

Vincenpaul Canada

The Magazine of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
National Council of Canada
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LET US BE AS CHRIST TO ONE ANOTHER

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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.

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Values

The Mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians we:

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

Cover page photo : By Jacques Nadeau, from the Quebec Regional Council photo project "Les mille et un visages de Frédéric" (The thousand and one faces of Frederic).

● OUR VINCENPAUL-CANADA WILL NOW FEATURE A NEW COLUMN.

● Do you have questions on any topic regarding our Society?

● Contact us and we will forward your questions to the appropriate committee, who will reply in a future issue.

● Moreover, the Education and Formation Committee will publish an article in every issue of the magazine. If you have ideas on topics that you would like to read about, we would like to hear from you. Via e-mail at editor@ssvp.ca, regular mail at Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, National Council of Canada, 2463 Innes Road, Ottawa, Ontario K1B 3K3, or by fax at 613 837-7375.

● Looking forward to hearing from you!

● Your cooperation is much appreciated.

Message from the President

Dear brother and sister Vincentians,

On a regular basis, while meeting with Vincentians everywhere in the country, a topic comes up that seems to be a concern for several people.

The concern is about replacing the person elected as Conference or Council President once his or her term is completed.

First, let us read what the Rule says about this.

The Rule states that someone may remain President only for a maximum length of time. In the case of a Conference, the person is elected for a 3-year term that is renewable for a similar or inferior amount of time (Rule 2.2.5).

In the case of a Particular Council, the person is elected for a 4-year term that is renewable only once (Rule 2.3.2) for a maximum of 2 years.

As for Central and Regional Councils (Rule 2.4.1 and 2.5.6), the person is elected for a 5-year mandate that is not renewable.

Finally, the person who is elected as President of the National Council remains in function for a 6-year term, not renewable for life (Rule 2.6.6).

Why must we replace the persons who have been elected President?

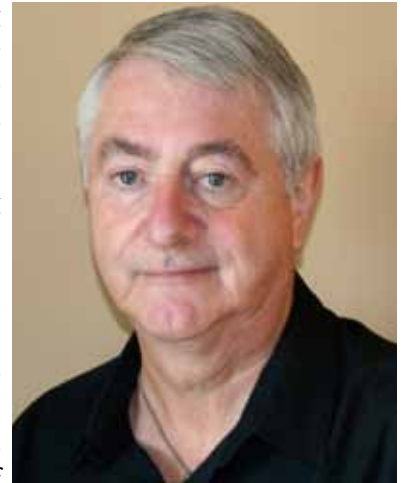
If you read about the obligations attached to the function, you will realize that it is a very demanding position and for this reason, I think that the election process should start as soon as the end of a term approaches.

Several people agree that after 5 or 6 years as President, the time comes to move on in one's life. That does not mean that the person who completes his or her term cannot assume another function within the Conference or Council. On the contrary, the newly elected person should encourage the former President to continue playing an active role, since during his or her term, he or she has acquired invaluable experience that should not be lost.

You might reply, but indeed, I cannot replace Mrs. or Mr. X, I don't have that kind of experience. I will reply that replacing is not the issue here. One cannot replace, or continue to do the same things that the previous person was doing. It is asked of you that you assume the

function by giving your very best, for a while guiding your Conference or Council members, while remembering always that decision making is a team process.

Look around you at the various people who have played that specific role. All of



them are different from one another, and thanks to those differences, we have today a Society of Saint Vincent de Paul that is strong, dynamic and always looking for the new needs of those we serve, though always in accordance with tradition. There is proof that new ideas have a positive impact on the workings of the Society.

Therefore, next time such an opportunity is offered to you, I invite you to think about what you can bring rather than wondering if you have the capacity to continue doing what the actual President is doing actually.

Such an approach will allow you to evaluate the proposition under an entirely different light. You will see that the challenge will seem much more feasible, since you will evaluate your capacity to carry out the term by assessing your own strengths.

In conclusion, **I wish to invite you to participate in our annual assembly which will take place this year in Hamilton, Ontario, from June 24th to 28th, 2015.** Come celebrate with us the 150th anniversary of the creation of the first Conference in that city. In addition, you will have the opportunity to attend very interesting workshops, as well as experiencing three days of Vincentian spirituality with Vincentians from across the country. I am convinced that your participation will allow you to return home with a fully charged battery.

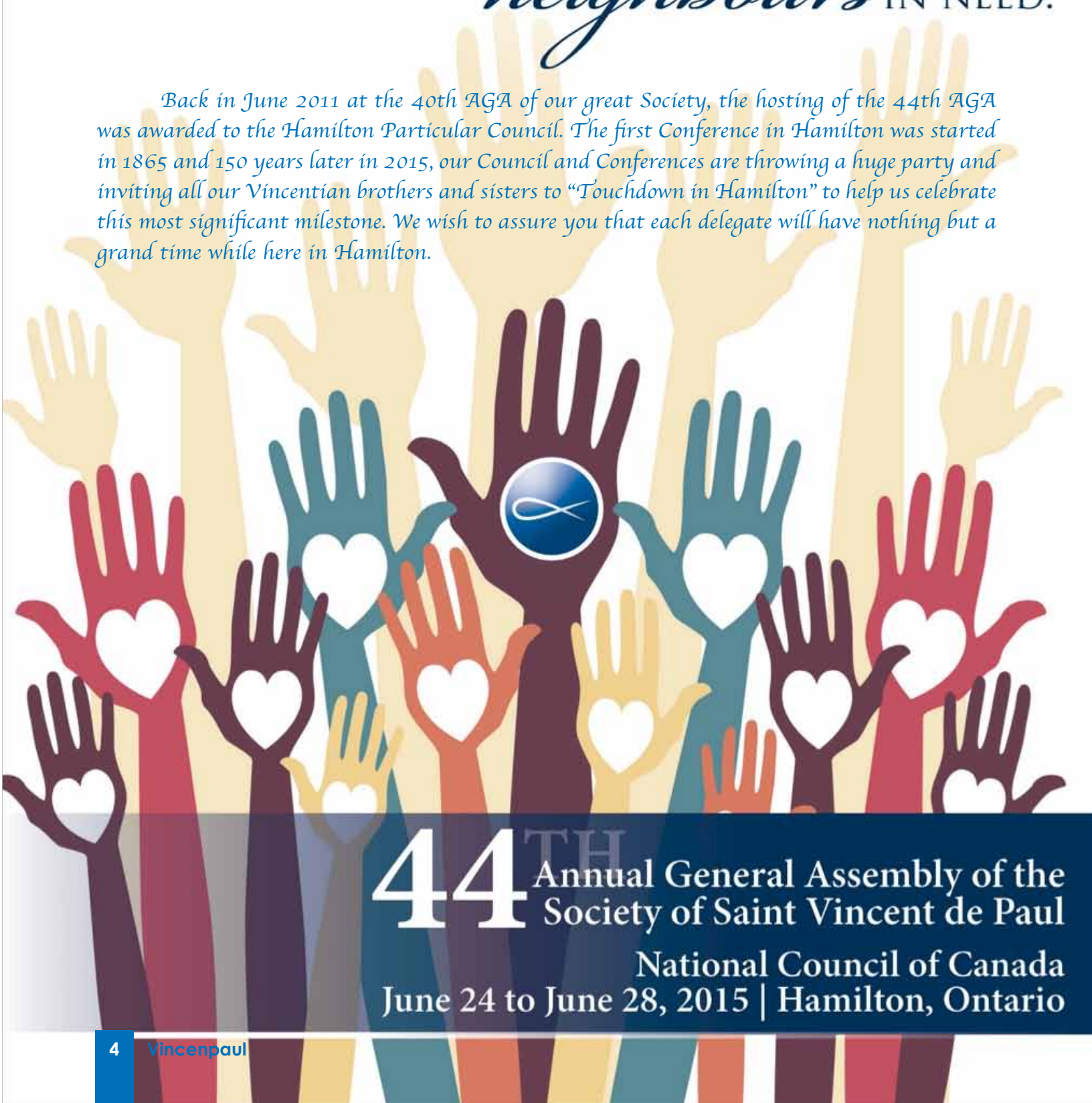
Looking forward to meeting you there.

**Jean-Noël Cormier, President
National Council of Canada**

AGA 2015 - Hamilton

EXTEND A *hand* TO OUR
neighbours IN NEED.

