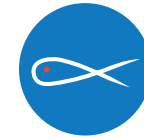


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COVID-19

The Twists and Turns of the Pandemic

CLICKABLE!

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**For many,
food insecurity
and isolation
are not new.**

*Celebrating our Vincentians
who continue to deliver food
and hope to those in need
while being careful.*

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



STILL STANDING

On Saturday, April 18, the One World: Together at Home concert put a lot of emphasis on recognizing the frontline workers tirelessly labouring during the COVID-19 pandemic. I definitely want to also recognize and thank the thousands of volunteers who have continued assisting persons in need during this period of physical distancing.

Presently, the mission of SSVP is more important than ever. However, it is harder to be able to meet our mission, especially since our primary source of funding from parishioners has been stalled with churches being closed.

Vincenians from coast to coast have adapted with alternative and creative methods to assist in all possible ways that do not involve direct contact.

But, as everyone is now realizing, normality as we know it will take a while to come back, not until a vaccine is found or a sufficiently large percentage of the population has developed the antibodies against the COVID-19 virus; public health experts are pointing to 60% to 70% of the population.

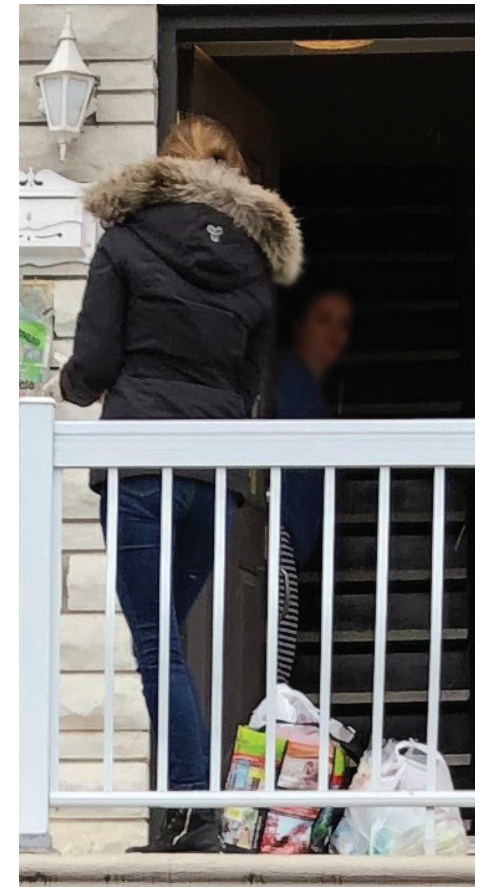
We are all impacted, but for some, it hurts more. For many, food insecurity and isolation are not new. The mission of SSVP is more important than ever. Our volunteers need to continue providing food, shelter and hope to those at risk.

The longer the situation of physical distancing occurs, the more we will see different needs surfacing, needs that still require personalized person-to-person contact. Our ways of assisting will be changed, and will be dependent on how people choose to support charities with time and donations. For a period, we can anticipate global views with local emphasis, and appreciation for what is essential, especially the frontline volunteers.

Keeping in mind that the mission of the Society is primarily carried out through home visits, we now need to expand the person-to-person contact and provide assistance while respecting the importance of social distancing, to address the isolation aspect, the elderly who has no contact. Assisting persons in need may not be just delivering a food hamper, but making a friendly phone call or having visual contact through Skype/Zoom/TEAMS/etc. The assistance may be for someone who needs help filling out a form. There are many ways we can continue to help; we just need to find the correct method.

Navigating the different government support programs

Since mid-March, the national office has been providing updates summarizing the different government assistance programs, both for employees and for employers. These programs were announced at neck breaking pace during the month of March. In April, different assistance programs were announced, from \$100M in funding for food banks and local food organizations, to a \$350M Emergency Community Support Fund. Information on these programs is available on the national website or via regional communication channels. ▼ ▼ ▼



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR... continued

Governance during a force majeure situation like a pandemic

The current pandemic is uncharted territory for governments, accounting firms and law firms. As the Carters Law Firm recently provided in a webinar, the “business judgement rule” recognizes that directors and officers are not expected to be perfect, but need to take all reasonable measures and perform the necessary due diligence required to fulfil their fiduciary obligations. What is very important for directors and officers of the corporation is to:

- Act honestly and in good faith with a view to the best interests of the corporation (fiduciary duty);
- Exercise the care, diligence, and skill that a reasonably prudent person would exercise in comparable circumstances (duty of care);
- Keep records of decisions: what decisions have been taken, and why;
- Keep up to date with government actions.

