

THE MAGAZINE OF

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AGA 2006



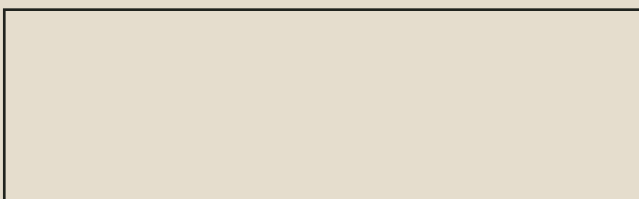
AGA 2006

Vincenpaul-Canada

"UPON THIS ROCK..."

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SUMMARY - MESSAGES.....	2
PRESIDENT'S WORD.....	3-4-5
COUNCIL IN ACTION.....	6
REFLECTION.....	7
HOUSING IN CANADA.....	8
YOUTH.....	9
INTERNATIONAL - ASIA.....	10-11
AGA 2006 - INVITATION.....	12-13-14
AGA 2006 - PROGRAM.....	15
AGA 2006 - SUBSCRIPTION.....	16

**THE SOCIETY OF
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CANADA**

MISSION

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is:

To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

VALUES

The Mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians we

- see Christ in anyone who suffers
- come together as a family
- have personal contact with the poor
- help in all possible ways

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Close attention to the following recommendations would greatly help your National Council.

Name of a Conference or Council

There are nearly 1000 Conferences and Councils in Canada, and every one of them is identified as "Society of Saint Vincent de Paul". However, each one is a distinct group. It is therefore important to identify all your documents, as well as your cheques, so that they show the complete name of your Conference or Council. Whenever the National Council receives a cheque labelled as "Society of Saint Vincent de Paul", it is very difficult to credit this cheque to a specific Conference or Council.

Canada Taxation Identification Number

Conferences and Councils that are registered with Revenue Canada must always use their ID number to identify their documents and cheques. The Taxation Identification Number must be written in full, because the last four digits are the ones that identify the Council or Conference. The National Council has the first number, the one ending with 0001. Therefore, all cheques and documents sent to Revenue Canada without being clearly identified are attributed to the National Council account.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Nicole Schryburt and Judith Poitevien
Administrative assistants
National Council

**IMPORTANT MESSAGE
TO ALL VINCENTIANS OF CANADA**

As of January 1, 2005, all receipts issued by charitable organizations registered with the Canada Revenue Agency must mention "Canada Revenue Agency" as well as the pertaining government Web site www.craarc.gc.ca/charities. If your receipts do not show this information, you may add this information through other means than regular printing (e.g. sticker, stamp, manuscript). The Canada Revenue Agency will accept receipts that do not show this information until the end of 2005. However, the CRA expects all registered charities to add this new information starting January 1, 2006.

Germain Souigny



Dear Brother and Sister
Vincentians

As we come to the end of Lent, my thoughts have been focused this year on the people of Africa, particularly the sub-Sahara peoples.

After reading Stephen Lewis's new book "Race against time" and The End of Poverty by Jeffrey Sachs, I felt moved to write the International Council General encouraging them to accelerate the Society's move into Africa. This letter got a lot more exposure around the world than I had anticipated (or planned) resulting in letters of support from a number of African delegates, the past Secretary General and the Past President of the Society from Italy. Given the international response, I decided to use this letter as the bases for this issue's President's Word.

Please read this letter and let your mind wonder and ponder the plight of these millions of people, and think of what we as Vincentians can do, or as Canadians what we can do, and what we can encourage of government to do.

Michael

An Appeal to the ICG to Accelerate Assistance and Projects in Africa

by Michael Burke
President National Council of
Canada – March, 2006

Peace and best wishes from the frozen Canadian north.

Given the grave and desperate nature of the situation in Africa, and the indifference of the international community (including the SSVP). I am submitting the following article to initiate discussion at the International level of the Society, and possible spur on the development and initiation of a sound plan for the Society's involvement in Africa. I would also apologize to anyone reading this appeal who might find some, or the entire article, disturbing or objectionable in any way. It is definitely not intended to be critical of any member of the Society, but it is an appeal to the membership to raise the level of urgency for action by the Society in Africa.

I was certainly happy to hear that the International Council General (ICG) had placed Africa on the list of projects for the next mandate. I was however quickly saddened to see that the committee

was to produce a report in two years (which means any action will be even farther down the road)!

