

Vincenpaul-Canada

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National Council of Canada
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THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

1813 - 2013 Bicentenary of the birth of Frederic Ozanam

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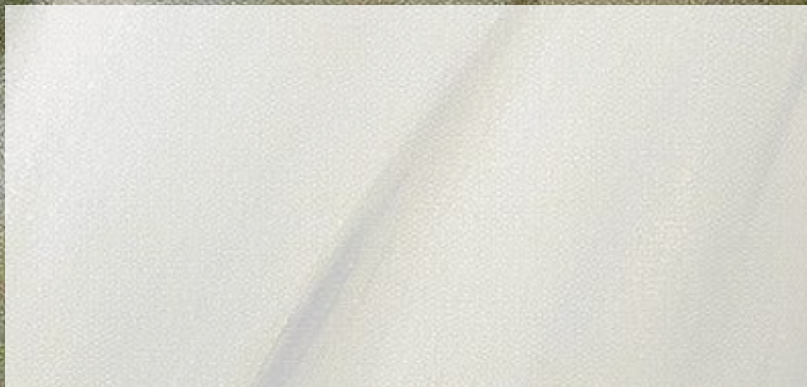


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The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a worldwide Christian community, founded in Paris in 1833, by a group of young Catholic lay people.

Membership is open to men and women, young and old. The SSVP asks that members accept fully the Christian ethos and are committed to express their love of God through personal service to their neighbours in need. The service provided by a conference is usually concentrated on home visits, the person-to-person contact with the needy. This is a fundamental part of the Society's mission. However, activities may include "Special Works", which serve people in a wider area or provide specialized service to those living in poverty.

In Canada, more than 8,200 volunteers are serving about 450,000 people each year. Where appropriate, members offer material or other type of assistance to serve those in need overcome crises, and develop with them long-term solutions to their problems.

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Penny's Last Piece

MY DEAR BROTHER AND SISTER VINCENTIANS

As we all know time certainly does move on, sometimes it moves along ever so slowly, and sometimes it flies by. When I began my term in 2007, six years seemed a very long time. However, as I write my last piece as President of the National Council of Canada, it really seems like a very short time. The question most frequently asked of me is what it has been like as president for the last six years? I would have to say that I see my ministry of administration as multi-dimensional and profoundly gifted.

These dimensions can be described as 'life-giving', 'ministerial' and 'educational'. Other descriptive words that come to mind are 'hopeful', 'faith-filled' and 'spirit-led'. Overall, it has been a true learning experience of what it means to become "people of the water and the towel", and most importantly, that there is no "I" in "TEAM".

It has been 'ministerial' in the sense that at all levels of encounter we came together as a family; we prayed together, worked together, ate together and yes, laughed and danced together. It was always such a joy to see each other again and again. We listened to each other, caring, sharing, assisting and supporting each member of the family in the ups and downs in each of our lives.

Msgr. Peter Schonenbach, our beloved Spiritual Advisor, has provided spiritual guidance to the members of the board of directors and to all of us as members at each AGA. Adapting the usefulness of cell phones to highlighting biblical verse, his thought provoking spiritual readings and reflections gave us wider angles of view when it came to making Gospel based decisions. What is most important, he showed us how to laugh with, and be with each other. My, what a chef he is as well!

The 'ministry of administration' was educational in that every encounter brought with it a wider perspective in looking at ways of addressing the needs of both members and those we serve. The 'educational' element came mostly from 'listening' to each other with more than just our ears; it also involved our hearts and minds. This type of listening provided a better, and more involved, understanding of the context each of us brought to



meetings and discussions; this learning assisted us as we strived to make Gospel based decisions. Each encounter, whether at the board, regional or local level brought about a wonderful impetus for change in each of us, both spiritually and practically. We understood that no one person had all the answers to issues and concerns. We recognized that we needed each other to come to spirit-led and faith-filled decision making.

Throughout our Vincentian vocation, we have all been challenged, at all levels, to think about creative ways that we could employ that will empower and bring the 'Jesus/Vincentian' relationship to reality for all concerned.

I must also acknowledge and compliment the contributions and support of the members of each of the Regional Councils. We are so fortunate to have such committed members, both in their work and spirituality. Regional Council members contribute immensely to the success of the work of Vincentians right across Canada and the world. Ultimately, Regional Councils' generosity is one of the ways Canada has been able to be responsive to any calls for assistance from our western hemisphere sister countries whenever we were asked.

Penny's Last Piece

Everyone has been so warm and welcoming to me and the executive members on our visits across Canada as we tried to bring the September Executive meetings to meet members from smaller areas across Canada. It was like being welcomed home, their hospitality was so very generous and kind.

The 'life-giving' aspect of this experience centers on the concern for who we are and the gifts we bring to the table at all levels. In fact, as you well know, who we are in itself is a gift, and the more we share that gift, the more we become who we are. The sharing of these gifts extended well beyond the table and moved into the realm of caring and concern and the implications therein, whether it was a simple email, phone call or a card.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and our Spiritual Advisor Msgr. Peter, the members of the Executive and the members of the Board of Directors have worked so well together to accomplish so much that has led to the strong and capable council that we are.

Youth have provided such a breath of fresh air into the life of the Society. Each AGA provides the opportunity to engage and integrate these young people. What a delight to listen to their voice and perspectives. They help us to love life and provide us with the 'reality check' we sometimes need when we are trying to make things complicated.

Staff

Of extreme importance is the continued dedication and commitment of our dear staff. Each has contributed significantly to the streamlining and the structuring of our administration processes.

Nicole Schryburt, who has been with us during the last sixteen years, has been a significant and steadfast employee. She has contributed to the growth of the National Council in so many ways. The web-site, the Vincenpaul magazine, the NCC annual report preparation, twinning transfers, keeping an eye out for promotional items that become visible signs of SSVP here in

Canada. We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated, patient and creative employee.

Josée Lemieux came into our employ three years ago. She has had much to learn about the National office and its processes. Learning names, faces and roles is not an easy task for many of us, but she has done an admirable job. She has a vast knowledge of computer skills that has moved us forward very quickly in the world of electronics. We now have "Breaking News" of National interest, our Standard Operating Procedures that contain policies, administrative procedures, guidelines, terms of reference for our national committees and forms all available for quick easy access for all members. Again, we are very fortunate to have her dedication and commitment.

Ghislaine Du Nord, our official translator has to be a saint! I cannot imagine doing the work she does in the turn around time that she does consistently. I have never met the lady, but have communicated with her over the years. What a delightful and understanding lady. She has also assisted the SSVP in Canada to develop the bilingual format for our communications, agendas and minutes. We owe her a great deal of thanks for what she does for us as our official translator.

Ellen Schryburt, as past president, has been highly engaged in assisting the National Council in several ways and deserves special mention. She has acted as editor for the Vincenpaul Magazine and together, with Nicole, they produce its layout and format. Ellen has also acted as coach and mentor to the host planning committee for the National Council AGA each year. She accepted this post in 2007. Using the AGA Planning Manual, she provided the coaching needed to ensure understanding of roles and responsibilities of both the National Council and the host committee.

Don Grant, our National Council of Canada legal counsel, I offer our sincerest thanks and gratitude for providing the legal assistance we required over the years.

Our families deserve an extra special thank you for their patience and understanding while the business of

Penny's Last Piece

the organization took place some miles away. It was not unheard of to discover that someone's husband or wife took ill while members were gathering for meetings.

There is much hope in the future of this wonderful Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and its work. We are in a modern electronic age of both information and media that provides us with new tools. We are now empowered to do the type of work on a larger scale that will make a profound difference in the lives of so many. We have new possibilities and opportunities to be as creative as we can be in serving and helping in all possible ways those who seek us to assist their need.

In closing, I can really say that I have enjoyed both my term and my team. It was good to hear that meetings were worthwhile, and that each member 'got a lot out of' the time spent together. I cannot say 'thank you' enough to each member of my executive and board for all of their contributions.

To you, the members of the National Council of Canada, for your welcome, interest, contributions and enthusiasm and your want to be a 'better Vincentian', I also say thank you.

I hope that I, as your president, have given everyone a measure of hope for the future of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Canada. I will always keep you in my heart and in my prayers.

To Jean Noel and his team, may God bless each one of you, and all of your endeavors with wisdom, understanding and strength as you move through your term. Your challenges and direction will move the Society forward even more.

May the radiance of your charity always be a beaming light!

"...all one in truth and charity",

Dr. Pierrette (Penny) Craig
National President



Penny Craig received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal on the 23rd of February from Jeff Watson, MP, at the Verdi Club in Amherstburg.

International Council General



Address Of Dr. Michael Thio, President General For the Press Conference at the Holy See's Press Office, Vatican, on 1 February 2013, in conjunction with the launch of the Holy Father's 2013 Lenten Message .

We are honoured to have the opportunity to share with you the charism and ethos of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in bearing witness to Christ and which draws some parallel to the Holy Father's Lenten message on his principal theme of Faith and Charity.

The Society is engaged in Charitable and Humanitarian activities in a Christian way or dimension and are marvelously witnessing to Christ in the poor and needy we serve or assist. We can encapsulate all such activities into the virtues and practice of the Gospel values in FAITH, HOPE and Charity. This exemplifies our zeal and commitment in our mission and vocation in our Vincentian apostolate.

Since our humble beginnings 180 years ago we are today present in 148 countries, with 780,000 members spread over 70,000 conferences, 1.3 million volunteers and serving over 30 million poor. The Society is involved in a wide range and variety of tasks and activities from the provision of food, clothing and necessities to the needy, homes for the poor and homeless, response to natural disasters in emergency reliefs and rehabilitation projects, assistance to refugees that emerged from

political conflicts, engaged in systemic change programs in education, self-help projects, micro-financing, counselling and many others. Among many other assistance and projects for last year, special mention is made to emergency reliefs provided to over 20 countries affected by natural disasters along with rehabilitation projects, assistance in the Famine in the Horn of Africa, food and crops programs, provision for rebuilding, renovation and construction of houses and notably support for a project in the construction of an indoor playground of a kindergarten due to the Tsunami tragedy in Fukushima, Japan, that is subjected to nuclear radiation.

The Society have been accredited last year by the United Nations as an UN-NGO with membership in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with Special Consultative Status. We are blessed and privileged to note that the Society is one of the most respected, well known, flourishing and inspiring Catholic apostolate of Charity worldwide.

FAITH: We believe and we trust in the Lord for without Him we can do nothing. We serve and He provides. We do our best and He will do the rest. In serving the poor and needy we bear witness to Christ and those around us. As He said to us "He who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" – John 15:5. FAITH determines our belief in God and gives us our purpose and manifestation of the goodness and Love of God. It gives us the conviction that Jesus is the pearl of our life. FAITH sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible. In absolute FAITH we listen to His word "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and HE will make your paths straight" Proverbs 3:5-6

HOPE: In Christ resurrection He has given us HOPE ... a new life, a new future. Likewise we share this HOPE with those we serve and assist and give them a hopeful life and the possibility of encountering Christ. Because we care they experience a new beginning, a better future. In seeing the suffering poor, we Vincentians, see and encounter the suffering Christ and give us the

International Council General

opportunity to serve Christ in the poor. In so doing we receive Christ in us and experience Christ's Love and strengthen us to grow in that discipleship of Christ. HOPE gives us confidence and courage. It gives us a dynamism of unconquerable FAITH and strength. It is a glorious saviour always at our side. Remember the words of our Lord "Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, I shall give you rest." The motto of the Society is "Serviens in Spe" – "Service in Hope".

CHARITY: Charity gives us motivation and supernatural zeal. Christian Charity is our LOVE for God transformed into loving service given to others and especially the poor. GOD is LOVE. Unless you have God in your heart you cannot share that LOVE with others. "The LOVE of Christ impels us" – 2Cor5:14. St. Vincent de Paul said "May your radiance of Charity be a beaming light in our FAITH in action." This is further advanced by Blessed Frederic Ozanam who said "Let us go to the poor. We must not only speak but act and affirm by our actions the vitality of our FAITH." "The least you do to my brothers, you did it to me" says the Lord in Matthew 25:40. By our loving Christian action in serving Christ in the poor and needy, we are witnessing to Christ and this is the key differentiator between a Christian Charity and a secular Charity. "Faith enables us to recognize the gifts that the good and generous God has entrusted to us, Charity makes them fruitful" as pronounced by the Holy Father in his Lenten message.

As we commit ourselves faithfully and lovingly to His call, we are engaging in the service of Christ in the poor and needy in FAITH, HOPE and CHARITY. In championing the cause of the poor, Christian actions and virtues are being promoted and we are but humble servants bearing witness to Christ. In our work of Christian Charity we reflect and radiate our Christian way of life as followers and disciples of Christ. As we grow in that discipleship of Christ, we become a better person and a better Christian. "You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world" as the Lord spoke to us in Matthew 5:13-14. The Holy Father said in his Lenten message "Through Faith we enter into a friendship with the Lord; through Charity this friendship is lived

and cultivated". The inter-relationship between Faith and Charity is manifested and edified and is intimately linked.

As Christians, we must preserve and grow in our spirituality to keep that Closeness, Love and Peace with Christ. The way we lead a good Christian life will draw people closer to God ... and bring about conversion and evangelization through witnessing to the goodness and Love of Christ.

