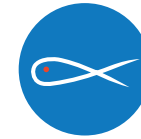


Western
Regional
Council
Edition

Vincenpaul
CANADA



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World Day of the Poor

November 15, 2020

Information and material:
www.ssvp.ca/world-day-poor-tools-members

North of 60 project - Food delivery from the sea container recently arrived in Inuvik, to people in need in the community of Tsiigehtchic, Northwest Territories.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED!

In Pope Francis' general audience address on August 12, 2020, *To Heal the World*, he focuses on looking at one's brother and his inalienable dignity in a loving way. **"The pandemic has highlighted how vulnerable and interconnected we all are,"** the Pope said as a preamble. **"If we do not take care of one another, starting from the last, from those most affected, including creation, we cannot heal the world."**

Pope Francis reaffirms a key point from the encyclical *Laudato Si'* that **"Everything is connected"** (#91 and #117). In the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis highlights building a dignified, just and peaceful world through the process of building fraternity and social friendship. In #59, Pope Francis states, **"In earlier Jewish traditions, the imperative to love and care for others appears to have been limited to relationships between members of the same nation. The ancient commandment to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev 19:18) was usually understood as referring to one's fellow citizens, yet the boundaries gradually expanded, especially in the Judaism that developed outside of the land of Israel. We encounter the command not to do to others what you would not want them to do to you." (cf. Job 4:15)**

The mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is even more important today, to be proactive in the assistance of persons in need, making no distinction of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions, and to help in all possible ways. The mission is a key differentiator since it is anchored in Catholic Social Teaching, and is inspired by the respect of human dignity, by personal contact, and by the personalization of assistance. SSVV has a wide reach across Canada, not just in a few urban centres.

Regardless of the pandemic, Vincentians have adapted to continue providing assistance to persons in need. And, as we will continue to navigate the ups and downs for the coming months, we also have to consider that assistance to persons in need can be more than providing food security, or material help. Other types of assistance to consider are friendly contacts, reaching out to families, to persons in need, simply by doing a follow-up; this can be achieved by a telephone call or using one of the collaboration tools available, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, etc.

Please note that National has updated the 2020 statistics report to better tabulate the assistance to persons in need given outside of home visits, and the type of assistance provided.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, National has been involved in a series of communications and initiatives to assist conferences and councils navigate COVID-19.

National has facilitated exchanges between store managers as they worked their reopening strategies; a collaborative work has been outlined in a strategy document for reopening and staying open under COVID-19 public health requirements.

For food banks, a relationship has been developed with Second Harvest / Food Secure for SSVV to leverage fresh produce being made available in their communities. By recuperating food that would otherwise go to waste, we are living one of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, care for creation.

The National donation portal has been enhanced to further assist conferences and councils to have funds redirected to them, by adding capabilities to donate once or monthly, by credit card or by pre-authorized bank withdrawal. Twinning contributions as well can now be made electronically to National.

On the communications front, working the social media angle, a digital advertising campaign was undertaken last spring, and one is underway for November and early December. As an extension to this, social media visuals have been developed and shared, to be reused by conferences or councils for their social media vehicles. ***A social media user guide and social media operational best practices have also been developed and shared.***

As we plan for 2021, a calendar of communications events has been elaborated and associated material will be developed and shared. The first such example has been the Feast days for the Society.

And, World Day of Poor material has been developed to reflect the message of Pope Francis, with this year's theme **Stretch forth your hand to the poor.**

Richard Pommerville
Executive Director

PLANNING COMMITTEE

The National Council of Canada is working to generate a **2021-2023 strategic plan**; to assist, a Strategic Plan Steering Committee is being setup. The National Council is looking for 4 to 6 individuals to assist with this very important task. The Strategic Planning Committee will work to assist the Board of directors establish priorities and goals for the next 3 years. The Committee will obtain insights from multiple sources and identify strategic issues that require to be addressed; after prioritization, it will define objectives and strategies for submission to the Board. Vincentians with experience in formation, governance, fundraising, finance, store/retail, and interest in strategic planning are invited to submit their candidacy with resume to national@ssvp.ca by November 16.

CHOOSING A PATRON SAINT OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL IN CANADA

The National Spirituality Committee has conducted a search for nominees in order to choose a **Patron Saint of the Society in Canada**, a distinctly Canadian saint to reflect our Canadian history and character within the international Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The decision will be made by membership voting, so we need your participation. It is hoped the selection will be made in time for the **175th anniversary of the Society in Canada**, when we would consecrate the Society in Canada to the chosen Patron Saint.

