

REASONS FOR SERVICE OR WHY WE SHOULD PRACTICE GOD'S MERCY

Matthew 25:34-40 NIV

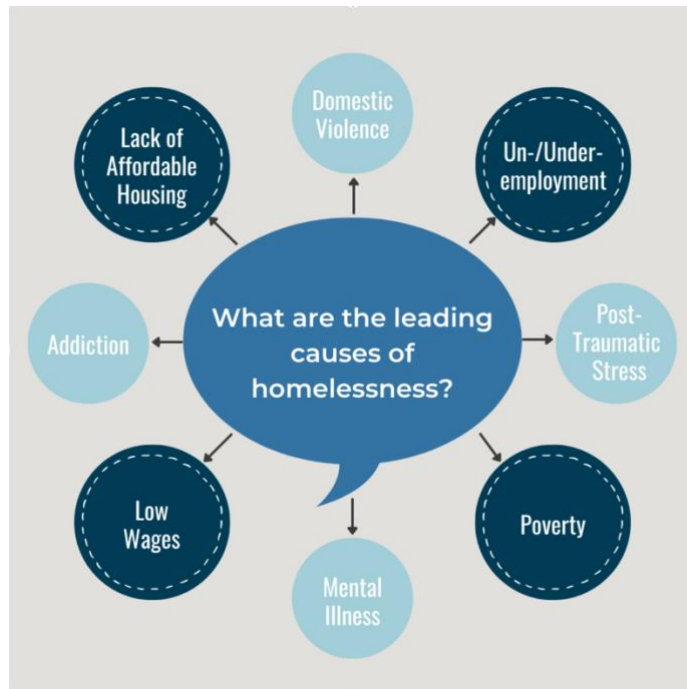
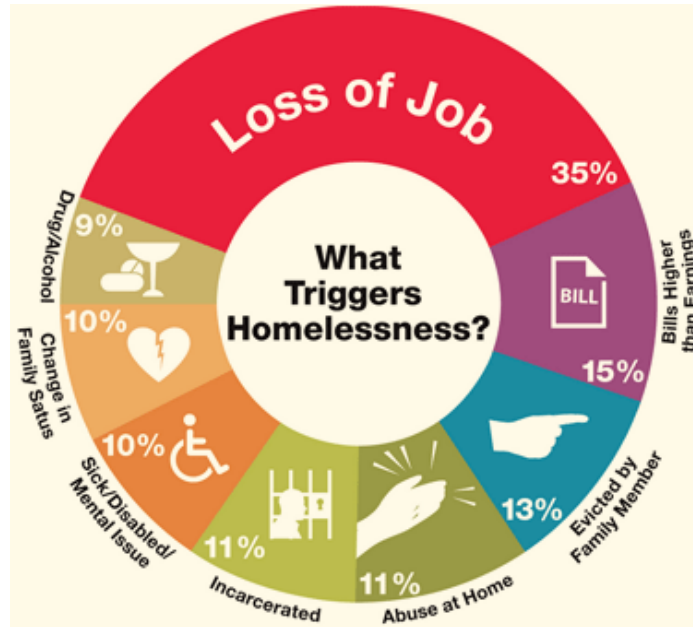
³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰ **"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'**

Learn to practice mercy and kindness as God expects.

Acts of kindness to the poor, the sick and marginalised are acts of service to Jesus.



HOMELESS CASE STUDIES

Austin

A man lives in a room in a boarding house in Gertrude Street Fitzroy. He is a graphic designer and has a several large graphic design machines in his room, from which he earns an income from his graphic design work. Let's call him Austin.

Is Austin homeless? (Discuss with the person sitting next to you).

Answer:

Yes, Austin is homeless. Homelessness can take the form of sleeping in cars, couch surfing, living in boarding houses, living in extremely crowded dwellings or living on the street.

John in Chapman Street, North Melbourne

John lived in a boarding house in Chapman Street, North Melbourne. A single man, though he had grown-up children, John was one of the lucky ones. He had a room and a kitchen he shared with another younger man. I used to call John our "homespun" philosopher, who was such an interesting man that when the group of us had finished seeing others at Chapman Street, we used to congregate in John's room to chat with him, where he used to regale us with his life stories.

However, on the same single-fronted property another man lived in a cupboard under the stairs which was just big enough to put down a mattress. He paid \$60 a week for his "room" (many years ago). Another man lived in a room with dozens of wires crisscrossing the ceiling in conditions today that would be regarded as totally unsafe and unfit for human habitation.