Back in June 2011 at the 40th AGA of our great Society, the hosting of the 44th AGA was awarded to the Hamilton Particular Council. The first Conference in Hamilton was started in 1865 and 150 years later in 2015, our Council and Conferences are throwing a huge party and inviting all our Vincentian brothers and sisters to "Touchdown in Hamilton" to help us celebrate this most significant milestone. We wish to assure you that each delegate will have nothing but a grand time while here in Hamilton.



44TH Annual General Assembly of the
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
National Council of Canada
June 24 to June 28, 2015 | Hamilton, Ontario

AGA 2015 - Hamilton

The theme, “Extend a Hand to Our Neighbours in Need”, is a modern day derivative of the command by Moses to the Israelites found in the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy 15:11 and emphasizes once more that “calling” or “vocation” which all Vincentians have answered. This brings to mind the lyrics from a song, by Diana Ross of “The Supremes”, that invites all people to “Reach out and touch somebody’s hand; Make this world a better place if you can”, which is something that we do by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

We invite you to get to Hamilton in time to take in one of the three tours that we will be offering during the afternoon on Wednesday, June 24th. The first tour will be a bus trip to Niagara Falls (one of the wonders of the world), along with a visit to a winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake for a tour and a taste of the “fruit of the vine” (you may purchase one or two souvenirs there), and if time permits a short stop at a chocolate factory. The second tour will be a Museum Tour of two of Hamilton’s National Historic Sites, Whitehern House and Dundurn Castle, as well as a tour of the Cathedral Basilica of Christ the King. The third tour will be a visit to the Good Shepherd facilities in downtown Hamilton. When registering for the Conference please indicate your interest in the tours so that we may properly prepare. Following the Regional meetings that evening, we will join with our brothers and sisters from the Province of Quebec to celebrate the Feast of St. John the Baptist.

We have a number of workshops set for you and these encompass Spirituality, Systemic Change, Social Justice, Causes of Poverty, some Vincentian History, Society work in the North, the Stores and Twinning (reps from the Caribbean and Peru are expected to join us). Most workshops will be repeated at different times to ensure that each delegate gets an opportunity to attend his/her workshop of choice. The Opening Ceremonies will take place at the Royal Botanical Gardens pavilion on Thursday the 25th. On Friday the 26th we will host a BBQ dinner at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum where we will get to tour the museum before dining in a setting surrounded by vintage airplanes. Dependent on weather conditions, five people will get an opportunity to take a twenty minute flight in the Hamilton skies in one of the vintage planes. (Tickets for this raffle will be available at the hospitality table). The closing Mass on Saturday will be celebrated by a number of Bishops and Priests at the Cathedral Basilica of Christ the King. The Knights of Columbus will also honour us with their presence. Following the Commissioning Ceremony, the Closing Banquet will be held at the Hamilton Convention Centre.

The members of our Organizing Committee are all very enthusiastic and are anxiously awaiting your arrival to join in our celebration of 150 years of Vincentian service in Hamilton. We also have numerous volunteers who will help you enjoy your attendance at the SSVF AGA2015, as well as your stay in Hamilton. We do hope to see many of you in June.

Guido Kelly,
Chair, Organizing Committee,
SSVF AGA2015

AGA 2015 - Workshops

ENGLISH WORKSHOPS

1 - An Introduction to the Structural Causes of Poverty

Presenter: Corry Wink

Highlights of a presentation by Pope Francis; how to right these causes

2 - A Taste of the Poverty Experience

Presenter: Corry Wink

An interactive workshop re challenges faced by those we help

3 - Spirituality – the Fuel that feeds a Vincentian

Presenter: Denise Bondy

How we are energized to do the work we do; our spirituality is uniquely Vincentian

4 - The “Live” Benefits of Twinning

Presenter: Carmela Addante with two guests

Background of Twinning; Twinned Guests from Antigua and Peru to share their enthusiasm and actual experiences with their respective Canadian Twins; Twinning procedure

5 - Lending a Hand on Two Feet of Social Action

Presenter: Kojo Dampney

Approach re helping the needy from a Development and Peace slant

6 - St. Vincent de Paul – Truly the First Vincentian

Presenter: Fr. Joe Durkacz

The aspects of helping the poor that we learned from the Saint

7 - The Face of the Society – Our Stores

Presenter: Anne Bryan

Sharing of methods to increase efficiency while maintaining our “Face” in helping the needy

8 - Ozanam’s Spirit Endures – 150 years of Vincentian Work in Hamilton, ON

Presenter: Peter Burns

Exploring Frederic’s Vision and Actions re the Poor; short history of our work in Hamilton

9 - Presidents and Officers

Presenters: Nora Criss, Lynn L’Heureux

How the SSVP President embodies the role of servant leader

10 - Who Cares?

Presenters: Danny Bourne

Humorous and interactive workshop on Advocacy

11 - Systemic Change – Making it Happen

Presenter: Jere Hartnett

Understanding the need and value of Systemic Change

12 - Friends of St. Dismas - Prison Ministry

Presenter: Deacon Mike Walsh

How to form a group and offer support to present/former prison inmates

13 - Fundraising for Vincentians – the Why, the Means, the How

Presenter: Bill Graham

What is involved and how to fundraise

14 - Slavery – Recognizing it in the Vincentian Backyard

Presenter: Teresa Hartnett

A look at the cycle of poverty, mundane conditions and how we should react

15 - SSVP Treasurers and Secretaries – continuation of their roles

Presenter: Mary Grad

A continued discussion of their roles in the family of Vincentians

AGA 2015 - Workshops

FRENCH WORKSHOPS

A - How to recruit and keep new members

Presenter: Madeleine Morency Roy

B - The “Live” Benefits of Twinning

Presenter: Clermont Fortin

Background of Twinning; Twinned Guests from Antigua and Peru to share their enthusiasm and actual experiences with their respective Canadian Twins; Twinning procedure

C - Opening of a store

Presenter: Ellen Schryburt

The different steps to open a boutique style store.

D - Finances

Presenter: Solange Fortin

Diverse financial commitments such as the annual report, the T3010 form, the TPS / TVH forms, etc..

WORKSHOP SCHEDULED TIMES

Thursday, June 25th

08:45 - 10:15: 1, 4, 11, 12, 13, A

10:30 - 12:00: 2, 5, 9, 10, 14, B

13:00 - 14:30: 4, 5, 6, 7, 14, C

14:45 - 16:15: 1, 3, 7, 8, 10, D

Friday, June 26th

10:30 - 12:00: 2, 3, 8, 12, 13, 15



AGA 2015 - Workshops

LIST OF WORKSHOP PRESENTERS

Corry Wink

Corry has been a Vincentian for 9 years. She spent 3 years with CUSO which started her work on social issues. Personally, Corry and her husband have been married for 45 years with 3 children and 3 grandchildren.

Denise Bondy

Denise hails from Amherstburg, ON, just south of Windsor, and has been a Vincentian for 15 years. She is presently on the Ontario Regional Executive as the Chair, Spirituality Committee. Denise and her husband will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in July. They have 3 children and 4 grandchildren.

Carmela Addante

Carmela has been a SSVP member since 2002. She has been President of her local Conference, Youth Advisor for her PC and now a member of the International Council as the Twinning Coordinator for the Americas. She has been married for 25 years and has four children, 3 of whom are Youth Conference members.

Kojo Dampley

Kojo has been involved with Development and Peace since 2012. He is now the Regional Animator for the Ontario Southwest Region and includes the Dioceses of Hamilton, London and St. Catharines.

Anne Bryan

Anne has been a Store Manager for 22 years. She obtained her Management /Leadership Diploma from Mohawk College by taking night and weekend courses while still employed. She is married with 3 children.

Fr. Joe Durkacz

Fr. Joe has been a priest of the Diocese of Hamilton for over 30 years. He is currently Pastor at St. Ann's Parish in Hamilton, Ontario in one of the poorest sections of the city. Also, he is the "Chaplain" for the Canadian Chapter of the Showmen's League of America caring for the spiritual needs of carnival workers. He is a recovering alcoholic for 10 years and manager of "The Club" in Hamilton which is an AA and CA meeting place open 365 days a year and is "ground zero" for alcoholics and addicts in Hamilton and allows him to work with people in recovery, thereby helping with his own sobriety.

Danny Bourne

As a Vincentian for over 25 years in Toronto, Danny has held many leadership positions during that time as President of his Conference, Particular Council and the Central Council. He is now on the Ontario Regional Board as Chair, Voice of the Poor Committee. He works as a district Chief with the Toronto Fire Dept. He is married with one child.

