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Message from the President

A new liturgical year has begun and in eager anticipation we await the feast of the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Let us renew our commitment to serve with love, respect, justice and joy.

All around us, the world is in a topsy-turvy mode. All seems hell-bent on destroying the past. We are told that nothing good can come from the past. It appears that all is up for grabs and that no one and nothing is safe from the cancel culture and political correctness agenda. Everything and everyone is subjected to the scrutiny of the most recent cause in vogue for the day. Fear reigns supreme, everyone runs for cover.

Let us hold fast to the faith and values that our fathers and mothers handed on to us from our ancestors. If fear is the primary motivation, then we as Christians and Vincentians need to step back and pray for wisdom and discernment. We must look back to our founders and examples, to the many brave and heroic martyrs and saints who have gone before us. They stood tall, not yielding to the pressures of their times.

We read in Jeremiah Chapter 6: 16a, NRSVCE:

“Thus says the Lord:
Stand at the crossroads, and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way lies; and walk in it,
and find rest for your souls.”

Let us renew our efforts to bring about a more just and caring society by quietly responding to calls for help. Each time you answer the call, you are fulfilling the demands of justice by meeting the most basic and immediate needs of the person crying out for social justice. Let us not get tangled up in the endless public debates in vogue and ever changing from day to day. Our greatest efforts for social justice are achieved by simply being present, compassionate, empathetic and attentive to the person before you asking for help. Let us bring about change, one person at the time.

May the birth of the Child, Christ Jesus, renew our childlike spirit and our “joie de vivre” which is so edifying in bearing witness to our faith through our good works. Joy is one of the most reliable signs of faith and grace.

Jeremiah Chapter 29: 11 – 14a, NRSVCE:

“For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the LORD.”

I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.
In the words of Tiny Tim¹ “God bless us, every one.” Let us bring joy and hope to everyone. Like Tiny Tim, we can rise above our personal agendas, sufferings and hopes and thereby reflect Jesus to one and all.

*Claude Bédard, President
National Council*

Notes:

1. *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens



BRITISH COLUMBIA FLOODS

British Columbia has been severally hit by extreme weather events during 2021. In November, severe downpours have resulted in catastrophic associated flooding which will take months to recover; not only have people lost their homes, they've also lost their jobs, their schools and their communities. Conferences and councils in British Columbia are working to assist in whatever way possible; in the lower mainland and in the Kamloops and Okanagan regions, they are responding to the influx of people needing assistance.

A National Emergency appeal has been established to assist with the need. Donations via ["Donate"](#) on the National web page; please direct your donation to "National Emergency – British Columbia floods"



2021 Financial and Statistics Annual Report Forms for Conferences and Councils now available

The Annual Report document is designed to provide a consistent reporting format that will accomplish three things:

- provide a template that will lend itself to assisting the members of the National Council of Canada to speak with some authority and knowledge regarding the activities of all conferences and councils in Canada;
- provide a template for conferences and councils to measure the scope of service according to the Rule and Canadian statutes;
- enable a comprehensive annual report to be prepared for the International Council General.

The updated 2021 annual reports are available under the National Operations Manual at

<https://www.ssvp.ca/annual-report>



Fund Development

The Fund Development Committee is preparing resources for conferences and councils across Canada identifying fundraising initiatives to help raise funds to carry out our Mission of serving persons in need. We want to hear from you on your tried and successful initiatives to raise funds for the Society in your community that could be leveraged in other communities. Please email your ideas to [Linda Dollard](#). Thank you for sharing what has worked for you and can be replicated in other communities.

Linda Dollard, Chair

Fund Development Committee



Twinning Project: A Privilege and a Joy!

The St. John/Holy Spirit Conference for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Edmonton was instituted on October 15, 2002 and was one of the first to take on the task of serving the less fortunate in central west Edmonton. Our community is home to many low-income families, in many cases the working poor, often single-parent families who must hold down two or three jobs just to pay the rent and feed their families.

In 2004, the conference leaders at the time decided to broaden their support for friends in need beyond the geographical borders of our parish and sought to find a conference in a less fortunate area that needed their support. Through a twinning initiative, St. John/Holy Spirit Conference was connected with the St. John Fisher Conference of Sacred Heart Church in Manchester, Jamaica. This conference serves a rural area and was in much need of assistance to meet the many and diverse needs of the people of their community. At the beginning of this long-distance relationship, the area had been badly affected by a hurricane, so their needs were great in terms of just having the basics of life. They were indeed grateful for any assistance we could provide!

