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MEDIA RELEASE

Feast Day of Saint Vincent de Paul

Claire Victory, National President of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia said this year as we celebrate the extraordinary contribution of Saint Vincent de Paul it is worth reflecting on what his vision means for us in Australia in 2021.

‘In the face of overwhelming poverty and suffering, Vincent urged his followers to bring God’s justice and love to people who were unable to live a full human life,’ Ms Victory said.

‘He said “Deal with the most urgent needs. Organise charity so that it is more efficient.... Teach reading and writing, educate with the aim of giving each the means of self-support. Intervene with authorities to reform structures... there is no charity without justice”.

‘It was a simple message, one that informs and directs us still, 400 years later.

‘Over 50,000 members and staff are part of the St Vincent de Paul family in Australia.

‘In every state and territory, Vinnies is a respected name. Our work in grass roots communities is known and understood by most people.

‘Our vans and our shops are public testament to our faith and our expression of charity.

‘For many who have left our institutional church, working at the coalface with very vulnerable people is an authentic expression of their faith. In their demonstration of love, they bring Gospel values to life in the lives of so many people who need a hand up from time-to-time.

'We at Vinnies are a broad church. We come from many different backgrounds and walks of life. We've lived very different lives and have a wide range of views across some really important issues.

'But anyone who shares our vision for a dignified life for all is welcome in our services – as members, as volunteers and as staff. We are a diverse Society. We welcome everyone from different backgrounds who want to be part of Vincent's vision.

'This coming Sunday marks the commencement of the Catholic Church's historic Plenary Council, a rare opportunity for change in the church in Australia.

'In our submission in the lead up to that Council we acknowledged the need for greater inclusion at every level of the Church in Australia.

'Many people are excluded from full participation in the church because of gender, sexuality, marital status – the list goes on.

'Every single one of us has got important work to do – whether it's "dealing with the most urgent needs" or "intervening with authorities to reform structures".

'Today I thank our members, volunteers and staff who embrace Vincent's vision and continue his commitment to the dignity of all human beings,' Ms Victory said.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.

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