To put this time frame in perspective – in two years

- 912,000 people will die in the Congo.

- At this time, 3.5 million people face food shortage in Kenya.

- In two years almost 20,000,000 (18,000 per day) people (mostly women and children) will die in Africa from AIDS, malaria (Marco Betemps is doing great work to raise the awareness of this disease) and starvation. That is the equivalent to a Tsunami EVERY 17 days !!

- The pandemic of AIDS has all but eliminated a generation of Africans (again mostly young women). Many children are being cared for by their elderly grandmothers (if they are that lucky), and many other families are being led by children as young as 8 years of age.

- In Zambia 23% of all children are orphaned.

- In Swaziland it is up to 15%.

President's Word - Michael Burke

- There is a chronic lack of food; some precipitated by an ongoing drought some by wars etc.

- There is a severe lack of medications to treat the simplest of diseases along with malaria and AIDS.

- There is a lack of education facilities and schooling for young children in many countries is a luxury.

- And there is an ongoing lack of money.

The easy canard of course is to say that Africa is a basket-case and has been so for a long time, so nothing can be done. I am sure that I am not the only person that believes that if Africa was populated by white people (and not poor black people) and there was lots of oil under the soil they would not be ignored as they are now.

Brother Mike Nolan (South Africa) has repeatedly and eloquently outlined the serious nature of the situation in Africa to little or no avail.

While the ICG has been quick to respond to the Tsunami (Canada sent \$100,000.00 to this appeal), and the latest mudslide (Canada is responding with the requested E10,000.00) in the Philippines (and rightly so), it has been

painfully slow to react to the situation in Africa.

As Catholics and a Catholic organization, we have a difficult time dealing with the ravages of AIDS, especially as many of the proposed solutions to the problem involve the promotion, distribution and use of condoms. But please, I implore you; do not let this issue stop you and the organization from entering the relief effort to the people of Africa. There are other issues in the battle against AIDS that we can be involved in: provision of antiviral drugs, money for education, advocacy to have the rich countries provide cheap generic drugs etc.

According to Stephen Lewis (UN Special Envoy to Africa on AIDS in his latest book – Running out of Time) the main issue still facing millions and millions of people in Africa is food. The American Press reported on March 5, 2006 that the UN food agency will soon run out of food necessary to feed 3.5 million Kenyans facing shortages caused by prolonged drought. The World Food Program needs \$225 Million until Feb. 2007 to buy 30,000 tonnes of food each month, but only have received \$28 million from governments of rich countries. Let us initiate a world wide project to solicit money from our members and

other organizations to provide food to these millions of starving people.

The second issue we can be involved with is education – as in all societies, education is a key building block to allow people to break the bonds of poverty and AIDS. The issue of school fees continues to surface. Parents living on less than \$1.00 per day cannot afford even the smallest of fees. When the Millennium Report was published by the UN in 2005, Jeffery Sachs, economist and primary author called for an end to school fees. In fact he went so far as to include it at the top of his "Quick Wins" list. Unfortunately the UN did not deliver on this request. We as a Society can be working with Conferences to ensure that children in the Conference areas get access to schooling. This will pay immediate dividend for the people (children) of Africa, and it is something we can start doing TOMORROW – not in two years time (why not make this a VinPaz project).

Finally I would suggest that this committee start by raising the degree of urgency to produce a report within months and start to take action. Secondly I would again appeal that the make up of the committee on Africa be structured with people from Africa, primarily black and primarily

President's Word - Michael Burke

women. A committee staffed with white middle class men will fail to produce a report required, as they will not be able to empathize with the people they need to align with. Picking people who are not intimately knowledgeable about the situation in Africa will waste precious time as they try to familiarize themselves with the issues, resulting in additional delays in starting work in Africa, while 18,000 people a day are dying. Only a "Made in Africa" solution will work for the Society and the people of Africa.

In conclusion I ask all who read this appeal to sit and ponder the plight of our brothers and sisters (especially the many young women dying of AIDS) in Africa in prayerful reflection and meditation and to offer some special prayers during this Lenten season that the ICG can come up with some innovative practical projects right now to help our suffering brothers and sisters in Christ.

Peace
Respectively Submitted
Michael Burke
President, National Council of
Canada

Since this letter was sent there have been a number of responses from the ICG and other members with varying degrees of support and agreement/disagreement.