Jere Hartnett

Jere has been a Vincentian for over 15 years and is presently on the Ontario Regional Executive as Chair, Systemic Change Committee. He has also held positions of President, Halton Regional as well as Burlington St. Patrick's Conference during his tenure. He is a Past Grand Knight and now Navigator with the Knights of Columbus. Jere is a retired Professional Electrical Engineer. He has been married 45 years with 3 children and 4 grandchildren.

Mike Walsh

Mike became a Deacon in 2004. He has worked with others to form "The Friends of Dismas" in helping those touched by crime. He lives in Markham, ON and is married with two (2) grown children.

Mary Grad

Mary has been a member of our Society for 13 years. She is now the VP Communications on the Ontario Regional Board. She previously held the position of President of the Guelph Our lady Immaculate Conference. Mary has been married for 56 years and has 3 children, 3 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

Peter Burns

Peter has been a Vincentian for 40 years. He held the Presidency of the Hamilton Particular Council, Regina Mundi and Annunciation of Our Lord Conferences along the way. During his working career, Peter was a Teacher, Principal, Superintendent and Administrator with the Hamilton Catholic School Board. Peter and his wife (now deceased) had five children. He is now a grandfather to 13 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

AGA 2015 - Workshops

Teresa Hartnett

Teresa Hartnett has been devoted to strengthening and evangelizing people and families in their faith for over 30 years. As the Director of Family Ministry for the Catholic Diocese of Hamilton, she engages in providing educational workshops, information and support on a variety of topics. She finds herself collaboratively working with other agencies in assisting the vulnerable and the less fortunate. She has been married for 35 years and has four children and one grandchild.

Bill Graham

Bill lives in Mississauga, ON and has been a Vincentian for 25 years having held many positions and latest on the ONRC executive as Chair, Education and Formation. He is married to Shirley, also a Vincentian, for 55 years and they have 7 children, 6 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.

Nora Criss

Nora has been a Vincentian for 25 years and has held many positions over the years. In the Vancouver area, she has worked with RCIA as well as SSVP specializing in Facilitating Adult Learning. She has been on the National Education Formation Committee representing BC & Yukon Region since the first meeting. Nora is just completing her term as President, BC & Yukon Regional. She has been married almost 50 years to Ron, has 2 adult children and 2 grandchildren.

Lynn L'Heureux

A member of SSVP for 28 years, Lynn has served as President of her Conference, Particular and Regional Council over the years. She has been serving on the National Education/Formation Committee for the past 7 years. She is a writer of poetry and stories and sends out a weekly prayer and reflection to Vincentians internationally. She recently celebrated 50 years of matrimony to Tony who is also a Vincentian in Calgary, together they have 3 children and 6 grandchildren.

Ellen Schryburt

Ellen, National Past-President, has been a member of our Society for 37 years. She is now the President of her local conference in Montreal which operates a SSVP Store and a Food Bank. Ellen has been married for 57 years and has 4 children, 6 grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Clermont Fortin

Brother Clermont has been a member of the Society for more than 30 years. He is a member of the Jesus-Marie-Joseph Conference, Orleans, Ontario. He was Vice President of the National Council of Canada for 12 years before accepting responsibility of the National Twinning and Emergency Relief Programs in June 2013.

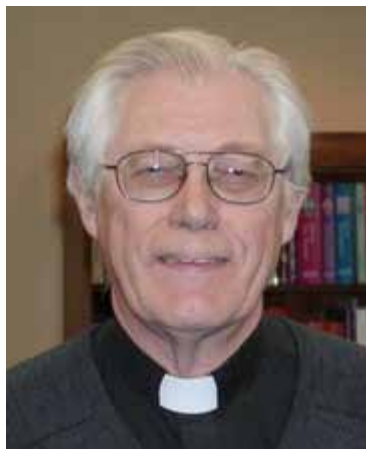
Solange Fortin

Solange has been involved with the Society of Saint-Vincent de Paul for the past 10 years, and President of the Trinity Conference for the last 4 years. She sits on the St. Paul Particular Council. Since September 2013, she holds the position of Treasurer for the National Council of Canada. She has worked 21 years with the Fondation franco-ontarienne, in Ottawa. Over the years, she set up a number of major activities, all the while creating and managing endowment funds, as well as obtaining 1.5 million \$ from the Heritage Canada Youth Initiative Fund over a period of 10 years. She has been married 43 years and has 3 children and 8 grand-children.

Madeleine Morency Roy

Madeleine has been involved in various Notre-Dame-de-Foy parish committees for more than 25 years (former President of the Pastoral Council, the Fraternal Life Committee and the 300th Anniversary Celebrations Committee) and a member of the Notre-Dame-de-Foy Conference. Holding a bachelor's degree in Nutrition from Laval University, she is a dietician, speaker and professor, and acted as a jury during the trial of Denis Lortie, perpetrator of the 1984 killings at the National Assembly of Québec. She is married, and has 4 children and 4 grand-children.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP: A JOB DESCRIPTION



Perhaps a good starting point is to ask the question: **What does Christ ask of His disciples?** First of all He wants His disciple to be fully engaged in life: a person who can be relied upon, who is ready to lend a hand when needed. A short list of five good habits that complete this

initial job description comes to us from the curriculum of a management school:

- Always be on time
- Always do what you say you will do
- Always finish what you start
- Always give more than is expected
- Always live with passion and purpose

It goes without saying that the disciple must look after his health both bodily and mentally. Good nutrition and exercise are essential

Secondly the disciple goes back to the ritual of his baptism and recalls that he was asked to follow Christ as Priest, Prophet and King. The disciple easily sees in these lofty words the simple triad of prayer, study and action.

The disciple is mindful of the strong words (1Peter 3, 15): **Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.** Such a teaching indicates that we should have a prayerful life that leads us to find out more and more about the marvellous Faith that is ours.

Vincentians know a great deal about action. If one keeps in mind that action is a great element of Christian discipleship, the whole business becomes more interesting and efficacious. Bear in mind that Divine Providence considers Vincentians first rate agents to bring God's love and goodness into the world.

However, just as Jesus sent the Advocate to his apostles at Pentecost, we too receive the Holy Spirit at our Confirmation. At that time very precious assets are given to us; the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

- Wisdom and courage
- Prudence, knowledge and understanding
- Reverence and piety

Just as blowing on embers makes them jump into flame so our energetic Christian life brings these spiritual gifts to life.

While valuable for all Christian disciples, but especially for Vincentians is the traditional list of works of mercy:

- To feed the hungry
- To give drink to the thirsty
- To clothe the naked
- To shelter the homeless
- To visit the sick
- To visit prisoners
- To bury the dead

This list has a very long history and its origin is two-fold, from charity and from Natural Law.

The seven Spiritual works of mercy are a further piece of data to complete our job description:

- To teach the ignorant
- To strengthen the doubtful
- To console the sad
- To reprove sinners
- To forgive offenders
- To bear with the offensive and troublesome
- To pray for the living and the dead

I would like to finish this reflection with a final list, developed by the French theologian, François Varillon, SJ. This is a list of the six verbs of love:

- To offer
- To ask
- To give
- To forgive
- To welcome
- To refuse

As you can see the important concept of tough love was not foreign to him.

Wonder and solid enjoyment come to the disciple who often seals his partnership with the Lord in the Holy Eucharist, thereby leading to perfection of his discipleship.

Msgr. Peter Schonenbach,
National Spiritual Advisor

ON HEAVEN AND EARTH

One of the best Christmas gifts I received this year was a book called “**On Heaven and Earth**”.

It was written when Pope Francis was Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio. In this book, Cardinal Bergoglio and Rabbi Abraham Skorka share a number of conversations on a variety of subjects both on theological and worldly issues. It is an excellent book and I have a great deal of respect for both men. But I would like to share with you our Pope Francis and his discussion on the poor. I will quote directly from the book.

Cardinal Bergoglio:

In Christianity, the attitude we must have toward the poor is, in essence, that of true commitment. And he added something else; the commitment must be person to person, in the flesh. It is not enough to mediate this commitment through institutions, which obviously help because they have a multiplying effect, but that is not enough. They do not excuse us from the obligation of establishing personal contact with the needy. The sick must be cared for, even when we find them repulsive and repugnant. Those in prison must be visited... It is terribly difficult for me to go to a prison because of the harshness of life there. But I go anyway, because the Lord wants me to be there in the flesh, alongside those in need, in poverty, in pain. The first attention we pay to poverty is assistance: Are you hungry? Here, here is something to eat. ”But our aid cannot end there. We must build toward human promotion and integration in the community. The poor must not be perpetually marginalized. We cannot accept the underlying idea that “We who are doing well give something to those who are doing badly, but they should stay that way, far away from us.” That is not Christian. It’s indispensable that we integrate them into our community as soon as possible, through education in technical schools... so that they may get ahead in life.

