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In this issue:

- Vincentians and the Papal Visit
- Northwest Territories Pilgrimage To See Pope Francis In Alberta
- Reconciliation Through Justice
- World Day Of The Poor
- Employment Opportunities - SSVP National Office
- Annual Dues Appeal - More Than Halfway Achieved
- CGI - Visit to the Grave of Co-Founder Jules Devaux in Colombières, France
- Twinning - Dominica
- Seeds of Hope - Be the Link from Awareness to Access
- Green Initiative: Year 6 Update
- Question & Answer

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VINCENTIANS AND THE PAPAL VISIT

The Trail is Made by Walking

On September 30th, 2022, our country of Canada will celebrate a second National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. I have been asked to share some thoughts on the recent events involving the Canadian bishops and the Indigenous who met with Pope Francis in Rome, and here in Canada, that might be helpful for us as Vincentians in the light of this upcoming national commemoration.

Some background developments provide us with some context for this reflection. During a May, 2022, Star of the North Oblate Justice and Peace webinar entitled *The Papal Visit – Indigenous Hopes and Catholic Responses*, Chief Harry Lafond asserted we were at a crossroads and hopefully at the cusp of a new model of Church and a new model of Canadian society. He asked us to imagine finally living a truly new, harmonious and just relationship with the Indigenous peoples of this country.

A September 2021 apology from the Canadian bishops for the residential schools, followed by the commitment to raise thirty million dollars for healing and reconciliation, was to me precisely an example of what Harry was hoping for.

Then came the March-April journey of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit delegations to Rome to meet with Pope Francis, accompanied by members of the CCCB. I was fortunate to be part of this event as a secondary delegate, tasked with organizing a supper at the Oblate General House for Chiefs Phil Fontaine and Wilton Littlechild and their entourage.

My takeaway from that historic visit, with over seventy media outlets covering it, was that Pope Francis listened, took in the stories, understood the pain, and was able to reflect back what he had pondered, so that the delegates truly felt heard and understood. Then he went beyond my hopes and expectations – he not only said the words “I am very sorry” but also asked for pardon from God and from the Indigenous for the damaging legacy of the residential schools. The impact of his words was palpable, adding intensity to the celebration of culture that followed, both in the hall as planned, and as a spontaneous round-dance in St. Peter’s square afterwards.

My appreciation of the impact of that visit of the delegation to Rome was dampened only by the fact that the Doctrine of Discovery was not included. A conversation with some of the bishops about this left me with hope that a statement about this issue might be forthcoming even before the pope’s journey to Canada.

That this journey was cast as a penitential pilgrimage to pray at sacred locations and meet with the Indigenous was very appropriate. That it was organized and took place within the space of four months is almost a miracle in itself. The three locations were appropriate: In the West, Maskwacis, site of a large residential school and home of Chief Wilton Littlechild, a TRC commissioner; Sacred Heart inner city National Indigenous parish; Eucharist at a stadium for the public, and finally Lac St Anne, site of the largest annual religious gathering of Indigenous people

in Canada. In the East, Quebec City and St. Anne de Beaupré for the Indigenous and Métis, and the north, Iqaluit for the Inuit.

Despite the problems and challenges (a ticketing system that disappointed thousands, the high level of security that discouraged many, and the negativity of some media and others), the overall impression from the many persons that I consulted in a mini-survey was that they were struck most of all by the humility, humanity, authenticity, and sincere commitment of Pope Francis' presence and messages, made even sharper by his physical limitations.

One person saw Pope Francis as "a great man who has compassion for humanity and realizes that things have to change. It took a lot of courage and conviction to do what he did. I think he has inspired a lot of people that we are all human." A religious sister commented that "this penitential pilgrimage to the Indigenous peoples of Canada was soul-felt, revealing the wounded heart of God's Shepherd for his beloved suffering children, that we may experience God's love for us all."