While this appeal was sent to the ICG, there is room for action and much thought for all of us (Vincentians as well as non-Vincentians) in the western world. The situation in Africa is treated with indifference by most of us. In Canada we do have a few examples of people who are trying very hard to raise the level of awareness and compassion for the people of Africa. One already mentioned is Stephen Lewis, another, who does not receive as much press, is the federal MP from Edmonton-Beaumont (now and independent) David Kilgour, who has been a tireless proponent for action by Canada in Darfur as well as other areas of Africa.

While most of us will never be a Stephen Lewis or David Kilgour, we all can do our own little part for raising the awareness for Canada's support of our brothers and sisters in Africa – talk with your neighbours and the members of your church communities, write your MP, support people like Mr. Lewis and Mr. Kilgour, pray for them that they may have the strength to continue their work, and last but not least, continue to pray for the people of Africa.

Peace
Michael Burke

QUOTES FROM FREDERIC OZANAM

“Christianity is not
about ideas but
about deeds
inspired by love.”

“Learn to defend
your convictions without
hating your adversaries
and love those who
think differently
from yourselves.”

“The best way to
economize time is to 'lose'
half an hour each day
attending Holy Mass.”

“Being a Christian I glory
in belonging to no other
school than that of truth,
which is the Church ...
I live by my faith.”

- Blessed Frederic Ozanam



Council in Action

SAGUENAY VISITS HAITI

The La Baie Particular Council, with the members of the Chicoutimi Particular Council, took part in a shipment of clothing, toys and other supplies intended for Tiverny, Haiti (picture).

This activity took place in partnership with Collaboration Santé Internationale which was organizing a shipment to the Tiverny community clinic.

The Saguenay's 18 Conferences (picture) prepared 300 boxes (picture) to be placed in a container paid for entirely by the Mission Internationale des Marins, which has been working in that part of the world for the past three years. The Mission, presently building a community clinic in Tiverny, was extremely happy to bring along clothing items so much needed by the people in that area.

Mr. Lemay, who escorted the shipment, videotaped the whole thing to let us see how happy people were in Haiti when they received this miraculous manna.

Sister Évelyne had previously run a census, and a temporary store (picture) had been set up where each family would in turn select approximately 15 pieces of clothing, in addition to shoes and toys. One family of 23, made up of several generations living under the same roof, left the dispensary with an armload of supplies and a heart full of joy. Handmade blankets were especially appreciated. Before going back home, everyone received cookies graciously provided by Biscuits Leclerc, a Quebec company

The people responsible for escorting families through the store saw

the impact of the Quebec shipment through their smiles and those of the children (picture). The team received kisses and embraces that they transmitted to us as soon as they came back. 1300 people had the opportunity to benefit from this overseas present.

Outside of Tiverny, only a few kilometres away, there are 8 families, 73 inhabitants, who took advantage as well of this unexpected gift.

The team also went to l'Île à Vache, close to Tiverny, where a population of 11,000 resides. The boat trip took place in the morning on fairly agitated seas. The team was going to an orphanage managed by Sister Flore, who was waiting for them on the wharf. They said it was a very touching moment because this location is one of the most affected by the hurricane.

A CBC filmmaker put together a feature story on living conditions of these Haitians, as well as on the work of the Mission. It will be broadcasted next fall.

This offshore sharing action, accomplished without any religious or racial barriers, gave us the opportunity to put into effect our mission statement "LIVE THE GOSPEL MESSAGE BY SERVING CHRIST IN THE POOR WITH LOVE, RESPECT, JUSTICE AND JOY".

We are already preparing for another shipment to take place in the fall of 2006.

Nicole Gagné,
President of the La Baie and Bas-Saguenay Particular Council.



The 18 councils



300 boxes were shipped to Haiti



Happy haitians with 2 of our representatives



The store



Kids where happy to get new clothing and new toys

PATIENCE

In the writings of St Vincent de Paul one finds the following 'Christ uttered five words on the cross and not one of them had a hint of impatience'. One of the great qualities which Vincentians ought to cultivate is patience.

The dictionary tells us that the word comes from the Latin, *patientia*, and that the root is *pati*, to suffer. The dictionary goes on to say what the word means: enduring with calmness and composure, forbearance under provocation, as well as, constancy in labour.

