

The Society of Saint Vincent De Paul (Vinnies) in Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish

The Society of Saint Vincent De Paul is one of the major worldwide organisations in our Catholic Church which is devoted to helping the needy. Vinnies has been active in our Parish since the 1970s. The main physical presence in Tauranga is the Support Centre and Opportunity Shop on the corner of Sixteenth Avenue and Cameron Road. This Shop has been there since the mid-1980s. There is another Shop in Chadwick Road, Greerton.

We all know that in today's world there are many who struggle to gain access to basic needs such as food, shelter, medical care and education. Tauranga has many people who are struggling to obtain their share of those basic needs and Vinnies is there to help.

Vinnies charitable works with the needy are made possible by the time given by Volunteers. Volunteers are in three main Vinnies groups, In

- Conferences which is the group that meets face to face with the needy and arranges help
- Projects which are teams like Fullstop (the van which delivers meals around Tauranga six nights each week)
- Shops where donated goods are recycled for sale

Main activities Vinnies undertakes in our Parish include distributing

- Food parcels (about 30 per week)
- Baby packs (about 10 per week)
- School lunches
- Night meals
- Furniture, household linen, utensils

In addition payments such as rent arrears, overdue energy accounts, medical bills, vehicle repairs are processed through our Conferences. In the past twelve months nearly \$70,000 has been paid to help people who are struggling and cannot met these bills.

The main challenge for the Society is membership. The vast majority of members are retired people and nationally The Society is struggling to attract new members. There are many reasons for this but unless more people are willing to give their time the work that Vinnies does will not meet the growing demands for help from our less fortunate brothers and sisters.

So how can our Parish help. There are several ways in which our Parish could assist the work of the Society. Listed are a number of options. Maybe one or more of these might appeal to you

- Become a member of a Conference
- Join one of our Project teams
- Work in one of our Opportunity Shops

Each of these teams require a commitment of coming together each fortnight/week. Shops are based on a three hour shift. Conferences and projects are a two hour Commitment.

Roles in Shops are

- Receiving donated goods
- Sorting, preparing for sale and pricing donated goods
- Shop attendants
- Van drivers/assistants

If giving your time is not an option for you how about

- donating unused/upgraded goods that are fit for resale/reuse
- making regular cash donations (online or Collection Box at rear of Saint Mary's)
- Giving basic food items to the weekly food collection (at Saint Mary's)

There is much need in our City and Vinnies wants to help those seeking assistance. But we need more workers. So I urge you to think seriously about ***"How can I help in this work which God has asked that we all be involved in?"***

Thank you for reading this article and I look forward to seeing you as one of our happy teams doing what God asked us to do helping the least of our brothers and sisters.

God bless and kind regards

Tony Rogers
Area President