Let me share with you this inspiring quote of Blessed Mother Teresa:-

The Fruit of Silence is Prayer
The Fruit of Prayer is Faith
The Fruit of Faith is Love
The Fruit of Love is Service
The Fruit of Service is Peace

and furthermore she adds "What you are is God's gift to you; What you make of yourself is your gift to God."

LET us Dare to Encounter JESUS with Love and Conviction in our hearts.

LET us want TO LIVE ... a fulfilling, loving, peaceful, Christian life align with the Gospel values.
LET us want to CONTEMPLATE ... to meditate and discern.

LET us want to SERVE ... CHRIST and mankind.

"LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GIVE GLORY TO OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN".
Matthew 5:16

JESUS LOVES YOU.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

Yours in St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic,

Dr. Michael Thio, President General

In Memoriam

It is with deep regret that we announce the following deaths:

Gerry St. Pierre, St. John the Baptist Conference, Amherstburg ON, January 1, 2012
Frank Maisonville, St. John the Baptist Conference, Amherstburg, January 9, 2012
Andrew Tytgat, Holy Name of Jesus Conference, Essex ON, January 25, 2012
Andre Roy, St. Jerome Conference, Windsor ON, April 8, 2012
Roland Breault, Most Precious Blood Conference, Windsor ON, April 11, 2012
Debbie Frimer, Our Lady of Attonement Conference, Windsor ON, May 19, 2012
Lucien Carrière, St-Sébastien Conference, Ottawa ON, July 2012.
Phil Charette, St. Michael Conference, Leamington ON, August 6, 2012
Messias Pavao, St. Michael Conference, Leamington ON, November 23, 2012
Jerome Bernard, St. John Vianney Conference, Windsor ON, December 9, 2012
Normand Provencher, Ste-Geneviève Conference, Québec QC, December 23, 2012
Claude Hubert, Trinité Conference, Orléans ON, January 1, 2013
René Boulet, Notre-Dame-de-Foy Conference, January 3, 2013
Leona Ford, Holy Redeemer Conference, Charlottetown PE, January 16, 2013
David McAsey, Holy Spirit Conference and St. Gerard Conference, Calgary AB, February 6, 2013
Gary Fagan, Holy Family Conference, Amherst NS, February 7, 2013
Eileen Orysiuk, St. Pius X Conference, Calgary AB, February 20, 2013
Angénard Morin, St-Denys-du-Plateau Conference, Ste-Foy QC, March 14, 2013
Gertrude Webb, Holy Redeemer Conference, Charlottetown PE, March 18, 2013
Jerome Bernard, St John Vianney Conference, Windsor ON
Roland Breault, Most Precious Blood Conference, Windsor ON
Phil Charette, St Michael Conference, Leamington ON
Debbie Frimer, Our Lady of Attonement Conference, Windsor ON
Don Harvey, St Mary's Conference, Collingwood ON
Claude Hubert, Trinité Conference, Ottawa ON
Frank Maisonville, St John the Baptist Conference, Amherstburg ON
Messias Pavao, St Michael Conference, Leamington ON
Andre Roy, St Jerome Conference, Windsor ON
Gerry St Pierre, St John the Baptist Conference, Amherstburg ON
Andrew Tygat, Holy Name of Jesus Conference, Essex ON
Barb Young, Store Manager, London ON
Gord Bergl, St. Michael Conference, Calgary AB
Marlene Soby, St. Michael Conference, Calgary AB

They were our brothers serving the poor.

Lord, we pray that all the good they did bear fruit and be continued.

Help us keep their memory alive in our hearts. Let us keep them in our prayers.

Please send your death notices to editor@ssvp.ca

STORIES WITHOUT END

There are matters of importance that are often neglected in our lives. Let us consider two of them: we live in a veritable ocean of stories and secondly we have a most urgent need of other people.

Every morning I am a creature of habit. I have a bowl of cereal, but it must be prepared in a particular fashion. I begin with two pieces of *Shredded Wheat 'Original'*. A banana is thinly sliced; three tablespoons of blue berries are added as well as a tablespoon of Maple Syrup and a scant quarter cup of 2% milk. This has to be accompanied by a good mug of freshly brewed coffee.

Think of all the people I need to bring about my bowl of cereal. Everybody is there: farmers, factory people, merchant seamen, transport folk, wholesalers and retailers, foreign and Canadian. And each one has his or her story.

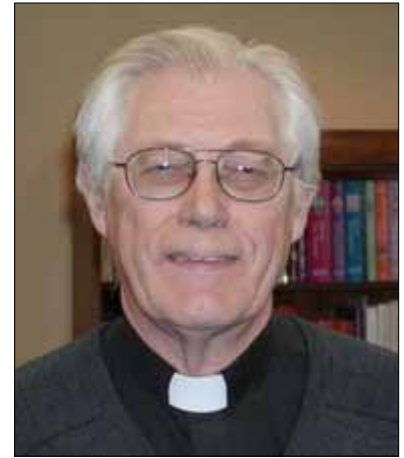
Now if I take the Christian perspective I know that each one of them is created in the image of God and each is loved by our Heavenly Father. Thinking this way leads us to an attitude of gratitude. We begin to understand why the only prayer of great saints is an act of thanksgiving

There is another side of this matter. My life is important for countless people. That is so even if my only action is to pray for all who are part of my story.

Also, these reflections help us understand the importance of the dialogue that the Vincentian has with the person in need who is being assisted. Material assistance is very important but equally important are the words of encouragement, the words that touch the dignity and the depth of spirit in the other person. How important is this human interaction that is part of our visits. The embers of human greatness reside deeply in everyone. Our Vincentian vocation often provides us with the opportunity to assist in fanning these embers into a vigorous flame.

The Holy Spirit is the agent that helps us maintain a truly Christian vision in whatever we do. May our study and prayer ensure that the Holy Spirit will be active in our lives.

Msgr. Peter Schonenbach
National Spiritual Advisor



YEAR OF FAITH 2012
2013

SHINE THE LIGHT OF CHRIST FULLY



This past week we were anticipating a severe snow-storm with high winds and the strong possibility of losing our power. A friend asked me if I had contingency plans if the power went out. I replied that I had candles and I would be fine. She asked me if the candles would give me enough light and suggested that I purchase a battery operated lamp that would give me more light. We never lost our power but I am grateful for my friend's suggestion, as I will now have a lamp to light my way in the future.

The same is true of our journey as Christians. We believe that Christ is the light of the world and we have that light within us through the Holy Spirit. Yet, just as I was willing to settle for a candle, we often settle ourselves with little or no light and we rarely let that light shine before others.

So often our prayer life is restricted to weekly or daily Mass and our prayers are said in the silence of our heart. As Catholics we rarely talk about God with our families, our friends or our co-workers and we rarely pray in public. At the first AGA that I ever attended, I met a very spiritual Vincentian who was never shy or uncomfortable talking about God and how much God loves us. A friend later told me that this person could be in a restaurant or in a room with 100 of his

co-workers and would be asked to say grace and he would do so with ease. That day we decided that we would follow his example and we promised each other that we would always say grace before our meal no matter where we were. Perhaps a small gesture but we need to let the light of Christ shine brightly in our lives. And the best way to share our faith and our belief in Christ is in our every day actions with others.

John the Baptist was not the light, but he came to testify to it. He knew that Christ was the light of the world and wanted others to know that reality. Then Christ came along and said to His disciples that they will be the light of the world after He goes. That means that we, as His disciples, are the light of the world today. It is our role to shine the light of Christ before others. As Vincentians we are called to shine His light before His poor. We ought to shine it brightly and not on "dimmer mode".

In St Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he gives us a great lesson in how we are to act as the light. Ephesians 1:3-6. It tells us to always be prayerful and never cease in giving thanks. We are called to remain thankful no matter what else is going on in our lives. That is not always easy because life often throws us some curve balls. We may be at odds with a relative or friend, but we are called to move beyond it. We are challenged to always be grateful for every gift, like our family or friends, even when they let us down. We ought to be grateful for the many gifts each day.

We are reminded to pray without ceasing. We need to pray daily both as individuals and as families. We come to Mass to receive His nourishment, but it is in our daily lives we are called to live the liturgy. Each morning may we remember that we are called to be the light of Christ. We are called to testify to that light by our words and actions, by what we say and what we do. May we not be afraid of praying in public or sharing our faith with someone in need. But in all things may our actions shine the light first. May we let

our light shine brightly before all. No dimmed lights, but lights shining brightly for all to see.

As Vincentians there are many times in our lives when we are presented with opportunities to do good and be part of something better. But we must be willing to take the risk and be willing to go for it. We must be willing to listen to the message and experience something new. We must always remember that our baptism has called us to see His light shine in all. We are called to see signs of His presence among us. We are called to take the risk and follow His signs. We are called to discover that Christ again. Each of us is different and we see different signs. Where is God guiding us this week? What risk do we need to take to see Christ's light?

Many Vincentians will tell you that their lives changed after becoming a member. They have seen the light of Christ in those they served. Their lives were forever different. But they had to take the risk and trust that in doing His work, we will see the light of Christ among us. For Vincentians it is most often in feeding the homeless or the hungry. However, we must remember that there are many other opportunities to see or share His light with others. There may be divisions in our family or a problem with a neighbour or friend or co-worker. How about we make the light of Christ shine by forgiving someone or reconciling with someone?

Whatever the sign that Christ gives us, may we take the risk and follow it. May our hearts be converted again to the Lord and may we discover the light of Christ.

Maureen MacIsaac
Spiritual Committee

Mission

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organisation 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 is anyone who suffers
 - come together as a family
- have personal contact with the poor
 - help in all possible ways



Spirituality

THE NEW EVANGELISATION AND THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

This text is taken from the vincenian publication of the National Council of Scotland.

Dear brothers and sisters of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul I want to begin with some significant words which were written by Bl. John Paul II. In par. 3 of *Mission of the Redeemer*, he said, "I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelisation". Notice that the Holy Father said that the Church should devote not some, but *all* of its energies to the new evangelisation. When John Paul spoke about new evangelisation, he did not mean that the Christian message was new, but rather that the culture in which it has to be proclaimed has changed in many respects. For instance, in Europe, which it is so secularized, millions of nominal Christians have little or no contact with the Church, are largely ignorant of its teachings, and live as if God does not exist. So the gospel message has to be shared with them in ways that are new in ardour, methods and forms of expression.

In par 3 of *Mission of the Redeemer*, John Paul II went on to say, "No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples." That means that, not only the Vincent de Paul Society, but each and every one of its members have a duty to engage in the new evangelisation. In this talk I want to suggest some possible ways in which the members can do this.

Only those who have been truly evangelised can evangelise effectively.

There is a Latin saying, *nemo dat quod non habet* which means "you cannot give what you haven't got." You and I can only evangelize effectively if we have first been truly evangelized ourselves. I know this from personal experience. I spent eight years of study in the seminary. So when I was ordained I knew a lot about the person of Jesus but I didn't really know him in person. In retrospect I can see that. Like many other cultural Catholics, I was a deist rather than a true Christian. I believed in the distant, abstract God of the philosophers but I did not have a personal relationship with the divine Son of God. However, when I was 29, I had a powerful religious experience which enabled the truth about Jesus to fall the vital 18 inches from my head to my heart. I knew

my sins were forgiven and I had the power to comprehend the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of Christ which surpassed the limited measure of my understanding so that I was filled with a sense of his presence within me.

As Pope Paul VI rightly said, "the person who has been evangelised goes on to evangelise others." Then

he added, "Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelisation: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn" (Par. 24 of *Evangelisation in the Modern World*). The members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul should imitate Christ's way of evangelising the poor by means of witness

and proclamation.

Evangelisation as Witness

A - Table Fellowship

In our Lord's day the poor were given to believe that they were under a curse because they neither knew nor kept the law. This was in line with O.T. teaching. In Deut 27:26 we read, "Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out." In Jn 7:49 the Pharisees echoed their point of view when they said of the people that Jesus ministered to, "this mob that knows nothing of the law - there is a curse on them." Jesus had come to announce the coming of God's kingdom, the cancellation of the debt of sin and the free unmerited gift of God's merciful love. So instead of saying they were under a curse, Jesus

conveyed to disreputable people of his day, such as tax collectors and public sinners that they were blessed. He did this by dining with them which was a sign of acceptance and respect. As theologian Albert Nolan has observed in *Jesus Before Christianity*, "Because Jesus was looked upon as a man of God and a prophet, they [the outcasts and sinners] would have interpreted his gesture of friendship as God's approval of them. They were now acceptable to God. Their sinfulness, ignorance, and

uncleanness had been overlooked and were no longer being held against them.” The members of the Vincent de Paul Society convey the attitude of Christ by means of their own non-judgmental acceptance of the poor, no matter how they have behaved.

The members of the Society may hate their sins but they love the sinners, and convey that love by treating them with reverence, gentleness and compassion.

B - Deeds of Mercy

Jesus also helped the poor in practical ways, e.g. when he fed the five thousand in the wilderness. With this in mind, St Vincent de Paul wrote, “Sentiments of love of God, of kindness, of good will, good as these may be, are often suspect if they do not result in good deeds . . . We should be on our guard, for it is possible to be well mannered and filled with noble sentiments and yet stop there. When the need for action arises, such people fall short. They may be consoled by their fervent imagination or content with the sweet sentiments they experience in prayer. They may speak like angels, but when it is a matter of working for God, of suffering, mortifying themselves, of teaching the poor, of seeking out the lost sheep, at rejoicing at deprivations, of comforting the sick or some other service here, they draw the line. Their courage fails them.” On another occasion, he summarized his understanding of the connection between affective and effective compassion when he said: “In so far as it is possible, the hand should be conformed to the heart.” The members of the Vincent de Paul Society are universally admired for the way they express their compassion in practical action. They know that compassion without material assistance is sentimentality, material assistance without compassion is condescension, but compassion expressed in material assistance is Emmanuel, God with us. Deeds of mercy are undoubtedly an integral aspect of the new evangelisation.