Generally, it is not an issue for directors to hold meetings by telephonic or electronic means; however, it may not be common practice for everyone, and requires some adaptation.



Annual General Assembly (AGA)

Even in this time of physical distancing, incorporated organizations still have a legal responsibility to hold annual meetings. For federally incorporated organizations, there is currently no blanket relief from Corporations Canada. For provincially incorporated organizations, usually an AGA must be held within 15 months after the last AGA; there are certain provisions under a relief emergency order to postpone, but the extension time is usually limited.

Since physical distancing measures are expected to be present for an extended period of time, considerations to hold the AGA electronically should be considered. Key items to consider are sharing of information, having a Q&A period, and a secured voting mechanism.

For the National Council of Canada, with the cancellation of the 2020 Annual National Formation (ANF), plans are being made to have the statutory Annual General Assembly of its voting members held electronically; details will be communicated during the month of May.

*Richard Pommerville, Executive Director
National Council*



SPIRITUALITY

BLESSINGS AND HOPE ARISING FROM A PANDEMIC

Franciscan scientist Sister Ilia Delio once wrote: “Something dies but something new is born—which is why the chaos of our times is, in a strange way, a sign of hope; something new is being born within. Out of chaos, a star is born. Breakdown can be breakthrough if we recognize a new pattern of life struggling to emerge.”

Within the wisdom and hope of this quote from an eminent scientist, it seems to me that there are many positive blessings emerging out of the “chaos” of this present pandemic. Here are some that I have observed, and you may be able to add more:



1. Strengthening of family life:

One family realized this was the first time other than Christmas when they were having regular meals together as a family. Some are having their first experience of home-schooling as well as enjoying more leisure activities as a family. Worldwide Marriage Encounter couples are finding it easier to dialogue and appreciating it more.

2. Learning to “be with ourselves”:

The pace of our lives had led many of us to become “human doings” rather than “human beings.” Self-isolating and stay home edicts have led many to slow down and start to get in touch with the deeper parts of themselves. Home is becoming a “domestic monastery” as Oblate theologian and spiritual writer Ron Rolheiser’s newest book articulates. Some individuals have found themselves finally being able to grieve recent losses.

3. Clergy finding new ways to minister:

Many clergy began live-streaming their liturgies and prayer sessions, reaching thousands instead of hundreds of people. I started videoing my daily homilies and posting them on Facebook. Fr. Susai Jesu OMI called hundreds of his parishioners after Easter just to touch base and surprised them all. Our retreat centre is moving towards live-streaming programs and using webinars.

4. More creative ways to worship God:

Couples and families are finding ways to participate more fully in the liturgies they are viewing on line. One couple washed each other’s feet while watching the Holy Thursday liturgy, and were deeply moved by that experience. They also held a cross together during the veneration of the cross on Good Friday, which bonded them even more. One person participates in the Eucharist at our residence via speaker-phone.

5. A greater focus on spiritual and religious values:

The realization that we are not in control and that we are all in this together globally is leading many to a greater appreciation of deeper spiritual values. The mayor of New York asserted “God didn’t turn things around; we did.” Actually, he should have said, “God turned things around through us,” but at least he does mention God. News media are interviewing clergy and pastoral workers to see how they are doing their ministry. Pope Francis is often featured on what he is doing regarding the pandemic. Faith-based performances like an opera singer are beamed to the world. Couples and families praying together more.

6. More creative ways of caring for one another:

Waving, balcony parties, demonstrations of gratitude for front-line workers are happening. A virtual concert raised funds for the WHO. Facebook is being used to help people deal with the crisis. People are sewing masks and industries are converting to produce hand sanitizers for a donation to a cause. Elders are learning to use social media to stay connected.



SPIRITUALITY... continued

7. More attention to the real heroes:

There is less attention given to the usual television and movie celebrities, and much more attention given to the unsung heroes of our society, such as grocery store clerks, frontline medical people, mail deliverymen and women, truck drivers, farmers, factory workers, etc. Their role as essential services is being more openly acknowledged and appreciated.

8. Palliative care becoming more of a priority:

The lack of attention to senior homes prior to the pandemic has become more apparent and is being addressed. The horrible state of some centres during the pandemic has been revealed and is also being addressed. Palliative care is finally becoming a priority and may now obtain the funding and support it deserves. This renewed effort to improve palliative care and keep seniors safe and well will hopefully lessen the temptation to resort to physician assisted suicide.

