koh, CICM (below centre), who conducted the service.

“I decided to be baptised in the Catholic church, as I was introduced into the faith by the SSVP members, and started attending the catechism class. The SSVP volunteers are always so friendly, encouraging and helpful to me, that I want to get to know the faith more,” shared newly baptised FIN, Peter, aged 74.

“One of the success factors for setting up and running a FINs’ catechism class is the strong mutual bond and trust between the FINs and the Vincentians. This arises from the many years of care and love Vincentians have rendered to the FINs. If FINs and Vincentians from other Conferences wish to join our class, they are most welcome,” said Ms Dana Chia, President, Holy Spirit Conference.

This special catechism class has grown from strength to strength as more interested FINs have been drawn to attend and Mr Goh also conducts classes at Novena Church. Email us at enquiry@ssvpsingapore.org to find out more. 

FINS “FASHION IT NEW” at SSVP Shop

As part of the SSVP Shop’s 3rd birthday celebrations, our Friends-In-Need (FINs) Mdm Rajeswari and her family experienced a very different kind of “FIN” treatment as they received a “Fashion It New” makeover!

When Mdm Rajeswari, 47 years old, came to the SSVP Shop for the makeover, she brought the sunshine with her, filling the Shop with her warmth and exuberance.

Looking at her smiles, one would be hard pressed to imagine the many hardships and knocks she has endured over the last two decades.

She recounted how she had to leave her children in Malaysia in the care of her Malaysian husband and come back to Singapore on her own hoping for a better job and life for the family, “My children were all very young when I first moved back to Singapore, I worked in Shell and 7-Eleven. I applied for a rental flat and slept in Ang Mo Kio Park and void decks ... life was very hard.”

And life got harder when in addition to being homeless, she was unexpectedly widowed in her 30s and had to bring up her three young children on her own, with her son being only one-year old then.

Mdm Rejeswari was so depressed and stressed that she became suicidal. Life started to take a turn for the better when the tight-knit family of four was befriended and aided by SSVP Conference of St Joachim, after one of her friend advised her to approach SSVP for help.

Speaking of SSVP and her befriender, Ms Florence Koh whom she has known for over a decade, “She is like my best friend, she will call me and check on me.



Going out is a rare treat for this family and on their maiden visit to the SSVP Shop, we could tell from their giggles and laughter of excitement that they were having lots of fun going through the racks of clothes, discovering a treasure trove of awesome finds. Mdm Rajeswari and her two younger children aged 14 and 11 years old have been styled with apparel from the SSVP Shop.

When I am stressed, I will share with her, also what’s happening in my life, updates with SSO (Social Service Office), MP (Member of Parliament). Every year I have to apply for the renewal (for various government and social service agency grants), sometimes I don’t know what to do and I will ask (SSVP) for help.”

Mdm Rajeswari also has multiple medical ailments which makes it challenging to work full-

time while caring for her son who has Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder.

But she has remained inspiringly upbeat, hopeful that one day her dreams of holding a full-time job, owning her own home, and seeing all her children do well in school will come true.

If you know someone who needs our help, please email us at enquiry@ssvpsingapore.org. 

SSVP Conferences: Love in Action Across Singapore

With the easing of safe management measures, all SSVP Conferences can finally start to welcome FINs back to Church for befriending, monthly aid distribution as well as outings, and to be part of parish activities.

Here's a glimpse of some of the activities in the last few months.

Conference of the Holy Cross

On 3 July, the Conference was one of the first to welcome our FINs back to Church with open arms for a celebratory lunch cum monthly rations distribution. It was a wonderful session filled with so much cheer and laughter, celebrating friendships as well as birthdays for those born in July.



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SSVP Conference of St Mary of the Angels (SMOTA)

SMOTA Conference organised their very first outing for FINs after a hiatus of more than two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On 3 July, 63 FINs, Vincentians as well as SMOTA Outreach Office members visited Bollywood Veggies!

FINs had the opportunity to appreciate nature and experienced hands-on how to pot a plant, to care for it, and the highlight was - they got to take the plant home after!

More importantly, this outing helped cultivate fellowship between FINs and SSVP members, bringing the love of Christ to them through our interaction and engagement. For our SSVP Youth who only came onboard early this year, this was their very first outing with FINs. This experience was a real eye-opener for them as they learnt to engage and befriend our FINs in a more personal way.



SSVP Conference of Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM)

On 6 August, IHM Conference was possibly the first

SSVP Conference out in full force for 'canteen duty' – offering hungry parishioners local favourites like nasi lemak, mee siam, assorted kuehs, and for the young and young at heart, fried chicken wings and fish balls! Canteen duty has been much missed by parishioners and Vincentians alike as it is an opportunity to meet face-to-face and 'makan' together.