C - Action for justice

Jesus engaged in action for justice, e.g. when he critiqued the exploitation of the poor in the temple, overturned the tables of the money changers and chased away the

animals that were on sale. No wonder a 1971 synod of bishops declared, “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel,” When Pope John Paul II addressed the General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission in 1986, he encouraged the Assembly to “search out more than ever, with boldness, humility and skill, the causes of poverty and encourage short and long term solutions; adaptable and effective concrete solutions.” “By doing so,” he continued, “you will work for the credibility of the Gospel and of the Church.” The present day members of the Vincent de Paul Society imitate Christ not only when they associate with the poor and give them material assistance, but also when they seek to identify and rectify the systemic causes of their poverty and oppression.

Fr. Werenfried van Straaten, the founder of Aid to the Church in Need, could have been talking about members of the Society when he said in a Pentecost homily, “The Gospel has been printed millions of times on paper. It is sold in all languages. But people, nowadays do not ask for a paper Gospel. They demand a living Gospel. They hunger for Christ who is the living Good News. They are waiting to meet men and women in whom Christ becomes visible again, in whom they can recognise and love Christ. They demand of us that we should give Christ a living form again.” While witness of the kind already described is a vital aspect of the new evangelisation, it is not sufficient. Like Jesus, the members of the society need to look out for opportunities of proclaiming the gospel message to the poor.

The New Evangelisation as Proclamation

In Heb 11:6 we read, “without faith it is impossible to please God” and in Rm 10:17-18, we read, “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” Is it any wonder then that Pope Paul VI said on one occasion, “Even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified and made explicit by clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus” (Par. 22

Spirituality

Evangelisation in the Modern World). In the remainder of this talk we will focus on one way in which the members of the Vincent de Paul Society can proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

Person to person evangelisation

Although he preached to crowds of people, Jesus also engaged in person-to-person evangelisation e.g. with

Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-5), Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-5), Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:35-47) and the woman at the well (Jn 4:4-42). In the latter account Jesus accepted the Samaritan without a hint of judgment or condemnation and used the topic of water as a metaphor for new life in the Spirit. In the New Testament Church, the believers also engaged in person-to person evangelisation. There is an interesting example of this in Acts 8:26-42. It recounts how Philip evangelised an Ethiopian official he met on a lonely desert road.

The contemporary Church continues to advocate one-to-one evangelisation. Pope Paul VI said, “Side by side with the collective proclamation of the gospel, the other form of evangelisation, the person-to-person one, remains valid and important” (Par. 46 *Evangelisation in the Modern World*). It can take many forms such as a parent talking to a child about Jesus; a man sharing his or her faith with a friend, or a member of the Vincent de Paul Society talking to a needy person he or she met in the course of their charity work.

1 - Identify steppingstones to faith

Pope Paul VI once said, “one cannot deny the existence of real steppingstones to Christianity” (Par.55 of *Evangelisation in the Modern World*). So, those who want to engage in person-to-person evangelisation need to look out for steppingstones to faith. Here are three contemporary examples.

A. Recently a conscientious Catholic woman called Anne did a nursing exam. When it was finished, she was talking to a colleague called Liz about how things had gone. Liz said that she had been tired because she had slept badly the previous night and was also very anxious

throughout the exam. Then Anne said that she had slept well and was surprisingly calm. Liz asked how she had managed it. Anne explained that she had prayed to God for help and had trusted in divine help. As someone who had drifted away from the Church, Liz was not only surprised, she was also interested and asked Anne to tell her more about relying on God.

B. Dave, a Catholic taxi driver revealed at a retreat for men that he tried to evangelise when he was driving around the city. He explained that often a passenger would sit beside him in the front seat. For the sake of conversation the passenger might ask Dave when he had come on duty. He would respond by saying, “I attended Mass in my local Church at 8.00 A.M. and came on duty afterwards.” Often the passenger would be curious and go on to ask questions about his beliefs. This would give Dave an opportunity of sharing the Good News about Jesus and what he has done for us.

C. It should also be said that a believer can also raise meaning of life issues by himself or herself in a more direct way. For example, when a client who is being visited by a member of the Vincent de Paul Society talks about someone who has died, could be asked, “what exactly do you think happens after death?” That question can initiate a really good conversation about faith matters.

In these three instances person-to-person evangelization was made possible by identifying a stepping stone that could lead to a conversation about the Lord. When members of the Society are visiting their clients they can look out for steppingstones to faith.

2 - Personal testimony

John Paul II once observed, “People today put more trust in... experience than in dogma” (Par. 42 of *Mission of the Redeemer*). That being so, it is important to avoid preaching or talking down to people. It is better to share one’s personal faith story with others, by telling them what the Lord means to you and what he has done for you. As it says in Tob 12:6-7, “Proclaim before all with due honour the deeds of God, and do not be slack in

thanking him. A king's secret should be kept secret, but one must declare the works of God and give thanks with due honour" (Tob 12:11- 12). It is advisable that members of the Society who wish to evangelise others should write down a brief account of their own conversion story. Ideally, it should be structured as follows.

A. What were you like before you developed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

B. How did you come to relate to Jesus in a more intimate way and to experience the free gift of his saving mercy and love?

C. How did your new found relationship with Jesus have a transforming effect on you?

Whereas many of our contemporaries are resistant to dogmatic teaching of any kind, they do respect people's personal experience especially when it is shared in a sincere and humble way.

3 - Praying for others

No matter how well or badly an encounter of any kind has gone, evangelisers from the Vincent de Paul Society can bring it to a conclusion by asking the person they were talking to, whether he or she would like a prayer for any intention. Experience teaches that even those who are sceptical about Christianity will often reveal a need. It might be a relative who is sick, a friend whose marriage is in difficulty, or some personal need such as a financial problem, a desire to get a job, to overcome an addiction etc. The disclosure of such a need is significant because it is an acknowledgement of a certain openness to the grace and power of God. The person who is evangelising can go on to ask, "would you mind if I said that prayer for you right now?" If they say no, then assure them that in the future you will pray *for* them and their intention. In my experience, however, the person being asked this question will usually say that it is O.K. to pray *with* them, in the present.

We encourage the person who is saying the prayer to use this little formula of words as a prelude to the prayer, "God is love. God loves you. Because he loves you he

wants what is best for you. His love is the answer to your deepest need and the needs of the people you care about." The prayer follows. It is better to say it in the present rather than the future tense. For example if a woman has asked you to pray for her aunt Susan who is suffering from cancer, you could say something like this, "Lord, Susan is ailing from cancer. I thank you that you love her and desire what is best for her. Confident that this is so, I thank you that you are blessing her even as I pray by giving the gift of peace to her body, mind and soul. I commend her to your care knowing that your Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life is upon her now and will continue to be at work within her. Amen." Great things can and do happen as a result of such prayers even to the point of healings and miracles. As Jesus promised, "I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mk 11:24).

Conclusion

These are just a few ways through which we can do one-to-one evangelisation. What the members of the Society need, in order to proclaim the message of the Gospel in a person-to-person way, is conviction and courage. We have to overcome our fears, and like the first disciples, we should have a spirit of boldness. In Acts 4:30 we read that they prayed, "Enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness." In Eph 6:19-20 we also read, "Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given to me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel . . . Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should." This talk ends with the last words we hear at Mass, "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord."

Fr. Pat Collins C.M

Prison Ministry

THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL WINDSOR / ESSEX JAIL MINISTRY TEAM

During this “Year of Prison Ministry” we the members of the Windsor Essex Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Jail Ministry Team want to share some history and a few reflections from the “HEART”. We have been gifted and graced by many blessings and Spirit filled encounters with our brothers and sisters whom we meet and serve.

During this “Year of Prison Ministry” we the members of the Windsor Essex Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Jail Ministry Team want to share some history and a few reflections from the “HEART”. We have been gifted and graced by many blessings and Spirit filled encounters with our brothers and sisters whom we meet and serve.

The prison ministry started many years ago through Assumption Church, the church in the neighbourhood of the jail. The Jail Ministry team from the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul took it over about 20 years ago. Since that time, the members of the SSVPJM Team have provided two communion services every Sunday morning. Also, once every fourth Tuesday of the month, the women of the SSVPJM Team meet with the women in the jail and have a time of sharing the gospel message in word, song and activities, as well as, a snack and much conversation. The SSVP Jail Ministry is a committee of Central Council and reports monthly to the Council.



Our services on Sundays often start with an exchange of names, greetings and shaking hands.

There are often three Vincentians present to accompany those who come from the ranges. Sitting around a table with the cross, electric candle, and pix at the head of the table, we sing a song and even when they cannot sing we invite them to do so, as it is the heart that counts. Then, we have the introductory rite and the readings of that Sunday. We share an insight or explanation of the readings and invite feedback from the inmates. They open up and relate episodes of their lives. Often their comments as to how the reading applies to them teach and nourish us all. This dialogue is important, as we can invite questions and establish a good relationship with them. Sometimes, the group is up to thirteen people, sometimes, it is only one or two. It is amazing how the Spirit works, and that many or few, God enriches both them and us making a difference in our lives. After this session we have the communion service. One of the most treasured times is after the reception of the Eucharist when we recite together our Thanksgiving Prayer. It is always a time of deep connection to our loving God and each other. A blessing and a final song follow and more often than not we sing together their favourite hymn, “Amazing Grace”.

The session once a month with the women is more informal. There is no Communion service, but the Spirit is certainly present, and warm, caring relationships are established with the inmates. The Spirit filled time together gives many a sense of being respected, being listened to, genuinely supported, some courage and a measure of hope that in time they will be able to turn their lives around.

Also, about five times a year we provide what we call a ‘jug up’ for the inmates. We give up to one hundred

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fifty inmates a doughnut and a cup of cola. The inmates really enjoy this. Any leftovers are shared with the staff and given away to different agencies that assist adults and youth in need.

At Christmas time we give every inmate a bag of fruit with a handful of candy, and a homemade Christmas card from a school age child. The card is a highlight, and many inmates treasure the card for months. They know they are not forgotten and that people still care about them, in spite of their situation or crime.

Occasionally we give inmates we know a voucher, when they are released and have almost nothing to start with. If they have settled in the community they are referred to a Conference in their area. We have also assisted their families in need.

Our SSVPJM team members, find this service to the inmates a privilege, and have been blessed by God. Often we have seen God working through them.

Here are a few poignant reflections:

The most profound moments are when I really have to push myself to get out of bed and make my way to the west end jail, a very physically depressing and decrepit facility. Even though, some times I go reluctantly, the best sharing takes place that day during the church service. I know God is guiding my feet up those many stairs and I see the face of Christ in the inmates and guards. One particular Sunday we had the women as one of our two groups that day. We prayed the Lord's Prayer together and a female looked up and said "we are our daily bread". What a profound statement. How we nurture each other spiritually in so many ways. I am always encouraged how everyone helps one another, particularly those whose first language is not English. Every time I come away with the knowledge that God's grace is with me through these experiences and I wonder who I am really there for, the inmates or me. This is Church!

In John 1:46, Nathanael said to Philip, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

I suspect people today ask "Can anything good come from Jail?"

My answer is a very loud and joyous "YES!"

In the short four years that I have been involved with Jail Ministry, so many times, I have looked into the eyes of Christ in the faces of the women and men we serve. They have taught me so much about courage, strength and compassion as they struggle to live in their current environment.

No child grows up dreaming to one day live behind bars! Most times we do not know what they have suffered in their lives to bring them to this place and we seldom know what short-term or long-term impact our visits have on them, but I can relate an experience that shook me to my core. It happened on one of our Tuesday evenings spent with the women.

Often times, the women inmates will hug us as they leave to be locked in their cells until the next morning. One evening, a young girl, probably between the ages of 20-25, held on to me very tightly for an extended period of time and I could feel her tearfully shaking in my arms.

When I asked if she was okay, her response was, "You smell like my grandma".



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In that instant I felt God's loving embrace encircling both of us. I assume for her, it was a memory of happier times. For me, it was an opportunity to give thanks for being a part of this sacred ministry. This experience and many more are my answers to the question, "Can anything good come from Jail?"

One of the songs from the production of "Fiddler on the Roof" is, "Wonder of Wonder, Miracle of Miracles". The character exclaims that God takes the most ordinary of folks to be an instrument of good and a messenger of hope.

As a member of the Jail Ministry Team, I have come to enter the jail more humbly each time through the years. It is a seemingly unlikely spot for "wonder" and "miracles" and each time there is a gift given and a gift received. We who have come to be present to give and those who come to receive almost always change roles. How often I have been amazed, inspired and stirred to my depths by Providence and the influence of the Holy Spirit given as gift of good and hope to each of us through the inmates.

Most precious of all is however, when on the street or in a home visitation outside the walls we meet those we have come to know. I was gifted with this just recently. There was a ready smile, some tears of joy, a welcome hug and an exchange of "I'm doing OK!". "I've been

clean for six months." "I finished the programme and I found a good church and there's good support. When I shared this news with the other members of our Tuesday team our hearts were filled to overflowing. She continues to do well.