Nominations were open until September 30, 2020 and we have received four wonderful nominees. They are (with short biographies shamelessly lifted from Wikipedia):

Saint André of Montreal

- He was a lay brother and a significant figure of the Church among Quebecers, credited with thousands of reported miraculous oil healings.
- He was canonized on October 17, 2010, the first Canadian saint who lived after Confederation.

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

- She was an Algonquin-Mohawk laywoman born in 1656. She contracted smallpox, which left her face quite badly scarred. At 19, she was baptized and took a vow of perpetual virginity.
- She was known for her virtue of chastity and mortification of the flesh. She was canonized on October 21, 2012.

Saint Marguerite d'Youville

- She was a French Canadian widow who founded the Order of the Sisters of Charity of Montreal in 1737, commonly known as the Grey Nuns of Montreal.
- She was canonized in 1990, the first native-born Canadian to be declared a saint.

Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys

- She was a French nun and founder of the Congregation of Notre Dame of Montreal in the colony of New France.
- She travelled to Fort Ville-Marie (now Montreal) in 1653. There she developed the convent and educated young girls, the poor, and children of First Nations until shortly before her death in early 1700.
- She was canonized in 1982, the first female saint of Canada.

All of the nominees are models of Catholics committed to furthering God's work through actively living their faith in the world – just like we try to do as Vincentians. Their examples of selfless devotion to God is an inspiration to us all in our Vincentian works. In these times when many are quick to point out the undoubted historic and current failings of the Catholic Church in our society, we may not spend enough time studying and considering the positive effects of these holy men and women of God in our own history. Let us take some time to consider and appreciate their examples.

The information package for voting (introduction, voting instructions, and a brief biography of each nominee) will be posted on the national website under Spirituality Resources, www.ssvp.ca/spirituality-resources. The original nominator has been asked to prepare a brief written case for the Saint they have nominated to be the Patron Saint of the Society in Canada, for your consideration. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about some of our Canadian Saints.

Online voting will be accessible from the webpage, and will be open until March 31, 2021. The results will be reviewed by the Committee and announced by April 15, 2021 on the national website. Being a vote for a patron saint, we will assume that there will be no cheating, like multiple voting.

While you are visiting, please take some time to review some of the additional spirituality resources available – we hope that you will find it to be a repository of thoughtful Vincentian spiritual material for you to use. The National Spirituality Committee is currently reviewing our presence on the webpage and throughout the electronic universe and we plan to be posting some new material soon, so keep an eye on it! We are always open to feedback, suggestions, and constructive critique - feel free to contact me at john.carey@ssvp.ca. Feedback would be timely now, as we are already considering our future.

Remember, we at higher council are here to serve you, the servants of the poor. You do the sacred work of helping the poor in His name, we are but your helpers. Please pray for us and the poor we all serve in His name.

*John Carey, Chair
National Spirituality Committee*

CONSECRATION OF THE SOCIETY IN CANADA TO A PATRON SAINT

I am writing to you in anticipation of the nationwide vote to select the patron saint for the Society in Canada. It is in vogue these days to reduce a person's life to one moment in time when he or she erred in judgement or acted in a manner unacceptable to our modern society and legal system but which was the norm in their time. History cannot be erased or revised by any following generation, as repulsive as it may appear in our times.

LET US NOT LOOK AT THIS THROUGH THE CONTEMPORARY LENS OF OUR MODERN SECULAR SOCIETY WITH ITS KNEE JERK REACTION TO EVERY ISSUE IN VOGUE ON ANY PARTICULAR DAY. THE LORD IN HIS MERCY DOES NOT CLOSE THE DOOR SHUT ON ANY REPENTANT SINNERS, SUCH AS WE ALL ARE.

An in-depth study of any given saint or historical figure's biography can lead one to question their life, contribution to society or saintliness. This is especially true under the microscopic and narrow gaze of modern society apparently bent on destroying and tearing down, for the least offence perceived or actual, a saint or whatever other historical figure is in question that day. After all, even the great St Paul, apostle, evangelist, bible letter writer, martyr and murderer, who persecuted the church in its infancy, is not safe from those modern-day zealots who would rewrite history to suit their particular version on any given day.

Let us not allow these revisionists to destroy what love has built over the millennia since Jesus Christ founded his Church. Modern society owes a great debt of gratitude to the Church, which was instrumental in building what we now call western civilization. Let us not join the chorus of voices who would now like to tear it apart. What do they offer as an alternative?