We have to help them earn a living. What is degrading to the poor is not giving them the oil that anoints them with dignity: a job. A poor man must not be looked at with disgust; he must be looked in the eyes. Sometimes it may be uncomfortable but we have to be up to the task. The great danger-or great temptation-when aiding the poor, is falling into an attitude of protective paternalism that, at the end of the day, does not allow them



to grow. A Christian’s obligation is to integrate the most deprived into his community in whatever way possible, but definitely to integrate them.

Christian charity is the call of love of God and neighbour. It can begin with aid, but it cannot stop at fund raising events. There are things that are called works of charity when, in reality, they are social-conscience calming activities. These kinds of programs are carried out in order to feel good about oneself, but love always requires a person to go out from themselves, to truly give oneself to others. The person I intended to love needs me to put myself at their service.

The poor are the treasure of the Church and we must care for them. If we lose this vision of things, we will have a lukewarm, weak and mediocre Church. Our true power must be service. We cannot adore God if our spirit does not include the needy.

This article of mine just touches on the wealth within this book. The entire book is well worth the read.

Maureen MacIsaac
Spirituality Committee

International Council General

TRAINING MEETING AT INTERNATIONAL HEAD OFFICE: TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL TRAINING PROGRAMME - 19 FEBRUARY 2015

Training is one of the priorities in the Strategic Plan that the President General Dr. Michael Thio launched when he took office. Since February 2012, the CGI Training Commission has designed and set up a “cascaded” training programme delivered by International Vice-Presidents and regional coordinators, for National Presidents. Following the success of this first initiative, the CGI then considered extending the training to all members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. A working meeting was held from 2 to 5 February 2015 to establish the basis for an international training programme.

Working from existing programmes

There is presently no harmonized, general programme, nor a recognized method for delivery of this training within the International Confederation. Noting that some countries have already created valuable national programmes, the CGI invited the presidents and/or training coordinators of the countries concerned to a 4-day meeting in Paris. Chaired by Brian O'Reilly (Vice-President General) and Marie-Françoise Salesiani Payet (International Vice-President for Training) the participants, with their own training material, were encouraged to reflect and work together on the following points:

- Exploring the training programmes of each country.
- Creating and defining a general training programme for new members, existing members and Conference officers
- Identifying a range of training/documentation materials
- Agreeing on format(s) for transmission of the general training programme
- Setting up a working plan and schedule for carrying out this project

Claudia Nodari (President – National Council of Italy) attending the meeting, gave us her feelings: *“We have done some good work together, and it was very interesting. Training is really important within the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. We already have some training tools in Italy, and this meeting shows me that we are moving in the right direction.”*

Passing on the Vincentian spirit

The project relies on two important concepts: **harmony and structure**. The SSVP needs a unified training programme delivered through a recognized structure; the cascade model forms the most economic and efficient method to achieve this aim, given the size and diversity of the Confederation. This process provides a universal way to address the “authentic Vincentian spirit”, normally provided in the training material, without distortion or dilution.

In the view of **Jean-Noël Cormier** (National President - Canada) attending the meeting: *“It is an excellent initiative that will perhaps enable development of a shared, real Vincentian culture, which we don't have at the moment. In Canada, we are frequently asked by African countries (French and English-speaking) if they can use our training programmes, since they do not have the resources to find them elsewhere. So we need a training programme that adapts for use everywhere.”*

After the workshops, a work schedule was produced for the next few months: the countries involved will have till the 1st May 2015 to present modules for the future training programme. Some like Brazil and Canada will work together, on the subject of the home visit.

Emilia Jeronimo (National President - Brazil) explained: *“We are from different countries, but we have shared problems, and it was an opportunity to talk to each other. We need to train Vincentians, no matter how long they have been members of the Society. This training will be useful not only for us, but for the rest of the world as well. I am sure this will help to overcome problems on the ground, as we listed during the meeting. The aim is to work towards a more global, worldwide vision, developing Vincentian spirituality, working on relationships with other organisations (religious, NGOs) and governments, so we can better serve the poor.”*

Countries present: England, Wales, Brazil, Canada, United States, France, Ireland, Italy

TWINNING WITH NICARAGUA

Nicaragua, a country in Central America, has a population of about 6 million. According to the United Nations Organisation, it is one of the poorest countries of the region with about 80% of its inhabitants surviving with less than \$2.00 (US) a day. Its economy is based on agriculture, which constitutes most of its exports (e.g.: coffee, tobacco, fruits, sugar cane). A developing tourism industry is also a source of foreign currency and employment. The National Council of Canada has had a Twinning Agreement with the National Council of Nicaragua for many years. Canada has 5 active Twinning with this country and several Twinning Applications are awaiting a Canadian Twinning partner.

The Society is active in most regions of the country with about 360 members serving the poor in 44 Conferences and focus in Leon ⁽¹⁾. Election to the National Presidency was held in October 2014 and a new team of Vincentian leaders is in place. A new Twinning Representative, Sis. Mildred Corrales, has been nominated and an excellent collaboration has been established with her.

The Society in Nicaragua is poor, a mirror of the country's economy. Vincentians face great challenges in the service to those living in misery due to lack of resources and isolation. The majority of Conferences work is with diners for children and health clinics.

However, Vincentians get comfort from their strong faith in the Providence and the Blessed Virgin Mary. They need our moral and financial assistance for the Twinning Program to better serve the poor of their communities.

I invite Canadian Vincentians to consider an External Twinning with Conferences and Councils of Nicaragua. Twinning is a real expression of charity and contributes to reduce economic and social inequalities for families of extremely poor communities. Twinning does not require a lot of funds or time by Canadian Vincentians and it can change people's lives.

If members of your Conference or Council are interested in making a difference in the life of a community in Nicaragua, please fill a *Twinning Application* which can be found on National web site, www.ssvp.ca, link, Forms.

Families living in poverty in Nicaragua are waiting for your generous commitment to help them.

**Clermont Fortin,, Chair National Twinning,
National Council of Canada**

(1) Report, Extraordinary General Assembly, International Council General, SSVF, May 28 - June 1, 2010, Salamanca, Spain.



North of 60 Project

REPORT TO PARTICIPANTS AND BENEFACTORS

Summary

The last year involved the shipping of five sea containers to each of five Arctic Communities. The sea cans were picked up empty in Hay River, trucked and spotted around Edmonton, loaded with food stuffs, clothing, house hold items and specific project items as identified by our Northern Community Contacts. After loading, the sea cans were trucked back to Hay River and put on the barge at the NTCL Terminal. They were sent up the Mackenzie River and across the Beaufort Sea to reach their final destination. All five containers were loaded in May/June and arrived in Sept/Oct. The Communities have already or plan to distribute the products by methods that are specific to their Community.



Donated product being sorted at Edmonton area church.

Although the growth from three to five communities over this past year presented challenges and frustrations from the donors in the Edmonton area, logistical issues were identified and presented as areas of improvement for next year.

There has been encouragement from both the religious and corporate communities, as well as the Vincentian membership for growth in this project. The growth will involve support to more Northern communities. Additional volunteers, from both the Northern and the donor community in the south, will be required as will increased support from the transportation industry which has so graciously provided sponsorship for this project. Planning is underway for the development of the 2015 North of 60 Project.

Additionally, SSVP in the Ontario Region is considering a similar assistance program for Communities in Eastern Arctic Canada

Northern Communities

Sea cans were provided this year to Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Taloyoak and Gjoa Haven. This is the result of a three year growth of a project initiated several years ago and developed by Sister Fay Trombley of Tuktoyaktuk, Eileen Orysiuk of Calgary and other members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The model set up in Tuktoyaktuk is considered successful and therefore has become the objective for all the communities, i.e. a location where clothing and food can be stored, sorted and distributed to those in need. Product is sold to those who have money and given to those who have none.



Donated product distribution centre in Tuktoyaktuk.