Though it doesn't always work out that way and whether we meet again inside or outside the walls, the "wonder" and "miracle" of God's life giving presence comes together in those encounters.

One of the most significant moments in my Jail Ministry experience was a true story from one of the inmates told by him during our sharing time. He had broken into a home in the Toronto area in the very early morning hours. He thought there was nobody home. As he explored the house he met an elderly lady in the living room, who surprised him by asking what he wanted. He was perplexed and quickly said, that he was hungry. The lady answered, "You sit right down and I'll make you a nice breakfast". To his relief she started to prepare him breakfast. He thought that she was going to call the police, but she did not. Her husband returned home, and she introduced them to each other. After breakfast, she gave him forty dollars and said, "Now this is not for drugs, but for food, and if you come by here in the neighborhood again, drop by and have a meal with us." He had never forgotten this, and it made the inmate think. He decided to serve his time and to go for treatment for addiction.

There are moments of Grace every time we enter the jail but at Christmas time these opportunities are striking in their revelation. Here are two remembrances from that gifted time.

The first time I was involved with distribution of Christmas goody bags at the Windsor jail was also the first time I had been to the different ranges where I could see personally the physical surroundings of the inmates. We sang "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" and everyone joined in. At the last "stop" we asked if they had any requests. Suddenly that space became even more sacred as one of the inmates requested



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“Silent Night”. We could tangibly feel the presence of the Holy Spirit as we sang and praised Christ’s birth. There was no “we” or “them” at that sacred moment in time. It was just “us”, enveloped by the shared spirituality of the moment.

I am just a new member of this special team. As I mentioned, witnessing the joy on those inmates’ faces when they read the hand-made Christmas cards from those grade school children was priceless. When three of us returned the following day, Sunday for the Communion service, the inmates could not thank us enough. They told us to make sure that we thanked the children as well. They were deeply moved.

I am also quite amazed at the unselfishness and concern for others that the inmates have shown during our prayer request. One gentleman was very sincere when he offered up prayers for his friend who was awaiting an operation. Even though the inmates are

cut off from society, they show genuine concern and compassion for those on “the outside” in spite of their own situation.

Finally, I found the staff to be friendly and accommodating. It seems that they are quite aware that our ministry is making a difference. I believe that our purpose, enthusiasm and presence there is very important. It has been a huge blessing for me. I look forward to my future ministry at the jail.

These are just some of the many “Stories from the Jail” as we call them. In all we continue to serve with love, respect, justice and joy as we are blessed through those whom we serve.

Guided by the Witness and Spirit of Jesus we remain,

**The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
Windsor / Essex Jail Ministry Team.**



“ALL MONIES COLLECTED IN THE NAME OF THE SOCIETY BELONG IN PRINCIPLE TO THE POOR OF THE WORLD.”

This statement was made in 1976, at an international meeting of the members of the Society from around the world. When members of the general public hear this statement, they give feedback such as: “It belongs to them so it isn’t charity,” “Are you doing the best possible thing with the money?,” and “The poor should have some choice in where the dollars are spent.” The implications and thoughtful consideration of this statement will help us to fulfil our mission and our spiritual calling.

If we consider this message in the “Light of Christ”, we could put ourselves in the place of the poor. What would they think if they ‘we’ heard this statement? If the funds belong to ‘us’ in principle, when ‘we’ receive the funds, ‘we’ are not receiving charity. ‘We’ are receiving funds that the faithful are intending for Christ, funds that have been donated in the name of the love of Christ. It is not charity that ‘we’ receive, but the love of Christ from our donors. It is not charity, it is love.

What would ‘we’ think if ‘we’ saw the **use** of the funds that in principle belong to ‘us’? Would ‘we’ consider their use as being done by good stewards? Are the administration fees being kept to a minimum? (We know what we think when the banks start to raise their administration fees on our funds.) Are the funds being distributed with care and caution or misused by those seeking to take advantage of ‘us’? Is the trust in the providence of God enabling help now, not ‘saving’ for low times? The use of the funds that belong to ‘us’ in principle is a different view of what is held in trust.

If funds belong to them/’us’, do ‘we’ have a choice in where the funds are spent? This is one of the principles of Systemic Change, “Invite everyone to the table who has a stake in the outcome; administrators, staff, those living in poverty themselves.” “Construct a shared vision with diverse stakeholders: poor communities, interested individuals, donors, churches, governments, NGOs, the private sector and the media.” from *10 Steps to Systemic Change*.

Systemic Change is the direction in which the Society is moving. The poor should have some choice in where the monies are spent.

This powerful and loving statement can be a guide to the appropriate use of our funds, as if we indeed were serving Christ in the poor, with love, respect, justice and joy.

- It is offered to members of Conferences and Councils with insufficient funds. In our case, we offer it to those who need internal twinning as recipients, to sincerely consider this an invitation to apply for help from other Conferences and Councils in Canada.
- It is offered to members of Conferences and Councils with funds beyond their needs for their current works. In our case, we offer it to those who can donate to Conferences, especially external, as we are mindful of the poor of the world.
- It is offered to members of Conferences and Councils around the world, who ask,

“What more can we do for the poor?”

Kathy Weswick
Canadian Twinning Chairperson

International Emergency Relief

The number of natural disasters and other calamities (e.g.: nuclear reactors explosions, Japan 2011) has been increasing in recent years. Such large scale events cause major property damage and destroy cultures and livestock, but more importantly, result in the loss of lives and immense suffering to hundreds, even thousands of survivors. The recovery period from a natural disaster takes months, more often, years. The National Council created the International Emergency Relief Committee in 2004 to respond to appeals for help when a disaster strikes abroad.

The Committee's role is to help Councils and Conferences outside of Canada in the provision of financial assistance, upon a written request by National Council's presidents of countries affected by a disaster. Major natural disasters or other such events (e.g.: refugees/displaced persons as a result of armed conflicts, epidemics, etc.) may occur anywhere in the world. However, Canada cannot help in every situation as emergency relief funds are limited. Emergency relief assistance is provided, if justified, to National Councils of countries that are twinned with Canada (i.e.: *Dominican Republic, Columbia, Guatemala, Haiti, Peru, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Antigua and Trinidad & Tobago*). Requests for assistance to other National Councils may be accepted, in the case of a major disaster, or as a result of an urgent appeal from the International Council General (ICG). In such situations, the National President may launch an appeal to Conferences and Councils in Canada for relief assistance.

Other National Councils of developed countries do provide emergency relief assistance to Councils and Conferences within their hemispheres (e.g.: Europe to Africa), according to historical links and the international SSVP structure. Canadian Conferences and Councils should consult with the Chair of the International Emergency Relief Committee before making a decision on financial assistance to a foreign

SSVP Council, other than to countries on the list of twinning countries.

All funds to be sent to foreign SSVP National Councils must be forwarded to the National Council Office for transfer to the appropriate National Council or the ICG.

Clermont Fortin
Chair, International Emergency Relief Committee



Haiti 2010

Youth

YOU WILL BE OFFERED TWO DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES AT THE AGA, TO GATHER FUNDS FOR YOUNG VINCENTIANS WHO WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WYD

Gourmet Dinner

On Friday evening, an excellent cook, Michael Burke, former President of the National Council of Canada, will prepare a delicious dinner for six people. Our young Vincentians will do a lively service. The dinner will take place in the dining room of the National Council house, in Ottawa.

In order to take part to that fabulous dinner, you are invited to participate in a draw. Tickets will be sold on site at the AGA, and the draw will take place at noon on Friday. The winner and his or her five guests will share that delicious dinner. Who will be the lucky ones?

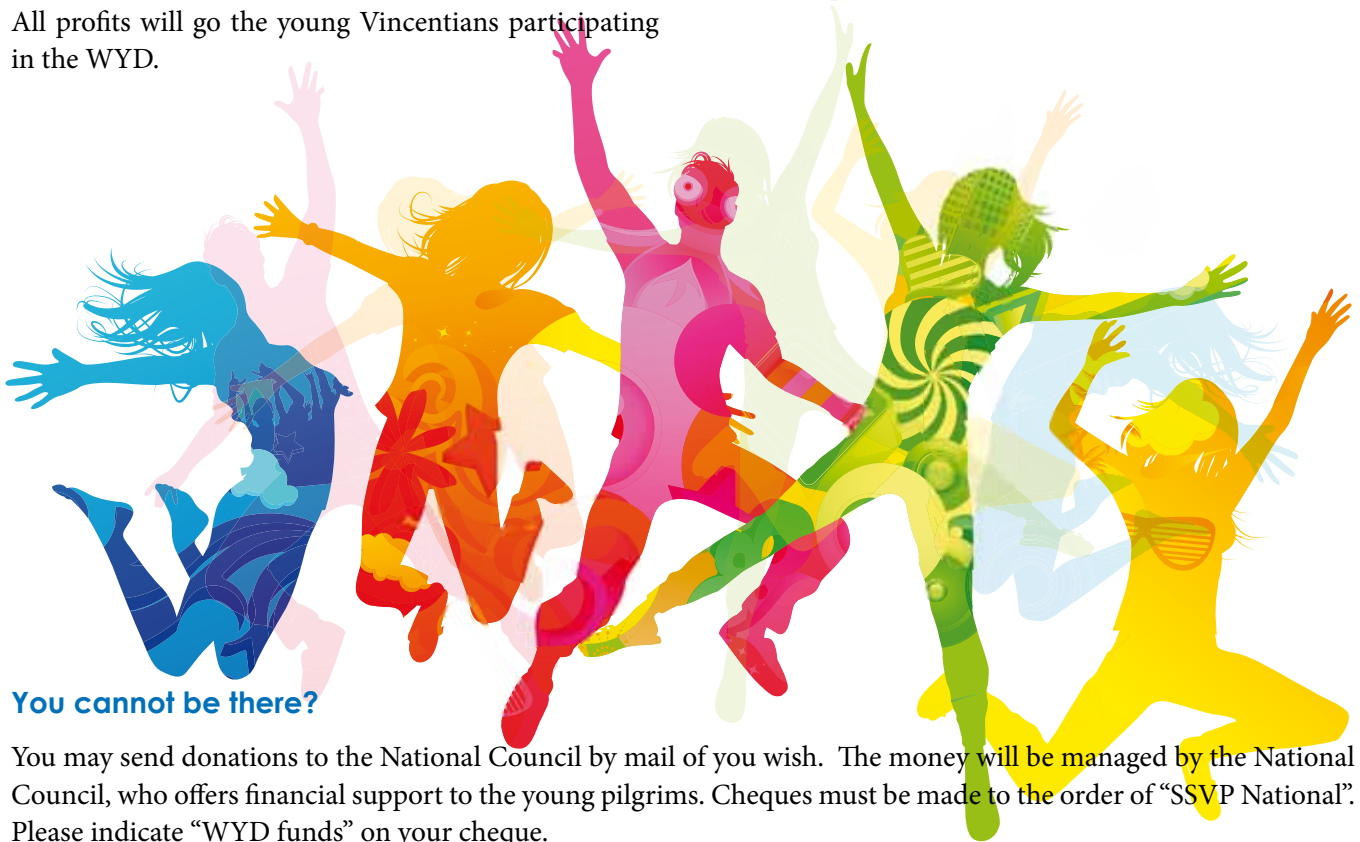
All profits will go the young Vincentians participating in the WYD.

Sleep Walk

On Saturday morning, around 6:30, AGA participants who wish to support the cause will walk together in Ottawa streets over a 1.5 km-long course.

During the activity, young and less-young alike will have the opportunity to give the donations collected beforehand from sponsors wishing to encourage them to get up early for a good cause! A sample letter can be downloaded from the Canadian SSVP website (youth section) to help you collect donations.

Complete details on the “Sleep Walk” activity will be available upon arrival at the 2013 AGA in Ottawa.



You cannot be there?

You may send donations to the National Council by mail if you wish. The money will be managed by the National Council, who offers financial support to the young pilgrims. Cheques must be made to the order of “SSVP National”. Please indicate “WYD funds” on your cheque.

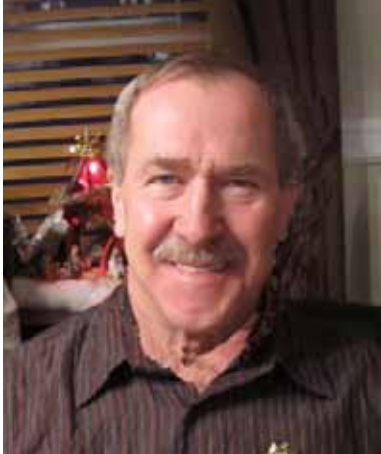
The money will be managed by the National Council, who offers financial support to the young pilgrims. Caroline Gilbert, Youth Representative at the National Council, is in charge of taking down the names of future participants in order to evaluate financial needs and put together the Canadian Vincentian delegation. You may contact her by e-mail at carolinegilbert@live.fr.

For additional information on World Youth Days, you may refer to the youth section of the National Council of Canada’s web site at www.sspv.ca.

Canada's Council in Action

QUEBEC REGIONAL COUNCIL

Michel Thibeault, Honoured by the Trois-Rivières Community



Michel Thibeault was featured in the daily newspaper *Le Nouvelliste* of Trois-Rivières, in its edition of January 28, 2013. We take this opportunity to celebrate his achievements.

