

President's Word – January 2005

Dear Brother and Sister Vincentians

May the Peace and Joy of the newborn Child be with you, your families and all those we serve in the year 2005.

Tsunami Relief

As we begin a new year we are still in shock watching the devastating effects of the Tsunami that hit South-East Asia on December 26. As the death toll surpasses 155,000 all the major international charities have been onsite for a couple of weeks helping to deal with the immediate needs of the survivors. As I write this latest Word, the major Canadian press have already moved the news about the Tsunami to the back pages of the papers, or have dropped the story entirely.

The following is an excerpt from a letter to the National Presidents from International President General Jose Ramon Diaz Torremocha:

My Dear Friends and Brothers

Facing the tragic disaster that struck South-East Asia at the end of 2004, we cannot be indifferent neither individually nor as a Catholic organization which tries to alleviate suffering.

However during the first days of the tragedy, a great participation cannot be carried out as it exceeds our feeble resources, nevertheless, within the next months we shall be capable of supporting the work of our brothers in all affected countries, when the biggest organizations have clarified the situation. Then, media effect will fade away, and our role and help will be particularly indispensable.

We must help our Conferences in the affected countries, so they can alleviate the suffering of the poor people and all broken families; that is why I have decided to invite all Conferences throughout the world, to demonstrate their fraternity and solidarity providing the necessary support, as they have done in the past.

Therefore, I would like to ask you to transmit to all Conferences established in your area, urgently, the following information:

a) Due to the magnitude of the disaster, the General Council wants to initiate a fund raising, starting with 10,000 Euros from adequate funds.

b) Throughout 2005, The General Council will send through the "Vincentians for Peace" team, all members who want to voluntarily help their brothers of affected countries. (this call specifically concerns the brothers who speak English, and who have special education which makes them totally operative in the area, like: engineers, doctors, nurses, social assistants, etc.)

c) The Presidents of the countries who have suffered the consequences of the Tsunami will be officially invited to the next Permanent Section that will be held in Salamanca (Spain) next April. The Permanent Section will dedicate part of this meeting to evaluate the needs of each Council, and to decide how to help them with the funds and the human resources at the disposal of the General Council after this call for funds.

I know very well, dear friends, that you will join me in my prayers to the Lord, for all the people who died, are missing, mutilated, and those from so many broken families. Surely every Conference is already praying, and sharing the suffering of our brothers in the area.

Let us be, dear friends, a ray of hope for our brothers, and the true demonstration that, with our commitment and our generosity, the Vincentian rally to “serve in Hope” the poor and those who suffer, everywhere.

With Prayers and Affection

Jose-Ramon Diaz Torremocha

As you can read above the Vincentian response has already started at the International Council General level, and the Vincentian participation will go on for many months, even years after the major Charities have completed their work. This is also the first time that the ICG has called for volunteers to participate in providing aid and a rebuilding effort in the affected countries. Anyone who is interested in following up on this request should contact the National Council office for more details.

In response to the ICG appeal the National Council of Canada has issued an appeal to the Regional/Provincial Councils for international emergency funds that will be forwarded to the International Council General to be forwarded to the Superior Councils in the affected areas.

ICG

The International Council General is responsible for the development and management of the works of the Society world wide. Unfortunately many Vincentians do not understand the role of the ICG, and our responsibility to support it. Certainly events like the Tsunami underline the work of the ICG, but there is more to this Council. The ICG is responsible for the mission of our Society; it is the heart of the Society in the world. It takes our spiritual message and material assistance throughout the world. The ICG is responsible for the continuing expansion of the Society. It responds to disasters around the world with appeals for funds; it also provides funds to Councils in countries where the Society is developing.

It encourages twinning of Conference to Conference and Council to Council and was responsible for the development of the twinning Manual.

The Council General is responsible for Aggregations of Conferences and Institution of Councils, the development and continual up-dating of the Rule.

The International Council General is a very important body within the Society and one which must be supported by all National/Superior Councils around the world.

