

enabled him to undertake, that of the care of foundlings was one of the most important. Some of the foundlings at this period were deliberately deformed by miscreants anxious to exploit public pity. Others were received into a municipal asylum called "la couche", but often they were ill-treated or allowed to die of hunger. The Ladies of Charity began by purchasing twelve children drawn by lot who were installed in a special house confided to the Daughters of Charity and four nurses. Thus years later the number of children reached 4000; their support cost 30,000 livres; soon with the increase in the number of children this reached 40,000 livres.

With the assistance of a generous unknown who placed at his disposal the sum of 10,000 livres, Vincent founded the Hospice of the Name of Jesus, where forth old people of both sexes found a shelter and work suited to their condition. This is the present hospital of the incurables. Vincent did more than anyone for the realization of what has been called one of the greatest works of charity of the seventeenth century, the sheltering of 40,000 poor in an asylum where they would be given a useful work. St. Vincent attached the Daughters of Charity to the work and supported it with all his strength.

Vincent's exterior life so fruitful in works had its source in a profound spirit of religion and in an interior life of wonderful intensity. He was singularly faithful to the duties of his state, careful to obey the suggestions of faith and piety, devoted to prayer, meditation, and all religious and ascetic exercises. Of practical and prudent mind, he left nothing to chance; his distrust of himself was equaled only by his trust in Providence; when he founded the Congregation of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity he refrained from giving them fixed constitutions beforehand; it was only after tentative, trials, and long experience that he resolved in the last years of his life to give them definitive rules. His zeal for souls knew no limit; all occasions were to him opportunities to exercise it. When he died the poor of Paris lost their best friend and humanity a benefactor unsurpassed in modern times.

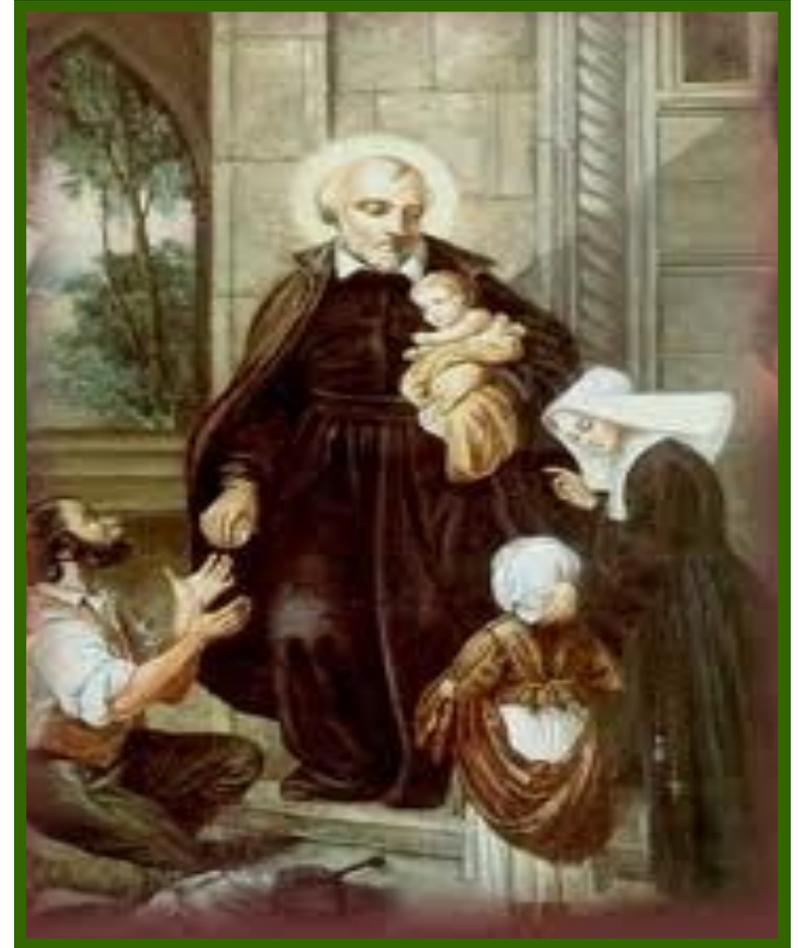
Vincent died on 27 September 1660 (aged 79) Paris, France. His body was exhumed in 1712, 53 years after his death. The written account of an eye witness states "...the eyes and nose alone showed some decay." However, when the body was exhumed again during the canonization in 1737 it was then discovered to have decomposed due to an underground flood. His bones have been encased in a waxen figure which is displayed in a glass reliquary in the chapel of the headquarters of the Vincentian fathers in Paris. His heart is still incorrupt, and is displayed in a reliquary in the chapel of the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity in Paris.