Why is it an important quality to culture and foster? Practically all Vincentian work requires patience. The Society is one of volunteers who bring to their involvement the limitations of their talents and character as well as the amount of time they are ready to give. The Society has its way of doing things and it takes patience to properly conform. By the very nature of their predicaments those who call upon the Society for help and assistance are often under stress and exact patience from those who respond. The old black and white film about St Vincent de Paul has a great scene where some High Society women, who had asked Vincent to allow them to help in the distributing of food, come back to him, complaining the his poor were not polite!

How do you cultivate patience? First of all, accept your self as you

are and learn to accept those around you as they are. Realise that your input, while it has immeasurable value is but part of the picture and that in the Society's work there is always a silent partner working with us and he is the Lord. Learn from your mistakes but move forward. Patience must be seen as a dynamic quality; it should not make us a pushover but rather bring greater stability and wisdom to our actions.

Personally, when I look back over my pastoral life, there really is no situation where I regret having shown patience. Human growth is a slow process and fraught with obstacles. As the farmer must be patient with the seed planted so must we be in the long process of helping people achieve more of the potential that God endowed them with. The great French Jesuit teacher, François Varillon, saw the Christian Mission as *faire l'homme*, an expression I would translate as empowering people to greatness, a task that is impossible without patience.

You say that you are not a patient person. Pray that that patience be granted to you. But do pray with patience.

*Mgr Peter Schonenbach,
National Council Spiritual
Advisor*



Mgr Peter Schonenbach,
National Council Spiritual Advisor

IMPORTANT

Please take note that the National Council has a new address:

**The Society of Saint
Vincent de Paul
National Council
of Canada**

**1247 Kilborn Place
Ottawa ON K1H 6K9**

**Tel: 613 738-1118
Fax: 613 738 4789**

E-mail: ncc-cnc.ssvp@bellnet.ca

All your correspondence with your National Council should be sent at this address.

Should it be to reach a member of your National Council, to send an article for the Vincenpaul magazine, to order an object from the Society, to pay for your Vincenpaul subscription, to send your contribution for twinning and any other topic that is under the National Council jurisdiction.

THANK YOU!

SSVP DEMONSTRATES AFFORDABLE HOUSING IMPROVES FAMILIES LIVES

National President Michael Burke writing in the Spring 2006 Vincenpaul-Canada magazine wisely questioned:

"DO CANADIAN CHRISTIANS NEED TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT HOUSING?"

and the answer is a resounding: ABSOLUTELY, YES !

WHY ? Because our Society has demonstrated the success of social, subsidized housing.

Our SSVP in Toronto built and manages a 164 apartment affordable rental building.

In the 10 years this building, named Gower Park Place (Gower Street - Park Place, the best street on a monopoly board), has been in operation, 49 of its families, who moved in on social assistance - welfare, have with-in 3-4-5 years moved out to buy their own homes!

Decent, basic, well managed, well maintained affordable housing raises residents sense of self worth, encourages taking opportunities for training and jobs, and shows that improvement and success are possible.

In addition, SSVP owns the building, and when the 35 year mortgage is paid off, will have a \$12 million dollar asset!

How did this happen?

In 1987 the Ontario government passed legislation to encourage and fund non-profit groups to

build affordable housing. Nick Volk was Toronto East Particular Council President, and measured the rapid rise in calls to SSVP as rents soared and welfare cheques and food ran short. More housing was needed and the Ontario government ruling was the way to go.

In 1989 the Ontario government gave the extensive SSVP application an allocation for 100 units for \$14 million dollars. The only decent property available was 1 1/2 acres (for \$3.8 million). The government said buy it, the housing is greatly needed, funded the purchase - but SSVP must build more units - at least 165 apartments - and increased the funding to \$22,860,000. Then came several years of the zoning process, neighbours complaining about who might live there, SSVP going to court - and winning, construction (SSVP turned back \$1.5 million in construction savings), until the glorious day when move-ins started August 1, 1994.

For 123 families who were living in discouraging poverty housing (like where we make home visits) this was the start of a whole new life - the SSVP was determined - of opportunities for successful living. 41 apartments were rented at the market rate, to have a positive economic mix of residents - and 1 apartment was converted to a dedicated community centre, programmed by the City Parks and Recreation office.