Michel Thibeault is President of the Trois-Rivières

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Particular Council. His career is testimony to the patience and determination that characterise that honest and spontaneously generous man! Michel was first hired as a policeman in the city of Trois-Rivières.

As in his personal life, Michel, a calm and amicable man, took the time to climbing the career ladder until he became fire marshal. During that period, he was decorated by the Governor General of Canada, Madame Jeanne Sauvé, for saving a woman's life while on duty.

But he has not "saved" only one person; for Michel Thibeault, life puts us on a road that offers multiple opportunities, every day, to help others.

The first site occupied by the Society in Trois-Rivières was located at 2525 Royale Street. It was actually a colleague of Michel Thibeault, Gérald Cholette, who at the time had the idea of opening a second-hand store for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Trois-Rivières. During several years, Michel Thibeault did everything, or almost everything, even delivering furniture with his own trailer... With other Society pioneers, he participated in setting up a solid team of volunteers, the very essence and the true driving force of the organisation.

Michel Thibeault continues to be involved in the Media "Guignolée" and Christmas of the poor. *"I don't know if I was born for that purpose, but I have always had a preference for struggling individuals, for old people as well. Perhaps because I saw many of them die during my life... In reality, I'm the winner in all that, since every time I help someone, I feel good, I tell myself that I am capable of making someone happy..."*

Bravo Michel, and a lasting journey!

Last January 31, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Trois-Rivières inaugurated a **new store**, located at 2580 Royale Street, in Trois-Rivières.

After renting the place for the past year, the Particular Council proceeded with purchasing the building that was owned until now by Guy Beuchesne, a well-known businessman in the area.

The building, erected a few years ago, is in excellent condition and very well lit, providing the store with increased visibility. Comments from visitors are eloquent; they say that the place is clean, clear, welcoming and pleasant. The second storey houses administrative offices.

It is a new start for the Trois-Rivières Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, who is very happy for the transaction.



From left to right, Pierre Morissette, President Quebec Regional Council, André Boucher, Michel Thibeault, President Trois-Rivières Particular Council, Gérald Cholette, founder of the store, Agathe Proulx, wife of the late Jean-Guy Proulx, former director of the store and Mgr Luc Bouchard, bishop of the diocese.

Canada's Council in Action

ATLANTIC REGIONAL COUNCIL

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Annual Meeting Atlantic to be held at Cape Breton University May 24-May 26.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has been described as a family, fraternity of friends, good neighbours, Vincentians. As a president of Atlantic, I share these descriptions of our society, given by Conferences, isolated Conferences, and Particular Councils.

Last year Carol Horne, Maureen MacIssac and friends from the Halifax and Dartmouth Particular Councils came together to help plan a very successful National Annual meeting held at Saint Mary's University in June. The spirit of cooperation and charity was obvious to everyone. This year, a new committee led by the Particular Councils of Glace Bay and Northside Cape Breton, are hard at work planning the Annual meeting of Atlantic Regional Council to be held at Cape Breton University May 24-May 26. This project is not easy and I want to thank our Vice President of Cape Breton, Laura Young, George MacDougall President of Northside Particular Council and Jim MacIntyre President of Glace Bay Particular Council for their hard work and attention to detail. They love their work on behalf of the needy and all Vincentians in Atlantic. Lorraine Bartlett with over twenty years of service to the needy and Jim Guilford Treasurer are also working closely with the Cape Breton team by encouraging members of Conferences, Isolated Conferences and Particular Conferences to attend this year's meetings and share experiences that will help needy persons in Atlantic Canada and shape new directions in service.

Traditions start somewhere. This year our national President Penny Craig and President Elect Jean Noel Cormier will give a joint presentation "Looking Back, Looking Forward". This marks the first time a past president and president elect will stand on the same podium in support of our Society. They are sending the message, communication works. They believe our Society has

a proud history and that the poor will continue to be served in justice and joy.

The presidents of isolated Conferences, The Vice Presidents of Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton, and the presidents of five Particular Councils will also be asked to make presentations along with our Twinning representative. The theme of this year's conference is "To live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy". This year marks two hundred years since the birth of our principal founder Frederic Ozanam.

All events take place at the University of Cape Breton. To see the university map go to cbu.ca. Parking will be available in front of Building 19 and Vincentians may stay at the MacDonald residence. The university has asked the organizing committee to book all meals in advance so that they have an idea of how many to prepare. An early registration fee of fifty dollars and the late registration fee of sixty dollars per person covers the two meet and greet socials, coffee breaks during each session, parking fees, and multi-purpose room rental. The cost of meals and residence are also listed on the registration form. Double rooms are available at 52.00 a night. A very limited number of single rooms are also available on a first come first serve basis. Transportation from McCurdy airport to the University and return will be provided to those attending the meetings.

Events planned include a presentation with special reference to the Conference theme by Father Paul Abbass at the opening supper on Friday night and a supper with Father Jake Andrea on Saturday evening.

I strongly support the Cape Breton team and the dedicated members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Atlantic. Every member of the organizing committee has over ten years of experience with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. They see Christ in the face of the poor. They seek to live the gospel message by serving Him in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy. They

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know in their hearts that this is not easy, that it begins at the Conference level with needed support from Atlantic region and our entire National team across Canada.

Meet the service team at Cape Breton University, Learn more about the wonderful work done by young and old of The St John's Particular Council in New Foundland, the new directions taken in service to the needy by The Halifax Particular Council's 'Hand in hand' Project team and the amazing support programs for the poor and needy done at Christmas time by the Dartmouth Particular Council. The Isolated Conferences of Prince Edward Island, Northern Nova Scotia and New Foundland will be there to share their work on advocacy, member recruitment and other services.

Although the number of Vincentians providing service is decreasing and although an increasing number of persons require service I am confident the work will be done with joy with justice to those in need. New and narrow roads are being taken to feed the Hungry, encourage self-confidence, and extend the arm of friendship to the poor. That friendship will blossom in Atlantic Canada with your prayers. Like never before it will bloom with your prayers.

**Dennis McCormack, President
Atlantic Region**

Members of the planning committee Annual meeting of Cape Breton



George MacDougall, President
North Side Particular Council



Laura Young, Vice President
Cape Breton



Jim McIntyre, President
Glace Bay Particular Council



Jim Guilford, Treasurer
Atlantic Regional Council



Lorraine Bartlett, Secretary
Atlantic Regional Council



Dennis McCormack, President
Atlantic Regional Council

Canada's Council in Action

ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL

The Year of the Young Vincentian

Frederic Ozanam was a 20 year old student who started the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. We need to get back to our roots and encourage the young people to become part of our Society, giving them an active part by doing activities they can and like to do. The world we live in is not the same as it was when Frederic Ozanam started his home visits with fellow students. We must be able to encourage the young people to embrace the need to help in our communities with the use of all their enthusiasm and modern technology.

With that in mind Ontario has dedicated this the Year of the Young Vincentian. We started with an article in the Catholic Register in November announcing the start of the special year. We followed that up with contacting all the Catholic School Boards with information about our Society, some of our special projects and also included them in the mailings of our newsletter The Vincentimes. Some School Boards have been enthusiastic and from others we have had no reaction.

Various actives planned this year, include a Video Contest where Young Vincentians or school children are encouraged to make a short video depicting some aspect of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Hopefully these will be suitable to include on our updated website.

On May 24th we are having a Sleep Out for Poverty, where young people are encouraged to raise funds, collect food and clothing, to help those in need in our communities. At the same time we hope that they will be sleeping outside in their own makeshift shelters, being nourished only by water and crackers; just a small way of feeling what it is like to be homeless.

We are also pushing our Ozanam Fund which helps young people get an education as a way out of poverty.

Another project started by Halton Particular Council, which we hope will go across Ontario is the Canadian Learning Bond and Canadian Education Saving Grant , as a way of saving for future education. Halton will give the first \$25 deposit.

BAM Two ; The Ontario Youth Committee is working actively on making the 2nd **BAM** (Big Awesome Meeting) even bigger and better than last year.

Ontario Regional Council is sending five pilgrims to the World Youth Day in Brazil. This time each person has to pay \$500, and Ontario will pay the rest.

These are some of the activities planned for The Year of the Young Vincentian. There will be more activities as part of Conferences, throughout the year.

Geraldine Campbell, Secretary and Chair of Public Relations, Ontario Regional Council



Canada's Council in Action

ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL

On Friday September 28th, 2012 youth groups from all over Ontario came together in London, Ontario for the first annual **BAM**.

BAM stands for Big Awesome Meeting, a retreat specifically geared towards the youth involved in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, up to the age of 35.

The event was coordinated by Lillian Mulder, Youth Advisor, who had this to say,

"I am so thrilled about how the weekend has turned out; we have been blessed to have met such beautiful youth from Ontario. Each sharing the gifts that God has given them. It has warmed my heart to see them building together, sharing in faith and the passion of serving the poor."

The youth arrived Friday evening, between 7 and 8pm. Once everyone got settled there were games and introductions, and an opening prayer.

The youth were treated to t-shirt decorating followed by an hour of reflection. The night finished with a movie (The Way starring Martin Sheen) and snacks.

Jessica Vadori, age 16, from Windsor had this to say about the weekend:

"It was incredible, it was an amazing experience. It was inspirational, I would go again."

The morning opened with breakfast and grace followed by prayer. Next up was a workshop lead by Jim Paddon. The workshop was a brief history of Saint Vincent and Frederic Ozanam.

"It was fun. I liked the food and the games were mostly fun. I learned a lot about Frederic Ozanam, the founder," said Aidan Bruneel, age 14, from London.

After lunch the youth were treated to music performed by Chris Schmarek. The music was Christian soft rock in nature and was a big hit.

Next on the agenda was a workshop about System Change which was lead by Jerry Hartnett. Some of the topics raised were Charity vs System Change, The history of SSVP and Systemic Change, Systemic Change for the individual and the community, etc.

Marieke Creese, age 20, from Waterloo had this to say about the retreat,

"It's great to see so many enthusiastic youth! We learned about systemic change which is a great initiative that will be helpful in the present and the long term."

After a break for snacks the youth were treated to a workshop about Spirituality, headed by Janine Rocheleau. After this last workshop the youth attended a Mass.

After a wonderful dinner that evening, everyone said goodbye and with that the retreat was finished for this year, leaving the youth in anticipation of next year.

Lillian is hopeful **BAM** will be hosted each year in a different part of Ontario. Possibly Sudbury, Windsor or Chatham.

Tim Titus, age 20 from Chatham, had this to say about the weekend,

"It's good to see youth both 'young and old' come together to help the less fortunate. Great attitudes and leadership shown."

Thank you to the Holy Family Parish for hosting the first **BAM** and to Rev. Peter Poel for the fantastic evening Mass. And also a big thanks to the CWL and the Knights of Columbus for preparing the meals



Canada's Council in Action

ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL



Camp Vincent, also known as St. Vincent de Paul Camp, is a residential summer camp for children ages 6 - 15 yrs old. We accommodate over 700 children each summer from all walks of life, and strive to provide an outdoor program that helps children grow in mind, body, and spirit.

The camp was established by the St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1974, approximately 4 miles east of Thamesville, Ontario. The camp is located in one of the largest and most significant forested areas in southwestern Ontario for size, diversity, forest cover and rare species. Known as Bothwell Forest or «Skunk's Misery», the area contains many unique opportunities for the observation of wildlife that is seldom found anywhere else.

Camp Vincent consists of approximately 69 acres, over half of which is forested. Our facilities include 10 well-ventilated cabins, a large washroom building with

showers, a fully stocked infirmary, a spacious rec hall, dining hall, arts hall, and swimming pool. Our facilities also boast a large and spacious recreational field for sporting activities and games, complete with a baseball diamond, volleyball field, and soccer field, as well as a large trailed forest area.

Some of our many activities include swimming, hiking, canoeing, archery, arts (crafts, art, dance, music, and drama), nature discovery, campouts, sporting activities, wagon rides, and camp-wide games. One of the most significant aspects of our camp, and the driving force behind all of our activities, is the weekly theme and programming. Each week, campers embark on a themed adventure and an engaging story through the use of games, characters, story lines, and props. Various weekly activities revolve around a particular theme and encourage campers to become characters in a unique story!



Canada's Council in Action



Our 2012 themes for girls' weeks included Cirque du Soleil, Arts Week, and Legendary Mythology; our boys' weeks hosted the themes of Survival in Nature, Sherlock Holmes, and Video Game Week. Our Co-Ed week had the privilege of once again playing host to our annual Colour Wars Week where various colour teams compete in challenges. This year, we are hosting a Junior Co-Ed week, as well as a Senior Co-Ed week to provide this unique opportunity to as many campers as possible! New to this year, we have also adjusted our age groups to include campers aged 6 years old in order to incorporate campers from grade one and up.

At Camp Vincent, we take a great deal of pride in the level of creativity our staff applies to the programming during the summer. Our goal, in addition to providing each child with an unforgettable experience, is providing them with a unique experience each time they visit us. Whether it is a camper's first visit or their tenth, we enjoy the challenge of trying to provide something new

each time. We also strive to ensure that each child is able to take advantage of smaller group experiences to ensure proper attention from their leaders and personal growth opportunities.

While it is true that we provide a variety of outdoor experiences to campers, we also provide a kind of "life experience" that affords them the opportunity for personal growth, expands their independence, and develops confidence and self-esteem. It also provides a safe environment where campers are able to meet and develop friendships with other individuals as unique as they are. Regardless of financial, social, or faith backgrounds, we believe that summer camp is an experience every child should have the opportunity to enjoy, and we are committed to providing "a summer of fun, a lifetime of memories".

