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In this issue:

- Annual National Formation 2022
- Reflection - Simon of Cyrene
- Social Justice - Catholic Social Teaching
- Ten Foundational Principles in the Social Teaching of the Church
- What is Systemic Change?
- Housing Campaign
- Twinning - Guatemala
- Question & Answer

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ANNUAL NATIONAL FORMATION

We are very pleased to announce that the **Annual National Formation (ANF)** conference is confirmed to take place in Ottawa on June 17 and 18, 2022. It has been a long time since we have been able to be together as Vincentians and this has created even more anticipation in all of us as we plan the event. Our theme for the 2022 ANF is HUNGER. We believe that this is a powerful and timely theme because it goes to the heart of the work of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, nationally and internationally. It represents the hunger we all have for our spiritual life as Vincentians, our hunger to connect with others socially through our daily interactions with each other and the people we serve, and of course the hunger for food that is a basic need for all.

We have chosen Carleton University's new Richcraft Hall which overlooks the Rideau River and offers a bright and spacious location for our meetings. This year we are creating space for a live Chat Room with tables set up to accommodate conversations on a variety of topics that are of interest to Vincentians. Members can pick a table and invite others to join the discussion. In the same area, we have invited Conferences and Councils to display information about their projects and/or promising ideas for serving people in need. Richcraft Hall also offers large and small meeting rooms to accommodate the workshops that are a consistent part of the ANF. Our workshops this year will fall within the theme of hunger. We have been receiving proposals and we will offer several choices in French and English. These will be announced as we get closer to the event.

We have confirmed two plenary speakers for the 2022 ANF; we are pleased to announce that MP Francis Drouin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and Marie-José Mastromonaco, Second Harvest, Chief of Operations (Québec & Nunavut) have accepted our invitation to address the assembly. The Parliamentary Secretary will speak about the state of hunger in Canada, the government's initiatives to reduce food insecurity, and how the charitable sector can assist the Minister to achieve the objectives of zero hunger. Ms Mastromonaco will inform us about recovering wasted food in our society as part of their Food Rescue initiative and how charitable organizations may participate and benefit from this initiative; note that several SSVP conferences already participate. Both of our plenary speakers have a relevant and timely message for the Society.

I urge all of you who can attend, to do so. This time together offers more than just information. It gives us the connection and the sense of belonging that nourishes the soul and revives our faith.

*Deborah Joyce, Chair
National Formation Committee*



ANNUAL NATIONAL FORMATION

We are excited to invite you to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Annual National Formation (ANF) to be held in Ottawa on June 17 and 18, 2022 at Carleton University.

The theme for the 2022 ANF is HUNGER; this theme covers hunger on different levels, such as hunger for spirituality, human contact, the continuity of SSVP as well as the hunger we address in our communities related to food insecurities. We are offering multiple workshops in French and English and a Live Chat Room for an opportunity to exchange ideas and enter into conversations with our fellow Vincentians on their initiatives. We are also pleased to offer a plenary session with a keynote speaker (TBA). The theme of HUNGER will be a thread that runs throughout the two-day event.

The Live Chat Room / Exposition Hall is a forum where members, conferences or councils can identify a topic for discussion or share their successful initiatives/projects with other Vincentians. Please reserve a spot at the Live Chat Room to present your initiative or project by filling this [submission form](#).

Workshops are typically 75 minutes long, to include presentation with a question and answer period. Presenters must provide their own presentation material. Please submit your workshop proposal by filling this [submission form](#).

Please submit by April 30.

This in-person event is long-awaited after our hibernation over the last two years. Our hope is to create an inspiring and uplifting event in which we can once again network and enjoy each other's company and wisdom. We hope to see you there.

National Formation Committee

Please note that at the March 26 National Council board meeting, it was decided to have the statutory meeting, a.k.a. as the Annual General Assembly (AGA), at a later date.



SIMON OF CYRENE

*Simon stopped in hesitation.
Not foreseeing his proud station.
Called to bear the Cross of Christ.*

A bit of background may be in order. We know that Simon was from Cyrene, a city in North Africa in what we now know as Libya. It was a city with significant Jewish population. Simon had likely come to Jerusalem to be part of the Passover celebration, not to do good works or engage in a prison ministry - certainly not to carry the cross of Christ. The bible tells us he was the father of Rufus and Alexander, two men who were familiar enough to early Christians that they would have been known to those reading the story by their first names. To this extent, we can infer that Simon would have heard about Jesus and His works from his sons.