There was some dismay at the mention of genocide on the pope's trip back to Rome, and the use of Latin as well as lack of Indigenous culture at the Eucharist. I have personally become more aware of how complex the issue of the Doctrine of Discovery is for the church and our society, and that the more in-depth study of the issue by the Vatican and the bishops presently underway is necessary. There is a general realization that a start has been made by the journey to Rome and the papal visit to Canada, but much more needs to be done.

That "much more that needs to be done" is where we come in as Vincentians. Here are some thoughts on ways we can be involved in journeying towards decolonization, healing, right relationship and reconciliation as a follow-up to the papal visit:

- Learning our history from an Indigenous perspective, especially through the Kairos Blanket Experience, as well as the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the 1764 Treaty of Niagara. A friend was shocked that students in a Grant McKewan International business class did not know what a treaty was.
- Reading the TRC report, or at least the summary, which unfortunately tends to leave out the more positive elements of the full report.
- Pondering over and praying with the papal apology given in Rome. It is a masterpiece.
- Striving to learn more about the Papal Bulls, the co-called Doctrine of Discovery and the colonial concept of Terra Nullius.
- Being open to developing one-on-one relationships, as Indigenous spirituality and life is all about relationships. A friend who welcomed a refugee family from the Ukraine into her home was told by the husband, while waiting in a social security line, that they wanted to meet an Indian. That led to a very open, warm and educational conversation with a former chief waiting in that same line.
- Rereading the TRC 94 Calls to Action and trying to implement especially the ones addressed to the church, asking why that call is there.

- Striving to be a *Listening Witness*, trying to comprehend, and feel, the depth of pain and suffering of survivors. According to psychologist Alice Millar, all that people really need to heal is to encounter a “listening witness.”
- Becoming more trauma-informed, through books, movies, courses and conversations.
- Entering into cross-cultural experiences, something we can choose, but which Indigenous persons face every day.
- Appreciating Indigenous spirituality as a gift to us all.
- Addressing social issues such as poverty, housing, water and systemic racism as individuals and groups, and not leave that up to governments.
- Learning a little of an Indigenous language and supporting language revitalization.
- Becoming more aware of our own brokenness and need to heal.
- Finding creative ways to return land to the Indigenous peoples, following the lead of the Mennonites, portrayed in the video *Reserve 107*.

At the Star of the North, we are focusing on TRC Call to Action # 59, which stresses educating ourselves, as something we can do. As such, this coming year, the monthly Together We Heal (TWH) sessions just completed will become Reconciliation Through Justice (RTJ) - three sessions devoted to the issues of water, housing and land. And we are looking to perhaps adding a session on exploring the so-called Doctrine of Discovery and how the church’s role now may be to convince governments to remove the influence of the papal bulls from their legal systems ingrained with that doctrine.

All of this is admittedly a challenge, but I believe the generosity, sincerity and determination of Pope Francis, both in Rome and through his penitential pilgrimage to Canada, is blazing a trail for us to follow, even if perhaps we will be making that trail by walking it.

Archbishop emeritus Sylvain Lavoie OMI
National Spiritual Advisor

Here are links to resources centered on the papal visit to start with:

Walking Together by Salt and Light ([Click Here to watch this](#))

Moving Forward: Reflections on the Papal Visit by the Jesuit Forum

(Copy and paste in the following link to watch this)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Yofu_fIGpc

Archbishop Don Bolland:

<https://archregina.sk.ca/archbishops-office/archbishop-bolen-weekly>

Click on *Reflections on Walking Together on the Journey to Right Relationships* for the article and below it for the video.



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PILGRIMAGE TO SEE POPE FRANCIS IN ALBERTA

Greetings Friends, Family & Colleagues:

It's been an eventful summer. After arriving back in Yellowknife from my stay in BC we started to prepare for the Papal visit to Canada. Our diocese, which covers all of the NWT and some of Nunavut, chartered a plane to take us to Edmonton. We had 40 pilgrims and 4 staff including the bishop and myself.

