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Pope Leo XIV offers his blessing to visitors and pilgrims during his weekly general audience in

Pope Leo XIV offers his blessing to visitors and pilgrims during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Aug. 26, 2026. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Pope Leo XIV encouraged members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to follow the example of its namesake by giving witness to their faith through serving the poor.

"Saint Vincent de Paul demonstrated that prayer and social justice are not merely complementary but, in fact, are inseparable," the pope said during a meeting Aug. 28 with a delegation representing the society's U.S. branch at the Vatican.

"It is therefore my hope that you will continually turn to your heavenly patron in order to follow his example and seek his intercession," he said.

Founded in 1883 by Antoine Frédéric Ozanam, the lay organization is dedicated to serving the poor and the marginalized and was inspired by the example of St. Vincent de Paul, the 17th-century French priest who was declared the patron saint of

charitable associations by Pope Leo XIII in 1885.

The society established itself in the United States in 1845 and currently has more than 90,000 Vincentian volunteers across the country.

Welcoming the delegation, Leo expressed his gratitude for their service and his hope that their visit to Rome would "strengthen your faith and deepen your desire to serve the Lord and his Church."

"I thank you in particular for your devoted service to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and through it, to your brothers and sisters across the United States of America," the pope said. "Indeed, by freely offering your God-given gifts and talents, you give eloquent witness to your faith in service to the building up of the Kingdom of God."

Recalling his apostolic exhortation on love for the poor, [*Dilexi Te*](#) ("I have loved you"), the pope reflected on St. Augustine's teachings on the "Christocentric nature of care for the poor" and on God's generosity toward "those who serve them."

When motivated by love, he noted, caring for others "not only helps those in need, but also opens the heart of the giver to God's grace."

"Dear friends, I urge you, then, always to give of yourselves," Leo said. "In this way, the Lord's grace will steadily purify your hearts and minds, and you will more readily recognize Christ in your neighbor, both in those you serve and in those with whom you work."

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