Communications

The needs of these Northern Communities are the subject of continuous dialogue that takes place between a designated volunteer representative from the North and one from the southern donor community. This communication throughout the year allows for the identification of donation and collection of the items that are in need. Donations from individuals and corporations drive this project. The Project Manager reviews these needs with Catholic Parish coordinators who arrange for the parishioners to provide the items that are identified.

Financing

The goal is to use a minimum amount of cash to achieve the objective. Donations of transportation have come from the corporate community and special recognition is due to Inuvialuit Regional and the Development Corporations, NTCL, Canadian North Airlines, Landtran Group of Companies and Continental Carriers for their support. Growth will require further support from the transportation community.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has provided financial assistance from Councils and Conferences in Ontario, Quebec and Winnipeg. Generous donations of food, household items, furniture, and specialty products come primarily from members of the Catholic community and parishes in Edmonton, Winnipeg and southern B.C. The project in 2014 is estimated at having a value of approx. \$400,000.00. The cash cost of the project was in fact approximately \$3000.00.

Donor Community

Many thanks go out to the Catholic Community, their Parishes and the Vincentian Family in the Archdiocese of Edmonton. Edmonton is the gateway to the NWT Arctic North. The transportation corridor and the corporations serving that corridor have been generous with their support. This project has received the attention of others across Canada. Support from the Catholic Community in interior BC as well as Winnipeg, Ontario and Quebec has helped substantially in the ability to provide for those in need. Hundreds of donors and volunteers worked to collect and sort items for sea containers that were located in church parking lots. In several cases the collecting and sorting was done outside in cold and rainy weather. Not an ideal situation and an area for improvement with this project.

Other Aspects of the North of 60 Project

A separate program under this general area of Vincentian Works is a project called Healthy Food for Children. This aspect of the project is being funded separately and has been active since the beginning of 2014. The objective of this project is to supply cash support to the

Communities of Taloyoak and Gjoa Haven for the local purchase of food to support a meal preparation and delivery program for children.

To be done for 2015

1. A warehouse is needed in Edmonton for three months (April/May/June) to collect and sort donations. This will allow for better food distribution to the sea cans designated for specific communities as well as the collection of special project products like wood and hardware for building renovation.
2. Work on renovation of the building in Paulatuk to provide a secure location for food, clothing and house hold item distribution.
3. Increased support is needed from the trucking supply community to get empty sea cans from Hay River to Edmonton and back again in a timely manner.
4. A stronger relationship should be built with those Northern Communities which currently have a food bank or used clothing distribution. There is no need to duplicate. Better to collaborate and support.

Thanks to all for what you do

Peter Ouellette



Family in Gjoa Haven helping to repack bulk food for distribution.

A Bit Of History

THE SOCIETY AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR – 1914-1918

The First World War in Western Europe raged on from August 1914 to November 1918. Four years of war that left over 67,000 Canadian soldiers dead on the battlefields and close to 250,000 injured. Canada launched the hostilities alongside two main allies, France and Great Britain. It was a period of great disturbances in our country.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul actively participated in the war effort by helping families and soldiers in the Canadian militia, in addition to maintaining its charity service to the poor.

Province of Quebec

When the war broke out, Canada was in the midst of an economic crisis that amplified due to an increase in unemployment and the enrolling of thousands of male volunteers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. In Montréal, with the famine threatening thousands of poor families at the onset of the 1915 winter, Archbishop Bruchési submitted an urgent request to the Montréal Central Council to establish Conferences in every parish of the Archdiocese in order to **“help poor families and unemployed men”** ⁽¹⁾. The Society responded enthusiastically. The number of Conferences in the Montreal area increased from 46 to more than 75 by the end of 1914, the Council opened soup kitchens and bread distribution service to poor families. As well, the Montréal Central Council created a Special Work, the **“Assistance to Canadian conscripts”** Centres in May 1917, with the financial help of the Knights of Columbus. There were two locations where young soldiers could meet and get support. This new Special Work also played a role in supporting regiments overseas, by helping families to send letters and useful items to the troops. The Centres welcomed between 300 and 400 soldiers every day ⁽⁵⁾. This war time activity continued its operations during the fifteen-month period of demobilization following the Armistice that was signed on November 11, 1918.

Major recruitment and training centres were established by the Canadian militia in the Québec region in the early stages of the war. The Québec Central Council, with the help of the City of Québec, the Militia and the Archdiocese, opened four drop-in centres at the training sites, called **Soldiers’ Home**, in Québec, Saint-Louis,

Val-Cartier and Lévis, in 1917-18. The purpose of this Special Work was to **“assist soldiers in their social life, preserve faith and moral values among the young men”** ⁽⁴⁾. The soldiers visited the drop-ins to read, write to their families, relax and attend religious services. In 1918, approximately 500 letters were written and sent to families every day by recruits. The **Soldiers’ Home** in Québec remained open after the war to help soldiers returning home.

As well in 1916, the Québec Central Council created the **Catholic Sailors’ Club**, to welcome Canadian sailors and crews of foreign ships berthing at the *Port de Québec*. The Club offered a place for social gatherings and a chapel to attend mass. More than 4,600 sailors visited the Club in 1916. ⁽⁶⁾

Province of Ontario

In 1914 Toronto, the difficult economic situation and the arrival of a great number of immigrants fleeing the war presented a considerable challenge to the members of the Toronto Central Council and affiliated Conferences. Requests of assistance by families whose father was unemployed and those of soldiers fighting in Europe doubled in 1914 to reach a total of 2,906 families. ⁽²⁾ The Toronto Central Council and its 19 Conferences, created in 1916, the **Information Bureau**, a service providing help to find employment as well as material and funeral assistance to the less fortunate. The *Bureau* helped 423 men find jobs and insured the proper burial of 13 persons in 1917 ⁽⁷⁾.

The Council also established the **Huts for Catholic soldiers** to help soldiers living in poverty. In 1916, the Toronto Central Council created the **Aid to War Industries** program to provide material support to employees (mostly women) of those industries, as well as, soldiers engaged on the battlefields of Europe.

In its 1917 annual report, the Ottawa Central Council reported that Vincentians visited military barracks in the Capital Region in order to provide moral support and material assistance to trainees.

Province of Nova Scotia

A training centre was established in Amherst, Nova Scotia soon after Canada declared war on Germany and its allies. Several Vincentians, recruits in the 22nd

battalion ⁽⁸⁾ and undergoing training in that town, established a temporary Conference in 1914, to “**help the good families of workers who have been unemployed for several months**”. ⁽³⁾ These Vincentian soldiers asked women conducting sewing classes called **The Wardrobe**, to make children’s underwear with fabric bought by the Conference. As a result close to 300 clothing articles were made and distributed to large families in the Amherst area during the winter of 1915, in addition to assistance in the form of food and shoes.

In its 1917 Annual Report, the Halifax Particular Council indicated numerous assistance requests from families whose “**men are defending us on European battlefields**”. Halifax Vincentians were also involved in a major tragedy related to the *Great War*. On December 6, 1917, a French ammunitions ship sailing near Halifax collided with a Norwegian ship, creating a large explosion and fire. The blast from the explosion swept the city and many properties were destroyed by fire. The disaster killed close to 2,000 people and injured many others. In 1918, Vincentians assisted a considerable number of victims of this tragedy who not only lost their home and possessions, but were also suffering mentally due to the loss of loved ones. Following an appeal, the Canadian and American National Councils, as well as the International Council General collected and forwarded to the Halifax Particular Council close to \$ 5,600 in emergency assistance in this 1918 tragedy.

Social Climate in Canada

The economic situation in Canada improved with the need for workers in the war industries and the arrival of women on the labour market. The federal law on prohibition, enacted in 1916, somewhat improved the social climate. There was no social safety net in Canada at the beginning of the 20th century; poor families relied mostly on charitable organizations such as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul for assistance.

The First World War allowed the Society to gain influence in Canada as it was greatly solicited by political and religious authorities and members rose to the challenges before them. Their assistance to all those suffering in various ways, was made even more difficult as the number of its members, only men at the time,

decreased due to the enrolment of many of them in the Canadian Expeditionary Corps. That situation worsened with the Military Service Act (conscription) as the war was entering its crucial final phase.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was present mostly in Ontario, Québec and the Atlantic provinces at the beginning of the last century. Vincentians activities related to the First World War in other provinces are not recorded in the Superior Council of Canada’s Annual Reports for that period.