Most of our pilgrims were elderly but we had some younger folk as well including Izaak from Tuktoyaktuk who had never been out of the North. He was quite an excited 12-year-old.

Our pilgrims were from all over the NWT. They flew or drove to Yellowknife where we boarded the charter. We were put up at King's University in Edmonton which was a small private institution. The staff were great and we were fed like kings.

On day one, we attended the Pope's apology at the Cree pow-wow grounds at Maskwacis, Alberta. It was very moving and many wept to hear the Holy Father's words of heartfelt remorse for the RC church's role in the colonization of Canada's FNs, Metis and Inuit.

On the second day we attended Mass with the Pope at the Commonwealth Stadium home of the Edmonton Elks (formerly, Eskimos). This was a huge event attended by around 50,000 people. Later in the afternoon we bussed to Lac Ste Anne which is a pilgrimage site for many FN peoples in Western Canada. The Pope addressed the exuberant crowd and blessed the waters of the Lake. It was amazing to see so many different nations of Native peoples as well as many others all celebrating this wonderful event in honor of our ancestors. The next day we made our way to the Summit Air terminal in Leduc AB and flew back to Trapper's Lake Spirituality Centre just outside of Yellowknife where we had our "last supper" together and a final Talking Circle.

A big **Thank You** to our sponsors, including St. Vincent de Paul Society and the archdiocese of Edmonton, Alberta, the various churches, the Diocese of Mckenzie /Ft. Smith and Bishop Jon Hansen who stuck with us all the way.

Shalom

Mahsi cho/Nakurmiik/Qujannamiik/Matna/Quyanainni/Quana/Thank-you/Merci,

Darrell Taylor

Healing Program Coordinator

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<https://mfsdiocese.ca/>



RECONCILIATION THROUGH JUSTICE

Housing is a continuation of the well-received *Together We Heal* series, moving us toward action. We welcome elder **Fred Gloade and Carola Cunningham** on Thursday evening, September 29 at 7:00 pm MT to speak to us on the issues surrounding housing. Registration by donation at 780-459-5511 or at: <https://www.starofthenorth.ca/register/event-calendar/>

Fred Gloade is the current co-chair for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul housing initiative exploring Indigenous housing in the Ottawa area. Previously has served on several boards including The Mentorship Aftercare Program, a non-profit aftercare community program that provides a supportive presence for people leaving both the provincial and federal criminal justice systems in the Ottawa area; and as Vice President of Gignul and Madawan Non-Profit Housing Corporations, both committed to a holistic and comprehensive approach to housing. During his long tenure as a civil servant, Fred served as Chair of the National Council of Aboriginal Federal Employees (NCAFE), representing more than 6,000 Aboriginal federal employees.

Carola Cunningham has over forty years of experience in Education, Justice, Community Wellness and Addictions Recovery. She has designed, developed and delivered programming specifically tailored to the needs of the Indigenous Community; and in particular; those that have high risk lifestyles. Throughout her career, Carola has demonstrated a strong dedication towards bridging cultural differences and creating understanding. This work continues in her role as CEO of Niginan Housing Ventures that builds, designed and develops housing Initiatives primarily for Indigenous people, such as Ambrose Place; a harm reduction, permanent supportive housing program that is guided from Indigenous world view.



WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

The **Sixth World Day of the Poor** will be observed on **13 November 2022**. This year's theme "***For your sakes Christ became poor***" is a summons to responsibility and commitment as men and women who are part of our one human family, as we can read in Pope Francis' text:

<https://www.vatican.va>

Material for the World Day of the Poor available here: [WDP 2022 CAMPAIGN MATERIAL](#)





EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES - SSVP NATIONAL OFFICE

[Administrative Assistant, SSVP – National Council Canada, Part-Time](#)

[Executive Director, SSVP – National Council Canada, Full-Time](#)



ANNUAL DUES APPEAL - MORE THAN HALFWAY ACHIEVED

We are slowly returning to “normal” after two years of following different local/regional/provincial Public Health requirements. As 2021 financial and statistics reports are being received, we have a better understanding of the impact the pandemic had on conference life, where certain conferences have managed to continue and even thrive, while others went dormant. This latter situation implies that some conferences are not in a position to cover their annual dues.