SSVP hired its own wonderful SSVP principles utilizing management staff. A Conference was established in the building which

set up a computer training lab, organized courses, helped students with homework and added the building blocks of life skills to the building. A separate corporation, under SSVP control, was set up to limit liability to the SSVP; government rental subsidy funding was established - and families began building their lives.

That is why we MUST ADVOCATE and ASK our newly elected representatives for the rapid use of the \$1.6 billion in approved new housing spending Michael spoke about - for the immediate start and construction of "25,000 affordable housing units every year for the next five years".

Respectfully submitted - Nick Volk



A Gower Park resident waits to greet visitors at the front entrance of the SSVP's 164 suites affordable rental building apartment



Maria Minna thought Gower Park was so excellent she got the Honorable Joe Fontana, former Housing Minister to visit with the Gower Camp kids in the common living room.

The first ever Canada-Wide Catholic Youth Ministry Conference for adults was held on February 10 to 12, 2006 in the Diocese of Hamilton, Ontario, at the Hamilton Convention Centre. Presented by the Canadian Catholic Youth Ministry Network, in partnership with the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, the conference theme was "...and the community of believers was one in heart and mind" (Acts 4:32). In attendance were Youth Ministers, Pastors, Pastoral Ministers, High School Chaplains, Campus Ministers, Vocation Directors, Bishops and lots of enthusiasm from all ten provinces and two territories.

With a coordinated effort by Vincentians from the National Council, Ontario Provincial Council, Halton and Kitchener-

Waterloo Particular Councils, the Society had an exposition booth and a special opportunity to present a fifteen minute speech about the mission and values of the Society to the over 400 delegates at the evening banquet.

The Exhibit booth was created and worked by the team of Bro. John O'Flynn (Youth Representative at National), Bro. Nick Volk (Ontario Provincial President), Bro. Steve Brent (Particular Council President of Halton, Ontario), Sister Carmela Addante (Ontario Provincial Vice President of the Young Adult Program), Sister Xenia Futo (Marillac Place, Kitchener), Bro. Barry Purvis (Particular Council President of Hamilton West, Ontario), Bro. Nick DiTomaso (Particular Council 1st Vice President of Halton) and Bro. Renz Mostacci (Ontario

Provincial Vice President for Special Works). All worked seamlessly in providing a memorable opportunity to network in the Christian Youth/Young Adult Community, to facilitate a great knowledge exchange with visitors to our exhibit and to spread the Vincentian message throughout the Conference.

The Exhibit Hall included organizations such as L'Arche, CWL, Catholic Christian Outreach, EWTN, Salt & Light/Catholic Register, NET Ministries, Alliance for Life, various religious communities and Catholic book stores.

The next CCYM conference is scheduled for January 11-13, 2008 in Banff, Alberta.



Nick Volk, Steve Brent, Carmela Addante and John O'Flynn at the Booth



Nick Volk, Xenia Futo and John O'Flynn



The Exhibit booth

International - Asia News

NEWS BULLETIN FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL GENERAL ON THE DISASTERS IN ASIA

PAKISTAN

The earthquake which struck the northern part of Pakistan on the 8th of October, 2005 was the worst in its history. Almost 3 million people were affected by the earthquake, besides 100,000 deaths.

The Board of the National Council of the Society in Pakistan met immediately, as all the country did, to raise funds and help. There was need of food, clothing, medicine, housing, etc., but the major requirement of urgency was the equipment and heavy machinery to save the lives of people who were lying trapped in the debris of their homes, and buried under the huge landslides that took place.



Example of the damages

Winter was fast approaching and the Board decided that the easiest and neediest requirement for poor people would be blankets. Concretely, it was decided to send a minimum of 10,000 units. Taking into account shortages and the increase in prices, the Board calculated that a good and warm blanket could be available for \$ 20; that is \$ 200,000 for 10,000 units. This was a fight against time because the winter was imposing its own deadlines. The International Council General arranged to send \$ 175,000 which reached Pakistan at the end of

November. Earlier on, England and Wales and Australia had sent funds directly, allowing the purchase of 2,000 blankets that have been distributed in the affected area with the help of army helicopters.

