

## PENNY'S PIECE

*However great the work that God may achieve by an individual, he must not indulge in self-satisfaction. He ought rather to be all the more humbled, seeing himself merely as a tool which God has made use of. (St. Vincent de Paul)*

Greetings to all!

It certainly has been a very busy six months! So much to learn! But also so rewarding! With any new administration comes changes, and changes are healthy for any organization. As we all know changes need to be “managed”, not just “made”. Changes need to be related to what the organization has defined as its priorities so that results can be seen as meaningful for all concerned.

One of the questions I have been asked concerns the Strategic Planning directions and how this new administration will continue to address these directions at this time. I think I have put structures will be put in place that will continue to assist us to make gains in becoming true “People of the Water and the Towel” so that we may serve both members and those in need.

The last three strategic directions/issues identified rested a great deal with the work of the National Council Board of Directors and Administration. These directions included:

- Administrative Processes
- Public Relations and Media
- Education

For me, accountability is of paramount importance. I will keep you the membership, up to date regarding the progress of these issues.

### **Administration**

In the area of Administration: Since I am able to travel to Ottawa fairly easily this provides the opportunity for me to be more “hands on” in the day to day administration of the Ottawa office. Thus, I have chosen to work with two Administrative Assistants. Joanne, working 30 hours per week in the Ottawa office, and Nicole working 14 hours per week in Montreal. Together, they are willing and able to meet the administrative needs of the members of the National Council.

To assist with smooth communication, it follows that a description of who will do what is in order. Joanne will focus on the day to day management of the Ottawa office. Her duties will include processing requests for aggregations and institutions, filling sale requests for ordered items such as Rule Books, prayer cards etc., answering telephone and email messages, maintaining the data base for Vincenpaul magazine, forwarding submissions to the editor for the magazine, acting as contact person between Canada and Paris, receiving correspondence and of course, staying in contact with me via email.

Nicole will continue to work with Kathy regarding Twinning. As well, she will manage web-site information and Vincenpaul with Ellen Schryburt. Members' feedback to the last magazine indicates that members like to see pictorials in the magazine of the activities of the National Council, so together they will manage the magazine. A very big thank you to them and to all

of our contributors for the last fall 2007 issue! The preparations for each AGA will involve a combined effort of all of us. We continue to develop and redevelop administrative procedures to serve our members, the public and those in need so much more efficiently.

I would like to also pay tribute to Jean Noel at this time and thank him for all his efforts!

## **Public Relations/Media**

This is a relatively new area that will deal with maintaining the image, look and messaging with regards to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and its work in Canada. Public Relations and Media will also focus on the production of materials for both public distribution and education materials in keeping with the branding of the Society. We are now moving into the realm of advocacy in a more formalized fashion, and The Voice of the Poor Committee will require a professional look and communication style.

Members have asked National Council office for the “official version of prepared materials they could use for displays, distribution etc. We have just recently completed the draft revision to the national brochure. This was an often requested item that had not been revised for some time, and it should be available in November.

### **Looking for Members to form Public Relations Committee**

**At this time I am looking for three or four individuals with this type of knowledge/experience who may wish to volunteer their time to assist the council with these types of activity. Experience/knowledge can include: journalism – writing of press releases, position papers, education materials etc; graphic design – to assist with the development of the look of education materials, public displays etc. If this interests you, please do contact me.**

## **Education**

We have Carol Horne as the chair of this committee. She has recruited one member from each region to act as the National Education Committee. They will focus on organizing training materials, developing courses for member development, and developing trainers in each region using “train the trainer” models. Educational opportunities will be developed using various modalities. The Education Committee will work closely with the Public Relations and Media Committee. Members of this Committee are: representing BC/Yukon is Nora Criss; Western is Lynne L’Heureux; Ontario is Bill Graham; Quebec is Gerald Croteau; and Carol Horne will represent the Atlantic region. Welcome everyone!

## **National Audit**

As you may know we are conducting a national audit of all Conferences and Councils in Canada. This is important on two levels. First, it will provide some accurate data related to numbers in Canada. Secondly, these numbers will relate to our standing at the International Council General Executive Committee level in Paris . Canada must have 1000 Conferences to be a member with a voice and a vote at these meetings. We were not allowed to attend last year because it was determined we did not have the 1000 number. I urge all of the Regional

Presidents to work diligently to accomplish this task by December 1, 2007. If you know that your Conference is not aggregated, please contact your Regional President.

At this same time, the International Council General is also now conducting an audit in all countries. We are very timely with our audit.

