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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain." Psalm 127 NRSVCE

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and our founders recognized their vocation as a call to follow Christ's example in serving the poor. The Society they formed was not merely born of personal motivation but as a response to a call from above. They set the example for us, prayer and service, a right ordering of priorities when doing God's work.

"Prayer teaches us the need of laying before God all our necessities, of corresponding with His grace, of banishing vice from our heart and of establishing virtue in it." – St. Vincent de Paul

We must remember that the work of the Society, its members and edifices are all just cogs in the wheel powered by the Lord. It requires the grease of prayer to work efficiently and effectively. Without prayer and effective listening to the Word of God, we risk the danger of going awry.

"A man of prayer is capable of everything. He can say with Saint Paul, 'I can do all things in Him who strengthened me.'" – St. Vincent de Paul

How many communities or individuals have built kingdoms or monuments to themselves for their own self-aggrandizement, only to vanish and disappear from history with nary a trace left behind and never to be heard of again?

"Happy is everyone who fears the Lord, and walks in his ways." Psalm 128 NRSVCE

The way to peace and prosperity as a member of society or as a Vincentian is to live in fellowship with each other and to follow God's ways. This is not an easy way of life; if it were, everyone would be doing it. No, it takes work and effort and discipline in every area of your life.

Let us say the prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola:

Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

In closing, may you and your families have a blessed safe, enjoyable and refreshing summer. Take time to enjoy the great outdoors, taking in all the goodness of God's creation.

JMJ

Serviens in spe

*Claude Bédard, President
National Council of Canada*



SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

***“Jesus wept.”
John 11: 35***

Depending on the translation, the verse above is written differently. It can be “And Jesus wept,” or “Jesus began to weep,” or some other slight variation. When it is written as “Jesus wept”, it is quoted as the shortest verse in Holy Scripture. Besides being the shortest, it is perhaps one of the most profound statements about God in the person of Jesus.

John’s gospel tells us that Jesus wept at the death of his dear friend Lazarus. Jesus wept at the devastation Lazarus’ death caused for his family, his sisters Martha and Mary. Jesus wept to show us his love and tenderness towards those three friends of his, but Jesus also wept to show us his love for all humanity. Yes. That includes you and me and every person living and dead.

Jesus loves everyone. He loves sinners and saints; he loves those who love him back and those who deny him and everything connected with God. God’s love is freely given to every single person whether or not, in my personal judgement, that person deserves this love. To show us the unlimited reality of God’s love, Jesus wept with love.

That’s beautiful! God is so good! But there’s more....

***“A new commandment I give you:
Love one another.
Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for one another.”
John 13: 34,35***

God wants me to love the way He loves. Jesus said so. As a Vincentian, I will encounter all kinds of people who will give me the opportunity to love them as Jesus does. I need to learn – I want to learn – to love completely and unconditionally. That means I must try to overcome any of the prejudices that I have acquired. I must search my heart to find those prejudices that are so ingrained in me, from my childhood, from my family, from my own ethnic, racial or religious background, that I don’t think I have. Loving as God loves means loving those who aren’t easy to love, including people who don’t agree with me and those who don’t treat me or those I love fairly.

Vincentians say that we serve everyone regardless of their background, beliefs, status, etc. We serve, but do we truly respect and truly love each and every person we encounter in our Home Visits and Special Works? Do we love them as Jesus does?

Perhaps I am not there yet, but I will be, with God’s help.

*Denise Bondy
Ontario Region Spirituality Chair*



LE MARGINAL TRAILER

Première Heure Interview, Radio-Canada (CBC), with Mireille Roberge

Following is the interview (2 segments) from June 30, provided by Marie-Élaine Michaud, the manager of Le Marginal trailer program, accompanied by her son Isaac and Louis Beaudoin, long-time volunteer with the program, and Chef Dominique Lavoie.