SSVP Conference of Transfiguration (COTT)

It was with great relief and joy that "Be the Change" (BTC) – COTT's mentoring and tuition programme for young FINs could be conducted on-site again instead of only 'virtually'. Many of our young FINs are from families who face various social and economic challenges. BTC was initiated in 2018 and puts priority on providing our FIN children with mentorship, guidance and friendship as well as tuition assistance. With the love and care of Vincentians and BTC volunteers, our FINs under this programme continue to be inspired to work hard and to do better.



It's not all work and no play for the young FINs as they enjoyed a movie treat with Vincentians and volunteers during the June holidays.

“Gerard and I frequently talked about how we can give back to the community as a team and when the opportunity came, we signed up for “Be the Change”. It was a life changing experience for both of us. We come every Saturday with hearts ready to inspire and help the kids see their potential.”- Gerard and Alicia, BTC volunteer tutors.

“Seeing the children blossom in both academia and character for the past six months has been a rewarding journey that is a definite motivator for any volunteer to want to continue to serve!” - Vanesia, BTC volunteer tutor.

SSVP Conference of the Blessed Virgin Mother Nativity (Nativity)

Nativity Conference established the Home Improvement Programme (HIP) in July 2022 to improve the living conditions of our FINs by refurbishing their homes.



During the nine days of Novena leading up to the Parish feast day in September, flowers for Feast Day (above) were sold to raise funds for badly needed home improvement repairs for our FINs.

Faith in Action at SSVP Shop

When you drop by SSVP Shop on a Sunday, you may notice very young, energetic and industrious teen volunteers, helping out.

They are usually catechism youths from various Parishes who have chosen to serve with the SSVP Conference as part of their journey towards confirmation. Apart from befriending FINs and helping with ration distribution, they sometimes lend a hand at the SSVP Shop, neatening the racks, re-stocking the shelves and sorting the donations. We hope that after their Confirmation, they will continue to support SSVP's social mission and serve the Community.



Catechism youths and Vincentians from Conferences of the Risen Christ (left) and Divine Mercy (right).

Between 19 to 21 August, Laudato Sí at St. Joseph Church (Bukit Timah) organised an SSVP Shop Pop-Up for the Parish community, an idea spearheaded by the Parish's Vincentian Youth. Laudato Sí is a vibrant community that takes action towards the caring of our common home. The Pop-Up was very well-received and parishioners were enthusiastic for this to become a regular feature at the Parish.



During the Holy Cross Parish Feast Day on 18 September, the SSVP Conference offered a wide array of items from SSVP Shop at their booth (above) and encouraged parishioners to purchase SSVP Shop vouchers as gifts for their friends, families, and especially their domestic helpers who may be preparing to ship gift boxes back home.

SSVP Conference of St Stephen – Food Distribution

60 SSVP FIN families from St Stephen Conference were invited by Canossaville Children & Community Services to be part of the Lazada Farmers' Market Food Distribution Drive on 16 September.



SSVP FINs (right) could choose from a wide range of fresh fruits and vegetables as well as meat and seafood. Each family also received provisions such as rice, soya sauce, breakfast cereal and toothbrush/toothpaste.

SSVP National Care Pack Distribution Project R.I.C.E.

On 1 July, SSVP launched our second nationwide care pack distribution initiative. Over 2,000 sets



of goodies which were part of Project R.I.C.E., a community initiative by Singapore Red Cross, were packed, ready for collection for SSVP's FINs across

Singapore.

Conferences chose from different categories of items including food, cleaning products etc, depending on what was most needed by our FINs. We would like to extend our gratitude to Singapore Red Cross for the donation-in-kind as well as volunteer support, and also to Vincentians and friends who helped with the packing and distribution.

SSVP Faith Formation & Development Induction Retreat

On 6 August, SSVP held our first national on-site event for Vincentians since the easing of pandemic measures in May. The Retreat, themed “Know You Are Not Alone”, was organised by SSVP Faith Formation



and Development Committee and attended by over 70 Vincentians. Almost half the attendees were “newbies” who later took the Vincentian Pledge in September.

Father Francis Lim, SJ, the Spiritual Director for the Retreat, started the session by asking the attendees if they knew the difference between ‘Lonely’ and ‘Alone’. He said, “We are not alone, God is with us ... we serve the poor by going to God.”

Mr David Lau, a Vincentian of over 40 years, presented the topic “So you want to be a Vincentian?” He asked the attendees to think and reflect on many hard questions. At the end, David had these parting words, “As Vincentians, we must strive to serve (our Friends-in-Need) with our hands holding theirs, our hearts beating with theirs.”

It was also the first time in two years that Vincentians could meet and mingle freely with members from other Conferences and had invigorating discussions during the Retreat. The Retreat included evening mass which was celebrated by SSVP National Spiritual Advisor Father Eugene Vaz.

