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THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CANADA

VOLUME 37 NO. 2 - SUMMER 2011

“VINCENTIAN DISCIPLESHIP - HE HAS ANOINTED ME”



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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.

Values

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

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



Photograph of the Saint Vincent de Paul stained glass window at the Saint Joseph Cathedral, Macon, Georgia, USA

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Penny's Piece

GREETINGS TO ALL!

As always, I look forward to welcoming everyone to the National Council of Canada Annual General Assembly in Victoria. The challenging theme of "Unity in Diversity" will provide workshops that will assist Vincentians in promoting attitudes of relationships that are life-giving to all we serve.

If we approach our work with those we serve from a partnership perspective, this will help to guide our ability to be fully present in our "One to One Personal Contact with the Poor". The theme's aspect of 'unity' was interesting and caught my eye. I began personal reflection on what exactly that meant, and how might I realize 'unity' in my personal contact with those whom I serve? I certainly understand the 'diverse' nature of our work, but the word 'unity' provided a springboard for all sorts of soul searching. This searching led me to some realizations of the way I understand the relationship of 'helping' as opposed to 'serving' those in need.

As Vincentians this becomes a salient aspect of our vision of who we are. I recently read an article that really started to challenge my response to our Vincentian motto. The article set things into a different perspective for me and it made our Mission and Values become more alive!

In the article In the Service of Life, Rachel Naomi Remen shares an interesting perspective on the difference between 'helping' and being of 'service' to those she is asked to assist. She writes:

"In recent years the question "how can I help?" has become meaningful to many people. But perhaps there is a deeper question we might consider. Perhaps the real question is not "how can I help?" but "how can I serve?"

For Rachel, serving is different from helping. The essential difference being the aspect of inequality. If, as Vincentians, we perceive those we serve as lesser, or unequal to us, then the Gospel Message is lost in the translation. She writes:

"Helping is based on inequality; it is not a relationship between equals. When you help you use your own strength to help those of lesser strength. If I'm attentive to what's going on inside of me when I am helping, I find that I'm always helping someone who's not as strong as I am, who is needier than I am. People feel this inequality.



*Penny Craig, President
National Council of Canada*

"When we help we may inadvertently take away their self esteem, their sense of worth, integrity and wholeness."

If we are to be People of the Water and the Towel as Jesus taught us, then we must take into account the value of the spiritual strength that these acts provide. Not only are we serving to provide for others, but, in essence we are also gaining in our own inner strength that assists our willingness to use ourselves to serve. Rachel continues:

"When I help I am very aware of my own strength. But we don't serve with our strength, we serve with ourselves. We draw from all of our experiences. Our limitations serve, our wounds serve, and even our darkness can serve. The wholeness in you is the same as the wholeness in me. Service is a relationship between equals.

Helping incurs debt. When you help someone they owe you one. But serving, like healing, is mutual. There is no debt. I am served as the person I am serving. When I help

Penny's Piece

I have a feeling of satisfaction. When I serve I have a feeling of gratitude. These are very different things."

As Vincentians we need to assume an attitude of 'gratitude' that we are able to serve those in need. Our Vincentian mission is to allow our Jesus/Vincentian relationship to be a visible sign to those we are privileged to serve. For it is in sharing that Jesus/Vincentian relationship that we become real and gratified messengers of the Gospel and its Good News.

Further in my reflections, I realized that to 'do for' those we serve is not always the most life-giving. Empowerment and 'working with' these individuals provides a more sustainable, hopeful and lasting experience. As a healthcare professional, and as someone deemed to be in the 'helping' and 'caring' profession, I am always on the alert to make things better, to 'fix' the problems that I deem need fixing. However, as Rachel points out:

"Serving is also different from fixing. When I fix a person I perceive them as broken, and their brokenness requires me to act. When I fix I do not see the wholeness in the other person or trust the integrity of the life in them. When I serve I see and trust that wholeness. It is what I am responding to and collaborating with.

There is a distance between ourselves and whatever or whomever we are fixing. Fixing is a form of judgment. All judgment creates distance, a disconnection, an experience of difference. In fixing there is an inequality of expertise that can easily become a moral distance. We cannot serve at a distance. We can only serve that to which we are profoundly connected, that which we are willing to touch. This is Mother Teresa's basic message. We serve life not because it is broken but because it is holy.

If helping is an experience of strength, fixing is an experience of mastery and expertise. Service, on the other hand, is an experience of mystery, surrender and awe. A fixer has the illusion of being causal. A server knows that he or she is being used and has a willingness to be used in the service of something greater, something essentially unknown. Fixing and helping are very personal; they are very particular, concrete and specific. We fix and help many different things in our lifetimes, but when we serve we are always serving the same thing. Everyone who has

ever served through the history of time serves the same thing. We are servers of the wholeness and mystery of life.

The bottom line, of course, is that we can fix without serving. And we can help without serving. And we can serve without fixing or helping. I think I would go so far as to say that fixing and helping may often be the work of the ego, and service the work of the soul. They may look similar if you're watching from the outside, but the inner experience is different. The outcome is often different too.