National Council Board Meeting

On the national front, the National Council Board met in Montreal on December 4, 2004. The Board reaffirmed the north/south philosophy for national Twinning and added Honduras and Guatemala to the list of



countries that we will pursue for twinning with Canadian Conferences. We continue to encourage all Conferences in Canada to get involved in this very important and basic Vincentian activity. It is a very real and concrete sign of solidarity that we can send to our brothers and sisters in Central and South America. In another and related discussion, the Board agreed to arrange a youth exchange with a Central American country within a year and a half. This travel exchange will be planned and directed by Martin Thompson the National Youth Representative on the National Board. It is believed that such an exchange will build solidarity with the young Vincentians in Central America. The exposure to the conditions in these third world countries will have a very positive impact on the young Canadian Vincentians which they will be able to share with others in Canada.

International President General Election

During the meeting I also reported to the Board that I have been nominated as a candidate for the position of International President General. The election procedure has started and will culminate with a vote of delegates attending the Annual Assembly in Salamanca Spain in June 2005. The names of the three candidates, incumbent IPG Jose Ramon Diaz-Torremocha from Spain, International Vice-President Michael Thio from Singapore and Michael Burke, President, National Council of Canada, have been sent to the Vatican for approval. The approved names will be on a ballot which will be sent to Superior/National Council Presidents by the end of March. The letter ballots will be returned and the two candidates with the most votes will be on a second ballot to be voted on by Superior/National Council Presidents present at the Salamanca meeting on June 19, 2005.

Jean Vanier Visits Toronto

Well known Catholic thinker and founder of L'Arche, Jean Vanier visited Toronto this past October to present a talk to 400 people at St. Michael's College. In an article in the Catholic Register, Michael Swan presents the following quotes from Vanier's talk:

"There can be no peace unless we have the conviction that every person is important, that every person flows from and flows to the heart of God."

"Peace is not the absence of War. Peace is not living in the same city under the rule of law. Peace requires that we meet."

Finally he warns against the easy way out – "If there are injustices, if there are inequalities, if someone is suffering, don't imagine that a loaf of bread will just appear. It is up to you and me."

During this start of a new year, the words of Jean Vanier about peace and justice are very appropriate to our Vincentian family. Please take some time to reflect on these words, and if possible pick up a copy of Vanier's book "On Becoming Human" and read and reflect on his wonderful message of peace.

Lending Money

While I do not believe that the practice of lending money within the Society is common, I do know that it exists and wish to address the practice. I believe that as Vincentians, as members of the Vincentian family we should not be lending money. Do you lend money to family members? I believe that if a Vincentian family member is in need of money (a

Conference, a Council, or a Special Work) and you (a Conference or Council) have excess funds you should give the money to the needy Conference or Council, not lend it. I would encourage all Conferences or Councils who have outstanding loans to other Vincentian Conferences, Councils or Special Works to cancel the debts in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity. I would also encourage that in the future, no moneys are “loaned” within the Society, but funds are “shared” in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity.

AGA 2005

The last time the AGA was held in Calgary was 1995 when Past President Ellen Schryburt was installed as National President. Now ten years later we are returning. Western Regional President Lynn L’Heureux and her AGA Committee members are busy planning and preparing for the meeting. During a family visit to Calgary over the Christmas holidays, I had the opportunity to meet with WRC President Lynn L’Heureux and visit the AGA venues including the No Ka Oi Ranch. Friday June 24 (the feast day of St. Jean Baptist) will be particularly special at this year’s AGA. Delegates will be bussed to the No Ka Oi Ranch for noon lunch. We will then have a presentation on the development of the Theme of the AGA and later a Bar B Q dinner. The program, facilities, workshops, and spirituality programs are being prepared to provide and meet a wide variety of interests and experience as well as to cover the necessary business activities of the National Council. Once again I encourage all Members by Right to attend this important meeting of the Society in Canada. And to all Vincentians - come and join us

YAHOO.