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MEDIA RELEASE

LAUNCH: Catholic Social Teaching - Dreaming as one Human Family

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia has released a fresh reflection on Catholic Social Teaching, the principles which have underpinned the Society's work for over 150 years.

Speaking at the launch of *Catholic Social Teaching: Dreaming as a Single Human Family* written by theologian Dr John Honner, National President Claire Victory said that in a world where individualism trumps the common good, it's worth reflecting on the core principles that motivated our forebears and inspire us still.

'As Vincentians the dignity of every human being is at the core of our work. We oppose individualism as we commit to the common good. And we encourage the empowerment of people through participation at whatever level might be possible. We stand with others who share these values and above all we defend our priority for people living with the impact of the structural causes of poverty and disadvantage. In addition, we share the care of our common home.

'Catholic Social Teaching is the collective name given to the church's formal pronouncements – authorised by papal encyclicals – on matters of social structures and social justice since 1891.

'It is grounded in the critical social questions of the day and draws on contemporary economics, and social and political sciences.

'A lead founder of the Society, Frederic Ozanam, was a pioneer in articulating a Catholic response to capitalism and communism and was instrumental in shaping 'social Catholicism'. The key features of Ozanam's social Catholicism remain relevant today: the personal comes before the political: equality comes before economy: and the sacred can be found in the secular.

Frederic Ozanam's writings provided Pope Leo XIII with the foundations for the letter *Rerum novarum*, which was the first social encyclical of the modern era in 1891.

'In helping to shape a charitable organisation that was independent of clerical control, yet both profoundly Christian and absolutely lay, Ozanam not only gave the Vincentian spirit a new dimension but also anticipated the renewal of the Church conceived at the Second Vatican Council.

'The Honner report visits Frederic Ozanam's vision which influenced the formation of Catholic Social Teaching; the evolution of the principles in response to historical events; and exploration of the six principles through the lens of Vincentian spirituality with an eye on their possible applications in today's social context.

'The National Council commissioned this document to inform the Society's continuing commitment to accompanying and serving disadvantaged people and its engagement in the social, economic, and political discourse that shapes our society,' Ms Victory said.

A summary of the principles is included below.

Catholic Social Teaching: Dreaming as a Single Human Family is available on the National Council's [website](#).

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING PRINCIPLES

1. The Dignity of the Human Person: Freedom to be

Calls us to:

- Actively accompany people who have been pushed to the margins by giving them a hand up to live their unique lives to the full
- Challenge individualism and consumerism
- Advocate for change
- Keep this principle at the centre of our work

2. The Common Good: We are more connected than separate

Calls us to:

- Consider that the good of all is dependent on the good of each one
- Continue to work with people in local communities through our conference structure in order to build a stronger society

3. Subsidiarity: Participation and empowerment

Calls us to:

- Promote and develop local conferences and channel feedback from members
- Focus our advocacy in disadvantaged communities or where voices have been silenced
- Understand that the Conference is closest to the person in need and is best placed to make the decision about how to help
- Observe that this principle is at work in the 'council' structure from regional to national councils

4. Solidarity: Intense effort

Calls us to:

- Accompany people living with poverty across national, racial, religious and ideological boundaries
- Identify and address social and economic factors that cause marginalisation, or continue to marginalise people
- Restore the dignity of people living with poverty and empower them to participate in society through cultural, economic and political processes

5. Preferential Option for the Poor: Our priority

Calls us to:

- Keep people living with poverty central to our thinking
- Guard against individualism
- Engage in witness, accompaniment, advocacy and action

6. Care for our common home: Dreaming as a single human family

Calls us to:

- Cross borders, to build friendships, to value difference, to identify deeper communion
- Celebrate, rather than possess; nurture, rather than exploit
- Centre on others, rather than on our self
- Be accountable because of the urgency of the challenge

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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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