After receiving all the funds, a reassessment was made, considering a drop in prices, and the Society was indeed able to send 20,000 blankets instead of 10,000. The total amount of \$ 200,000 received by the Society in Pakistan was almost all spent on blankets, logistical support, transportation, hotels, etc; Asi@news n°8



SSVP relief convoy

On 7th December, 2005, 7 trucks loaded with blankets left from Rawalpindi, where an Army escort was provided as the consignment had to travel through dangerous places to the area chosen by Vincentians for help: Muzaffarabad, in Azad Kashmir. A group of Vincentians including the national President and Vice-President left the day after. "Along the way, we travelled through high mountains and desolated areas, over roads that were temporarily repaired and across make-shift bridges.

Everywhere along the way, there were thousands of tents spread out for the earthquake victims. Several victims were high up in the mountains and refused to come down as they were afraid that their land would be lost or confiscated. Tents

were pegged on small plateaus near their homes so that an eye could be kept on their properties" says Valentine Gonsalves, National President.



A victims camp along the way

As the first 2,000 blankets had been dropped by helicopter in areas inaccessible by road, the 18,000 units were distributed by Vincentians in Al Mustafa and Minhaj camps, at Maira Tanolian, Jhelum and Neelum valleys. The Society had to work with the Army, as the responsibility of help and rehabilitation was given to it.

The top man of the region informed the Vincentians that the urgent need, after the blankets, would be kerosene stoves, which would not only assist in cooking, but would also act as heating devices. The money remaining after the purchase of the blankets will thus be used to buy kerosene stoves. You will be informed once the mission is accomplished



V. Gonsalves, National President, handing blankets to victims

Source and pictures: SSVP Pakistan

INDIA

Since the Tsunami tidal wave struck, at Christmas 2004, the Society in India has continuously been working on relief assistance to victims and affected areas.

Phase I of the Relief Project of the National Council of India is finished, it had consisted of:

- giving emergency relief (food, utensils, clothes, medicines...)
- buying or repairing 1995 nets
- buying or repairing 606 boats
- repairing 603 houses

Phase II of the project has allowed assisting 3,798 students so far.

By the end of September, the National Council has decided to stop all further payments to Councils and Conferences involved and review the situation by calling for revised applications for help, as they found out the needs had changed, the beneficiaries had changed and aid was also provided by government and other agencies.

The Committee which met on that occasion tried as much as possible to limit the sanctioned amount within manageable limits, and sanctioned 20,520,350 Rs (380,000 euros). This comprises of aid where no other agencies provided assistance. The help was confined for 217 house repairs, 55 nets and 51 boats, 891 small self help ventures, etc. totalling Rs 6,920,350 (127,000 euros) and a few projects in the worst affected areas which are mainly for education (like computer centres), for the affected aged, and a small project for the marriages of tsunami affected peo-

ple totalling Rs. 13,600,000 (250,000 euros).



Guntur Vincentians handing new nets to victims

This represents a Rs 2,503,846 (46,250 euros) shortfall from the 18,016,504 Rs (332,500 euros) balance the National Council had in late October, 2005. Further requirements will be restricted to Educational aid. The present situation is that the Government is not assisting in food aid. People continue to live in temporary houses in many places. Government has provided land to private agencies and houses are still being constructed. The situation is returning to normal, but at a slow pace.

Source and Pictures: SSVP India

Let's keep on helping them!

All the money raised and sent to the General Council will be forwarded to the countries involved as soon as possible. It is very important that these funds pass through the General Council to ensure good management and good use of these funds which are sometimes vital for precise and definite projects.

You can send your funds to your National Council and please specify "For the Asian Disaster fund"

Even though a great amount of money is needed, each contribution, no matter how modest, has the same symbolic value; it is a sign of

fraternity and solidarity; a small amount sent by a country with little means involves a great effort, whose true worth will be appreciated.

But let us not forget...

The United States, Central America and the Caribbean have been struck by Katrina, Stan, Rita and Wilma hurricanes last October. As always, the Vincentians of the zone have reacted immediately assisting with emergency goods and help. Council General launched a common appeal for Pakistan and America, on October 21st, but with limited results to date.

\$ 5,000 have been sent to the United States as a solidarity gesture towards this country which has helped Council General and other countries so often; and \$ 30,000 has been sent to Bro. Ernesto Balladares, International Territorial Vice President for Central and South America. It has allowed him to personally bring first emergency help to the 5 worse affected countries in Central America, on his visit there at the beginning of November, thus allowing the Society in these countries to start assisting the victims and those who have lost everything, and also to try to evaluate the damages and needs. Some countries have also sent help directly to affected countries.