Since multiple conferences are not in a position to cover their dues, this ultimately has an impact on the National Council of Canada revenues since a significant portion of these dues cover the day-to-day operations. Based on current information received, there is a contributions gap in the order of \$35,000.

We are therefore reaching out to conferences and councils that are capable of providing some financial coverage for sister conferences who would not be in a position to pay their annual dues. Currently, we are more than halfway there; thank you. Funds can be sent to [National via the donation portal](#).

Or by sending a cheque to the National office at: **2463 Innes Road, Ottawa ON K1B 3K3**

*Dave O'Connor, Treasurer
National Council*



VISIT TO THE GRAVE OF CO-FOUNDER JULES DEVAUX IN COLOMBIÈRES, FRANCE



The mayor of the city hosted the Council General delegation

Continuing the “International Theme Years” project, members of the Council General International’s Board of Directors, accompanied by territorial youth delegates, travelled to Colombières (Normandy), 300 km from Paris, to visit the tomb of co-founder Jules Devaux (1811-1880). The trip took place last September 11.

Upon arrival at the local cemetery, there was a warm welcome by Vincentians of the region as well as by religious and political authorities. The mayor of the city, Mrs. Catherine Viel, was honored to welcome the delegation from the Council General, highlighting the illustrious son – Devaux – who is resting in this cemetery. The youth laid a bouquet of flowers on the grave, and “Amazing Grace” was sung with much emotion.

The 16th President General, Bro. Renato Lima de Oliveira, offered his thanks for the welcome and addressed the following message to those present: “We are very happy to be here. It is a great privilege to be able to visit our co-founder and first Treasurer General who was so important in the history of the SSVP. Moreover, the more we know about our origins, the better we will know how to carry out this evangelizing mission of charity and service”, emphasized Renato. The Secretary General, Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet, also expressed the thanks of the Council General.

After prayers and hymns in front of Devaux’s tombstone, everyone went to the Saint-Pierre church, adjacent to the cemetery, where the local religious (Father Philippe and Brother Cyril) and their parishioners led invocations and Bible readings in French and English. Afterwards, at the invitation of the mayor, a welcome cocktail was served at which time brother Hugues de Rosamel, President of the Departmental Council of Calvados, spoke about the beautiful charitable work carried out by the 15 conferences of the region.

Furthermore, brother Thierry Vialatte from Caen (former President of the Departmental Council of Calvados) donated to the Council General a very beautiful and also very old painting of the face of St. Vincent de Paul, which will be hanged at the international headquarters. It is worth

noting that all these events were attended by many brothers and sisters from Colombières, Calvados, Roen and Moyaux.

Since Colombières is a very small village, the delegation stayed overnight in Arromanches-les-Bains, a historic town where the allies landed in June 1944 to liberate France from Nazi oppression. In this municipality, all prayed for peace in the world, especially at this time when wars and conflicts between nations are a sad reality on our planet.

Lisieux

On the way to Colombières, the delegation passed through the city of Lisieux where they visited the tomb of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, as well as that of her parents, St. Louis Martin and St. Zélie Martin. In Lisieux, they visited the chapel and basilica of St. Thérèse, followed by a fraternal lunch with representatives of the Rouen Departmental Council, including former president, sister Frederique Quevilly. In the basilica, the visitors prayed for young people, children, the elderly and families around the world.