Merv, the Irishman

Merv was another wonderful man; one of life's gentlemen. He was Irish, spoke with a rich Irish accent, but he was an alcoholic. He was a very funny man who loved seeing us and we loved chatting with him. He was always positive even though we would often find him on the bus stop outside the Royal Women's Hospital in Carlton, or under trees in the front garden of a Carlton terrace house or sitting in his armchair in a lane out the back of a pub. He refused offers for accommodation, but he did accept Chas Butler's offer for a shower on a Friday night as soup van base in North Melbourne. As Merv's health began to decline, he finally accepted an offer of accommodation with Mrs Doodah, who ran a number of run-down private boarding houses in Fitzroy, with her husband.

Michael, St Hilary's member

And, in fact, it was on one Friday evening in the upstairs room off a rickety verandah in another of Doodah's boarding houses that the door was opened by Michael, who we recognised as being a member of a St Hilary's small group.

Imagine our surprise! A St Hil's member living in a squalid boarding house.

We loved our catch-ups with Michael. Michael worked for the railways but on a trip to Queensland with his mates where they spent all his money leaving him destitute.

Ian, with the white towel

Ian lived in a room down the corridor from Austin. We would often see Ian draped in only a white towel. Some of you may remember Rikki May, a very successful performer who appeared regularly on *Hey, Hey, It's Saturday*. Well, Ian managed Ricky May and other successful artists. Ian made a lot of money and bought a large naval vessel which he kept at a special mooring in Sydney. One weekend when Ian came to Melbourne with Ricky May, he asked a mate to keep an eye on his naval vessel. The mate went out on Saturday night but didn't check to ensure that the vessel was securely tied up. Because of the strong wind the vessel banged against the wharf, holing it in a number of places and it drifted and sank in the shipping lane. Ian was pressured by the harbour master to hastily remove the vessel, which he did at huge expense. He lost his house, his marriage and came to Melbourne. He died of a heart attack, a lonely man.

So, you can see homelessness may be just one bad decision away from a normal successful life.

John, the Seaman

John was a small, endlessly cheerful talkative man probably in his late 70's. He had been a merchant seaman for most of his working life. He spent long periods away from his wife and family and used to drink lots with his mates when overseas. He became an alcoholic and lost his family. Later, he became a Christian and John even came out to St Hil's a couple of times.

When we arrived at his room, John used to tell us jokes which often verged on risqué. He even compiled a calendar of jokes, one for every day of the year. His favourite for newcomers was: *How do you weigh a pie?* "Somewhere over the rainbow way up high..."

But he would proudly tell us he was celebrating 40 years sober. He used to attend the Mission to Seamen on Flinders Street and outside there one day he saw a woman looking lost. She was American. So, he showed her around Melbourne, they formed a relationship and he subsequently married her and they shared his one-bedroom kitchenette in Fitzroy.

VINNIES SOUP VANS STREET SERVICE INNER CITY



Commenced in 1975 by a group of Uni students.

Our Vinnies Soup Vans are located in seven locations in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. I volunteer at the Inner City Soup Van operating from a converted factory in Kensington. Others volunteer most Friday nights.

Vinnies Soup Vans are run by dedicated volunteers, known as Vannies, who annually provide over 780,000 meals to people in need. Our Soup Vans operate 365 days a year, rain, hail or shine!

Vinnies Soup Vans offer food, social connection and referral pathways out of homelessness and poverty, to people experiencing or at risk of, homelessness and disadvantage.

Our Soup Vans undertake street service of meals to our friends on the street and people experiencing food insecurity in boarding and rooming houses, crisis accommodation, social housing and other residential locations.

Volunteers help prepare and package food, assist with loading the Soup Vans and off-load deliveries, distributing food on a 'Soup Van Run' as well as assisting in cleaning the kitchen and vehicles.

Soup Van services have changed greatly over the years. We used to visit a number of boarding houses in North Melbourne, Flemington, Fitzroy and Carlton as well as attending a number of outdoor stops. However, that changed with COVID, when Soup Van delivered weekly food packs to boarding houses and motels and hotels where homeless folk were housed. Since the end of COVID, Vannies still deliver food packs to some places during the day, but most of the food distribution takes place in the evening where we attend three sites; being a park in North Melbourne, outside the All Saints Church in Fitzroy, and near Flinders Street Station. We serve about 150 people—including kids with a parent—with fresh food, a salad, sandwiches, fruit, an Up & Go, a sweet, a sausage in bread, a soup, cordial, coffee or hot chocolate as well as toiletries, blankets when we have them, and dog and cat food.

For more information on how to volunteer, our food services, food donations or to learn how to support the service, email us on soupvans@svdp-vic.org.au