During Lent, we consider Simon of Cyrene during the stations of the Cross, a common Lenten devotion. As He was carrying his cross to the place of execution, Jesus became so weak that the soldiers forced Simon to carry the cross. This is not out of pity, but because the soldiers were afraid that Jesus would not survive to be crucified - it was just another day at work for them, indeed rather light duty dispensing harsh justice. The Roman soldiers would not do something as shameful as carrying the cross of a condemned man, so they forced Simon to do it. This was most likely not how Simon had foreseen his day unfolding as he watched the spectacle before him (indeed he may have grumbled "Oh man! Why me?"), but what a grace in Simon's life. Simon may not have been eager for the task, but he took up the cross of Christ and followed Him, quite literally.

It's one thing to prepare oneself and schedule time to help our brothers and sisters in need, but it can be quite another when that need comes up unexpectedly. As Vincentians, we often go out to help those in need at a time and place we have scheduled. We have a designated time in our lives set aside to deliver hampers or visit those in prison, but how do we react when the poor and suffering suddenly require our assistance as we go about our daily lives? As Vincentians, we are called to see Christ suffering all around us in the poor, in the powerless, in the misunderstood. When a suffering poor person is thrust on us unexpectedly, we may hesitate to come to their aid - His aid. We find many excuses. We remain aloof. It is difficult to find the wisdom and courage to help, and see the least of our brothers and sisters as our masters, and through them to serve Christ in the poor. If we are not cautious, we become indifferent to their suffering and we do not even see them, let alone Christ in them. We respond often to the needs of those suffering in our midst and because of our Vincentian calling, we see them.

Many of those we aid have crosses that have become too heavy for them to bear. Some are scourged by their addictions - beaten, scorned and marginalized by the wealthy society in which we live; weakened by hunger with no home to call their own, sleeping on furnace exhaust grates in order to keep warm in the cold Canadian winter. There are no soldiers forcing us to help these people, but through our response to Grace, and as a manifestation of our Vincentian mission, we are called to respond. We can help them get back on their feet after a fall. We carry their cross and alleviate their burden - His burden - like Simon.

*John Carey, Chair
National Spirituality Committee*



SOCIAL JUSTICE – CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

As we continue our efforts to expand our social justice network across Canada, it may be worth looking at a document that is often overlooked. Catholic Social Teachings is a summary of papal encyclicals and other Catholic social thoughts. The 1891 encyclical Rerum Novarum by Pope Leo XIII began a process to look at how we have progressed in our thinking as it relates to the most basic principles, which is the dignity of the human person and respect for life.

As we educate ourselves and fellow Vincentians on social justice issues, I would suggest using Catholic Social Teachings as the base. There are a number of variations on the basic themes of social teachings and principles.

The attached document, [“Ten Foundational Principles in the Social Teaching of the Church”](#) by Fr. Robert P. Maloney, CM.

I had the opportunity to meet Fr. Maloney several years at a Vincentian gathering and heard him give a most eloquent speech on this subject. His article looks at social teachings from a Vincentian perspective that I believe we can all relate to in our various work here in Canada.

Please use these ten principles as discussion topics at your next meeting. Share them with your conference members, take some quiet time to meditate on each principle and consider how they may help you in your ministry to persons in need and your conference relationships.

Jim Paddon, Chair

National Social Justice Committee



TEN FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES IN THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

Here are ten building-blocks upon which the Church's entire social teaching rests.

1. The principle of the Dignity of the Human Person

"Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family." This is the bedrock principle of Catholic social teaching. Every person- regardless of race, sex, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, employment or economic status, health, intelligence, achievement or any other differentiating characteristic- is worthy of respect. It is not what you do or what you have that gives you a claim on respect; it is simply being human that establishes your dignity. Given that dignity, the human person is, in the Catholic view, never a means, always an end.

The body of Catholic social teaching begins with the human person, but it does not end there. Individuals have dignity; but individualism has no place in Catholic social thought. The principle of human dignity gives the human person a claim on membership in a community, the human family.