Our service serves us as well as others. That which uses us strengthens us. Over time, fixing and helping are draining, depleting. Over time we burn out. Service is renewing. When we serve, our work itself will sustain us. Service rests on the basic premise that the nature of life is sacred, that life is a holy mystery which has an unknown purpose. When we serve, we know that we belong to life and to that purpose."

The essential message in this article leads one to cogitate and evaluate the basic elements of our Vincentian vocation. There is so much to learn about how we do what we do. As Rachel aptly clarifies, "When you serve, you see life as whole. From the perspective of service we are all connected: All suffering is like my suffering and all joy is like my joy". For us as Vincentians we serve out of compassion and willingness to act out our faith. As Rachel puts it, "The impulse to serve emerges naturally and inevitably from this way of seeing". This impulse that for us provides the inner strength that comes from learning to 'serve as Jesus served'.

We thank President Mary Spencer and her team from the Victoria Particular Council for all their efforts; the theme is thought provoking and so relevant to assisting our Vincentian vocational attitudes. The team has done its utmost in hosting this 2011 AGA and make us all welcome! We look forward to their hospitality!

"all one in truth and charity".

Penny Craig
National President

Vincentian Family

THE DAUGHTERS AND SISTERS OF CHARITY – NORTH AMERICA

The Daughters of Charity was founded in France in 1633 by Saints Vincent de Paul (1581 –1660) and Louise de Marillac (1591-1660). Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton founded the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's in the United States in 1809. The new community followed a modified form of the Daughters of Charity's congregation rules, and was independent of the Daughters of Charity. In 1850, the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's merged with the Daughters of Charity, assuming their name, rules and habits.

As well, communities of religious women known as Sisters of Charity but not connected with either the Daughters of Charity or the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's were established as early as 1812. Today, eleven (11) Sisters of Charity communities in North America, along with the American provinces (includes Canada) of the Daughters of Charity, make up the Sisters of Charity Federation. It is a voluntary organization representing more than 4,000 members who recognize their character and spirit in the tradition founded by Saint Vincent, Louise and Elizabeth Ann.

The Daughters of Charity and communities members of the Sisters of Charity's North American Federation are represented in Canada. Some of the member congregations are: the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul (based in Halifax, N.S.), the Religieuses de Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur (based in Dieppe N.B.), the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha (based in Antigonish, N.S.), and the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception (based in St. John, N.B.). Some of these congregations are present in more than one province. Their membership is dwindling, however, they remain active in the area of charity and advocacy, health and education.

Conferences and Councils of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul are encouraged to contact the Sisters and Daughters of Charity as they are members of the worldwide Vincentian Family; we share a common heritage and spirituality. Vincentian Family mem-

bers are increasingly learning to serve, together, on a number of projects and programs at the international level (United Nations Organization, the Vatican, Systemic Change projects, etc.) and in many countries.

Clermont Fortin
National Council of Canada

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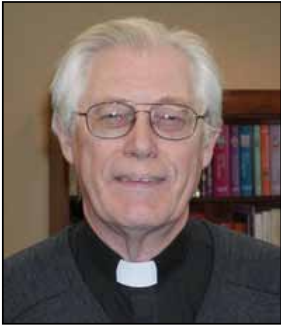
Web site: www.sisters-of-charity-federation.org



Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

Spirituality

HOSPITALITY AS PART OF CHRISTIAN LIFE



An important element of Christian Life is hospitality. Many Bible incidents relate to events of hospitality. There is the story of Abraham offering hospitality to three strangers who turn out to be the very presence of God Almighty. The miracle at Cana comes to mind, as well as, the meal

at Martha's house. Another example is the feast that the forgiving father gives in honour of his lost son who has returned.

Why is hospitality important? It becomes an occasion for generosity. It often leads to better communication. Often the recipient of hospitality is thereby encouraged. More importantly it is a natural link with the great act of hospitality that Jesus provides with the Holy Eucharist.

Moreover, if our Vincentian mind becomes imbued with the spirit of hospitality we will be much less judgmental when we deal with people in need.

Unfortunately modern life, with its frenetic activity, leads many to forget about hospitality. Self-centeredness takes over and hospitality is simply forgotten. How can we increase our spirit of hospitality? Two ideas:

1-In conjunction with festivities around times like Christmas and Easter try to include on your guest list one or two people who are alone.

2-During the ordinary time of life celebrate Sunday by having others in to share a meal. Remember folks appreciate the hospitality you show; they do not expect you to produce 5 star meals.

I have heard the comment that goes something like this: "I would like to be more hospitable but I find it is such a hassle to have people over for a meal". Like many things in life this matter can often be solved with organization and forethought. Why not emulate the big restaurants who have a kitchen crew that comes in the morning and is known as the *Prep Kitchen*. Their work enables the evening crew to cope with the rush of various dishes ordered by the patrons.

Lest someone wonder what all this has to do with a chaplain's message I should note that our Roman Catholicism is a very tangible tradition. As Jesus is true God and true Man, we reveal his presence through good works that feed both the body and the soul.