Clermont Fortin
National Council of Canada

1. Superior Council of Canada Annual Report, year 1914, Dussault & Proulx, Reg. Printers, 1915, p. 11.
2. Ibid., p. 13
3. Ibid., p.70
4. Superior Council of Canada Annual Report, year 1917, Québec, Dussault & Proulx, Imp. 1918, p. 5.
5. Ibid. 4, p.111.
6. Ibid., p. 6
7. Ibid., p 47
8. The 22nd Bataillon du Corps expéditionnaire canadien changed its name to the Royal 22nd Régiment in 1920. General Georges Vanier is one of its founding members. As the Commanding Officer of the Regiment, he launched an assault at Chérisy, France at the end of the war, and was injured, his right leg was amputated.



Canada's Councils In Action

ATLANTIC REGIONAL COUNCIL

GLACE BAY

The Glace Bay Particular Council has been providing support to disabled persons of Breton Ability Centre, Bramore Home, Sydney NS. The Vincentians entertain the patients, who are mentally challenged. Some have been in the home for many years and some of the patients have no visitors at all except for the workers and the volunteers.

The third Tuesday of each month our members all get together with them for a fun night. This was started over 30 years ago and is still one of the main activities for the Society.

At Christmas the Vincentians buy gifts for the patients and they take in sandwiches etc. There is music supplied and lots of dancing for about an hour or so. Then in comes Santa. The real one for sure!

It is a very interesting and entertaining night.

Jim McIntyre, President
Glace Bay Particular Council



Canada's Councils In Action

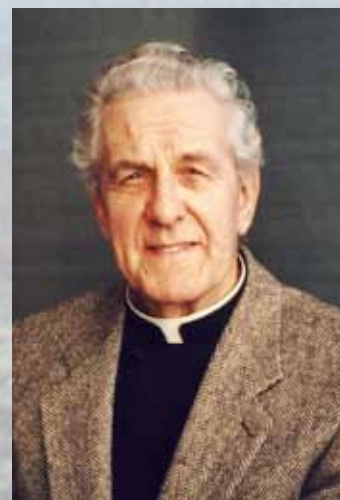
QUEBEC REGIONAL COUNCIL

DEATH OF FATHER LIONEL DION CHAPLAIN OF THE QUEBEC REGIONAL COUNCIL

Father Dion was a missionary in Uganda during several years and, upon his return, while on a retreat in Québec, he accepted the chaplaincy of the Quebec Regional Council. He attended Board meetings until the fall of 2014, when he fell critically ill. Father Dion prepared quite profound prayers and spirituality messages that were appreciated by all.

A cheerful and spiritual man, he deeply loved the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. One day, upon my request concerning the writing of certain documents about Vincentian spirituality, he replied that he would think about it. A few weeks later, he told me, *"but in reality, it is you, lay members of the Society, who should meditate and develop that spirituality."* His reply, which I accepted and understood, showed me once more his great human and spiritual wisdom, as well as his caring affection for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

At the funeral, someone told the following anecdote. As he was visiting a family, Father Dion, a very good cabinetmaker, is doing woodwork in the basement with the father of the family. Meticulous as he is, Father Dion is focused and works in a precise manner. A young child starts playing and running around him – singing and dancing while he runs. Father Dion calls him and asks him to go back upstairs because he is disturbing him. Later on, at the end of the afternoon, at supper time, after finishing the work, he goes to the young one and apologizes to him. The young one asks him why he apologizes. Father Dion replies, "Well you know, I am an old bachelor and I did not respect you when I asked you to go back upstairs – the 6 year old jumped in his arms."



Father Lionel Dion
(1930-2015)

At the funeral, it was reported that in his last moments as always, he replied thus to a question asked by Hélène Lussier, one of the relative, wanting to know if he feared death, *"Somewhat, yes, because I fear God's tenderness."* and he specified, *"God will welcome me in his tenderness, but then my eyes will open up and I will see that my tenderness in God was not always up to his own tenderness."*

On behalf of all the Vincentians and employees of the Regional Council, and of all those who have known you, I thank you, dear Father Dion, for your engagement towards the SSVP. God will see, as will you, all the good accomplished.

May the Father welcome you, with eagerness and joy.

**Pierre Morissette, President
Quebec Regional Council.**

Canada's Councils In Action

ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL

SUE MAZZIOTTI-ARMITAGE

By Paul Rellinger

Peterborough This Week/myKawartha.com



PETERBOROUGH — Sue Mazziotti-Armitage clearly recalls, with equal parts fondness and admiration, her Italian mother's mantra that there's always room for one more at the family dinner table.

Years later, that no-one-is-turned-away kindness — witnessed and absorbed by her and her two siblings — continues to guide her actions to the benefit of many.

"A natural affinity to care for others...I definitely acquired that from my parents," says Ms Mazziotti-Armitage who, in her current role as a lead volunteer with the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, embodies the organization's mission to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

Serving some 1,800 clients monthly, Ms Mazziotti-Armitage's "workplace" — the food pantry at 256 Murray St. — is the clearly the centre of her universe, taking a backseat only to husband Don and their two kids, John and Nicki.

On this afternoon, the space is very quiet but Wednesday though Saturday, 9 to 11:30 a.m., is quite a different story.

"Nobody wants to be here. Nobody wants to come to a food bank...there's a humility factor there," assesses Ms Mazziotti-Armitage.

"How would you want to be treated? How would you want your mother, your father, your sister, your brother to be treated? We're all one bad decision away, one bad turn of luck, from being here looking for help. We can never lose sight of that."

Born and raised in Peterborough, Ms Mazziotti-Armitage attended St. Anne Catholic Elementary and then Adam Scott Collegiate.

"You had to pay then to go to St. Peter's...we couldn't afford that," she says of her switch to the public school board.

She continued her education at Fleming College, from which she graduated in business studies. That landed her a decent job with the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, working at the Land Registry Office in Peterborough for 10 years, at which point she was "surplussed by Mike Harris."

Part-time office work at Kawartha Chiropractic followed but it was her involvement with the breakfast and hot lunch programs at St. Anne that set the course for much of what followed for her.

"I figured I had an hour or two, so I can do that. Really, it was a little selfish because it kept me involved with my kids (who attended St. Anne)," she notes.

Invited to attend a St. Anne Parish Council meeting, led to increasing involvement with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, an organization she would lead for six years as its president.

A major highlight of her tenure at the helm was the rebranding, and relocation, of the society's thrift store. Called Vinnie's Feel Good Shopping, it moved three years ago from its former Murray Street location to a brighter, more inviting space on Erskine Avenue. Every cent brought in goes directly to helping those in need.

"Our store was losing money...that's not the case now," says Ms Mazziotti-Armitage, a smile forming.

Canada's Councils In Action

"I really had no idea that we have so many needy people. There's a constant need and it's not just a need for food and clothing. A spiritual need is always present. You don't have to be Catholic to understand that or to empathize. Just an awareness to always take care of your brother."

That empathy for others hasn't gone unnoticed.

Mardi Ayotte, who volunteers her time weekly at the food pantry, says it's quite evident in her actions and her words.

"She's wonderful to work with...so passionate," says Ms Ayotte.

More than that, she notes, is Ms Mazziotti-Armitage's ability to get the most from volunteers by leading from example.

"It's clear that she has a compassion for others that guides her life."

If the countless hours she spent guiding the local St. Vincent de Paul through dramatic changes wasn't enough to keep her busy, Ms Mazziotti-Armitage immersed herself in committee duties with the local Catholic school board.

At St. Peter Secondary School, she chaired the parent council for six years and, at the board-wide level, sat as a member of the Parent Engagement and Religion and Family Life committees. That involvement was a springboard for her seeking a Catholic board trustee seat on two occasions, the most recent bid being this past year. In the end, she came up well short with Helen McCarthy and incumbent Christine Dunn winning Peterborough's two seats.

"I like turnover...it's important that we have fresh faces and different opinions," say Ms Mazziotti-Armitage of her motivation for seeking election. In addition, long-time trustee Lorne Corkery deciding not to run created an opportunity.

"I learned from my first election experience that running against incumbents is tough. He (Mr. Corkery) knows his stuff but enough was enough. I put my name in late. The result didn't really surprise me."

Still, for all her varied volunteer experiences, past and present, make no mistake — Ms Mazziotti-Armitage's work on behalf of the food pantry sees her at her most fulfilled.

"In our society, we always look up at what others have...I always say look down and be appreciative of what you have," she says.

"Those coming here, they need to see that you're human. I cry all the time. I see a lot of heartache, a lot of sadness, but it makes me want to do more."