Upcoming visits

The tomb of co-founder Pierre-Auguste Le Taillandier will be visited in February 2023 (in reference to Thematic Year 2022). The body of Jules Gossin (Thematic Year 2023), 2nd President General, will be revered in December 2023. The Project “Thematic Years” aims to deepen our knowledge of the legacy and biography of our predecessors, starting with the seven founders. However, a new phase is starting with the highlight of personalities who have been important to the history of the SSVP, such as the Presidents General. This initiative consists not only of visiting the tombs, but other initiatives: songs, film festival, special logo, spirituality articles, motivational talks, commemorative stamp and literary contest.



TWINNING - DOMINICA

The Holy Rosary Conference, Milton, Ontario is twinned with the St. Patrick's Conference Commonwealth of Dominica. Here is a message from their twinning partner.

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Your support makes it possible to eliminate humiliation and to promote caring, loving and hope offering. When you embrace giving the basics you embrace human dignity. While we continue to promote our mission in helping and caring for the less fortunate ones amongst us, we thank you for being our team partner. We pray God's blessings on you all for your generosity.

We continue to use the funds for our Jesus Feeding Program. The mentally challenged and elderly are served with a hot meal every Sunday. A donation of goods was also given to the Grotto Home and Chances.

Now that we are in the hurricane season, we are praying that we don't get affected by any adverse weather conditions. During this time, we do our best to secure our elderly to keep them safe. Attached are pictures of our clients who are benefitting from the program.

We extend love to you all on behalf of our clients. They are very appreciative of the assistance being received. My family and I are not doing too bad although we are trying to cope with the constant increase in prices.

May you all have an enjoyable summer.

Valda George, President

St. Patrick's Conference, Grand Bay, Commonwealth of Dominica





SEEDS OF HOPE - BE THE LINK FROM AWARENESS TO ACCESS!

The Registered Education Savings Plan/Canada Learning Bond (RESP/CLB) project is one of a suite of opportunities available to the families we serve under the umbrella of Health, Education and Wellness (HEW)

The Canada Learning Bond (CLB) is up to \$2,000 of free government funds that will create much needed hope for a brighter educational future. In BC the amount of available government funding is up to \$3,200!

The CLB is deposited directly into a child's RESP for children born January 1, 2004, or later, so any student 18 years of age or younger.

It doesn't cost any money to open a RESP and receive the CLB, not even one penny!

There is low awareness and barriers to access this opportunity which has resulted in over half of the children across Canada not receiving their funds.

Vincentians can and are changing this, one precious child at a time!

To date our Society has helped 637 children get access to almost \$1.3 million in funds to help improve their educational outcomes.

The dream is that we can collectively reach 1,000 precious children with this hope.

No child left behind! Every child deserves hope for a brighter educational future!

Follow this link to the National website to access the SOH Project toolkit.

[Seeds of Hope Toolkit - Society of Saint Vincent de Paul - National Council of Canada \(ssvp.ca\)](https://ssvp.ca/Seeds-of-Hope-Toolkit)

Contact me, Linda Alexander, Seeds of Hope Project Coordinator at seedsofhope@ssvp.ca and I will help your team get started!

Schedule a zoom coaching session for your conference to help bring this much needed hope for a brighter educational future to the precious children you serve!