For more information, visit us at www.campvincent.com



Canada's Council in Action

ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL

Vincenian program targets education

Written by Ruane Remy, The Catholic Register Thursday, 24 January 2013 13:13

Ozanam fund hoping that school will help raise people out of poverty.

TORONTO Ontario's Society of St. Vincent de Paul has launched an education program as it continues to evolve from a purely charitable organization to one that can fundamentally change lives.

The Ozanam Education Fund Program, named after the St. Vincent de Paul Society's founder Frédéric Ozanam, has been created and funded by the society's Ontario Regional Council to provide financial assistance towards education to help individuals and families escape the cycle of poverty. The Regional Council's Systemic Change Projects Committee, a group of three members and the occasional ad hoc contributor, runs the program that started off with \$40,000.

"The (Regional Council) said, 'Here's some seed money. We want you to go out and start with this and see what you can do in finding really worthy cases... people who are in poverty situations where if you provide some extra funds, it can get them out of that situation and get them into some kind of training,'" said project committee chair Jere Hartnett.

In an article on poverty and education, Hartnett wrote, "The main obstacle is the lack of financial resources. Funds are required for tuition, course fees, computer equipment, tools, accommodation, food, transportation, day care, previous debt payments, etc.. Any combination of these can present barriers that will continue to prevent the person from ever being able to obtain the education or training they need to obtain a decent job. With a low-paying or part-time job or no job at all they will continue to scrape by with a mere existence trapped in a world of poverty." Hartnett says his committee could have restricted the fund to students graduating high school, but decided to extend the program to older applicants living in poverty who wanted to further their education. The committee will

grant up to \$2,000 per person, meaning it can provide money to 20 people a year.

Since first accepting applications last fall, three people have received funds for post-secondary education and a fourth application is in the works.

"A couple of them are single mothers," said Hartnett. "One has a couple of teenage daughters, and she's been scraping by... She's going to be a hospital medical administrator, (but) she needs to go back to CDI College." People apply to the Ozanam fund through a referral process. A member of their local St. Vincent de Paul Conference would need to recommend them and assist them in completing the application forms before sending the package to the projects committee.

Conference members are typically involved with their communities, engaging in charitable works, such as distributing food, clothes, etc.

"So at that level, our people are in touch with a lot of people who are in those situations," said Hartnett. "So right now we rely on them bringing forward cases."

If a person is seeking funds, but is not in contact with a society member, Hartnett recommends that he or she seek out their local St. Vincent de Paul Conference.

Once an application is in, the key factors to gaining the funds include quantity of applications, the priority of cases and applicants' inaccessibility to education and training.

"We're looking a little more at the overall situation, understanding the overall environment that they're in and saying, yeah, they need this funding to make the difference and get out of that situation," said Hartnett.

Right now there are few applicants, so the committee is handing out funds to those eligible on a first-come, first-serve basis. But when more applications come in, the plan is for a more stringent screening process and assessing applicants in blocks three times a year. Those who receive funds can reapply.

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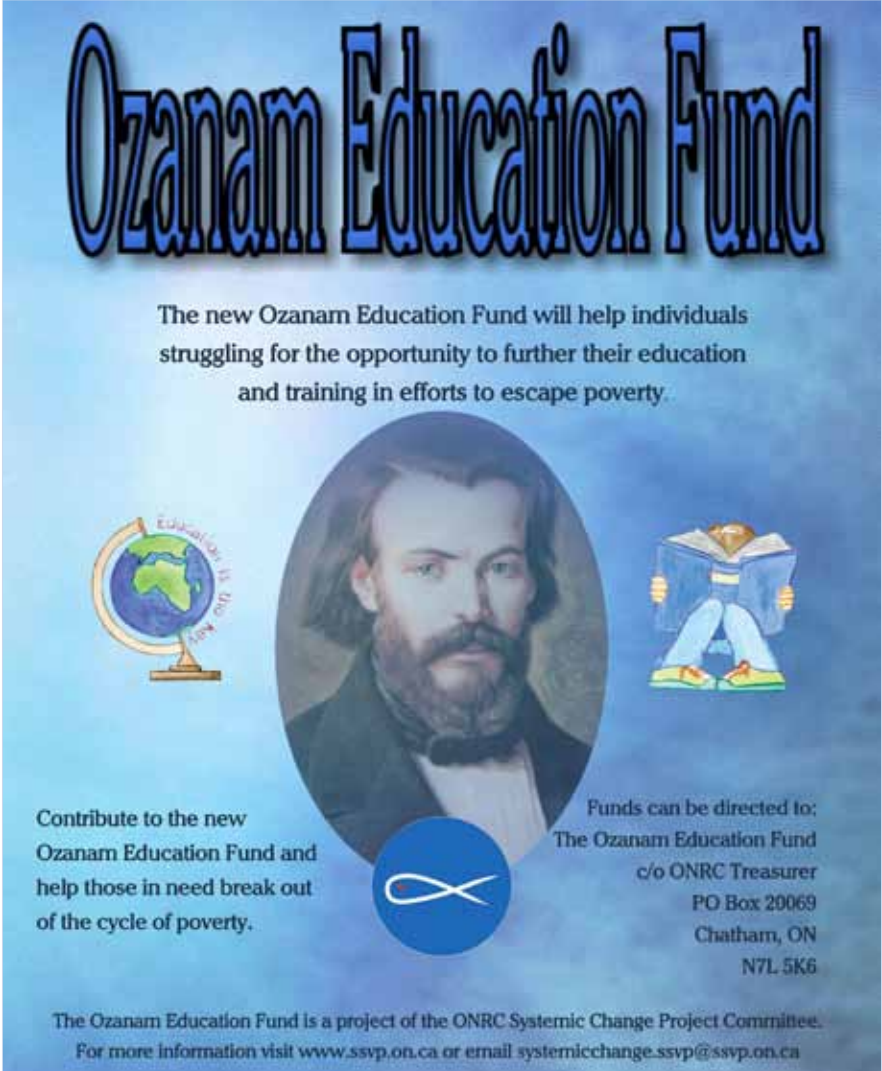
The projects committee encourages donations to keep the fund running and to expand it in the future.

“This can be done through your local Saint Vincent de Paul organization or by making a donation directly to the Ozanam Fund,” wrote Hartnett.

“We’re really committed to (the Ozanam Education Fund)... and that’s why there are several people here who feel quite passionate about this project.”

For more information on the Ozanam Education Fund Program, contact:

systemicchange.ssvp@ssvp.on.ca.



Ozanam Education Fund

The new Ozanam Education Fund will help individuals struggling for the opportunity to further their education and training in efforts to escape poverty.

Contribute to the new Ozanam Education Fund and help those in need break out of the cycle of poverty.

Funds can be directed to:
The Ozanam Education Fund
c/o ONRC Treasurer
PO Box 20069
Chatham, ON
N7L 5K6

The Ozanam Education Fund is a project of the ONRC Systemic Change Project Committee.
For more information visit www.ssvp.on.ca or email systemicchange.ssvp@ssvp.on.ca

The poster features a central portrait of a man with a beard, surrounded by icons: a globe with the text 'Education is the key', a person reading a book, and a blue infinity symbol.



Ginette Paré, President of the St. Paul (Ottawa) Particular Council, pays tribute to Raymond Lurette

For more than 25 years, as Conference President, Raymond dedicated himself to helping the needy in the St. Sebastian parish. He gave everything to that task, dedicating time and energy to serving the poor.

On behalf of the Particular Council Conferences, she gives him the medal minted for the beatification of Frederic Ozanam (August 22, 1997).

Raymond gives thanks to the Lord for all those years of service. He is happy that he could contribute to help families in his community, and says that he has always appreciated sharing with the members of other Conferences.

Pierre Hubert

Canada's Council in Action

WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL

City Suffering Prompts Vincent de Paul's Growth
January 14, 2001 *Western Catholic Reporter*



Terry Muench, Margaret Mechefske and Eileen Orysiuk are active in the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Edmonton's St. John the Evangelist Parish.

These headlines from a past article in the WCR featured Eileen Orysiuk, an aggressive real estate professional, who was one of the founding members of our Society in Edmonton. She was quoted as saying "You don't have to possess special skills to be part of this society. Willingness

to help others is the only requirement." The picture to the left shows Eileen and some of her Vincentian family in 2001.

Well Eileen had that willingness and with it she started a program of growth and success in Edmonton that is truly special.

In 2000 when Don Hunter came from Calgary to initiate SSVP Conference formation in Edmonton, he and other early Vincentians like Eileen had no idea that it would take off with such success.

The rapid growth of the Society in Edmonton has them in a unique structure with the Edmonton Particular Council functioning like a Central Council and 3 Particular Councils reporting (Edmonton North, South and West). Growth continues with Red Deer being the most recently Aggregated Conference and New Conference Formation activity underway in Spruce Grove, Slave Lake and St Joseph's College at the University of Alberta. "Application for Central Council Institution is just around the corner", says Bernie McCracken who is President of the Edmonton Particular Council.

Let's look at the growth that Eileen and others have inspired:

- The Society in Edmonton currently has over 500 members assisting more than 2000 families a year.
- Their call line receives over 1,000 calls a month.

- They have Conferences in all parts of the city with a Central Distribution Centre and other warehouse space totaling approximately 10,000 sq ft.
- They run three large trucks for furniture pickup and deliveries.
- A relationship has been developed with major city hotels to acquire used beds and furniture.
- They have food pantries in eight locations around the city.
- A SSVP Spirituality Group has started to have meetings.
- They have initiated a strategy for establishing a Criminal Justice (Prisons) Ministry and Vincentians are meeting regularly to coordinate involvement.
- A strong website (www.ssvpedmonton.ca) has been started and is constantly updated to assure maximum communication within the Vincentian Family.
- A new user-friendly data base has been developed and is being tested with a few of the Edmonton Conferences and is soon to be offered to Conferences across Canada.
- A Capital Fund Raising Committee is active in the support of aggressive SSVP expansion plans to serve those in need.
- Youth members have signed up to go to FamVin 2013 in Brazil.

If this only described the current dynamics of the Society it would be a great story, but there is so much more.

After the fire in Slave Lake Alberta, SSVP Edmonton put together a Disaster Relief Program that, with the financial assistance of the Societies National Board, provided help to the burned out victims of the fire. Truck loads of clothing, furniture, bedding, back-to-school supplies, handyman tools, and many other items were distributed without question to those in need.

Canada's Council in Action

The Archdiocese support for SSVP was demonstrated recently with a fund raising Gala Dinner where over 700 attended. About \$150,000 was shared by Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Edmonton and the Diocese of Mackenzie – Fort Smith where a lot of SSVP work is going on. In fact Eileen was a driver in the SSVP assist to the Communities in Canada's far north. Over the years she developed a passion for working with Sister Fay Trombley of Tuktoyaktuk. With the assistance of Daryl Dittrich from Edmonton, they provided Tuk with sea containers loaded with food, clothing and materials for the repair of the Church.

The Edmonton Archdiocese filmed and recorded the passion that SSVP has developed with a video production "Serving in Hope". You can view this video at www.ssvpedmonton.ca. This presentation is a milestone in the growth of the Society in Edmonton.

Edmontonians continues to see and hear about the new SSVP through their collaboration with Edmonton Separate School Board, the Bissell Centre, Homeward Trust and many other agencies, shelters and programs in the city. Eileen contributed to the start of a process that shows "Catholics in Action". Her legacy lives on through the many Vincentians that she inspired.

Vincentian Eileen Orysiuk left us to be with her Lord on February 20, 2013. She was a leader, the first president of St. John/Holy Spirit Conference in Edmonton. She worked along side Bob Prestash to form Edmonton Council, start stores and was instrumental in Edmonton's now famous annual auction. She was an "iron lady" in carrying out justice. She loved the Society and worked tirelessly for the advancement of those in poverty.

Among her many credits is the "True North Strong and Free" especially Tuktoyaktuk, commonly called "Tuk". She was the push in getting the conference in Tuk and was the push and heart of the "North of 60" project, which flourishes today.

Eileen, upon moving to Calgary continued her love of the Society and making change. She was involved in Strategic planning and sat on Calgary central council and a member of St. Pius X Conference in Calgary.

Her big dream she never completed, mentioned often in her last days was Stores for Calgary and of course starting new conferences north of 60.

She was fierce in her passion to serve the poor with love and respect. Well done good and faithful servant.



Bernie talking with Daryl Dittrich - the volunteer Distribution Centre Manager, John Chin - the Chairman of the Building Committee with Max Wan - President of the Divine Mercy Conference.



Canada's Council in Action

BC AND YUKON REGIONAL COUNCIL

The New Generation of Vincentians

We need the Youth of our Parish to join us, and become "The New Generation of Vincentians".

This group of fine young men and women is the "CFC-Youth Group from Our Lady of Good Counsel Church and Parish in Surrey, British Columbia.

This picture was taken at Christmas 2012, in the Don Bosco Youth Centre, and this Youth group is a non-profit catholic organization. They were formerly Youth for Christ, now they operate under the banner called CFC Youth ANCOF, (Answering the Cry of the Poor).

It was perfect timing when we met last year, we, being the Society of St Vincent de Paul at OLG, doing our Lemon loaf fund raiser for our Christmas hampers for all the needy families in our Parish community. Mike McCormick, our President of Fraser East-West Particular Council was assisting us that particular Sunday, after several masses.

