

PENNY'S PIECE

A MESSAGE OF HOPE FOR THE EASTER SEASON

Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own

Greetings to all!

At the time of this writing we will have just passed the Christmas Season, which I hope was life-giving for all! We are now setting our sights towards the opening of a new year, as well as, heading toward the Easter Season and the message that it brings to each of us.

As it happens, over the past several months, I have received many notifications regarding the death of so many individuals in our Vincentian Family, as well as personal friends. Upon reflection, it brings to mind that death touches us all, and in so many ways. We hear about it all the time; people die in accidents and explosions. People die by violence and crime and diseases of all kinds. Certainly our sympathy, prayers and support go to all those who have experienced such losses.

Whenever loved ones die, we naturally go through a period of mourning and grief. We know and realize that we will not see this person again while we live on this earth. Of course, feelings of sadness, loss, and emptiness seem to overwhelm us. So what is it that sustains us and keeps us going? A timely question for us to consider as Christians as we approach the Easter Season.

For us as Christians, our faith is our anchor and support at times of sadness and grief. We know and believe that death is not a hopeless tragedy. We truly believe that life and death are really life transitions, and not necessarily the end. In other words, "life" is merely changed, not ended. We believe that our loved one is possibly in heaven and already with God and enjoying eternal happiness and joy. Thus, for this reason, our human sadness and grief is mitigated by SPIRITUAL JOY and HOPE!

As Christians we know that life on earth is a temporary time, a quickly passing phase that leads us to our eternal home that is heaven, our real home, our final home and into the eternal life God created us for in the first place, because He loves us! We can envision that Heaven will be like a giant family reunion! Not only will we meet our immediate family, but also our ancestors and famous people! But most importantly we will come face to face with our heavenly Father, Jesus and Mary and all the angels and saints! In fact, everyone in heaven will be our family! We will indeed see that God is the Father of us all, and that as Christians, we are truly brothers and sisters in Christ. Just as our Vincentian spirituality, mission and activities here on earth help us to create the Vincentian family that we are.

"Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor2:0)

The Easter Season is when we come to celebrate the Resurrection and its fullness of meaning. As Christians we remember the Resurrection as the cornerstone and the foundation of our Christian faith. Easter is for all Christians a feast of faith and hope and love: of faith in the Resurrection of Christ from the dead; of hope, that when we have followed Christ and lived out His teachings in this life, especially as Vincentians, we will rise with Him in eternal life; and lastly, of love for Him who died that we might have eternal life with Him in heaven.

Our happiness at Easter comes first of all from the fact the Jesus, whom we love, has conquered suffering and death and has risen to unending glory with His Father in heaven. For Christ, death was only the final step to His eternal glorification, not only the glorification of Jesus, but also our own glorification when we rise again.

This is the day the Lord has made; rejoice and be glad!

‘Alleluia, Alleluia’ is the Christian Church’s way of crying out happiness. Crying out how happy we are that Christ was raised back to life, that is, a new kind of life that we will all share.

However, to keep our Christian commitment alive, we must remain faithful to our baptismal promises and be keenly aware of what is always expected of us. For me to live out this perspective is always saliently expressed in the work we do as Vincentians and the vocational call to which we responded. As Vincentians and Christians we are constantly reminded that selfishness and stubbornness and sin must no longer mark our lives. Easter Season is a time to enhance our love and trust and faith in order to help it grow stronger and deeper each day.

For this Easter Season, may each of you enjoy the peace, love and joy that only the Risen Christ can give to all who recognize Him as the Saviour of the world!

AGA 2009

Plans have been made; food prepared; lodgings set and Carmela and her planning committee are set to welcome you to the upcoming Annual General Assembly to be held in Kitchener/Waterloo June 24 – 28, 2009. The theme of “5 loaves + 2 fishes + Vincent = ?” , will provide fertile ground that will give rise to many opportunities for us to open new venues of what it means to be truly the Gospel Vincentian.

The Spirituality Committee will be very hard at work developing opportunities that will make this year’s theme come alive and be meaningful for each and every one of us.

The Education Committee is also busy planning the “call for workshops”. Over the years, we have always enjoyed interesting workshops that Vincentians and others have shared at all of our AGA’s. Please do what you can to support the call for workshops.

Please plan to register early!

As always, I will look forward to welcoming each and every one of you!

ON THE ROAD

At the time of this writing, I have not been on “the road” very much. However, Canada has been invited to visit with the National Council of Haiti in late January. This trip will allow for face-to-face contact with the members of the National Council of Haiti, the International Vice President Larry Toumey of Ireland and me. This will help all of us to determine and prioritize needs, establish relationships and lines of communication that will assist in addressing these needs. I will report for the next issue of Vincenpaul and at the AGA.

Another invitation has been extended to Canada to attend a Twinning meeting of the Americas to be held in Virginia, USA sometime in February or March. This will include representatives from all of the countries in the Western hemisphere, with the aim of looking at the twinning programs in all the areas. This meeting will assist all countries in reviewing twinning partners and programs, thus avoiding duplication and will ensure that, as many Conferences as request help, do get the help they need. Kathy, our National Twinning Chair and Clermont, the Chair of Disaster Relief will attend with me. Disaster Relief is above and beyond what Twinning is about, but sometimes duplications of requests for aid confuse situations. Clear lines of communications can now be established and hopefully all the assistance that is requested will reach as many as possible.

ADMINISTRATION

Sandra Melo has been very hard at work making our Ottawa office as functional as it can be. She has been a pleasure to work with and quite creative in her administrative functions.

1 800 Number

The SSVP National Council now has a 1 800 number which will assist many persons in contacting the office in Ottawa. These contacts may be members, public relations, donors or other inquiries. The number is 1 866 997 7787 or 1 866 997 SSVP.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

The National Council will be meeting with CRA very soon. We need to clarify and rectify the recording of all business numbers and incorporation numbers for all entities across Canada. Our records are scant and they are a complete mess as it relates to trying

to determine to whom and where these numbers of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul really belong.

In the National Audit, everyone was asked to submit their numbers to the Regional Council for documentation and record keeping. We have received very few. It is, of course, expected that there are only a few incorporation numbers. However, most Conferences and Councils have a business number in order to issue tax receipts. We need to record these numbers so that information and communication maybe be timely to the responsible entities.

The National Council Ottawa office receives many requests from CRA for information related to specific entities which we cannot provide. Their records are not specific enough for us to track to whom the number belongs. Each year, a report by everyone with a business number must indicate who the directors are for the year. We have stacks of these requests we cannot forward. The end result is that the National Council, being the parent organization, will now be in jeopardy of losing the business number for all of you for failure to comply.

I know there are many questions about issuing tax receipts, having the church collect the monies and issuing a cheque to SSVP Conference etc.. We will have a discussion regarding this issue at the president's roundtable this year.

Please just call, email or whatever...your Conference or Council business number or incorporation in to the regional offices. They should have this information recorded also, they in turn, can forward it to the Ottawa office. We can record that number beside your aggregation/institution information tracking sheet for any future reference.

Penny Craig
National President
March 2009