The food pantry keeps its shelves stocked with the invaluable donation help of Peterborough Catholic parishioners via Sunday church collections as well as proceeds from Vinnie's. And at least one major fundraiser is held annually with assistance from businesses such as Knock On Wood.

Ms Mazziotti-Armitage stresses that as much as one wants to help all who come through the food pantry's doors, identification, and proof of address and income, is required of all each time they visit.

Based on the size of the family involved, points are awarded. Those points act like money, determining what can be chosen from the shelves. And there is a limit of one visit every four weeks.

"There is accountability...there has to be...but anyone in need is eligible," notes Ms Mazziotti-Armitage.

Looking ahead...well, she isn't one to sit idle. Besides her food pantry responsibilities, she also's involved with The Mount Community Centre, sitting on a committee responsible for the coming up with a plan for the former convent's kitchen and gardens.

"I've never had a grand plan...things have just sort of happened," she says, before admitting to a desire to one day volunteer her time, at least what's left of it, to the benefit of hospice clients.

"No one should die alone," she says.

Canada's Councils In Action

ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL

CHRISTMAS CONCERT, DECEMBER 6, 2014

Saint Francis Xavier Conference and Parish, Brockville, Ontario

On December 6, 2014, the Saint Francis Xavier Brockville, Ontario Conference of the Ontario Region of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society held a musical concert in the church. It was produced first of all, for the sheer joy of the music. For the young, it was a chance to be exposed to some fine Christmas pieces performed with polish and artistry. For those getting on in years, the excitement of a visit from Santa has long since paled, but the beauty and hope of The Christmas Story, the coloured lights, and our culture's marvellous heritage of music celebrating the Season, still call back the old enchantment.

There was another reason for the concert. It was a fundraiser for our local Conference of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. The concert was made possible through the hard efforts of parishioner Karen O'Connor-Wace and her husband Steve Wace, together with a cluster of volunteers they enlisted. The four musicians – we humorously named them “Three Amigos and an Organist” – were two local singers who founded and manage the Music Theatre program at our local community college; a professional engineer who grew up in our town, sang in

our church choirs during his youth, and now performs on contract at weddings and other ceremonies in our Nation's Capital; and our newly hired Church Organist and Music Director, an accomplished musician and trainer of singers.

The programme was chosen from a variety of music genres, and included plenty of opportunities for singing by the congregation. This helped people feel involved, and harked back to a day when spontaneous music-making by ordinary people was a standard activity and naturally expected.

For the concert the church, though not packed to overflowing, was solidly filled with parishioners and music lovers from all over the city. As the concert concluded they saluted the performers with a standing ovation, and gave generously to the free-will offering.

A video recording was made of the concert, and offered for sale afterwards; around seventy-five people took advantage of the offer. All the music, except for one organ solo, was in the public domain, and that piece was omitted from the video.



Left to right: Roger O'Connor, Chris Coyea, Alex Fleuriau Chateau, Rod McAvoy (organist)

The concert was introduced by Conference President Paul Sheppard, and at the end Saint Francis Pastor Father Brian Price thanked the performers, the producers, and all for coming. Unfortunately, the introduction and thank-you were omitted from the video.

The event was a marked success, and there are good hopes that something like it can be repeated in a year's time.

Paul R. Sheppard
Conference President

Canada's Councils In Action

DONATION TO THE ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CONFERENCE, BROCKVILLE, ONTARIO



Procter & Gamble recently presented the Saint Francis Xavier Conference of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society with a cheque for \$1979, as part of its program of awards to deserving local no-for-profit organizations to commemorate twenty-five years of operation in Brockville. Pictured at the presentation are (left to right): Marc Dennis, Paul Sheppard (Conference President), Bill Heasley



Canada's Councils In Action

WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL

THERE WHEN YOU NEED THEM

Society of St. Vincent de Paul celebrated decade of service in city, now facing its own time of need.

Wednesday, Feb 18, 2015 06:00 am

By: Scott Hayes

St. Albert Gazette

When you're in need, when things are dire, there's an organization out there that makes emergency house calls.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is like the Batman of charities: always out there in the shadows, just waiting for the distress signal. It's also an international Catholic organization whose mission is to be there for those who have nowhere else to go.

"We help people who are either desperate or are close to it and they've pretty well run out of options at that particular time," explained Lou Duigou, one of the group's members in its St. Albert conference.

"That's when we come in and, as we say often, 'give them a leg up.' They just get buried and there's no way out and there's no source of funds. We'll come in and help."

That local conference has just marked its 10th anniversary of service but in seven years of reporting, I only ever seem to hear of them around Christmas. At a time when the St. Albert Food Bank, the St. Albert Kinettes and the Salvation Army are working overtime to make sure that people have food on the table and gifts under the tree, every one of those agencies always says that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has them covered, even when other agencies aren't answering their phones because they've all gone home to be with their families.

And it's not just food that the society can offer either: furniture and household items, clothes, bus tickets, and more. They have an ongoing weekday clothes closet for people to pick through. They can help refer you to existing community support programs. They can offer advocacy and guidance toward regained self-sufficiency, and they are always able to lend a friendly ear if you are struggling in any way.

In short, they may be a bit of a poorly kept secret, but they are awesome at what they do and they don't seek

fame for their good deeds. Sounds like a superhero to me.

Gerry Tersmette remembers his first experiences, when he was a Junior Vincentian going door to door for pennies and nickels as a young man in the Netherlands.

"I knew all about St. Vincent de Paul and my grandfather was a staunch supporter. He was fairly affluent and could afford to knock on the door of those in need and hand out money," he said, recalling how he jumped at the chance to help start a conference (as the local chapters are known).

"I learned through Parish Council that we have poor and disadvantaged people in St. Albert. While the numbers are relatively small, it's a fact of life."

The year after this group was established, it received a request from the conference headquartered at St. Joseph's Basilica in downtown Edmonton for help as they didn't have the resources to accommodate the demand for them.

"The group discussed it ... and decided that we would help them out until they get organized. Well, eight or nine years later, we are still doing it," Tersmette joked. "The real spirit of St. Vincent de Paul is helping. St. Albert is an affluent community and it has been very, very generous in many, many ways: financially and materially."

Joan Stang added that more calls come in the winter. That's when the climate and the economic climate seem to be at their worst.

"It's cold! It's hard for them to get out. They have to use food banks. The food bank you can only use once a month as a rule and so, if they run out of food or something, we get more calls. Utility bills are more in the winter."

Historically, 10 per cent of its clients come from this city while the rest are in Edmonton's inner city.

Canada's Councils In Action

Stang continued that Alberta's oil boom years brought a lot of people here, not all of who were able to handle the transition.

"We just had a family from Montreal that came here for work, but by the time they paid to get here, they had no money for furniture. There was a mother and father, and a daughter and her husband all living together in a very, very small place. The men were both working only part-time. The mother was in a wheelchair and the daughter was home looking after her. They spent everything they had just to get here. Eventually the men will probably get better work. We don't expect to be helping them every month."

"When we help, the idea is that we are helping you this month to get over this bad patch. We're not social services. We won't be there next month. We took them food. We took them pots and pans."

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is, after all, an emergency assistance organization. Just before Christmas, they received and fulfilled calls for more than 40 beds.

At the same time, they don't preach but they do give information, including referrals to other organizations that can offer more enduring assistance.

When they do come to help, they don't just drop off the goods and leave. They are there to get to know the recipients, understand their situations and their challenges, and perhaps leave them a little smarter for how they can better cope by themselves.

There's something about the old adage that says 'Give a person a fish and they will eat for a day. Teach them how to fish and they will eat forever' that comes to mind. Even the logo sparks that imagery.

Tersmette said that it's not preaching though.

"Just a pinch of advice."

"Just to show that somebody cares," Val Merchant added.

"And it's non-judgmental," concluded Mary-Anne Warren. They all reminded me that, while the society is based in Catholicism, there are no bounds to who can make that all-important call for help. All faiths, all

backgrounds ... everyone is a neighbour who sometimes experiences that dire need.

Is it all worth it? May Carline responded with a resounding 'yes'.

"We were all asked if we wanted to give up working in the inner city. There wasn't one of us that said yes. I think that says a lot about us as a group."

The St. Albert Conference helps to respond to the 1,200 calls (to its assistance line at 780-471-5577). In 2013 alone, it helped to 4,656 families including nearly 3,000 children.