Medium and long term projects are being set up there. A future issue of our News bulletin on disasters will inform you precisely of the situation, extending Asi@news to disasters all over the world, and no longer only in Asia.

You can donate specifically for one of these disasters, or for Council General's General Disaster Fund! In advance, we thank you for your generosity!

AGA 2006 - Invitation

Dear Vincentians,

You are cordially invited to attend the 35th Annual General Assembly of the National Council of Canada for 2006, to be held in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Date: June 21-25, 2006

Location: Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador,
Elizabeth Avenue, St. John's, NL www.mun.ca

Theme: *"Upon This Rock" (Matt. 16:18)*

Vincentians use this theme each and every day by serving Christ in the poor. Each one of us tries to provide a foundation of respect and love for those less fortunate in our communities. As Vincentians, we are privileged to be considered rock solid, a safe shelter where Christ's poor are welcomed and treated justly.

Let the spirit entice all Vincentians to visit our beautiful city in June 2006. Come and meet new friends and enjoy Newfoundland hospitality, all prepared just for you.

Memorial University Campus is situated in the north-east area of St. John's. Our accommodations, workshops, dining facilities, morning church services and meetings will be very closely situated on campus. The university is also within 5 minutes of a beautiful pond (Long Pond) and provincial park (Pippy Park) which has camping and trailer facilities. For camping or trailer reservation information please call 1-800-563-6353 or visit the web site www.gov.nl.ca (Please reserve early).



Memorial University Campus

On Friday afternoon we will be visiting "Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto" in the community of Flatrock where we will recite the rosary. The community of Flatrock is where Pope John Paul II blessed our fishing fleet on his visit to Newfoundland and Labrador in 1984. After the Grotto, our return trip will take us through scenic Marine Drive with a stop over at Signal Hill Historic Site. Afterwards, we have a "Newfoundland" night planned, locally called a "Newfoundland Kitchen Party".

As we prepare to participate in the 2006 AGA we provide you with our development of the theme "Upon This Rock" and ask that you embrace it and be prepared to focus on it in all of our AGA deliberations:

Our theme "Upon This Rock" (Matthew 16:18) is a call to all Christians to build the community of God. The days of this conference will help us to answer this call and deepen our Vincentian spirit.

History and faith fill every fragment and every splinter that forms the "Rock". Along with centuries of history and generations of a living faith, come four themes or cornerstones which help to define who we are as

Vincentians. The four cornerstones are - love, respect, justice & joy.

Upon this "Rock" a great number of people are striving to follow God's word. We desire to not only listen to what God is calling us to do but also to act and fulfill the message that God is challenging us to embrace. Upon this "Rock" our faith stands firm and we are invited to grow in all that our faith means.

Our greatest cornerstone is love.

To paraphrase the words of Mother Theresa of Calcutta, "we are called not to do great things but to do simple things with great love." That love is demonstrated in several ways throughout scripture. Simple things like bringing a toy to a child who has nothing to play with at Christmas or inviting one of our children to join us on a delivery to a client so that others can share in the call of the Gospel, as we do.

Great love is demonstrated in each food delivery that is made and each broken heart that is on the mend. That love is demonstrated through Christ's relationship with each of us, His children. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus calls Peter the Rock upon which He will build His community of faith. Jesus builds that community through the example of St.

Peter, one of the first to receive Christ's call. Jesus builds the community through the many specific instances from which we are all invited to learn and grow. Perhaps the most obvious portrayal of Jesus using St. Peter, the Rock of the Church, to show us what love is all about comes when the resurrected Christ appears to Simon Peter, the fisherman, and He asks; "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" (Jn.21:15-18).

Jesus asked this question three times of Peter and each time Peter responded, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you. You know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus then told the Rock of the church, "Feed my sheep." As Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul we must feed the Lord's sheep. We must feed them with joy. We must feed them with justice. We must feed them with respect and love. If we truly love as Peter, the Rock of the Church, loved, then we will not simply catch a fish for one who is hungry; we will strive to do so much more.

As is often said, we will not simply teach one who is hungry how they can catch fish, we will teach them how to catch with love. We will teach them with a love that is beyond all telling. We will teach using the love of God, the love which is greater than all things. The love which

AGA 2006 - Invitation

binds all things together (1 Cor 12:31-13:8).