Msgr. Peter Schonenbach

Spiritual Advisor

UNITY IN DIVERSITY



St. Paul tells us "Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. (1 Corinthians 12:12) He goes on to tell us that we "have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and have all been given

the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:13)

The Spirit has blessed each of us with different gifts and our faith calls us to use those gifts for the greater glory of God. As Christians, we strive to be a visible sign of

Christ in the world. How we do that depends on how we use the gifts we are given. As Catholics, within our parish community, it may mean offering ourselves as a Minister of the Word, a Minister of the Eucharist, a Minister of Hospitality, a Religious Education Instructor or a variety of services that help to enhance the spirituality and the liturgies within our parish.

Within the larger community, we are called to be an outward sign of the love of Christ. Being Christian doesn't make us better than others, it makes us more responsible. We are called to be "Christ-like" in all we do so that all we always strive to see the Face of Jesus in all those we meet. To do this, we use the unique talents that each

Spirituality

of us has received from Him. Regardless of our unique talents, we are all called to treat all those we meet with the same love and compassion that He has for all of us. We are one body in Christ and that makes us strong, but some of that strength comes from each individual using the gifts we have been given.

As Vincentians, our vocation calls us to use our talents to answer His call to serve His poor. In order that we are best able to serve His poor, we must always remember that, in the poor, we see the suffering face of Christ. To be able to do this, we must ground our work in faith. Individual prayer is important but we should also strive to participate in the community of faith by attending daily Mass when possible in order that we may receive the Eucharist which will give us the love and compassion we need to be His heart, His hands and His voice.

All of us are poor in some way so we must not forget that, as a Vincentian community, we must always pray for one another; we are one with Him in the work He has called us to do. Jesus tells us that He prays to the Father “May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me.” (Jn 17:21) This is why all of our gatherings should be grounded in the love of God and of one another.

Jesus calls us to serve His poor and He has given each of us unique abilities to carry out this work. As St. Paul tells us “ He did this to prepare all God’s people for the work of Christian service in order to build up the body of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:12) He wants us to use these talents to serve the poor but He also wants us to help one another carry out His message of service. We all have come from different backgrounds, different life experiences, different educations, different faith journeys and we all have different strengths. We are called to use all of these differences to work together to serve His poor. It is so important that we be open to receive help from one another as the Holy Spirit works with each of us in His own unique way.

Whether we are making a home visit, visiting the sick or those in prison or working in a Thrift store or a soup kitchen we must always be open to suggestions and ideas from one another as we are all striving for the

same end - responding to the Gospel message of service. We need to encourage one another to express our ideas and opinions so that we grow in our faith and can learn from one another. We must learn to be patient with one another if there is a difference in how we perceive a situation. One way that may help us is to realize that, at our meetings, we start our Opening Prayer with the Sign of the Cross but we do not make it again until our meeting is ended. This helps us to look on the entire meeting as a prayer and may help us to be more compassionate with one another.

St Paul tells us “Be always humble, gentle and patient. Show your love by being tolerant with one another. Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives us by means of the peace that binds you together. There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. There is one God and Father of all people, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6). The awesome gift from Him is that He has given each of us our unique gifts so that “Under His control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love”. (Ephesians 4:16) Please pray that we all may continue to use our diverse talents to grow together in love and service to all.

Maureen MacIsaac
Spirituality Committee



International Emergency Relief

COLOMBIA

November 2010 - Alerted by twinning Canadian Conferences that their twins in Colombia were suffering through flooding in parts of Colombia, we sought reports from our good contacts in Medellin. Margarita Henao reported that flooding and mudslides had devastated various parts of Columbia as a result of a prolonged rainy season which was expected to last until February 2011 as the La Niña factor is present this year.

Resume of international media reports:

National Emergency Status has been declared by President JM Santos on November 17, 2010, in 28 of the 32 departments of Columbia most affected by rain and flooding.

So far, 136 persons have been killed while about 200,000 homes have been damaged to various degrees, mostly in the Central regions and the North regions near the City of Sucre. Infrastructure (roads, dams, etc.), crops and livestock inventory have suffered as well. Government sources report that 552 on 1100 municipalities are under emergency conditions.

The National President, Sr. Penny Graig, wrote an E-mail message on December 2, 2010 to all Regional Council presidents, seeking funds for this disaster, stating that the National Council is contributing \$3000.00, taken from International Emergency Relief Fund.

This contribution as well as \$1000 for twinning was electronically transferred to the bank account of the Superior Council of Columbia on December 7, 2010.

Margarita Henao, on behalf of the National Council of Colombia confirmed, with much gratitude, that they have received this much needed financial support. "Thank you very much for helping the poor people in our country. God bless you. May His love reign in our hearts."



Twinning

HELP US FIND THE POOR IN CANADA

Twinning with Colombia is external twinning. We also have internal twinning in Canada, between conferences and councils within Canada, when we are able. We do not however have Conferences or Councils who apply to be **receivers** of assistance through internal twinning.

Many Conferences and Councils have a history of being on the receiving end of internal twinning in their early years, sometimes by other names like extension. In the archives of Victoria Particular Council, we found thank-you letters for contributions, from Ontario and Quebec in 1985, that supported our Council and which acknowledged assistance “in response to our need for more financial aid to assist our ongoing programs”. Our Council is now able to assist others as they seek to support the needy in their parishes.