For almost two decades, our conference has been privileged to provide regular funding to support the work of the St. John Fisher Conference. With these funds, the local leaders have supported the educational efforts of families with books, uniforms and assistance with paying school fees. They have supported local healthcare needs with funding for doctor visits and prescription medications, in addition to food and toiletries for the elderly of their communities. They recently provided funds to cover the costs of a dignified funeral and burial for a homeless man.

One of the truly gratifying aspects of this twinning initiative has been the ongoing and regular communication with this conference, which has included exchanging letters, cards and pictures of the work being done to support the less fortunate people of this distant island. In addition to the regular reporting of the use of funds provided, we share the spiritual twinning prayer at each meeting.

We feel blessed to be part of this shared commitment to serve the poor and we thank our Heavenly Father for giving us this opportunity to work together through the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

*Marie Owen, President, and Theresa Muench, Spiritual Advisor,
St. John/Holy Spirit Conference, Edmonton, Alberta*



Members of the St. John/Holy Spirit Conference and Father Dean Dowle, parish priest, on the World Day of the Poor activities in 2019, Edmonton, Alberta



Members of the St. John Fisher Conference, Manchester, Jamaica



Finding heads for our beds: Cenovus Mattress Donation

Cenovus Energy has again donated double- and queen-sized mattresses to First Nation communities in Southern Alberta.

SSVP North of 60, SSVP CDCC, and SSVP Western region arranged for the mattresses to be picked up from the Cenovus warehouse by Premier Van Lines. The mattresses were then stored in the lower hall at St. Albert the Great Church and our SSVP Sea Can.

Arrangements were then made to have the mattresses delivered to:

- Bearspaw Nation, Eden Valley AB
- Piikani Nation, Brocket AB
- Siksika Nation, Cluny AB

The people who have received these mattresses were very appreciative, as this donation will help to address a critical need within the community.

The donation of these 76 mattresses could not have been completed without the help of many people:

- Father Troy, Father Myles, Father Long, Father Roy and Father Maruszcak from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary
- Kiki and Roger at the Wellness Centre at Eden Valley
- Colin and Tarrant with the Eden Valley Critical Incident Response Team
- Johny Wingert, Jason Krueger, Greg Gutek, Mike Alvares, Tara Epp and the Student Team, Murray, Sheldon and Jim who were our drivers and helpers
- Members of SSVP CDCC, SSVP Western Region and SSVP North of 60

A special “Thank You” to Cenovus, whose generous donation made this happen. Since 2018, Cenovus and the North of 60 Program have partnered to donate mattresses to communities in need.

*Lance Berrington, President
St. Pius X Conference, Calgary*





Opération Bonne Mine

Listening to our communities, all the way to Kuujjuaq!

This year, we benefitted from a \$15,000 grant from Hydro-Québec as part of Opération Bonne Mine.

The amount received was redistributed to member organizations of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul across the province to help fill the back-to-school needs of young people from low-income families. School supplies, gift cards and other items were purchased and given to more than 400 pre-selected youth.

The Hydro-Québec grant also helped us support Inuit youth with their back-to-school necessities at the Jaanimmarik School in Kuujjuaq, which serves 350 students, from primary grade 4 to the fifth year of secondary school.

The school uses the \$3,000 we have made available to reward young people who, through various actions, distinguish themselves by their perseverance in studies throughout the year. This demonstrates the positive effect of Hydro-Québec's financial assistance.

*Kutuka Baudouin, Coordinator
Québec Regional Council*



Spiritual Reflection

Advent Letter 2021

by [Communication Cont](#) | Nov 30, 2021 | [Congregation of the Mission](#), [News](#), [Superior General](#)

THE SICK AND THE ELDERLY STRONG BUILDERS OF A BRIGHT AND HOPE-FILLED FUTURE



Dear members of the Vincentian Family,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be always with us!

