

Lives
of
Saints

St Vincent de Paul

1580-1660

Feastday: 27th September



“Strive to live content in the midst of those things that cause your discontent.”

St Vincent de Paul



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I was born into a peasant family in France around the year 1580. At the age of 20, I was ordained priest. Five years later, I was captured by Turkish pirates and taken to Tunis. There I was sold as a slave, but escaped in 1607 with my master, whom I had converted. After that, I studied in Rome for a while, and then, back in France, I did pastoral work in a parish, converting several Protestants and founding the first conference of charity for the assistance of the poor, and served the well-known Gondi family, educating the children, and serving as spiritual director.

I started organising peasant missions and I founded a religious institute of priests for the evangelization of country people — the Congregation of Priests of the Mission, and I helped to form priests by founding seminaries, and holding ecclesiastical conferences at which priests assembled to discuss things. I also instituted open retreats for laymen as well as priests.

Around the same time, I established the Daughters of Charity, and secured for the poor the services of the Ladies of Charity. I also founded the Hospice of the Name of Jesus, where old people of both sexes found shelter and work suited to their condition, and encouraged the foundation of societies undertaking to bury the dead and to clean away the dirt which was a permanent cause of plague. I directed my attention and charity to all the provinces and individuals living in misery. Such were the convicts in the galleys, young women and children suffering the brutality of soldiers, and the Irish and English Catholics who had been driven from their country. Through my care soup was distributed daily to 15,000 or 16,000 refugees or poor.

This exterior life had its source in a great faith and piety. I was devoted to prayer, meditation, and to other religious and ascetic exercises.

I died in Paris at the age of eighty and was canonized by Clement XII in 1737.