Helping FINs Clean and Declutter Conference of Our Lady Queen of Peace (QOP):

On 19 June, nine parishioners from QOP comprising five young adults from QOP Youth and four Vincentians from the QOP Conference helped to declutter the home of Mr A.

Mr A, single and in his early 60s, lives alone in a cluttered home, hoarding items which should be thrown away. Grappling with ill health, Mr A reached

out to QOP for help.

The Team went about cleaning earnestly, filling bag after bag with items for disposal. Often, Mr A had to be persuaded to “let it go” as the youth cajoled him to part with his hoard by employing large doses of humour.



After two hours, they managed to declutter the front living area while significantly cleaning many parts of his home which was now brighter and definitely safer with fewer health and fire hazards.

SSVP Conference of Christ the King:

The House Cleaning Project was a collaboration with the CC3 Catechism Teens. On 10 September, over 40 teens gathered in church with our Vincentians first thing in the morning and after a simple breakfast, a catechist led them in prayer before they set off to the FINs’ homes.

SSVP Reaches Out to the Poor SSVP Conference of St Francis Xavier

co-organised an Easter outreach initiative on 7 May.



They knocked on the doors of a rental block at Serangoon Avenue 4, to spread the joy of Easter to the neighbourhood as well as to share

more about SSVP and offer aid to residents in need of support. This meaningful initiative was a collaboration between SSVP, parishioners, the SALT community as well as the Level 10 youth with the blessings of Parish Priest, Father Benedict Chng.

SSVP Conference of St Anne’s

co-organised an outreach initiative at a rental block in Rivervale Crescent, together with the parish youth ministry on 9 July. Apart from giving out masks and hand sanitisers, a survey was also conducted to understand the needs of the residents to better plan future activities. 



Lighting the Spiritual Fire

The SSVV Youth Team has been all fired up since the second quarter of the year. First, there was the selection of a new Committee with Ms Adonara Mucek taking the lead and the easing of safe management measures allowing the Youth Team to re-start many of its plans which had been on hold because of the pandemic.

SSVP Youth Camp

Top of the list of priorities was the SSVV Youth Camp which was held from 4 - 5 June, during which over 30 youths from across Singapore attended the SSVV Youth Camp 2022 which focused on works of mercy, specifically reaching out to those most in need.



Each day started with outreach to the less fortunate, the first being the Conference of Divine Mercy's monthly grocery distribution outreach to tenants of one-room rental flats in Pasir Ris. The youth went knocking on doors, delivering much needed necessities including soap, toothpaste, and milk, requested from the month before. The youth befriended the tenants, concerned about their welfare and

gathered the needed information from those who requested help.

In the afternoon, Social Work Practitioners from SSVV Ltd's Community Service Office conducted a workshop on FIN Engagement and skills to communicate with compassion, kindness, without judgement. This was put to the test when the youth helped at the Conference of Our Lady of Lourdes' monthly Sunday ration distribution to FINs the next day. Our FINs invited the youth to their homes and shared heart-wrenching stories of the hardships they have endured.

The youth revealed how meeting the FINs had personally affected them and how they now really understand what it means to serve Christ in the poor.

It was also inspiring to see attendees from the 2019 youth camp step up as leaders, journeying with the newer participants as they grew in faith and experiencing Christ's love in the FINs they met.

"In SSVV, the activities are personalised, where we meet FINs and help them directly. Our FINs aren't strangers and any help provided by the youth can be seen and felt immediately. This makes it stand out compared to other volunteer activities." – Ms Adonara Mucek, SSVV Youth Coordinator.

Bringing Comfort & Joy to FINs

Sometimes when serving others, we need to put ourselves in uncomfortable positions.

On 9 August, SSVV Youth had the chance to push themselves outside of their comfort zones by helping



to declutter the home of an SSVV FIN family from the Conference of Our Lady Queen of Peace.

The FIN lived with his mother and experienced trouble trying to organise his own home, which resulted in disorganised clutter on all surfaces, including the couch, chairs, kitchen table and floor.

Armed with gloves, trash bags, and a lot of insecticide, the youth carefully helped him sort through piles of documents, empty containers, clothing and food in the living room — clearing out about eight large trash black bags after five hours!

The FIN was very appreciative of the support and even started to take photos; proudly declaring that he can now invite his teacher over for tea because the house was now more presentable.

The act of charity may seem relatively small but the youth personally witnessed the meaningful and very personal impact this act made on the FIN and how it changed his demeanour. The youth hope to return soon to declutter the rest of his home and provide a sense of peace and comfort to the FIN's home.

Inspired by the love and passion of our youths? Email youthexco@ssvpsingapore.org to join the SSVV Youth Team. 