9. A shift in caring for creation and ecology:

The struggle to breathe for those who are sick can be seen as a reflection of the planet's struggle to survive the pollution we have created by our lifestyles. Water is clearing up and the ozone layer building up – nature is being granted a welcome reprieve. We are being given a greater awareness to see how our relationship to the planet has to change.

10. The possibility of arriving at a new normal:

Pope Francis, I believe, made the statement that the greatest recession, after the pandemic is over, would be to just go back to the way things were before the pandemic. There is a greater openness and willingness now to consider a more holistic and ecologically friendly way of living and conducting business.

To my mind, there are two underlying spiritual principles at work throughout this pandemic. The first - God turns everything to the good for those who love Him. The second - one of the attributes of God is that, while not preventing evil from happening, including the crucifixion of his own Son Jesus, He will always draw good out of evil, symbolized by the resurrection.

If we can see and appreciate all these blessings arising from our experiencing this pandemic, then perhaps we can all agree with Sister Ilia Delio that the chaos of our times, in a strange way, can be a sign of hope - something new is being born within.

*Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie O.M.I., Spiritual Advisor
National Council*



COVID – 19 : THE TWISTS AND TURNS OF THE PANDEMIC

FOOD BANK AND MUTUAL SUPPORT IN PANDEMIC TIMES

I am president of the Saint-Léonard Conference in Montreal. Over 70 years of age, I am asked to stay at home, in confinement, and this is what my husband and I have been doing since the start of the Covid-19 crisis.

Unfortunately, we had to close the SSVP store, as well as the conference food bank. Since all of our volunteers are over the age of 70 or are affected by poor health conditions, except one, they cannot put themselves at risk. How can we help the beneficiaries of our food bank, who are in need of food, when we have only one volunteer available?

Fortunately, the Saint-Léonard borough of the city of Montreal insists that all beneficiaries of our food bank continue to receive food every week. It allows us to use our usual premises, located in one of its buildings, and provides us with two employees to help organize the weekly food distribution. In addition, the SSVP store being closed, we no longer have funds available to buy milk for our beneficiaries. The borough is paying the milkman until we can reopen the store. Food is provided to us free of charge by Moisson Montreal, a member of Food Banks Canada.

Of course, two people and one volunteer are not enough to run the food bank. Fortunately, three of my children, as well as my daughter-in-law and her cousin, my granddaughter and two friends of the family come, every Thursday, to help prepare and deliver food bags for 60 families, directly to their homes.

Only six people are allowed inside the building; they are the ones who prepare the bags, while keeping a good distance between them. The others go there at noon to collect the bags placed outside and deliver them according to the address lists that I prepare for them in advance.

Although I am confined to the house, organizing all of these home food deliveries still keeps me busy. I can't wait for everything to return to normal so that I can start working again with my volunteers and interact with our beneficiaries.

*Ellen Schryburt, President
Saint-Léonard Conference, Montréal, Québec*



SSVP STORES SUPPLY THE FABRIC



The Peterborough, Ontario Regional Health Centre asked for people to make facemasks from fabric, for use by patients and visitors at the hospital. Angela, the manager of the SSVP store, answered the call for fabric. We posted on Facebook that we would donate all the fabric we had for this cause and the requests came in fast and furious. Angela went to the store and put names on the bags of fabric that had been assembled from material in the warehouse. The people who had requested fabric came and picked up their bags and they were all gone within an hour. We then went back and got more fabric.

The Peterborough Regional Health Centre received more masks than they needed. They thanked the volunteers at the Vinnies Feel Good Shopping store for their efforts.

*Sue Mazziotti-Armitage
Vice-President, Stores Liaison
Ontario Regional Council*



COVID – 19 : THE TWISTS AND TURNS OF THE PANDEMIC

MANY PEOPLE WITHOUT FAMILY ARE CRAVING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



St. Patrick Conference's food bank in Carbonear, Newfoundland, started doing something new; they began calling people to check in on them. It started after they contacted an elderly lady who lived alone, and she began to cry.

"Without us, she has no contact with anyone," said Kerri Abbott, President of St. Patrick Conference. "We stayed on the phone with her. So now we've started doing that. We added that to our services. We started reaching out to people and just checking in with them."

Abbott said it's always been common for customers to appreciate the social interaction when they pick up food hampers from the food bank. But she's begun to notice it's the people who stayed quiet who were the most appreciative of a phone call.

Taken from CBC News website.