Currently, there is a potential internal twin. Pat Bennetto, president of Western Region, has been very active over the past years in approaching the North. Franki Luke, the twinning chairperson, and the Northern Committee of the Regional Council in Edmonton, has been working with the newly aggregated Conference, Saint Joseph's in Tuktoyuktuk. When Saint Joseph's Conference receives its charity number, it can become a receiving internal twin. Several Conferences in Ontario are interested in helping.

Inner city Conferences can be very likely receivers of twinning funds. As they struggle to keep their conferences active and able to help, they also find that the people they help are being relied upon to also contribute to the works. In fact, the poor do help the poorer. But the assistance of those with more contributions can support the work of these hard working Vincentians, if conferences who could benefit from this would ask by completing a twinning application to be a receiving conference

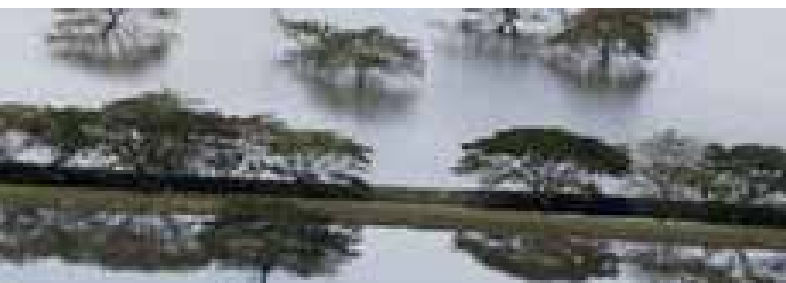
I have applications from Conferences in Canada who wish to donate, from as long ago as 2006. Conferences that are struggling are perhaps not aware that assistance may be available. ***Would Conferences who can benefit from receiving twinning funds, please consider applying to twin? Application form available in centerfold.***

Let's be open to the word of God.

Let's accept the word of God.

Let's receive as we would receive Christ.

**Kathy Weswick, Chairperon
National Twinnin Committee**



Canada's Councils in Action

QUEBEC REGIONAL COUNCIL

A spirituality committee was formed in the Quebec Regional Council, in February 2010, with the objective of offering members different ways to maintain/improve the quality of Vincentians' spiritual reflections, and a new perspective in doing so.

In this text, I will attempt to describe the thinking process of the committee members aiming to meet their objective.

Observations on current situation

- We live in a much laicized society
- Schools are laicized (without religious teaching)
- There are increasingly fewer priests in our Conferences
- Laypersons are not very ready to take over
- We have been used to receiving spirituality from above, with regard to content as much as container
- In general, Conferences live their Vincentian spirituality pretty much the old way, which is not very attractive for today's people
- Vincentians are not against spirituality, but they are bored by it, as are many Catholics
- Even the vocabulary is from another world, especially for youths
- Catechism classes are given to a minority of children
- Young people under 40 have not learned to pray

How can we renew/continue our spirituality, and make our Vincentian members participate?

- Use the spirituality of Frederic Ozanam and his groups of young friends
- Use the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul
- Publish texts on the thoughts and activities of those persons
- Use more modern language
- Publish current texts (e.g. Ramon Diaz Torremocha farewell speech, Jean Cherville's talk on training, Father Robert Maloney's talk on systemic changes, texts by Father Dion, among others...)
- Recount our local history

When and how to recharge our batteries?

- Within the great Vincentian Family (see CGI web site, ssvpglobal.org), www.ozanet.com, Congregations, Zafen project...
- Acquire awareness of what is happening elsewhere in the world (globalization is here) - Ref. "Seeds of Hope"
- Direct some of our activities to the outside world (e.g. Twinning)

How to guide Vincentians toward better reflecting on their interior life?

- Have a plan to guide the base towards a reflection about the importance of advocacy, their responsibility for having a personal vision of their own spirituality
- *Simply* reflect on the values that carry us as Vincentians : *love, joy, mutual respect, justice, hope, and faith*
- As Ozanam said, "we must act before we preach"
- Become living examples (it is our way to evangelize)
- If we want to do what is right, to accomplish our work the right way, we must work on our internal life
- Encourage *collegiality* by organizing informal meetings among "friends". That creates links, fosters rejuvenation. It is worth the trouble.

Formation, information, communication

How to orient spirituality towards young people?

- *That is an activity for which we need help (youth ministry agents, young family groups, scout movement, high schools, colleges...)*
- Let the youth express their values, their ambitions
- Listen to the youth
- Propose selective projects to them
- Be good examples. Testify.
- Give them responsibilities and the means to complete their projects (internet, storefronts...)
- In Quebec, youths live in a laicized society. They learn to pray very little.
- Our spirituality must adapt to that reality
- Use the appropriate vocabulary. Change our language.

Canada's Councils in Action

ATLANTIC REGIONAL COUNCIL

What tools can we use?