Peter is the Rock of the Church and what we build upon that Rock, the cornerstone of our faith, is a gift that will surely stand firm. When a house is built upon that Rock, whether the winds blow or the rains beat against that house, it cannot fall.

Our house upon this Rock is a house big enough for all. The youth belong in this house; the lonely belong in this house; the one who is in greatest need belongs in this house; the one who thinks they have no need of the house truly belongs within the walls of the house which is built upon the Rock of our faith.

Come and enjoy life upon "our Rock".



*Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto,
Flatrock, NL*

Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto was formally dedicated on August 17th, 1958, by the Most Reverend P.J. Skinner, C.J.M., Archbishop of St. John's. That year marked the 100th Anniver-

sary of the first apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Lourdes, France.

The inspiration for this Grotto came about in 1954 as a result of a pilgrimage to Lourdes, France by the parish priest at that time, Reverend Father William Sullivan. While visiting the renowned shrine at Lourdes, Father Sullivan was quite impressed by the similarity of the Grotto's terrain at Lourdes and the land surrounding the church in his parish at Flatrock.

Upon his return he informed his parishioners of his dream of constructing a shrine to Our Lady similar to the one in Lourdes, France. The enthusiasm shown by the parishioners was so great that work began immediately in the summer of 1954. Much of the design work was carried out by the late Michael Curtis of St. John's. Today, as a result of a lot of hard volunteer manual labor that was given by his parishioners and support from friends outside the community, the Grotto was completed. This is one of the largest religious shrines in Eastern Canada.

On September 12th, 1984, a special blessing was accorded the Grotto and the people of the parish when His Holiness, Pope John Paul II visited Flatrock and

knelt at the Grotto to pray.

Annual parish devotions are held at the Grotto during the summer months.

The Legion of Mary from other parishes gathers annually on the Sunday nearest the feast of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven to recite the Rosary.

There are also many daily visitors to the Grotto during the summer. These people not only visit from various parts of Newfoundland but from all over North America.

This Grotto is certainly a credit to the memory of Father Sullivan and it is a testimonial to the community's devotion to Mary, Mother of God.

A volunteer Grotto Committee was formed in 1980. During the summer this committee gives their time to insure the upkeep of the Grotto and to continue its beautification.

A warm welcome is extended to all those visiting our Lady of Lourdes Grotto. We hope you enjoy your visit and that Our Lady will be with you and protect you during your travels.

The Grotto Committee

AGA 2006 - Program

Wednesday June 21	9:00AM - 9:00 PM	Registration
	5:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Supper
Thursday June 22	7:00AM	Mass and Rosary
	7:45AM - 8:45AM	Breakfast
	9:00 AM - 12:00	Workshops
	9:00 - 10:00	National Board. Meeting
	10:00 - 10:30	Coffee
	11:00 - 12:00	National Committee Meetings Twinning, Strategic Plan, Youth Spirituality, Emergency Relief
	12:00 - 1:00	Spiritual Advisors Luncheon
	12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
	1:00 - 2:30	Regional/Provincial Meetings
	1:00 - 3:00	Meeting with National President by Appointment
	1:00 - 4:00	Workshops
	6:00 - 7:00	Supper
	7:00 - 10:00	Wine and Cheese
Friday June 23	7:00AM	Mass and Rosary
	7:45AM - 8:45AM	Breakfast
	9:00 - 9:30	Official Opening
	9:30 - 10:15	Keynote Address
	10:15 - 10:30	Coffee
	10:30 - 11:15	Theme Development
	11:15 - 12:00	Screening Presentation
	12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
	1:00 - 2:00	National Rule Presentation
	02:30	Bus leaves to Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto
	6:30 - 10:30	Newfoundland night
Saturday June 24	7:00AM	Mass and Rosary
	7:45AM - 8:45AM	Breakfast
	9:00 - 10:30	National Statutory Meeting
	10:30 - 10:45	Coffee
	10:45 - 12:00	Ratification of National Rule
	12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
	1:00 - 2:00	Regional/Provincial Reports
	2:00 - 2:30	Presentation of National Council Presidential Candidates
	2:30 - 2:45	Presentation by AGA 2007 Committee - Kelona BC
	2:45 - 3:15	Closing Remarke by National President
	04:15	Bus leaves for Basilica
	05:00	Mass at Basilica
	06:30	Reception
	07:00	Closing Banquet and Dance