Every year, the Church offers us the gift of the grace-filled period called “Advent” that helps us to prepare our hearts and minds in a special way for the Christmas season. Continuing the reflection on Saint Vincent de Paul as a “Mystic of Charity,” I invite all of us in this year’s Advent season to meditate on the indisputable and vital mission that the sick and elderly have in the Church and in the world, and, therefore, in our Congregations, Associations, communities, families, and groups.

If, on the one hand, society so often considers sick and elderly persons as useless for the development of a bright and hope-filled future for humanity; on the other hand, in the Bible, Jesus turns all those assumptions upside down, giving the sick and elderly a privileged role in the mission that the Father entrusted to Him to bring all peoples to Him, to His heart, to bring the Kingdom of God to its fulfillment.

This Biblical reversal derives from a radical distinction of who, in fact, is placed at the center. Who is the source for bringing the greatest meaning into our lives, to what we do, to that to which we dedicate all our gifts and talents? Who is the font of ultimate happiness and joy? It is not the human person who is put in first place, but God.

Society often puts the human person at the center insofar as the person is physically and mentally able to bring some profit to it; God has no place or, if He does, He is put in third or fourth place, according to an individual’s selfish views. The logical conclusion is that, at some point, the sick and the elderly become, as Pope Francis often repeats, “the discard of society” (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, nos. 19-20, 278), no longer useful for bringing a bright and hope-filled future to humanity.



Saint Vincent spoke about the role of the sick on several occasions:

I've already said this many times, and I can't help repeating it once more now, namely, that we should be of the opinion that those suffering from illness in the Company are the blessing of the Company and the house, and that we should consider this to be all the more true since Our Lord Jesus Christ loved that state of suffering, through which He himself willed to pass and became man in order to suffer (CCD XII, 26-27; conference 184, "The Good Use of Infirmities," 28 June 1658).

We have good reason to praise God that, by His goodness and mercy, there are sick and infirm men in the Company who make of their inactivity and sufferings a theater of patience, in which they show forth all the virtues in their brilliance. We must thank God for having given us such persons. I've already said many times, and can't refrain from saying it again, that we must believe that its sick members are the blessing of the Company (CCD XI, 61; conference 55, "The Good Use of Illness).

But for the Company—the poor Company—nothing special should be permitted either in food or clothing! I make exception, as always, for the sick. Oh, the poor patients! For them, even the chalices of the Church should be sold. God has given me tender feelings in that regard, and I ask Him to give this spirit to the Company (CCD XII, 334; conference 220, "Poverty," [5 December 1659]).

In his message for the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, Pope Francis quoted "a saintly elderly person who continues to pray and work for the Church," Pope-Emeritus Benedict XVI: "The prayer of the elderly can protect the world, helping it perhaps more effectively than the frenetic activity of many others." Pope Francis commented, "He spoke those words in 2012, toward the end of his pontificate. There is something beautiful here. Your prayer is a very precious resource: a deep breath that the Church and the world urgently need."

The Pope further affirmed, "There is no retirement age from the work of proclaiming the Gospel" and defined the vocation of elderly people: "To preserve our roots, to pass on the faith to the young and to care for the little ones." (Pope Francis, Message for the First World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, 25 July 2021).

During the series of catechesis on the family, Pope Francis said: "The elderly are the reservoir of wisdom for our people! [...] We must reawaken the collective sense of gratitude, of appreciation, of hospitality, which makes the elder feel like a living part of his community." A society that cannot show gratitude and affection to the elderly "is a perverse society. The Church, faithful to the Word of God, cannot tolerate such degeneration."

"Where there is no honour for the elderly, there is no future for the young." Moreover, "The elder is not an alien. We are that elder: in the near or far future, but inevitably, even if we don't think it. And if we don't learn how to treat the elder better, that is how we will be treated" (Pope Francis, General Audience, Wednesday, 4 March 2015).

Vincent understood these principles. In the *Common Rules*, the first *Constitutions* of the Congregation of the Mission, he wrote:

One of the principal things Christ did was to visit and care for the sick, and especially persons who were poor. He very often recommended this to those He was sending into His vineyard. For this reason the Congregation should have a special care for helping and visiting the sick, whether outside or inside the house (VI, 1).

Wherever we visit a sick person, inside or outside the house, we should look on this person as Christ rather than as just a human being, since Christ said that He regarded any service done to such a person as being done to Himself (VI, 2).

