

Mini-Vinnies are heading to Westminster

Anita Boniface

Westminster Cathedral will be filled with the vibrant spirit of 800 'Mini Vinnie' children when Christian charity the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) holds a special celebratory Mass at 2.30pm on Tuesday, 11th June.

The SVP's youngest apostolate will gather together for the Service celebrated by Westminster Auxiliary Bishop Paul McAleenan. The Mass is being held to give thanks and celebrate the children's talents and voluntary work.

Mini Vinnies, aged 7-11, will be travelling from all corners of the country to meet one another, pray together and worship in the spirit of Patron Saint Vincent de Paul at the celebration. The Mass will have specially selected Vincentian themed readings, prayers and hymns.

The children will be involved in the readings, bidding prayers, offertory, altar serving and a banner procession at the service. The Mass will also bring together chaplains, adult volunteer co-ordinators and members of the SVP staff team. Michelle Roca, a sign language interpreter from Westminster Caritas Deaf Service will be present.

Refreshments will follow in the Cathedral Hall.

Programme Manager, Moira Dawe said: "We are delighted that this Mass to mark and give thanks for

our Mini Vinnies is taking place. It offers a wonderful opportunity celebrate the faith and contribution of our children to their communities, but also to give thanks to the adult volunteers who are so vital to that work too.

"As St Oscar Romero said, it is about planting and watering seeds, knowing "that they hold future promise."

Bishop Paul said: "It will be an honour for us at Westminster Cathedral to host the young Mini Vinnies who are following in the footsteps of St Vincent de Paul.

"We look forward to their presence, an opportunity to thank them and to acknowledge all they are doing in their own communities. May this gathering and celebration inspire and encourage the Mini Vinnies to continue to love God and to serve all God's people, especially those who are most in need."

Fr Ged Walsh is the spiritual advisor for SVP Youth Committee and will be concelebrating the Mass with Bishop Paul. Fr Ged said: "In the light of Easter and the dawning of Pentecost, it will be an absolute joy to celebrate the faith in action of our Mini Vinnies. May the Holy Spirit continue to work through them to bring the light of the Risen Christ to those in most need, through good works."

The Mini Vinnies is the youngest of the Young Vincentian Pro-



grammes, which are run in schools and parishes around the country. Children are encouraged to 'see, think, do' something about any need or poverty around them in their school, church or community. The apostolates allow young people a practical way of expressing their

faith, and their concern for their communities.

The Mass is being coordinated by Mini Vinnie and Youth SVP Officer, Alec Jewell with funding from Westminster SVP Central Council.

• If you would like to attend the

Mass, or are interested in setting up a Young Vincentian programme in your school, parish or college, please contact the team at youngvincentians@svp.org.uk. Find out more about the SVP at www.svp.org.uk telephone 02077033030.

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