Linda Alexander, Seeds of Hope Project Coordinator



GREEN INITIATIVE: YEAR 6 UPDATE

In January, 2016, membership of St Vincent de Paul, St. Teresa's Conference, resolved to move to eliminating, as much as possible, the use of plastic in our pantry. This initiative resulted in a move to using green bins for grocery packing instead of using plastic grocery bags and to encouraging each family to bring reusable bags with them when coming to pick up their groceries. Volunteers were instructed on how to manage the transition. Considerable credit is owed to our pantry volunteers who have, over the last six years, remained committed to ensuring our conference can contribute significantly to reducing the quantity of plastic bags eventually ending up in our local landfill. In addition to not using plastic grocery bags, we introduced paper bags for the packing of fruits and vegetables, hygiene kits and several other food items. Our volunteers have contributed their ideas and made this happen. Food waste has been significantly reduced with careful inventory control which includes reference charts for food products' expiration and flagging soon-to-expire items with yellow tags so that members can select them for inclusion in a timely manner. The preceding are all illustrations of our recognition that we must responsibly care for our environment, our mother earth, and ensure best food options are available to those who are in need. Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*, calls each of us to "*Hear the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor*". We continue to explore possibilities to ensure we are doing our best in that regard. There remain a few areas for us to consider. We are burdened with how to dispose of the large volume of plastic packing material on our purchased food items. Most of this product is not classified as recyclable and is ending up filling our garbage bin frequently. We are called to challenge our local city garbage management program to help find an answer to this burden. There are still some opportunities remaining to redirect our thinking about using plastic. By way of example, we could consider using paper vs. plastic in our repacking of large bag items like Costco breads and sweets. We could use paper vs. flimsy plastic bags for packing frozen meats or eliminate bags for this entirely. Small bag items can just as easily go into a small paper bag as a small Ziplock bag. Sugar bagging presents a challenge as sugar can be messy in the green bin. We are continuing to study cost-effective and efficient ways to manage sugar distribution.

All ideas members may have regarding minimizing or eliminating plastic use in the pantry are invited and most welcome. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to reducing waste, to eliminating the use of plastic and to minimizing our carbon footprint as we work to support our families in need and our Common Home, our Mother Earth.

*Barbara Hawley and Michele Maloney, Green Team
St. Teresa Conference, St. John's N.L.*



QUESTION & ANSWER

Q: What are the major areas of responsibilities for a Board?

A: As servant-leaders with the primary focus to be stewards of the organization, it is important to include the Duty of Care, the Duty of Loyalty, and Duty of Obedience in the areas of responsibilities as the governing body on behalf of all members.^{1 2}

Duty of Care: A Board member is expected to act as any ordinary, prudent person in similar circumstances. This requires diligent, attentive, informed participation, i.e., reasonable care when making decisions in stewardship of the organization.

The duty of care is evident in the following activities:

- The Board holds regularly scheduled meetings.
- Board members have received and read the by-laws and policies.
- Information is provided to the Board in a timely manner and in advance of meetings.
- Board members arrive at meetings prepared, having read the minutes and advance material.
- Financial reports are furnished on a regular schedule and are reviewed by the Board.
- The Board makes informed decisions based on information provided.
- Minutes accurately reflect Board votes and decisions, including dissent.

Duty of Loyalty: Board members are expected to act in good faith, giving undivided allegiance to the organization when making decisions that affect it. They should not operate for personal gain against the best interests of the organization. When a conflict arises between the interests of a Board member and the well-being of the organization, the Board member should immediately disclose the matter and recuse from both the discussion and the decision-making. If the matter proceeds, the terms of any transaction with a Board member must be at least as favorable to the organization as that which could be obtained from a party with no ties to it. Board members should observe confidentiality regarding the Board's deliberations and decision-making, and respect and adhere to all Board decisions, regardless of whether they voted in favor of the motion. Only designated spokespersons (usually the President) may speak publicly on behalf of the organization.

Duty of Obedience: A Board member is expected to act in a manner that ensures the organization operates in keeping with its mission and by-laws and in accordance with the laws and regulations governing its formation and status. To maintain the public's trust as a non-profit organization, Board members must be fully conversant and compliant with the organization's mission, by-laws and policies, and ensure that the policies, goals and activities (including competent management of its funds and other resources) are executed in accordance with the mission.

It is under these duties that National Council of Canada had adopted in 2021 a series of Board governance policies; they are visible under the Operations Manual, section 6.6.

¹Source: Anne Dalton, “Three Major Areas of Board Responsibility,” The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc., 2014.

² US SVdP, <https://files.constantcontact.com/fd89f49d001/6973e70b-c88a-412e-b4a4-3a83b874923f.pdf>