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/ohdio/premiere/emissions/premiere-heure/episodes/544773/ratrapage-du-mercredi-30-juin-2021/9?fbclid=IwAR2wgPK5rIEpZbFFCErgyrvl8ce6XloqsSbVBRylCYUMM3872kyLHW4n-IE>

2nd segment:

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/ohdio/premiere/emissions/premiere-heure/episodes/544773/ratrapage-du-mercredi-30-juin-2021/13>

Summary of the interview:

Marie-Élaine Michaud, a social worker, manages the trailer program for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Quebec City. She has been promoting the welcoming of those in need, listening to them and building relationships for the past three years. She has established good relations with the beneficiaries, who come back regularly, allowing for informal follow-ups.



Le Marginal is a 36-foot motorized vehicle that has been transformed into a restaurant and thrift store, operated by the SSVP in Quebec City. The trailer travels three times a week to people experiencing homelessness, mainly in Lower Town of Quebec City, in the Saint-Roch district. This program has been in place for 30 years.

With Le Marginal, help is given to 20,000 people a year in Quebec City, on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays at dinner time.

The operation was different before the pandemic. The trailer was set up to welcome people, warm them up, provide them with clothing and allow them to have a good hot meal, thanks to its three booths that can seat 18 people. Since the beginning of the pandemic, however, the meals have been delivered at the door of the trailer. The same goes for the thrift store items – clothes, blankets, sleeping bags, hygiene kits – everything is delivered at the door of the vehicle.

In the past, the trailer volunteers served coffee and hot dogs. Now, they serve full five-course meals, prepared in advance and warmed over in stoves set up in the vehicle (hot meal, salty/sweet snacks, coffee).

Prior to COVID's arrival, 140 meals were distributed. Since then, an average of 200 meals, sometimes up to 260 meals, are provided to the beneficiaries. The trailer is on-site for two hours.

With the pandemic, some people who never had to ask for help now find themselves in need, owing to circumstances such as separations, housing losses, or substance abuse problems.



During the pandemic, a special grant from CIUSSS allowed the hiring of Dominique Lavoie, a chef employed by the Centre des Congrès (on break because of the pandemic) and hosting chef at La Table des Chefs. Dominique creates menus with food received from Moisson Québec and his meals are well appreciated.



Isaac Larouche, age 14, is the son of Marie-Élaine Michaud. He wanted to convince his school friends that the homeless are not dangerous and help reduce prejudice against them. Isaac was part of an entrepreneurship programme where students had cooking classes. The food cooked by these students was given to the trailer.

Testimony of Louis, volunteer at Le Marginal for 15 years.

This allows me to see the good life I have and give back what I have received from life. I too have gone through difficult times. I understand their difficulties and their state of mind and give them a smile, a hope, a helping hand. I get a lot out of meeting them every week.



TWINNING WITH COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

The St. Isaac Jogues Conference in Pickering is frequently in touch through WhatsApp with their twins, the St Joseph Conference in the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Here are two messages received by their twins:

"We want to thank your conference for continuous support to our conference. We would not have been able to maintain our regular activities of feeding the less fortunate without your help. God bless you all abundantly. At our last feeding program, we served 94 people in the parish, including the sick."

"Good morning hope everyone is in good health. This is the group that cooks for the less fortunate and the sick. We served 105 people in the parish. Thanks again and we do appreciate the contribution you sent for us to help to feed the poor and sick. I pray that God will continue to help you all and guide and protect you all. One love to all of you from our members. Thank you. And yes, we take the vaccine, and some got their second shot today. Love you."





SOCIAL JUSTICE UPDATES

Strategic planning

The online survey that was distributed in early June to social justice supporters has a submission deadline of July 20. There is still time to complete the [survey \(click here\)](#), which will be an important component of how our strategic planning will evolve.

Please take a few minutes to complete this online survey. One very positive result of the responses so far has been to identify members interested in being more involved in one or more areas, at higher levels or on future sub-committees.

Diversity and inclusion

The National Board of Directors approved the [Diversity and Inclusion Policy \(click here\)](#) at our June 19 meeting. There will be a sub-committee created to develop an action plan related to this important issue. If you are interested in being part of how we may become a more diverse and inclusive organization, please contact us.

Indigenous Peoples

We shall be working towards the development of resources and possible actions our Society can take to better understand Indigenous history, culture and faith traditions. This work will include discussions and advice from a number of Indigenous leaders. As the sad and tragic news related to Indian residential schools continues to be revealed, please join us in prayer and contemplation with our Indigenous sisters and brothers.