*(excerpted from: en.wikipedia.org)



Saint Vincent de Paul

Feast Day: July 20th



***"I was hungry and you gave me food;
thirsty and you gave me drink;
a stranger and you welcomed me;
naked and you clothed me;
sick and you cared for me;
in prison and you visited me."***

(Matt 25: 35-36)

Saint Vincent de Paul

*Vincent was born in Gascony, France, in 1581, though some authorities have said 1576. He was born of a peasant family, he made his humanities studies at Dax with the Cordeliers, and his theological studies, interrupted by a short stay at Saragossa, were made at Toulouse where he graduated in theology. Ordained in 1600 he remained at Toulouse or in its vicinity acting as tutor while continuing his own studies. Brought to Marseille for an inheritance, he was returning by sea in 1605 when Turkish pirates captured him and took him to Tunis. He was sold as a slave, but escaped in 1607 with his master, a renegade whom he converted. On returning to France he went to Avignon to the papal vice-legate, whom he followed to Rome to continue his studies. He was sent back to France in 1609, on a secret mission to Henry IV; he became almoner to Queen Marguerite of Valois, and was provided with the little Abbey of Saint-Léonard-de-Chaume. At the request of M. de Berulle, founder of the Oratory, he took charge of the parish of Clichy near Paris, but several months later (1612) he entered the services of the Gondi, an illustrious French family, to educate the children of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi. He became the spiritual director of Mme de Gondi. With her assistance he began giving missions on her estates; but to escape the esteem of which he was the object he left the Gondi and with the approval of M. de Berulle had himself appointed curé of Châtillon-les-Dombes (Bresse), where he converted several Protestants and founded the first conference of charity for the assistance of the poor. He was recalled by the Gondi and returned to them (1617) five months later, resuming the peasant missions. Several learned Parish priests, won by his example, joined him. Nearly everywhere after each of these missions, a conference of charity was founded for the relief of the poor, notably at Joigny, Châlons, Mâcon, Trévoux, where they lasted until the Revolution.

After the poverty of the country, Vincent's solicitude was directed towards the convicts in the galleys, who were subject to M. de Gondi as general of the galleys of France. Before being convoyed aboard the galleys or when illness compelled them to disembark, the condemned convicts were crowded with chains on their legs onto damp dungeons, their only food being black bread and water, while they were covered with vermin and ulcers. Their moral state was still more frightful than their physical misery. Vincent wished to ameliorate both. Assisted by a priest, he began visiting the galley convicts of Paris, speaking kind words to them, doing them every manner of service however repulsive. He thus won their hearts, converted many of them, and interested in their behalf several persons who came to visit them. A house was purchased where Vincent established a hospital. Appointed by

Louis XIII royal almoner of the galleys, Vincent visited the galleys of Marseilles where the convicts were as unfortunate as at Paris; he lavished his care on them and also planned to build them a hospital; but this he could only do ten years later. Meanwhile, he gave on the galley of Bordeaux, as on those of Marseilles, a mission which was crowned with success (1625). Congregation of the Mission. The good wrought everywhere by these missions together with the urging of Mme de Gondi decided Vincent to found his religious institute of priests vowed to the evangelization of country people—the Congregation of Priests of the Mission.

Experience had quickly revealed to St. Vincent that the good done by the missions in country places could not last unless there were priests to maintain it and these were lacking at that time in France. Since the Council of Trent the bishops had been endeavoring to found seminaries to form them, but these seminaries encountered many obstacles, the chief of which were the wars of religion. Of twenty founded not ten had survived till 1625.

Vincent established the Daughters of Charity. At first they were intended to assist the conferences of charity. When these conferences were established at Paris (1629) the ladies who joined them readily brought their alms and were willing to visit the poor, but it often happened that they did not know how to give them care which their conditions demanded and they sent their servants to do what was needful in their stead. Vincent conceived the idea of enlisting good young women for this service of the poor. They were first distributed singly in the various parishes where the conferences were established and they visited the poor with these ladies of the conferences, or when necessary, cared for them during their absence. In recruiting, forming, and directing these servants of the poor, Vincent found able assistance in Mlle Legras. When their number increased he grouped them into a community under her direction. Coming himself every week to hold a conference suitable to their condition. Besides the Daughters of Charity Vincent de Paul secured for the poor the services of the Ladies of Charity, at the request of the Archbishop of Paris. He grouped (1634) under the name some pious women who were determined to nurse the sick poor entering the Hotel-Dieu to the number of 20,000 or 25,000 annually; they also visited the prisons. Among them were as many as 200 ladies of the highest rank. After having drawn up their rule St. Vincent upheld and stimulated their charitable zeal. It was due to them that he was able to collect the enormous sums which he distributed in aid of all the unfortunates. Among the works, which their co-operation