- Propose brief reflections at meetings
- Share ideas among members, let everyone express what they have to say
- Share our experiences with new members, allow some time for them to adapt
- Have as a reminder a copy of the text on which the reflection is based
- Use modern texts, the Rule
- HOSPITALITY , valorize our members
- Orient discussions on the good we are doing. Be proud of it.
- Sow, and stop thinking about what is impossible
- Encourage member training to become a spiritual advisor
- Use the term “internal life” rather than “spirituality”. It seems less scary to the youth.
- Ask members to prepare a reflection in turn.
- Pray together

How to achieve that?

- *Golden rule: respect everyone's freedom*
- *Training new members as soon as they start volunteering*
- Experience has shown that we do not necessarily need to go outside to find the spiritual resources that we need to orient our members and help them grow
- Encourage those who would be willing to develop their technique as a presenter
- Set up a network of expertise among our members.
- Invite them as speakers
- Question people who do not participate
- Constantly remember that one of the main axis of our mission is to improve the quality of our Conference members' spiritual lives
- “**Serviens in spe**”: there is no hope without true faith

Jean-Claude Bienvenue, President
Quebec Regional Council

Vincentians in our Region are struggling through a difficult winter. Heavy snow falls are making it difficult to carry out our Vincentian Mission.

We have distributed information enabling our members to decide on attending either the Annual General Meeting in South Rustico, PEI, on May 6-8, or the Annual General Assembly in Victoria, B.C. June 15-19. Many Vincentians across the Region are looking forward to attending these events.

Across Newfoundland three Isolated Conferences have lost their premises to help the needy, but they struggle on as best they can. They had been tenants in various premises that were no longer available to them.

Mary Queen of the World Conference, Mount Pearl, NL, celebrated its 25th Anniversary of Aggregation on March 5; we were hosted by the Knights of Columbus, Father John B. Kent Council No. 6638, with a Dinner and Dance.

David Grant, President
Atlantic Regional Council



Labels of our logo are now available at National office. You can customize envelopes, letters or other documents.

We have 3 sizes of labels:

- Small (slightly more than 1 cm in diameter)
\$ 10 for 75 labels
- Average (slightly more than 2 cm in diameter)
\$ 11 for 75 labels
- Large (slightly more than 3 cm in diameter)
\$ 12 for 75 labels

Canada's Councils in Action

ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL

Ontario region welcomes new Spiritual Advisor Bishop McGratten

We are pleased to be blessed by having Bishop William McGratten, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Toronto, joins us as our Ontario Regional Council's Spiritual Advisor. Bishop McGratten was most recently Rector of St. Peter's Seminary in London, where he started in 1992 and was a lecturer before becoming Assistant Professor in 1993, and then Rector from 1997 to 2009.

Bishop McGratten has a BESC in Chemical Engineering from the University of Western Ontario, an MDiv. (Master of Divinity) from St. Peter's Seminary and a S.T.L. (Licentiate in Fundamental Moral Theology), from Pontificio Universita Gregorianna, Rome.

In addition to his distinguished career in teaching, he also possesses a keen compassion and understanding for poverty in Ontario and a desire to be an active member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The Ontario Regional Council is excited about having a member of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (ACBO) as we work towards a close and productive relationship with the Catholic Church and other Catholic organizations while striving to address the root causes of poverty in Ontario and develop a systemic change approach to poverty relief.

Our Ontario Council President, John Staley, expressed his pleasure with the addition of Bishop McGratten by saying:

"Bishop McGratten, as the Past Rector of St. Peter's Seminary in London, Ontario, has amassed a vast wealth of experiences and knowledge. He has readily shared his insights at our meetings. His friendly mannerisms and demeanour have made it easy for our members to relate to his message. We are blessed to have a Spiritual Advisor with such piety and understanding of the Values and Mission Statement of our Society. He is our Shepherd; the answer to our prayers".

We also presented Bishop McGratten with 3 questions related to the Society and asked for his comments:

Question One: While home visitation has always been the main way we contact our poor, there are other ways by which we now try to achieve this goal. Can you provide your comments on home visitation to our poor?

Bishop McGratten: The home visitations that the Society conducts are a very important part of our ministry. It is about going out two by two to seek Christ in the poor, where two or three are gathered together in His name, there am I. It is both a physical and spiritual exercise for Vincentians. And it also gives our members the opportunity to share their faith with one another as well as with those we serve.



Canada's Councils in Action

Question Two: The Society has a long standing history of works of charity. We also realize the obligation we have to address the root causes of poverty through the notion of systemic change. Can you comment on the need to also be involved in social justice issues?

Bishop McGratten: There has been a shift in the past 20 to 30 years within the Church to adopt the advocacy and systematic approach to dealing with the issues of poverty. There is a need to be a voice for justice and change. Groups such as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul are called to proclaim the need for change and justice for those living in poverty. There is a shortcoming on the part of government to address the basic needs and the Church must accept the social responsibility to address these issues. It therefore becomes a duty of the Church and ministries such as the Society to address these shortcomings.

Question Three: Can you relate any personal experiences regarding the Society of St. Vincent de Paul?

Bishop McGratten: While not having much personal experience with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, except through my knowledge at the Council level. I'm aware of how open the Society's members are to working with other ministries, and am pleased with the efforts in his regard.