In closing, I'd like to invite members across Canada to consider joining us as a social justice rep or supporter. There are many social justice topics that need our attention and action. We would like to hear from you if you are interested in any of issues listed here:

Housing/homelessness-food insecurity-advocacy-environment-Indigenous Peoples-systemic racism-prison ministry-criminal justice-refugees-migrant workers-basic income-North of 60-Seeds of Hope.

*Jim Paddon, Chair
National Social Justice Committee*



THE SOCIAL IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

As a volunteer for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, I have never questioned the need for social justice for those living under the poverty line. It's clear with every home visit that there are persons in need, but our faith teaches us that if God's justice truly lived in our land, no one would be struggling to survive. No one would have to choose between food or a roof overhead, and society's fears about unemployment, crime, addictions, loneliness, and mental health issues would simply cease to be. Instead, we live in a world where the gap between rich and poor continues to grow, and where racism, sexism, homo- and transphobia continue to take their toll on people's mental health and well-being, especially during this pandemic.

But even with the coronavirus raging, SSVP volunteers continue to think, talk and act toward making social justice a reality. Those who are able in these days continue to deliver groceries and furniture to our sisters and brothers in need while trying to follow the protocols set by our health experts and community leaders. We continue to engage in advocacy for those who live on the margins by contacting officials who hold power when it comes to improving public policy, and participating in fundraising where possible, to increase our capacity for outreach.

But sometimes I wonder if we're maybe missing something. I don't question the need for social justice, I just wonder where the social part of it is when it comes to really connecting with the marginalized during this pandemic. I wonder, is it enough to make a few phone calls and deliver some groceries? Is a load of furniture really the most important thing for that family of migrants? And even before covid, when Ray used to come to the Clothing Room every week for another pair of mittens because "somebody stole my last pair, and I know I'm only supposed to come once every ninety days, but my hands are cold, and I have a buddy who also needs mittens, and it's really good to see you, Maria," was it really mittens that he needed most?

The Social in Social Justice is about creating social change for the common good of all, but isn't it also about building human connection? As a volunteer, I find it easy to focus on the need for justice, the things that we can do to improve the lives of those who are struggling to make ends meet, or to find a job, or to get out of situational domestic violence. Providing material things is relatively easy. But often it's the immaterial that is the deeper need – the need for community, the need to be seen as a valuable and valued member of society.

I guess what I'm wondering about is whether all this *doing* we are doing doesn't also need an equally large side order of *being* during this pandemic. How can we be available for more than just the time it takes to drop things on the doorstep when we are told that we have to keep social distance even if it is cold outside? How, when making contact with a person in need, can we listen more, offer not just material, but also emotional and spiritual support even when we can't be so physically present? How do we build up the family of God in a time of pandemic?

I suspect that while many of the brothers and sisters we serve through our work for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul appreciate the goods we deliver to them, what they really crave is eye



contact, a listening ear, some cheerful conversation, and perhaps a heartfelt prayer that things finally go right in their world, a prayer that mentions them, their loved ones, and their needs, and gives them an extra helping of hope.

As for Ray, I saw him on the street the other day, and I have no doubt that he was looking for my smile far more than those mittens. It gets lonely on the street sometimes. He was delighted to have a socially-distanced chat when I asked him how he was doing, what was new, and whether he likes living in his sister's basement. His eyes teared up when I told him that whenever he comes to mind, I pray for him.

For me, that's the Social in Social Justice – a ministry of presence to let the people we serve know that we see, hear, and truly care about them, COVID-19 protocols notwithstanding.

*Maria Kruszewski,
Assumption/Resurrection Conference, Edmonton, Alberta*



QUESTION & ANSWER

Q: With vaccination progressing, when do we start in-person meetings? Do we still wear masks and socially distance at these meetings? When can we start in-person Home Visits? Do we wear masks in people's homes, and do we ask those we visit to wear masks?

A: The answers are very dependent on the local / regional / provincial Public Health requirements; however, prevention and precaution are always good measures to apply to manage the risks to members and those being assisted. This will still vary greatly across the country and even between adjacent communities.