Mike gave a tremendous presentation for us, and on behalf of SSVP, to gently remind our parishioners of the great need and urgency of the work that we do in the Parish, and most especially at Christmas time, when the need is the greatest and most urgent.

We managed to sell 95 Lemon loaves, that Sunday. It was our third year doing this Fundraiser, which our parishioners really enjoy. On top of that, we received donations in cash, worth \$800, that day. As we sold the Lemon loaves we interacted with the Community, and answered all their questions, about what we do as St. Vincent de Paul, throughout the year, and most especially at Christmas, with our hampers.

To our surprise, a young man named Rocky Nguyen, approached us and introduced himself, and told us about the Youth organization, that he and his friends were a part of, called CFC and that they wanted to donate non perishable grocery items to go towards our Christmas hampers, and some boxes of used clothing as well.

The donations came from the CFC Youth Parishes all around Surrey and the Tri-Cities area. They are the Pacific East Cluster.

We were really moved and touched by the generosity of these fine young men and women, taking of their time, and efforts to give to others, so unselfishly... at Christmas time!

The following two pictures show just some of the non-perishable grocery items donated to us for the needy families.

We are so thankful and grateful to them, for what they did. They are truly young Vincentians amongst us. The non perishable groceries were a great help for our needy families.

Rocky Nguyen, is the young energetic leader of this CFC Youth group, and it was a pleasure to have met him, and we will continue to work together with his CFC Youth, and bring new Vincentians amongst us, within our SSVP Conference at OLG, with a new, vibrant and energetic generation.

With Thanks,

Glynnis Benevoli, President
Our Lady of Good Counsel Conference

Canada's Council in Action

British Columbia and Yukon Regional Council Annual General Meeting



The AGM of the British Columbia and Yukon Regional Council will be held this May in the beautiful Comox Valley on Vancouver Island. We cordially invite all Vincentians from the region to join us for a weekend together to help us all develop a deeper appreciation for the mission of our founder Blessed Frederic Ozanam. It will also give us a greater awareness of the community of Vincentians in our region. And, of course, your hosts are eager to demonstrate their island hospitality to all their guests.

We will gather at Christ the King parish in Courtenay at 1599 Tunner Drive. Our hosts, Bill Duncan, President of the N. Vancouver Island Particular Council, and Claude Bédard, President of the Christ the King Conference look forward to renewing friendships and meeting new Vincentians attending their first Regional AGM. Everyone is welcome as we deepen our spirituality and Vincentian fraternity.

The weekend begins in the evening on Friday May 3rd, with a complimentary Wine and Cheese Reception which will enable us to meet and greet all the participants. On Saturday morning, after a special mass for Vincentians with Bishop Richard Gagnon, the keynote address to the general assembly will be delivered by Father Shayne, a dynamic speaker who is pastor of St. Patrick's parish in Campbell River. During the remainder of the day you are invited to attend a varied program of workshops under the theme of "The Light of Christ". In the evening, to round out the day, we encourage you to attend our formal banquet (included in your \$60 registration fee). The Regional Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday morning.

This is a wonderful opportunity to gain valuable knowledge, share your own experiences and develop lasting friendships. The registration form and the program can be downloaded from the Victoria Particular Council website at www.svdpvictoria.com. Please join us for what promises to be a wonderful weekend.

May God bless our endeavours and our Annual General Meeting.





Serviens in spe

“PUTTING OUR FAITH INTO ACTION” MEANS “SERVING IN HOPE”

FREDERIC OZANAM shared with his confreres that it is not enough to merely look after the physical needs of the poor, we must also:

-----, -----, -----, -----.

(After reading the article, fill in what you think are the most salient features to be addressed.)

When we think about hope and all that it engenders, we find it to be the most fundamental part of who we are and what it means to be Christian. It is such an important topic to the fundamental way we work as Vincentians and live as Christians. It is our mission, and it is our motto!

It would be interesting to share a little of my views as to what it means to be a Vincentian Christian, and to look at the critical elements of bringing the Jesus Vincentian relationship to all whom we serve and to ourselves. Also, it is important to emphasize, and for us to realize, as Vincentians, how vital this aspect is in our understanding of our Vincentian vocation. To know and understand that we need to see each other as signs of hope, and how that hope may come about.

We know that the Gospel message provides the guiding light that we need to see Christ in others as we interact with our neighbours and assist others, such as our brothers and sister Vincentians in our work, and I daresay in our day to day community living.

In the message of the Gospel, and also that which we have enshrined in our Mission statement: Christ himself asked us to treat others with love, compassion and justice...even those who seem the least able to embody the presence of Christ, and to do so with joy.

As our Society's mission statement embodies this Gospel message and asks this of us. Sometimes this is not easily done...sometimes we lose faith and perspective, and it is easy to miss that divine presence in ourselves and others. This can hold true even for those who are closest to us.

Did you ever stop to think why Christians can be happy and joyful in the midst of a cruel and harsh world? The basic reason is that we have confidence that one day we will rise with Christ to eternal life and that is where hope starts and leads us as Christians.

By our Baptism we share in the privileges of the risen Christ. We possess a new life greater than the human life we received at birth. We are swept up as it were, into a new creation more wonderful than the creation of the world.

Our happiness at Easter comes first of all from the fact that Jesus, whom we love and want to follow, has conquered suffering and death and has risen to unending glory in the bosom of the Father.

For Christ, death was only the final step to his eternal glorification. The resurrection is not only the glorification of Jesus; it is also the model and guarantee of our own resurrection and the hope of eternal life.

The baptized Christian, then, has a sure hope that he or she shall likewise rise glorious with Christ on the last day. This happens, however, only if each of us remains faithful to the demands of our Christian Baptism.

Through our union with Christ, we are not merely servants but sons and daughters of God, his children, through grace. We share “the unfathomable riches of Christ.” (Eph 3:8) Thus our job as Vincentians is to spread the “Good News” and share these riches we have been so freely given. Most especially by our actions towards each other and those we serve.

It is to be understood, that if we live Gospel Values we must use mind, body and spirit to fulfill what the Holy Spirit has inspired us to accomplish. Who we are is a gift, and by using these gifts we become more of who we are.

Love, is another element of our mission statement that provides a basis for Christian hope. In the Gospel



when Jesus answers questions related to the greatest commandment, Jesus responds from his heart and from the deep relationship he has with his Father in heaven.

The commandment to love God and your neighbour seems quite simple, but then it begs the following question, “who is my neighbour?”

St Vincent de Paul stated that “it is not enough for me to love God, if my neighbour does not also love God”.

Therein lies the challenge...reaching out to the outcasts, the downtrodden and even to our enemies. That is to bring that Gospel message of Good News, in the form of who we are through our actions and interactions. As Frederic Ozanam admonished, **“Social welfare reform is to be learned, not in books or from a public platform but, in climbing the stairs to a poor man’s garret, sitting by his bedside, feeling the same cold that pierces him, sharing the secrets of his lonely heart and troubled mind.”**

This is the love the Gospel speaks of; it is one of the underpinnings of truly “serviens in spe,”

What is the love that Jesus speaks of? It is the “forgiving” and “serving” love.

Serving for Vincentians means striving to become, and be “people of the water and the towel” thus washing the feet of those less fortunate, and yes, of each other. This can be a daunting and most humbling experience....

“So this is what obliges you to serve the poor with respect, as your masters, and with devotion: that they represent to you the person of our Lord”, says St Vincent.

This certainly requires faith and action fueled by strength and determination.

The Rule of St. Vincent de Paul in part states that ... to render to Jesus Christ every spiritual and

temporal service in their power, in the persons of the poor, either sick, children, prisoners or others who through shame would conceal their necessities.

Hope...how do we as Vincentians, account for the hope we bring, as “people of the water and the towel?”

Hope, as in the meaning for today, asks about bringing hope to those who have been abandoned, have lost positions, possessions, or are isolated and lonely?

We need to remember that relationships nurture hope....with a sense of God’s fidelity and presence.

We ought to remember that we are people of hope when we bring that Jesus/Vincentian relationship into a meaningful sense of Christ’s presence...“where two or three are gathered in my name....”

People who are suffering need to sense the presence of Christ with “skin on”.

As Vincentians, we need each other to provide hope to a heart shrouded in doubt and denial, bound by despair and fear, unbelief, powerlessness and isolation.

We need to invite others to step into the light of faith and the embrace of divine love and cross into that threshold of hope.

The Society’s charity is not just the soul’s response to the breath of the spirit. It is the response to the invitation to the whole of mankind to the touch of the triune personal love of God and his grace. The Father, the Son and Spirit!

We become holy only if God sanctifies us personally, and He does sanctify as we get to know him. We cannot even begin to strive for our goals, for the possession of God, unless God takes the initiative, comes sweeping into our lives and gives us a push forward. That, my dear brothers and sisters, is the function of the theological virtue of hope and our own Vincentian vocational call and response.



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Unfortunately, we don't hear much about hope; and today we need it more than ever before because we are living in an age of such despair.

We live in days that are shadowed by fear. There are, first of all, the private, personal fears as there have always been: failure of misunderstanding, and rejection; of pain, illness and death; the loss of those we love; of misfortune and tragedy striking close to home.

Behind all of these fears there looms, like a sinister backdrop, the fear, anxiety and misery of the world at large, universal cataclysmic despair; a relentless sense of foreboding, the inexorable feeling that a disaster is imminent and we will not be saved.

Such fear from 'within' a nation is a greater threat than the most formidable enemies 'without'. For despair by definition is, "the will-to-death". A nation gripped by despair destroys itself.

Yet, in this age of despair it is time for hope; a time to preach it, write about it, pray for it and exercise it. Only the virtue of hope can combat despair, and bring about the "will to live".

So, it is time for hope. What is hope? We know hope is not a tangible and empirical entity. It is a supernatural force in us: our share in the divine power. It does not consist in an imperceptible extension of human expectations, and still less does it involve a strong element of naiveté; nor is it a superior kind of optimism.

It is in a very real sense born in the soul; it is the fruit of a regeneration that has been achieved through the resurrection of the Saviour.

Christian hope is that virtue which reaches out infinitely beyond human reach into the Kingdom of God, striving for what is apparently impossible and insuperable. Hope knows that life is too short to choose

the second best. Hope makes us, both as Christians and Vincentians, take on arduous tasks for God.

It scorns ease and comfort and thrives on difficulties. It knows that if great trials are avoided, great deeds also remain undone, and in hugging to a miserable sense of security, the possibility of nobleness is utterly lost.

Hope is the oldest and most daring of all the virtues. It keeps fires of ardour and enthusiasm burning brilliantly in the hearts of youthful people. It is only when little people, children, dwell too long and too frequently with dull, drab adults that they lose their selfhood, their creativity and uniqueness, their boldness, daring and subsequently, their hope.

The unique and thrilling thing about this gift of Christian hope is that it is both the present and the future; and so we can take full joy in the present and still be full of expectation.

To live by hope is to lean on God and expect everything from His mercy. Remember, the foundation of this hope is that we have been Christened; Baptized!

Thomas Brooks wrote that " a Christian will part with anything rather than his hope; he knows that hope will keep the heart from aching and breaking, from fainting and sinking; he knows that hope is a beam of God, a spark of glory, and that nothing shall extinguish it till the soul be filled with glory".

Everyone needs to know and rely on the fact that they are members of the Whole body of Christ, the Mystical body of Christ. There are times, in fact, when a person believes and hopes with the faith and hope of others.

We must remember the times when one's own grip slackens, and is supported by the Vincentian Conference or Council community.



When one is discouraged, one leans on the hope of the people of God, and us as Vincentians as the visible members of the communion of saints. The people of God with “skin on” that Jesus Vincentian presence.

Our Christian longing for heaven does not diminish our Christian love of this world. We are responsible for the world.

However, we need to also remember that we cannot seek our own salvation and yet ignore the rest of our brothers and sisters.

Alas, a Vincentian or person of “hope” must be a person of “action” – we need to be restless, alert and apostolic. Eager to share the Good News! Share the Good News with everyone, Catholics, non Catholics, non believers or whomever asks for our help...for they too need and live in hope!

For us to accept inhuman living conditions as normal because we know that our Lord will “make it up to us” in the next world is to vitiate the meaning of the Gospels.

An intelligent and sincere Christian and especially a Vincentians knows that every improvement of life and every attempt to increase the earth’s beauty and fruitfulness springs from charity, justice and hope.

The essence of true Vincentian work involves an awareness of several key components of human relationships. This is important, regardless of the context, length of interaction and relationship, and whether the Society is the primary or secondary provider, these components are always present.

It involves understanding ourselves and how we act and react, our biases, our beliefs; it also involves understanding and accepting others in their own context, life style and culture.

The focus of living out the Vincentian Rule and its spirituality is to work to alleviate all forms of poverty.

This includes, as Frederic pointed out, being among them and suffering with them.

But who are the poor? How do we define poverty?

To help broaden our understanding of the poor, poverty and expected Christian relationships, let us follow the words of St Vincent de Paul’s teaching as he advises his Vincentian family members regarding the arduous task before them.

The Poor

*The street will be long and unfriendly,
the stairs and the poor often ungrateful.*

Defining the poor is basically easy...it is all of us. It is not just the people who call us, or live on the streets. We are all poor in some measure. Sometimes this poverty is more evident than others. However, we cannot forget that we are all children of God. We all have a reason to be.