Its own moment of need

"A chapel is a chapel," says the organization's website at www.ssvpedmonton.ca, "unless it's the overcrowded Distribution Centre of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Edmonton. We need a building. We need help to get one."

With all of that excellent humanitarian work accomplished over the last decade, perhaps karma is in order to help the society find a new building to continue to offer assistance to the thousands that need it. The conference's members are actively pursuing a distribution facility of up to 10,000 sq. ft. (double the size of the capacity of their current building) with overhead doors and a loading dock to allow for more efficient loading and unloading. Ideally, it would be located outside of the downtown core but still north of the river where it would be most central for volunteers and clients.

It would still have to be something that they could keep within their financial means as well, of course.

To that end – and to help the society with all of its endeavours otherwise – its members are hosting a charity sale. The public is invited to shop for antiques, collectibles, housewares and furniture, with all proceeds going to help support the society's work with those living in poverty. There's lots of parking and no entrance fee.

The fundraising sale runs from noon to 7 p.m. on Thurs. and Fri., April 9 and 10, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sat., April 11. It's set to take place at the auditorium of the St. Andrew Centre located at 12720 111th Ave. in Edmonton.

Canada's Councils In Action

WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL

ST. ALBERT CELEBRATES ITS 10th ANNIVERSARY AND HONORS IT'S OWN

At a festive pre Christmas Pot Luck, the St. Albert Conference (Edmonton Central Council), including 6 of its active charter members and the founding President Gerry Tersmette, met to celebrate its 10th anniversary

A wonderful evening beginning with mass, followed by prayer, fellowship and sharing was experienced. The honored guest of the evening was Gerry Tersmette who had announced his retirement from active service with the Conference, but promised his continued support through counsel, guidance and prayer.

Gerry has a great life history of involvement with St. Vincent de Paul, and it was a great pleasure to hear him recount his early days as a Vincentian.

Gerry and his beloved wife Joan have been active Vincentians in their community in Holland since the 1930's. Gerry and his brother Wilfred would go door to door among the local parishioners with a green can that had only a slot to put money into for Vincentian use. They were always curious about how one would get the money out, but never quite put this scientific curiosity to a test.

Towards the end of the war things were very difficult for the Dutch families. Gerry's parents made arrangements for him and his brother Wilfred to stay with the Augustinian Sisters at the Convent of St. Nicholas in Lutjebroek, Netherlands. In return for working in the vegetable garden, chopping wood, running errands and acting as altar servers in the convent they received room and board.

At the end of the war his parents rode their bicycles some 40 kilometers to reclaim their children from the convent.

Gerry and his wife Joan's parents were involved as Vincentians in their community. Gerry often accompanied his future father-in-law as he did his Vincentian visits prior to Gerry immigrating to Canada in 1954.

Joan joined him later following their marriage in Holland in 1956.

Gerry spearheaded the formation of the St. Albert Conference in May of 2004. The Conference encompasses two St. Albert parishes; Holy Family and St. Albert.

Val Merchant, charter member, outlined Gerry's work with the St. Albert Conference that brought it to its current success, and presented Gerry with an engraved SSVP pen in appreciation.

Peter Ouellette, President of the Western Region Council of the SSVP presented Gerry with a Certificate of appreciation from our National President Jean-Noel Cormier.



Canada's Councils In Action

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ST. LUKE CONFERENCE, MAPLE RIDGE

At the end of 2014, St. Luke's Conference in Maple Ridge presented Past President Rose-Marie Brown with a 'Certificate of Service' and a Past President recognition Pin for her years of service as Conference President from 2007 to 2013. Loretta Draper, the Parish Secretary at St. Luke's was also recognized and presented with a 'Certificate of Volunteer Appreciation' for all her help to the Conference. Rose and Loretta continue to be untiring and faithful servants to the poor.



Left: Rose-Marie Brown; Right: Loretta Draper

Father Mario Marin, the new Pastor at St. Luke's takes an active interest in the St. Luke's Conference. He offers spiritual reflection, is leading the involvement of the Youth Ministry and stepped in to help deliver Christmas Hampers this year. Go Father Mario!



Father Mario Marin (Spiritual Advisor) Pastor at St Luke's with long time volunteer Lou Martin

This Christmas St. Luke's Conference packed 27 Hampers, which thanks to the St Luke's Youth Ministry included gifts for children. The Youth Ministry was a very active part of our plans this year. They set up and decorated a tree - with hand-made Tags identifying children's ages for donors to select as their gift donation. With the other tree at our local ABC restaurant gifts were provided to all children on our list and we had enough to donate to the Ridge Meadows Christmas Haven for families not served by St. Luke's.

St. Luke's Parish Youth Ministry and their Children's Gift Tree



In Memoriam

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

- Robert Samson**, Conférence Sainte-Odile, Montréal QC, January 9, 2014
Floyd Morin, St. Stephen Conference, North Vancouver BC, April 11, 2014
Diane Turcotte, Conférence Saint-Alphonse, Victoriaville QC, April 14, 2014
Viola Toole, St. Ignatius Martyr Conference, Ottawa ON, April 17, 2014
Clément Poitras, Conférence St-Noël Chabanel, Laval QC, April 19, 2014
Lydia Marie Lirette, Holy Family Conference, Amherst NS, April 23, 2014
Alberto D'Agostini, St. Andrew Conference, Edmonton AB, June 12, 2014
Albert Moore, Sacred Heart Confrence, LaSalle ON, June 14, 2014
Catharine Mahony, Church of Our Lady Conference, Guelph ON, June 25, 2014
Alban Babin, St. John Conference, Guelph ON, July 4, 2014
Betty Lewis, Holy Family Conference, London ON, July 5, 2014
Louis Nicolas Siou, Conférence St-Pascal, Montréal QC, July 24, 2014
Denis Cadotte, Conférence St-Isaac-Jogues, Montréal QC, August 19, 2014
Conrad Hamel, Montréal QC, August 20, 2014
Rodrigue Gobeil, Conférence Notre-Dame-de-Grâce de Chicoutimi, QC, August 21, 2014
George Dorner, Good Shepherd Conference, Windsor ON, August 22, 2014
Harold Leonard, St. Thomas More Conference, Niagara Falls ON, August 23, 2014
Debbie Farrell, Immaculate Conception Conference, Harbour Grace NL, September 6, 2014
Mary O'Gorman, Corpus Christi Conference, Thunder Bay ON, September 8, 2014
Herb Jones, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Conference, Windsor ON, September 21, 2014
Len Jennings, Good Shepherd Conference, Windsor ON, September 25, 2014
Byron Ducharme, St Peter's Cathedral Conference, September 29, 2014
Julie Van Dongen, Corpus Christi Conference, Windsor ON, October 2, 2014
Roger Hachey, Our Lady of Fatima Conference, Elliot Lake ON, October 3, 2014
Owen «Scotty» McAllister, St. Denis Conference, St. Catharines ON, October 5, 2014
Douglas H. White, Assumption Conference, Windsor ON, October 9, 2014
Suzanne Ménard, Conférence St-François Solano, Montréal QC, November 10, 2014
Doug Vernem, St. Raphael Conference, Burlington ON, November 29, 2014
Patrick Taylor, St. Mary Conference, Collingwood ON, December 26, 2014
John Joseph (Jack) Seifred, Church of Our Lady Immaculate, Guelph ON, December 29, 2014
Gordon Burns, St. George Conference, London ON, January 7, 2015
Pierre Lafrance, Conseil particulier de Bellerive, Montréal QC, January 14, 2015
Père Lionel Dion, M.Afr.(Pères Blancs), Conseil régional du Québec, February 1, 2015
Grant McAuley, St. Agnes Conference, Chatham ON, February 13, 2015
Anna E. Boom, Holy Family Conference, Amherst, NÉ, February 15, 2015
Cecilia (Cis) Rayworth, Holy Family Conference, Amherst NÉ, February 16, 2015
Kevin Crozier, St. John Vianney Conference, Barrie ON, February 22, 2015

They were our brothers and sisters 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

What's New?



Statue of Saint Vincent de Paul from BACCI SARL (France)

Decor wood tone; approximate height of 20 cm.

Those statues made of HYDRACAL acrylic resin, a material that looks like plaster, but is much more resistant, like a resin.



Thank you

"Thank You" card

Dimensions: 4" x 6"

Inside: blank

Back: . *Founded in 1833 by a group of young laymen, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organisation of women and men, volunteers, committed to offer person-to-person help to all those in need. It is funded mainly from donations.*

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