To read the article, follow this link:

www.cbc.ca/news

DROP-IN CENTRE, PRINCE GEORGE, BC

The SSVP drop-in centre in Prince George, British Columbia, is a warm and welcoming place where you can enjoy a meal in a friendly and safe atmosphere. Staff and volunteers prepare wholesome meals and serve them to our guests.

From 80 to 200 people are served at each breakfast and lunch. Coffee is available throughout the day for those who might drop by to play cards, read, or visit with friends or new acquaintances.

On weekdays at 7:30 pm, sandwiches, coffee, and goodies are served. On Saturday and Sundays, sandwiches are served at 2:30 pm.

Social Concerns staff offer an open door policy to support individuals with concerns, questions, and advocacy issues. The office networks with other agencies and gives supportive reassurance and guidance and helps connect guests with community services, as appropriate.

In response to COVID-19, all meals, breakfast, lunch, and evening sandwiches, are being prepared and packed as take-out meals. The meals are served to our guests outside the centre, while adhering to physical distancing guidelines for everyone's safety.



CHALLENGING TIMES – CHALLENGING DECISIONS



Our well stocked food bank as a result of 5,000 lbs of food from the Knight of Columbus, 40 cans for Lent program and 2 donations from the local Rotary Club.

COVID-19 has certainly challenged SSVP in the delivery and practices of our charity and social justice work. In Edmonton, Western Region, our furniture and pickup operations have been shut down since mid-March due to various concerns. However, conferences were asked to continue distributing food hampers. The necessity of continuing to do food hampers was demonstrated when our conference received a call that a family was in need of food. The dad had left his wife and four children, taking everything with him. The mother was desperate for food for the children. When we delivered the food hamper and gift cards, the mom broke down in tears. There were grateful hugs and thank-you's from all. It was indeed a good delivery.

We went back twice to deliver food and children's clothing. Because of COVID-19, however, there were no more hugs. It was heart-breaking for all of us.

As COVID-19 restrictions are removed, we will need to make challenging decisions on how to reinstate our charity and social justice programs.

Stephen Dufresne, President
Maria Lupul, 1st Vice President
Edmonton Central Council

TWINNING - COVID-19 - HAITI

The Sainte-Croix Conference, community of Sarthe, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, is twinned with the Saint Pius X Conference, in Kelowna, British Columbia.

The members of the Sainte-Croix Conference aim to educate people in the Sarthe community about the precautions to take against COVID-19.

As part of the conference activities for this period, given the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, we could not say mass for the sick this year, but to replace it, we started with awareness raising in the community on the precautions to take against the COVID-19 pandemic.

While COVID-19 had just appeared in Haiti, after having infected and killed several of our brothers and sisters around the world, the International General Council and various national councils shared with us a great number of awareness messages about the pandemic. As a result, since the end of March, instead of mass for the sick during Holy Week, members of the Holy Cross Conference have organized these awareness-raising sessions.



First, with groups of two or three conference members, we took to the streets to talk to people about the virus and the damage it has caused around the world and in our country, telling them that it can get worse if they do not take preventive measures seriously. In a second step, we chose specific locations to deposit a bucket with water, soap and chlorine for washing the hands of people passing by on the streets and markets. We also put banners in strategic locations, showing key messages. We cannot distribute health kits to all the communities, but the presence of those containers allowed people in the community to wash their hands, in addition to reading the messages posted on the banners.

The situation is very difficult for families in Haiti, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, given that we have a very precarious health situation already. Consequently, such an activity will have a positive impact in protecting people against the virus.

The members of our conference wish to add to this report how grateful we are to all members of our twin conference, the Saint Pius X Conference, who have always supported us, not to mention the National Council of Canada.



BY PREVENTION:

1. wash your hands regularly;
2. respect a distance of 1.50 m;
3. do not shake hands;
4. avoid close contact and kissing;
5. cough or sneeze in the elbow;
6. do not use the masks more than 3 hours.

We pray that God in his infinite love will shower you with his grace and protect you from this pandemic.

I share with you some photos of the launch of the awareness activity on COVID-19.

*Lagredel Dieudiel, Chair, Twinning
National Council of Haiti*



MISSION

The Society of Saint 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 Saint 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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**Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
National Council of Canada
2463, Innes Rd.
Ottawa, Ontario K1B 3K3
Tel.: 613 837-4363 / Toll free: 1 866 997-7787
Fax: 613 837-7375
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national@ssvp.ca



www.ssvp.ca



SSVP Canada