Respectfully submitted,

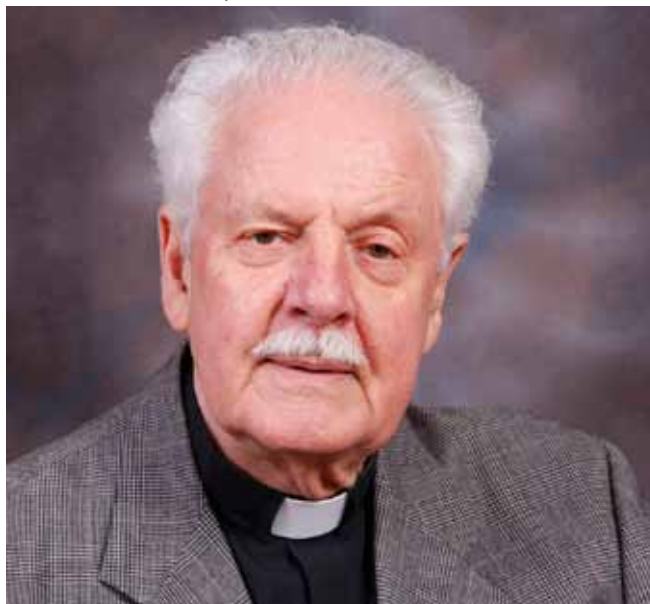
**Jim Paddon, Vice-President
Ontario Regional Council**

*Members of the Ontario Regional Council
Left to Right :*

*Twinning - Guido Kelly (Hamilton)
Treasurer - Agnes Turley (Milton)
Special Projects - Jere Hartnett (Burlington)
President - John Staley (Tecumseh)
Formation - William (Bill) Graham (Peel North)
Corporate Secretary - Brenda Kormendy (Blenheim)
Spiritual Advisor -
Most Reverend Bishop William McGratten
(Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Toronto)
Communications - Bernie Hartlin (Kanata)
Vice President - Jim Paddon (Chatham)*

*Missing from photo
Past President - Nicholas (Nick) Volk (Toronto)
Youth Coordinator - Jason Hunt (Waterloo)*

Msgr. André Drouin, former Spiritual Advisor to the National Council, is honoured.



Msgr. André Drouin, P.H., B. Th., M. in Pastoral Studies is nominated Alumnus of the year 2011 by the Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Ontario.

An extract taken for the U. St. Paul web site on the honour bestowed to Msgr. Drouin reads: "Following in the footsteps of many others who did their utmost to improve society, strengthen the life of the Church, and come to the assistance of those who were impoverished in various ways, Msgr. Drouin exemplifies everything that Saint Paul University wishes to promote". The article further describes the pastoral life of Msgr. Drouin during his 54 years of ministry: He was ordained priest in Ottawa in 1957 and named Prelate of Honour by Pope John Paul II in 1996. He was parish priest until his retirement in 2009. He was Chaplain for several Veterans' groups, the Knights of Columbus and at a local children's hospital. The article notes his particular care for the sick and dying, particularly his accompaniment of priests who are dying and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Msgr. Drouin was Spiritual Advisor to the National Council of Canada for many years in the 1990s and remains diocesan Spiritual Advisor to the Ottawa Central Council and the Conseil particulier St. Paul to this date.

Congratulations for an honour well deserved.

Canada's Councils in Action

WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL

Gifts from a blind man

James came to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul clothing room today. Every time he comes in, he's wearing a huge smile, and he tells me, «It's just another day in paradise.» Today he tacked on, «except a little colder.» I commented on his wonderful furry earflap cap, and he smiled even bigger, saying, «You guys gave it to me.»

When he was in two weeks ago, James got a thermal undershirt that was too small. He told me he gave it to someone else because it didn't reach his belly button, and he asked for a size bigger this time. He also wanted a warm long-sleeved button down shirt, and a pair of gloves because some idiot at the bus stop stole his when he «wasn't looking.» James is mostly blind. He has one glass eye, and 2% vision in his other eye, peripheral vision. He looked at me by not looking at me. After I helped him find what he needed, he stood and chatted for a while. Eventually, he pulled out a small, well-used paperback New Testament, flipped to a passage inked in yellow highlighter, and said, «Read that.»

I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. Even so, you have done well to share with me in my present difficulty. (Philippians 4. 11b-14)

If that wasn't enough, he «read» me the beginning of the 9th chapter of John's Gospel in his scratchy, husky voice. Of course, he has it memorized:

As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, «Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?» Jesus answered, «It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.» (John 9. 1-3)

«And that's me,» James said.

Amen, brother. God shines in James' cheerful disposition. I wonder if he saw the tears in my eyes.

Story by 'Edmonton Volunteer

Note: The man's name has been changed to protect his privacy.

B.C. & YUKON REGIONAL COUNCIL

1st Meeting of the North Island Particular Council

February 26th, 2011

The 1st meeting of the North Island Particular Council was held in Port Alberni on Saturday, February 26th, 2011. Bill Duncan of St. Peter's Conference in Nanaimo was elected to the position of President. Bill appointed Scotty MacLaren from Our Lady of Guadalupe, Campbell River to the position of Vice President, Dorothy Taschuk, Notre Dame Conference in Port Alberni to the position of Treasurer and Claude Bédard, Christ the King Conference in Courtenay to the position of Secretary.