## **On the International Front**

*Turn to God with Faith  
To your own with love,  
And to all with kindness.  
(Scottish Prayerbook)*

We have received a communication from Ernesto Balladeres, Treasurer of the National Council of Nicaragua. He was requesting \$3000 US in financial assistance to help with a special project. They wish to repair a module to a machine they use for X-rays. The SSVP in the city of Leon was offering Odontology (dental work) to the poorest of the city of Leon and of its bordering regions. Their services are given free to those who cannot pay, or a fee of \$5.00 to \$ 10.00 for those who can pay. Also they provide services of X-ray services for about 60 patients each week, a very useful service they do not want to discontinue for those with the least resources.

Of course, after discussion with Kathy and the Executive... Canada will come to the aid of these people. Where the money is to come from is a good question. I am hoping that I can appeal to the regions for some assistance to cover the costs. This is such a nice tangible project for us to become involved with!

*May we accept afresh our calling  
To make visible our unity in Christ  
With all other Christians by working  
Together with them in the service of those  
In need!  
(Scottish Prayerbook)*

## **On the Road**

**Your word is a lamp for my feet  
A light for my path. (ps 119)**

## **September Travel**

### **Austin Texas**

One very nice aspect of my position as President thus far has been to meet so many brothers and sisters on a personal level. I had the pleasure of attending the USA Annual Meeting in Austin Texas in September. A great event! The workshops and meetings were very informative. The Voice of the Poor Committee seems to be forging ahead in many regions of the USA. Issues identified in the USA are not much different than those we have in Canada. In some regions there is an identified need to address the utilities costs for families that are unable to cope because of their low income. As well there was interest in connecting with Canadian Vincentians to make the voice stronger. We will do that.

Historical Moment: Among those attending the USA meeting was the Vice President of Mexico. He was there to formally request assistance from their Brothers and Sisters in the USA to strengthen the Society in Mexico. A delightful and energetic young man, his intent is to get a fully functional National Council in Mexico. Joe Flannigan, the USA President promised his support by having an official document signed indicating the kind of support that USA will provide. I was asked to attend the signing to show the Canadian solidarity as regards assisting the Americas.... to "help in all possible ways".

### **Joliette Quebec**

A celebration of 150 years of the Joliette Particular Council. A beautiful Mass was celebrated followed by a luncheon. What a happy and proud, yet humble family they were! Jean Claude provided a wonderful summary of the history of the Council. It was certainly a marvelous tribute to all who came before them.

### **Bowmanville Ontario**

The Lakeshore Particular Council celebrated their first Mass as a Council. Another spirit filled meeting and luncheon! The focus of the meeting was to share insights into the topics of love and charity. Great presenters animated that aspect. The other portion of the meeting allowed all those who attended the AGA 2007 in Kelowna to bring back to members the pictures and reports related to certain workshops, meetings and fun they experienced. What a delightful way of being responsible and accountable!

### **Quebec Regional Council Annual General Assembly**

A very warm welcome as always. The meeting was very spirit led and spirit filled. It had the sense of a very large family coming together to pray, to share food and experiences. The depth of work conducted in Quebec is commendable. Of particular interest the projects called Bon Min and Sage. These two projects are related to helping school children. BONNE MINE assists financially with the purchase of school supplies and extra curricular activity expenses. SAGE provides assistance to those children who are having difficulty keeping up in class. This involves coaching and mentoring them through their homework and studies. The emphasis on this activity is to prevent these children from dropping out of school. These two activities are unique to Quebec, but certainly not impossible everywhere.

### **AGA 2008**

Remember that accommodations will be limited, so please do register early! To celebrate our 175 year anniversary of the Society, I have invited the International President General Jose Ramon Diaz-Torremocha and he has indicated he will be delighted to be in attendance!

### **Call For Workshops**

As you may know the theme in 2008 will be around "Putting our faith into action...let us go to the poor!" Please think about workshops that can be provided that will develop this theme, which is so rich with possibilities! Please submit your proposals and requirements for

workshops to the national office in Ottawa. These will be forwarded to planning coordinator in Quebec.

In summary, I have to say it certainly has been very busy three to six months. I wish to thank the staff Joanne and Nicole for their patience and understanding as we implemented administrative changes. Also, thanks to the Executive for their contributions toward building a stronger administrative process. All members in their respective roles have been excellent "Stewards"! Again, thanks to the contributors to the Vincenpaul!

A light will shine on us this day,  
The Lord is born for us;  
He shall be called Wonderful God,  
Prince of Peace, Father of the world to come;  
And his kingship will never end. (Is 9; Luke 1)

May each of you be blessed throughout the Christmas season with love, peace, and joy!

As always, I continue to pray "that we may all be one in truth and charity!"

Penny Craig, President  
National Council of Canada