2. The principle of Respect for Human Life

"Every person, from the moment of conception to natural death, has inherent dignity and a right to life consistent with that dignity." Human life at every stage of development and decline is precious and therefore worthy of protection and respect. It is always wrong directly to attack innocent human life. The Catholic tradition sees the sacredness of human life as part of any moral vision for a just and good society.

3. The Principle of Association

"Our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society- in economics and politics, in law and policy- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community." The centerpiece of society is the family; family stability must always be protected and never undermined. By association with others- in families and in other social institutions that foster growth, protect dignity and promote the common good- human persons achieve their fulfillment.

4. The Principle of Participation

"We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable." Without participation, the benefits available to an individual through any social institution cannot be realized. The human person has a right not to be shut out from participating in those institutions that are necessary for human fulfillment. This principle applies in a special way to conditions associated with work. "Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then due basic rights of workers must be respected- the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative."

5. The Principle of Preferential Protection for the Poor and Vulnerable

We believe that we touch Christ when we touch the needy. The story of the last judgment plays a very important role in the Catholic Faith tradition. From its earliest days, the Church has taught that we will be judged by what we choose to do or not to do in regard to the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the homeless, the prisoner. Today the Church expresses this teaching in terms of "the preferential option for the poor."

Why a preferential love for the poor? Why put the needs of the poor first? Because the common good-

the good of society as a whole- requires it. The opposite of rich and powerful is poor and powerless. If the good of all, the common good, is to prevail, preferential protection must move toward those affected adversely by the absence of power and the presence of privation. Otherwise the balance needed to keep society in one piece will be broken to the detriment of the whole.

6. The Principle of Solidarity

"Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family... Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that 'loving our neighbor' has global dimensions in an interdependent world."

The principle of solidarity leads to choices that will promote and protect the common good.

Solidarity calls us to respond not simply to personal, individual misfortunes; there are societal issues that cry out for more just social structures. For this reason the Church often calls us today not only to engage in charitable works but also to work towards social justice.

7. The Principle of Stewardship

"The Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation."

The steward is a manager, not an owner. In an era of rising consciousness about our physical environment, our tradition is calling us to a sense of moral responsibility for the protection of the environment- croplands, grasslands, woodlands, air, water, minerals and other natural deposits.

Stewardship responsibilities also look toward our use of our personal talents, our attention to personal health and our use of personal property.

8. The Principle of Subsidiarity

This Principle deals chiefly with "the responsibilities and limits of government, and the essential roles of voluntary associations."

The principle of subsidiarity puts a proper limit on government by insisting that no higher level of organization should perform any function that can be handled efficiently and effectively at a lower level of organization by persons or groups that are closer to the problems and closer to the ground.

Oppressive governments are always in violation of the principle of subsidiarity; overactive governments also sometimes violate this principle.

On the other hand, individuals often feel helpless in the face of daunting social problems:

unemployment, people sleeping in doorways or begging on street corners. Since these problems have societal dimensions, no one person or one group can do much about them. While giving due regard to subsidiarity, the government entity that collects taxes should help individuals, smaller communities, and the national community to "do something" about such social problems. When we pay taxes, therefore, we are contributing to the establishment of social justice.

9. The Principle of Human Equality

"Equality of all persons comes from their essential dignity... While differences in talents are a part of God's plan, social and cultural discrimination in fundamental rights... are not compatible with God's design."

Treating equals equally is one way of defining justice, also understood classically as rendering to each person his or her due. Underlying the notion of equality is the simple principle of fairness; one of the earliest ethical stirrings felt in the developing human person is a sense of what is "fair" and what is not.

10. The Principle of the Common Good

"The common good is understood as the social conditions that allow people to reach their full human potential and to realize their human dignity."

The social conditions the Church has in mind presuppose "respect for the person," "the social well-being and development of the group" and the public authority's maintenance of "peace and security." Today, in an age of global interdependence, the principle of the common good points to the need for international structures that can promote the just development of persons and families across regional and national lines.

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.



WHAT IS SYSTEMIC CHANGE?

Vincentians are called to serve our neighbours living in poverty. Traditionally, we have done this by acts of charity. But also, we are called to help our neighbours to change the circumstances of their lives by helping them remove the barriers which keep them in poverty. We call this part of our work, systemic change.

The definition of systemic change adopted by the Vincentian Family in North America is: “Systemic Change among those living in poverty aims beyond providing food, clothing, shelter and alleviating immediate needs. It enables people themselves to engage in the identification of the root causes of their poverty and to create strategies including advocacy to change those structures which keep them in poverty. Systemic Change requires transforming attitudes.”