Present at the meeting to congratulate the new executive was Mary Spencer President of SSVP VI, Kathy Westwick, National Twinning Chair and Nora Criss, President of SSVP BC and the Yukon Regional Council.

The North Island Particular Council encompasses the areas of Vancouver Island to the north of the Malahat. At the present time both the Victoria Particular Council and the North Island Particular Council report to the Board of Directors of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Vancouver Island. The institution documents were forwarded to the International Council General of SSVP in Paris, France in 2010 and the new Particular Council should be fully instituted by the end of 2011.

On behalf of the members of the Society - Congratulations!

Angela Hudson

Executive Director

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul of Vancouver Island



Claude Bédard, Scotty MacLaren, Bill Duncan and Dorothy Taschuk

FREDERIC OZANAM, ADVOCATE FOR THE POOR

Frederic Ozanam, the main founder of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, reinvented the concept of charity in the 1800's and made the middle class aware of the misery around them. Ozanam was a supporter and promoter of the Catholic Church's social doctrine and this led him also to advocate for the poor.

The difference between Charity (social service) and Advocacy (social change) is exemplified by the scriptural passages of the Good Samaritan and the Exodus Story. The Good Samaritan passage does not attempt to survey the causes of highway banditry. The Samaritan provides temporary and immediate relief. Moses does not ask for food and medicine for the Jewish slaves. He challenges the institutional system with the message "Let My People Go."

The 1833 origins of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Ozanam's original "Conference of Charity" had as a goal to "help resolve individual misfortunes by meeting with the poor on a one-to-one basis." The Society was originally composed of young upper/middle class students who astonished the poor by visiting them in lanes and alleyways. Firsthand contact with misery and poverty made a big impression on the original Vincentians.

By the year 1835 Frederic's extensive writings revealed that he had an open mind that was very preoccupied with social problems. He revealed the importance he attached to improving the conditions of the working class and the enthusiasm with which he alerted the rich and politicians to the discontent of the times. Frederic regarded poverty as an extreme injustice. He stated that everyone had the right to work, to be fed and to be treated with dignity.

France in 1840 had a population of over 34 million but the wealth of the nation was held by 200,000 landowners. The middle class formed a new aristocracy that was more interested in getting rich than in taking care of the working class. Poverty was the condition of 1/12 of the Parisians.

A year before the 1848 revolution in France, Ozanam established his political position on the side of the people when he wrote: "... I was asking that we do the same as him (the pope), that instead of espousing the interests of a doctrinaire ministry, a frightened peerage, or a selfish middle class, we concern ourselves with

the masses who are rightly claiming a greater share in public affairs, who have too many needs and not enough rights, and who are wanting guarantees against unemployment and against extreme poverty; the masses who have bad leaders for want of finding better ones, ... It is in the masses that I see sufficient faith and morality to save a society, the upper classes of which are already lost." By 1848 when the king abdicated, the country was tired of being controlled by the selfish middle class with the result that the people refused any longer to accept unemployment and poverty. In a letter of 1848 Ozanam wrote: "... I want a peaceful republic, protective of all civil, political and religious freedoms and liberties, without the intervention of the State in matters of conscience. And finally, with the respect of ownership, industry and commerce, I want institutions which can help improve and change the lot of the workers. I want not so much the organizations of the work itself, but the organization of the workers in associations, either amongst themselves, or with their employers."

Ozanam's position evolved over time from the Conference of Charity original mandate of charity to his recognition of justice. This evolution was not without risks since he also had to deal with the inevitable divisions that appeared between Catholics of various political stripes when he wrote to his brother in November 1848: "How sad it is that we spend the little time that we are put on this earth tearing ourselves apart."

Like Ozanam, we too can make the middle class aware of the misery around them.

Like the original Vincentians, modern Vincentians have through the Society's charitable works firsthand contact with misery and poverty – a charitable contact that can light the flame of justice in Vincentians.

Like Ozanam's response to misery and poverty, we can espouse the Church's 1971 Synod of Bishops social doctrine: "Action for the sake of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us to be a constitutive element of the preaching of the gospel."

Acknowledgements: Content about Frederic Ozanam is derived from the biography by Madeleine des Rivieres.

Gordon Stuart
St. Patrick's Conference, Victoria, BC

Advocacy

March 10, 2011

Right Honourable Stephen Harper,
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario.



Re: Private Member's Bill C-624, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act.

Dear Prime Minister,

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, a non-profit registered charity, has been serving those living in poverty in Canada for 165 years. Its 11,000 members in all provinces and territories are in contact with those in need on a daily basis. The Society is volunteer-based organization with few employees.

Proposed Bill C-624 was reviewed and the Society agrees with the principle of this piece of legislation and proposed amendments to current federal laws. We believe that all persons on a long-term disability plan shall have their benefits protected in cases when a former employer declares bankruptcy or is subject to receivership status. These injured workers have contributed with their employers to a long-term disability plan whose benefits shall be paid until the fund is depleted. We consider that in case of a company's failing, those ex-employees must be afforded protection of the law as stated in Bill C-624.