As Vincentians it becomes particularly important for our view of others to be reflected in the spirituality of our day to day living. Remember, we need to be seen as people of hope by those with whom we come into contact. Our presence needs to be a life giving relationship.

The poor we are serving may be an individual, a family, a group or a community as well as each other. How we view the people we serve is important. It is the driving force of our Jesus/ Vincentian relationship.

As children of God, those we serve need to be viewed as whole persons, and care for them may mean involvement in such activities as advocacy, empowerment, and respect for their autonomy, their voice, their right to self-determination and participation in decision-making. It is not merely delivering food to where the person is located. As St Vincent pointed out, “the rich can do that!” But if the rich do it once, is there hope they will do it again?



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Relationships

If our desire is to “serve in hope” as our motto states, then as Vincentians, we need to prepare ourselves to serve by understanding the important features of providing “a measure of hope” in relationships.

It is all about relationships isn't it?

*You will soon find charity a heavy burden,
heavier than the jug of soup
or the full basket.*

These relationships understood are maintained by us as Vincentians, and become evident to the poor that we serve. It is sustained through the will to do Jesus' work. It is the uniqueness of this Jesus/Vincentian relationship that provides us our identity.

As our Vincentian prayer says, “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

In our relationships, we bring our own personal gifts to bear. The critical elements of our gifts include our knowledge, skill, caring attitudes and behaviours in order to provide nourishment and sustenance that will contribute to the well being of those we serve as well as to each other.

These personal elements were so well demonstrated when Frederic and his companion Auguste LeTaillandier went to make their Vincentian visit to Madam Arouette and her family. To meet her needs, her need of understanding, they used their knowledge and skills of who they were as lawyers, their skills and connections to bring about hope and sustenance to a struggling lady who thought all was lost. This story, found in the book “The Apostle in the Top Hat” demonstrates so much about what we ought to be as Vincentians.

Remember, this relationship is based on compassion, trust, respect, justice. It also requires the Society to

be vigilant in order to ensure the appropriate use of power as it is inherent in each of our roles. This relationship starts with something as simple as introducing oneself to the individual or family and in turn, addressing the individual by name.

Time, we know, is a precious commodity. However, as part of the relationship process, we need to give these persons the time, opportunity and ability to explain themselves, and listen to them with intent to understand and without diminishing their feelings and circumstance. It is not about dropping the bags of groceries and running off. It is about caring for, and about, what is indeed taking place in this Jesus/Vincentian relationship. It is about establishing a whole and holy experience.

Each of our encounters with each other and those we serve must always indeed leave “a measure of hope”!

*But you will still be pleasant and smile.
Distributing soup and bread is not everything.
The rich can do that.*

Caring

Caring in literature is defined in a number of ways. For our purpose, caring can be considered the behaviours, actions and attributes of Vincentians.

It has been said that caring is the passage to the heart.

Caring Vincentians listen to, and are empathetic with those we serve, and with each other's points of views. Generally, caring requires the recognition of those we serve as unique individuals whose goals of meeting at least basic needs Vincentians try to facilitate.

Those whom we serve have their own set of values and these must be taken into consideration when we are providing assistance. In caring about these people, we need to find ways to actively include the individual or individuals as partners in providing for their needs. We need to take into consideration their abilities and



contributions. St Vincent points out that “the poor are neither deaf nor blind, they too have ideas.”

The Vincentian’s own personal values must never interfere with the provision assistance.

According to St Vincent de Paul, “when choices are made, priority is given to the poorest of the poor.

Let us pray that we always find ways to be creative, so that we are never to the degree that we find that we are not providing “a measure of hope”.

*The poor are your masters and
you will find them terribly exacting masters*

Values

Inherent in our understanding and sustenance of who we are as Vincentians rests in the values we have identified that promote our ability to work at “living the Gospel message as Christ would have us do with love respect, justice and joy. How and why we realize this joy as Vincentians rests with our defined Vincentian values. The values of “seeing Christ in all who suffer; coming together as a family; having personal contact with the poor and helping in all possible ways’ should be the mantra of every Vincentian.

Understanding our values, especially as they are embodied in our mission and values statement helps to keep us focused, and defines for those we serve the true essence of what they can expect from a Vincentian and his or her spirituality. It is articulated in our mission statement for public knowledge and to keep the organization alive and purposeful. Any organization that loses its values loses the heart of the organization.

If we lose the heart of the organization, we lose its soul and spirit. It follows then, if we lose the soul, then we lose the essential, activity of the Society and therefore, cease to be. We lose our worthiness and worse yet, we cease to care.

Trust

Trust is most critical in our relationships because those we serve are in a vulnerable position. Initially, trust in a relationship is fragile, so it is especially important that Vincentians keep promises. If trust is breached, it becomes difficult to re-establish. With broken trust comes the loss of “a measure of hope”.

*So the more unattractive and dirty they are,
the more rude and unfair they are,
the more you must lavish your love upon them*

Respect

Respect is the recognition of one’s inherent dignity, worth and uniqueness. This respect comes regardless of their socio-economic status, their personal attributes and the nature of the reason for being poor. In the beginning of their conference work, when Frederic and his companions wanted to do visitations and help the poor, they had to prepare themselves for the tasks ahead.

They visited Sr. Rosalie to ask for her help. However, she was not prepared to let them loose on “her poor”. She had certain criteria she felt they needed to know, understand and agree with. These conditions included: that the young men had to show respect to “her poor”; they had to show them love; they must never judge them; there was no preaching, the apostolate would come later in its own time and place and discretion was a must.

The respect paid to these individuals by Vincentians is probably the one and only measure of respect paid to them in a very long time, thus offering them “a measure of hope”.

Intimacy

Intimacy is inherent in the type of help we provide to those we serve. It may relate to physical activities, such as helping to feed families, helping them move



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to a new location. It can also involve psychological, spiritual and other social elements that are identified as needs.

Lastly, access to personal information related to finance or health status contributes to professional intimacy, and professional we must be with this intimacy. This intimate sharing of information, given willingly through an honest and sincere desire to change their circumstance, again speaks of “a measure of hope” and trust that things may be better soon.

It is only by feeling your love that the poor will forgive you your gifts of bread

Empathy

Empathy is the expression of understanding, validating and resonating with the meaning that the poverty experience holds for them. Obviously, we need to ensure that we do not lose objectivity when assisting the needs of the poor in their experience. The empathy is felt and exchanged in the whole dynamic of the relationship. For some it means that someone has finally listened, and will walk with them toward some attainment of dignity and worth. There may be light at the end of the tunnel...”let us hope so”.

Power

As Vincentians, we generally do not see ourselves as in a position of power. However, we do indeed have a position of power. It is one of unequal power. Although Vincentians may not immediately perceive it, the Vincentian has more power than the one being served.

This power represents the real difference between helping and serving.

The Vincentian has the authority and influence in the social system, special knowledge, access to privileged information and the ability to advocate for the poor and his or her family. The appropriate use of power,

in a caring manner, enables the Vincentian to partner with the poor to meet their needs. Vincentians may have preconceived notions about who is worthy. Thus, we see the notions of the worthy poor, and the unworthy poor.

What we need to embrace here is things and service done with the poor and not so much done for the poor. This puts us in the position of power and control.

We should remember also, that any misuse of power is considered abuse and will cause damage to the relationship. The damage is caused to both the Vincentian and to those he or she is serving. The loss of integrity often requires much to heal its wounds. This kind of damaged relationship will indeed not offer “a measure of hope”.

Culture

Culture refers to the shared and learned values, ethics, beliefs, norms and ways of life of an individual or a group. As we know, it influences thinking, decisions, choices and actions. Often there may be differences between what the Vincentian thinks ought to be and what those we serve think ought to be. How often have we heard the phrase “why do they live like that?”

For those we serve who may require special considerations or needs, for example, in their dietary needs, are we willing to accommodate them so that they may eat well enough? Or, is it “well, this is what we have and this is what you get”?

It has been said that some of the new immigrants we serve are “pushy” in their approach. It may well be worthwhile to think about where they have come from. Their pushiness may well be the only way they may have gotten something to eat or drink. It is their learned way of life, and I daresay their means of survival. It is what they know.

We are not in a homogenous society, there are realities that we need to keep abreast of in our thinking



and planning. Cultural consideration and sensitivity is one very salient feature of our work as Vincentians.

The 1977 version of the Rule comments regarding the universality of the Society. It states that "Universality implies both unity and diversity. Forms of poverty change like the world itself and its different parts. In every place and at every moment there has to be a forward-looking appreciation of misery and of the different ways in which it can be relieved. The fundamental unity of the Vincentian vocation is open to all disparities of actions constantly being readapted towards the same end. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul remains "one" in plurality of action".

Therefore, in the spirit of culture and ecumenism, we work to offer the reality of Christian hope in whatever dimension and measure it requires.

Each of us have our own areas of poverty to work through, and now more than ever, we need to be ever vigilant and aware as to where we, both as Catholics and Vincentians can step up to the plate to offer one more "measure of hope". This is truly the underpinning and the way of the spirit for us all!

Returning to Frederic's opening statement, how would you fill in the blanks?

*May the radiance of your charity
always be a beaming light!
St. Vincent de Paul*

**Dr. Penny Craig, President
National Council of Canada**

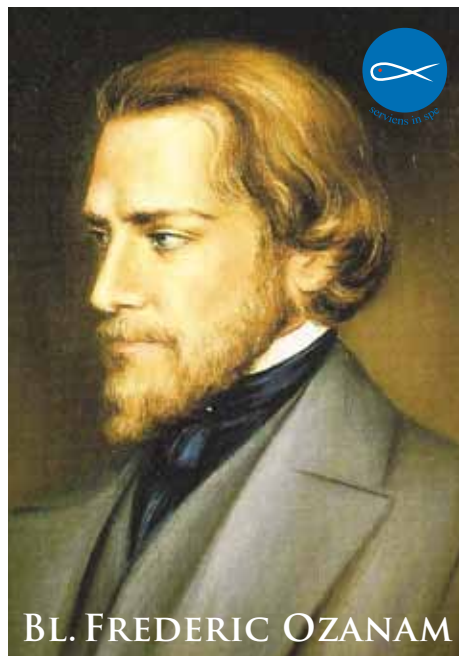


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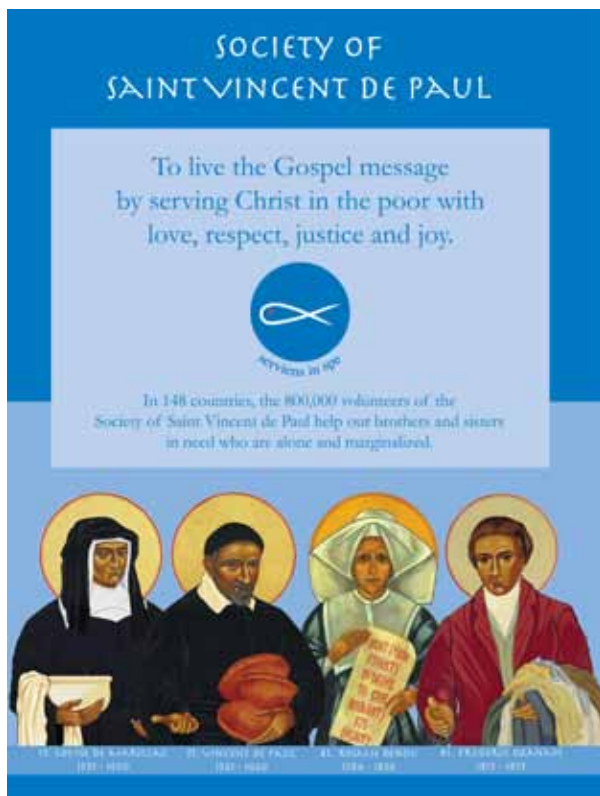
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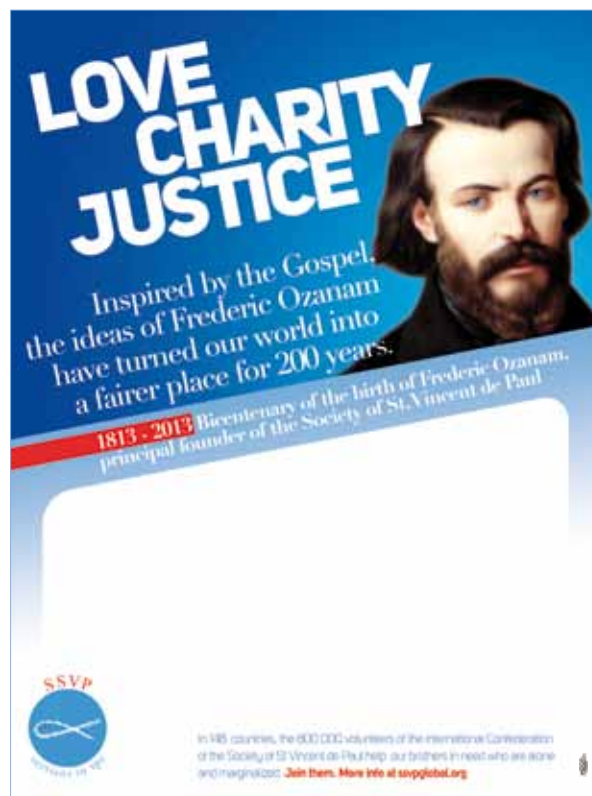


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