This in no way is intended to deny, hide or excuse any wrongful actions or sins committed by any of the saints who were recommended. We must always acknowledge our failures, past or present, and this applies to saints and historical figures equally. Does this mean they have nothing to teach us? Does it mean they cannot be emulated? The question is, should this impair our judgement in light of their whole life, both the good and the bad? If it does, then there can be no credible saints. None were perfect that I know of. All had their shortcomings and failures. All have sinned and fallen short of the mark. Only Mary, our Blessed Mother, was by the grace of God born without the stain of sin and remained sinless throughout her life.

Let us rather ponder and question how each of these saints mirrors and reflects the Vincentian spirit and vocation.

- What in their life and work inspires you to serve and give of yourself to your neighbour?
- How do they motivate your love of the poor, the marginalized, the forgotten and the oppressed?
- How did their life and work affect and bring about changes for the good in society?
- Will their work and life inspire others to join the society?

Yours in a unity of prayer and service,

*Claude Bédard, President
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul*

WEEKENDER PROGRAM FOR KIDS

Good Shepherd conference in Edmonton provides 50 weekend baggies for two schools every week. We started this program in January 2018 after reading in the Vincenpaul newsletter, May 2017 edition, about a conference from Brockville, Ontario that started the Weekender Program for Kids.

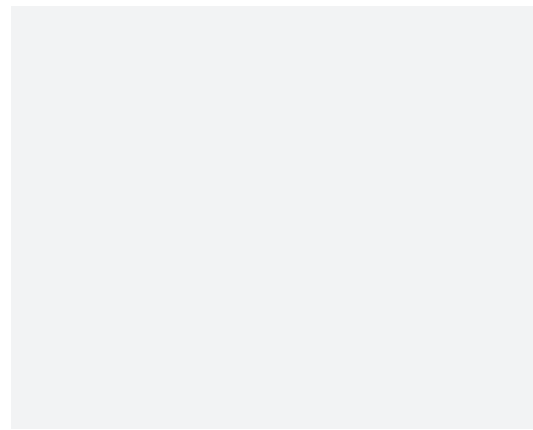
We communicate with the social worker who works at the two schools. Our Vincentians meet once every three weeks to pack 150 baggies. We have four or five Vincentians who buy the food items needed. As we have limited space, we can only buy for six weeks at a time. Another Vincentian delivers the 150 baggies to the schools.

We do not know the children involved as the social workers are in the best position to know who would need this food over the weekend. During the time of COVID-19 from March to June 2020, children were not going to school, so we provided the items and the social worker delivered the baggies to the homes of families in need. During this time we also helped with buying fresh dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt and margarine for families. We continue to provide food hampers as well for those families in need.

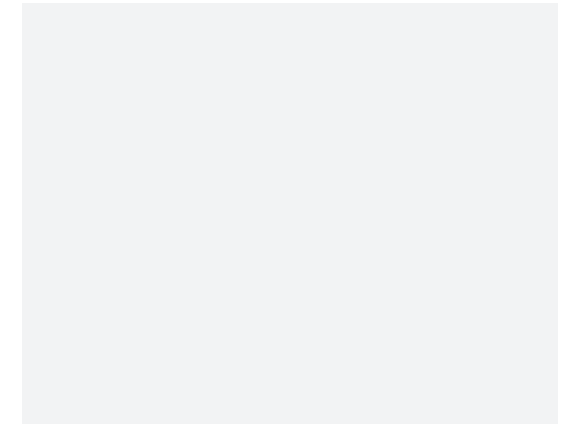
In the baggies, we provide two instant oatmeal packages, two juice boxes, one box of mac and cheese, one package of dry chicken noodle soup, two granola bars, two fruit snack packages, one fruit cup, one pudding cup, two packages of crackers and two rice crispy squares. The social worker has told us that this has helped the families who are struggling and that the children like the instant oatmeal as this make their tummies full!

We currently have two other schools that do a mac and cheese drive to help us, and our parishioners are very helpful in providing food items as well. This is a program through which we can invite others to become aware of those who truly are in need of our help!