I have met with a few former Nortel Telecom employees who are in receipt of long-term disability benefits; for them, this is the only or main source of revenue. Persons on long-term disability are considered amongst the "most vulnerable" of our society as they are suffering as a result of a debilitating condition which prevents them from finding stable employment. Members of the Society have been aware of other situations where companies (e.g.: in forestry and manufacturing sectors) have failed and ex-workers entitled to disability benefits under a company plan have drifted into poverty and depression when this income was abruptly cut, with no possibility to seek legal redress. Persons with disabilities deserve protection and support by the Federal government and Bill C-624 can achieve both objectives. It is only just and fair that such ex-workers who contributed so much to the economy receive the benefits they are entitled to regardless of former employers' fate. They cannot be held responsible for and be severely penalized by ex-employers' decisions and demise.

The Society is asking all parties to support Bill C-624 for the reasons mentioned above.

It is our hope that this Bill will be quickly adopted by the House of Commons and Senate this current session.

Sincerely,

Clermont Fortin, 1st Vice President
National Council of Canada
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

CC: Hon. Michael Ignatieff, MP, President of the Liberal Party of Canada and Leader of the Opposition, House of Commons,
Hon. Jack Layton, MP, President of the New Democratic Party,
Hon. Gilles Duceppe, MP, Président, Parti du Bloc Québécois,
Hon. Mark Eyking, MP, Liberal, Sydney-Victoria, NS

WHY A FEDERAL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY IS NECESSARY

Officially, at least 3.4 million Canadians live in poverty. However, research indicates that poverty increased to 4.3 millions as a result of the recession. November's "Hunger Count", by Food Banks Canada reported unprecedented historic highs in food bank use (up 9% this past year, after a record-setting increase of 18% in 2009). Also in November 2010, Campaign 2000's "2010 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty", reported that 1 in 10 children still lives in poverty. (source: The Catalyst, published by Citizens for Public Justice, Winter 2010 issue, p.1).

A report by a House of Commons Committee called *Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada*, published in November 2010 after a 3 year study, recommends that the Federal Government design and implement a poverty reduction strategy. The Federal Government in its response in March 2011 did not support such a recommendation. The Society along with several Churches and faith groups support such a strategy. The Society will continue to promote the strategy with elected members of parliament.

**Clermont Fortin, Chair
Voice of the Poor Committee**



THE NATIONAL WEB SITE MIGRATES TO SUBSCRIBERS

Your National Council is always trying to improve its communications with membership and move to new mass media technologies while respecting its limited human and financial resources. You have expressed such a need many times and it is a goal of the Strategic Plan. We try to deliver, always.

This magazine has been used by the National Council for decades as the traditional media to communicate with members and friends of the Society. In recent years, a web site (www.ssvp.ca) was created to inform and allow interaction with Vincentians in Canada and elsewhere, or with anyone interested by the Society's work.

The Site was revamped over the last 2 years with the addition of more internal documents on governance and Vincentian activities, and interactive features. For example, each edition of the VincenPaul-Canada magazine can be found in electronic format on the Site, as well as, such features as a Blog link and a "Need Help" icon where anyone in need can click on to contact the Society to get assistance.

We are very happy and proud with this evolution to communicate and serve you more efficiently; however, we wanted to do more by creating a direct personal link with our electronic readers. You may now receive the latest news and other publications through your e-mail account. **YOU SIMPLY HAVE TO VISIT THE WEB SITE AND CLICK ON THE ICON "TO SUBSCRIBE" TO RECEIVE THE LATEST NEWS UPDATES ON OUR WEB SITE.**

We are also developing a schedule of proposed annual contributions to your national web site by national and regional collaborators.

A big hug and thank you to Nicole Schryburt, Administrative Assistant at the National Council, who has devoted much effort and energy, and taken a number of courses to keep up with new communications technologies.

**DO NOT FORGET TO
REGISTER YOUR E-MAIL!
IT IS FREE!**



SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
National Council of Canada

APPLICATION FOR TWINNING

Date: _____

PART ONE

Name of Conference/Council: _____

Full address of Conference/Council: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____ e-mail: _____

PART TWO

Contact Person: _____

Full address of contact person: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____ e-mail: _____

PART THREE

This is a formal request for our Conference/Council to twin with fellow Vincentians either as:

DONOR twin : Outside Canada In Canada

Language(s) of choice for correspondence with our twin outside Canada:

English Spanish French

OR

RECIPIENT twin

PART FOUR

Our Conference/Council was aggregated/instituted on: _____

Our Revenue Canada Business Number is: _____ RR _____

President

Secretary

Please mail or fax the completed form application to the address below:

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
National Council of Canada - Twinning
c/o Nicole Schryburt
2463 Innes Road, Ottawa ON K1B 3K3
Fax: (613) 837-7375 - e-mail: twinning@ssvp.ca

Twinned by:

Date:

NCC/CNC/TW/app eng/2008/001