The key element here is to empower those who live in poverty to participate in, and even direct, the process of identifying the root causes of their condition. They are the experts on their own situation and we need to respect their expertise in the face of our own biases, preconceptions and even our well-meant solutions. When we encourage our neighbours living in poverty to express their needs and participate in developing solutions, they and we become partners in the struggle for justice.

Sometimes, the solutions can be implemented at the personal level. A Vincentian might help the neighbour in need access a resource that will help him or her escape poverty. Helping someone enroll in an education program is an example. Sometimes, the solution can be found at the community level when we support the provision of affordable housing or an important health care program that can help the person to a better quality of life. Sometimes, the solution requires change at higher levels of government. We can advocate for labour standards that will make it possible for workers to afford their basic needs. We can promote minimum standards for income support that will enable people to keep their health and dignity.

Two key elements of quality systemic change initiatives are that they help change the overall life situation of the person and create a permanent improvement in the person’s life.

How does the home visit fit into the vision of systemic change? As Vincentians we are in a privileged relationship of mutual trust with people who live in poverty. We help with their basic needs and we provide social and spiritual support in a way that no other person or organization does. Because of this relationship, our neighbours in need can be open and honest with us as they express their needs, hopes and frustrations about their lives in poverty. We can work with them to find the best ways to break the cycle. We can be companions and mentors as they find ways to a better quality of life.

The mission of the Society is “To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.” To do this effectively, we need to address the issue of poverty at both the personal and systemic levels.

Corry Wink

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Canada



HOUSING CAMPAIGN

Our [National Housing Campaign](#) was launched in February 2021 with our [National Action Plan](#), accessible at the national website. (www.ssvp.ca)

On the national level we have developed a collaborative effort with the National Right to Housing, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada (CHAC). In addition, we are in partnership with two Vincentian organizations in the Institute for Global Homelessness (IGH), and the Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA).

There are examples of existing housing projects in Toronto, ON, St. John's NL and Victoria BC, and housing projects in Halifax, NS, Ottawa, ON and London, ON.

The housing campaign includes education, advocacy and building projects. Housing is a federal, provincial, and local municipal issue with an emphasis on the need for local SSVp members who can step up and become our local housing champions. This is an area that we have a need to expand and grow. We need local champions who can join the housing campaign and help us achieve even further successes. Our request is that every council appoint a housing champion, or preferably a housing subcommittee to be part of this national campaign.

Council presidents: please support the national housing campaign by appointing one or more members to function as your housing champions or housing committee. The [National Action Plan](#) provides many resources for your use.

Jim Paddon, Chair

National Social Justice Committee



Twinning - Guatemala

The Mother Teresa Conference, Moncton, New Brunswick, is twinned with the Virgen de Guadalupe Conference, Ixcán, Playa Grande, Quiché, Guatemala. The following is an update from the President of the recipient conference, on the assistance provided by the twinning contributions received last year.

"In 2021, we had the pleasure of helping eleven families with very limited resources. We provided them with medicine, groceries, clothing, a bed and a scholarship. We received the bed and the scholarship as a donation. We are doing our best to help these families with the little funds we have and we continue to work this new year with all the encouragement and pleasure that God gives us every day. We see the great needs that our poor brothers and sisters have, which encourages us to keep going.

The members of the Virgen de Guadalupe Conference are very appreciative of the support that the Mother Teresa Conference has given to our Guatemalan brothers and sisters. We ask God to keep them safe and guide their steps each day.

I share here some photos of our work.

*Jesica Azucena Santos Ramirez, President
Virgen de Guadalupe Conference*





Question & Answer

Q: When can we start in-person Home Visits? Do we wear masks in people's homes, and do we ask those we visit to wear masks?

A: The answers are very dependent on the local /regional/provincial Public Health requirements; however, prevention and precaution are always good measures to apply to manage the risks to members and those being assisted. This will still vary greatly across the country and even between adjacent communities.

There is no national Society prohibition against resuming in-person Home Visits. Unless otherwise prohibited due to local/regional/provincial health requirements, SSVP members are encouraged to meet persons in need once again in person, either in their homes or in another safe environment. Masks are still recognized as a good prevention and precaution tool.