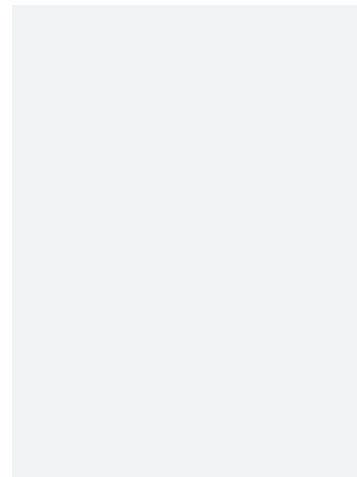
*Dolores Vande Brink, Weekender lead
Good Shepherd Conference, Edmonton, Alberta*



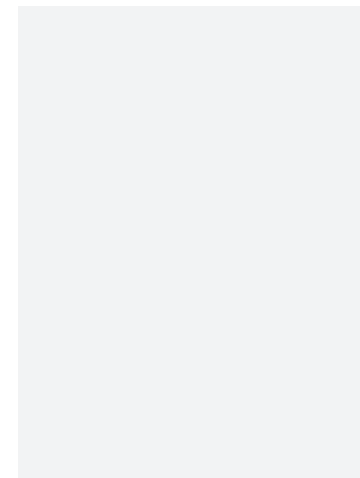
Items on table - ready for packing



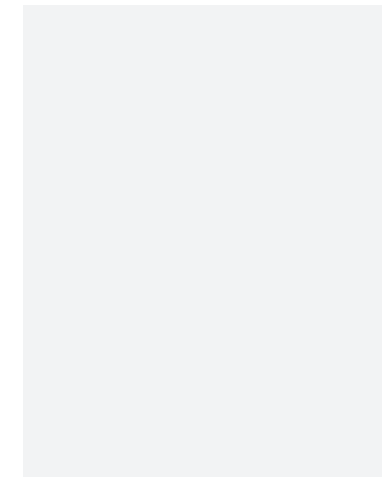
Packing the baggies - 2 volunteers



Baggie with contents



Loaded vehicle ready for baggie delivery



Social worker with baggies

LIFE BASED ON CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

Let's start by saying that Catholic Social Teachings are central to our faith. These teachings are based on the Gospels and the words of Christ. They call us to work for the common good, to help build a just society, and to uphold the dignity of human life.

Taking into consideration that the world we live in these days is different than what we were used to before COVID-19, we need to be much more aware of the teachings of the Church. Life will be based greatly on Catholic Social Teachings.

1 - Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, every person's life and dignity must be respected and supported. The way we relate to each other impacts human dignity and our ability to grow in community. We, like the disciples of Christ, are invited to come together as a community and work in close partnership with the Catholic Church to meet immediate and long-term needs.

2 - Care for God's Creation

"**Creation** is a gift that **God** has given us, so that we **care** for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude." *(Pope Francis)*

Our stewardship of the earth is participating in God's act of creating and sustaining the world. In our use of creation, we must be guided by a concern for generations to come.

3 - Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral society. When we fail to acknowledge the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities, it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected. *(Pope Francis)*

4 - Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

This **Catholic Social Teaching** principle encourages us to imitate Christ's love for the poor by creating a society where the needs of the poor are always considered first. The way we treat others should correspond to the mercy which God has shown us: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you ... for the measure you give will be the measure you get back". *(Lk 6:36-38)*

LIFE BASED ON THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS... continued

5 - Rights and Responsibilities

Catholicism teaches us that human dignity should be observed, and a healthy community can be achieved only if human **rights** are protected and **responsibilities** are met. Each person has a fundamental right to food, health care, housing, education, and employment. We encourage you to reflect on ways you can stand up for the rights of those who are less fortunate than we are as a way of practicing our Catholic faith and truly living the Gospel.

6 - Solidarity

For us Catholics, the principle of **solidarity** is about recognizing others as our brothers and sisters and actively working for their good. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. Our love for all our brothers and sisters calls us to seek a just society where goods are distributed fairly, and the dignity of all is respected.

7 - Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The **dignity of work** needs to be protected, by respecting the basic rights of workers, such as the right to productive work, to fair wages, to private property, etc. We should not be valued by what we own or by how much money we earn, but by our willingness to work, to be fair to others and what we share with our brothers and sisters.

Let us reflect on all seven Catholic Social Teachings, keeping in mind the world we live in, and all the changes that have been happening. If we look after our spiritual world, we should be able to navigate the physical world for ourselves and for everyone else around us.

Maria Lupul
Western Region Social Justice Chair

Images taken from VinFormation
www.vinformation.org/en/vincentian-formation-resources/presentations-media-games/catholic-social-teaching-101-video-series/



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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