Saint Vincent de Paul also addressed sick persons themselves with the following words:

Members of our own Community who are sick should remind themselves that they are not kept in bed, or in the hospital, just to be nursed and brought back to health by medical help. They are also there, as if in a pulpit, to witness publicly to Christian virtues, especially patience and acceptance of the Divine Will, at least by their example. In this way they can make Christ present to those looking after them and to visitors. And through their sickness they themselves can grow in virtue (VI, 3).

During this Advent, let us all discover more and more in our communities, families, and groups, the “living treasure” of our sick and elderly. They are the living presence of Jesus among us. They are Jesus, to whom we owe all our love, all the care we can humanly offer. They remain our teachers, models, and helpers in building a bright and hope-filled future, because it is Jesus who is speaking to us through them, showing us on what foundations we are invited to build our dreams, hopes, and objectives. We must not succumb to the mentality of some sectors of society who consider the elderly and sick as society’s trash: once the short-lived moment of joy is over, only sorrow, disillusion, frustration, and a meaningless life remain.

Vincent de Paul, in becoming a “Mystic of Charity,” came to understand and live the relationship with the sick and elderly as it was presented by Jesus.

May this Advent Season lead us ever more into the depths of Jesus’s message regarding the sick and elderly, so that, as we prepare to celebrate the Birth of our Savior, we might build together with them a bright and hope-filled future in the light of His presence.

*Your brother in Saint Vincent,
Tomaž Mavrič, CM*



Social Justice December News

As we near the end of 2021 and hopefully begin to see some light leading to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, I would like to thank all Vincentians for their efforts this past year. In addition, many thanks to our social justice reps and supporters across Canada. Charity and Justice are our two foundational pillars.

2022 will be an exciting year as we continue to expand our social justice network. We are also planning a new social justice survey in 2022 which we hope every member will take time to complete. This survey will help us to identify the interest levels across Canada regarding social justice. In addition, we hope to be able to identify members with an interest in learning more about various issues as well as potential new social justice reps and supporters.

The role and importance of social justice within the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has never been more needed. In order to be successful in our efforts, we need members and volunteers to join our social justice network. Please consider joining us at your conference level. If your conference does not have a social justice rep, perhaps you can take on this role. We can provide resource information on how you can be an effective rep for your conference. You will also be able to use the 2022 survey to identify your interests.

Our subcommittee formation continues as we develop various **these** for advocacy, multicultural diversity, Indigenous issues, housing/homelessness and prison ministry. While there will be smaller core committees, we invite anyone with an interest in one or more of these topics to join larger networks for each subcommittee. The 2022 survey will provide this option or you can add your name at any time by email to ssvpjp@gmail.com.

One issue that is often asked of us is: What does a social justice rep talk about at their conference meeting? There are a number of options:

1. Use our national website (www.ssvp.ca) to access past newsletters and social justice articles.
2. Review topical social justice issues such as systemic racism, housing/homelessness, Indigenous People, poverty levels and many others. There are also a number of websites where you can find information. These include Stats Canada, Homeless Hub, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, National Right to Housing, and Basic Income Canada. It is always a good recommendation to research locally regarding any of these and other issues in order to make them more interesting for our membership.
3. Use the Ten Catholic Social Teaching Principles. You can find this information on our website and also by doing an online search.

The key to having a good discussion at your conference meeting is to have enough time (minimum 15-20 minutes), ensure social justice is not near the end of the meeting agenda and encourage an open discussion that allows differing views.

In closing, may you have a joyous Christmas and may 2022 bring happiness to all.

*Jim Paddon, Chair
National social justice committee*



Question & Answer

Q: What changes/adaptations are possible for a conference / council in relation to "The Rule"?

A: All conferences and councils are expected to follow the Rule and Statutes, and Nationally approved policies and by-laws. In addition, the conferences and councils are expected to have their own set of guidelines for how they will operate locally. There can be nothing in the conference/council guidelines that contradicts The Rule, by-laws, the Operations Manual policies and procedures, or spirit of the Society. The guidelines should be in writing, approved by the conference/council as a whole, and distributed to the members.

To assist, on the National website, you will find a series of formation material on Vincentian Life and Leadership <https://ssvp.ca/members/training/>