

PENNY'S PIECE

Summer

NEWS FLASH!! NEWS FLASH!!!

SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL TURNS 175 YEARS OLD APRIL 23, 2008

Reflection

The harvest is rich but the workers are few; therefore ask the harvest-master to send workers to his harvest. (Lk10:20)

“Come Work In The Vineyard ...To Let Us Put Our Faith Into Action”.

In our 2007 theme, we were “called” to the vineyard to do Christ’s work as Vincentians. Usually, when we think about being “called”, we think about the “call for prayers for vocations” by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. We generally think it applies to a call for vocations to the religious life. However, at this time it can also provide us with the opportunity to recall the Vincentian vocation that each of us has chosen.

As we come to the close of the 2007/08 theme of “Come and work in the vineyard”, we certainly can consider ourselves “called” and “sent”. Through our Vincentian vocation, we have been called to serve in the vineyard of the poor and needy.

As we enter a new theme for 2008/09, now is a good time to think or pray about how we have lived out that Vincentian vocation in the past year. I am not sure we do enough of that type of self reflection; “Taking stock”, so to speak. It provides us with the chance to refill and regenerate ourselves, giving us the physical and spiritual energy required in fulfilling our mission, as it has done for 175 years!

Our Vincentian vocation comes to us in such a special way, that we often do not realize we have accepted a vocational call. Responding to the Vincentian way of life is one other avenue we have chosen to live out a spirituality that will enable us to fulfill our purpose on earth. This purpose is to work our way back to the Father in heaven. Most especially, our call comes to us as a result of our baptism, and what it means to be Christian, hence right out of the Gospel message.

The Vincentian vocation as described in the Rule of the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul states ” The vocation of the Society’s members who are called Vincentians, is to follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love. Members show their commitment through person-to-person contact. Vincentians serve in hope.”

The 1977 edition of the Rule of the Society in Schema II puts it so well in its title -The “Vincentian Vocation” Heart of the unity of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. (p11) This title has so much meaning for us as Vincentians living out a spiritual way of life. The section of the Rule goes on to explain the specific character of this call as, “the intimate desire personally and directly to participate in the service of the poor, by a contract

between man and man, by a personal gift of the heart and friendship, and to do this in a brotherly community of lay people inspired by the same vocation”.^{p11}

This vocational attribute has been the hallmark of the Vincentian calling for 175 years!

Therefore, it is not just joining a club or other organization. It is a unique call to be there for each other and to serve those in need in a very special way! To meet them on a one to one basis! To see Christ in all who suffer! To treat them with respect, justice and joy! Above all to help in all possible ways!

Through answering the call to a Vincentian vocation we are obligated to seek out ways to live out the Gospel message and put our ”faith into action!” We are called to dwell with those whom we serve not only in their need, but with the presence of our spirit and compassion to their circumstance as well. What a nice segue into this year’s theme! The challenge before us is to think outside the box. Again the 1977 Rule spells out some important aspects, “This vocation can be expressed in any number of ways with different shades of expression. Concrete translation into action, meditation adaptation to the diverse and changing world – all this is the life of every Vincentian, the life of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul”.

With “action” being the key word, we are called to make real and concrete what it means to be truly Christian and truly Vincentian. If we hope to attract youth and younger members, because they are all about “action”, then as committed members we must be open to the possibilities of what “no work of charity is foreign to the Society” really means! Our AGA 2008 will provide creative opportunities to seek out new ways of serving those in need.

I am sure our invited guest to our AGA 2008, José Ramón Díaz Torremocha, the XIV President General of the International Confederation Council will be most interested in seeing how seriously and creatively Canadian Vincentians take their vocational call.

Let us celebrate who we are as Vincentians! Let us ask our selves if we want to be known by our spirituality or by our works. From my understanding of our spirituality, I say “both”, and therein lies a very special challenge.

Emergency Relief: Quebec City Fire Destroys 16 Family Homes

In the month of March, there was a disastrous fire in Quebec City, on rue La Forest, that left 16 families without a home. While no one was lost, the sad part of all of this is that they did not have insurance. The call came to the National Council from the Quebec Central Council to help them in assisting the Conference in the area: the St-Louis de France – St-Yves Conference. The Disaster Relief fund provided \$15,000.00 to assist these families. We were certainly pleased to help out.

Certainly, our prayers and support were and, still are, very welcome I am sure. Thanks to Clermont for the quick action and turn around time.

National Council of Canada Pamphlet

Our new National Council of Canada pamphlet is now ready. This new pamphlet is part of the Public Relations/Media strategic plan that identified a need to have updated materials. This pamphlet is available to all Regional Councils and Conferences at no cost to them. Please call or email the Ottawa office to have some sent to you. They will also be available at the AGA 2008 in Quebec.

Website

We are pleased to report that our website is being filled with information. Nicole has been working very diligently at entering information so that we can access what is needed on a timely basis.

Vincenpaul Magazine

Wrong or outdated addresses have plagued our database for the Vincenpaul magazine. There are a substantial number of magazines returned to the national office in Ottawa. As all of you know, our database is only as good as the information placed into it. Therefore, in January 2008 a printout according to province/region was done. This printout was circulated to each Regional President in order for them to review and update this listing. I would hope that every President receives a copy of the magazine and passes this on to the other members of the Conference or Council for their information.

Please do advise the national office when presidents are changed in your local areas.

Around the world

“I would like to embrace the whole world in a network of charity”...Fredric Ozanam

Nicaragua

I am sad about the report that our brother, Ernesto Balladares has died. Canada has sent condolences to the family and we have enrolled Ernesto in a perpetual Mass. Please keep him in your prayers.

ICG Youth Retreat – Salamanca Spain

June 4 – 8, 2008, Caroline Gilbert is attending as Canada's Youth representative. She will be connecting with youth from all over the world. I know she will have an interesting report for us when she returns.

Canada was asked to sponsor a youth from a country that cannot afford to have a youth attend this conference. We have indicated that we would indeed sponsor someone. We have asked that we sponsor someone from Nicaragua.

If any regions can assist with the funding for this youth member to attend, this will help a great deal.

World Youth Days

As you know the WYD are being held July 9 – 14, 2008 in Australia. The Vin Family gathering is occurring a few days before the official WYDays are started. We have four youth, Aiden Masterson, Sara Latouf, Josh Pfaff and Ryan El baba attending. The adult counselors attending are Carmela Addante from Waterloo, as well as myself. This will be a very exciting time for all of them as they will truly experience the vastness of the scope of Vincentians and the work of charity that is indeed encircling the globe. The exciting part of all of this is that they are all part of it! Please, if any region can help to defray some of the costs for these individuals, it would be greatly appreciated. National Council and Ontario Regional Council will also be assisting financially.

Haiti

Many have been asking what Canada is doing to help our brothers and sisters in Haiti. Vinpaz, is a committee of the International Council General whose function is to assist poorer countries with the establishment of the Society in their countries. This past February saw the end of the commitment of the Irish volunteers in Haiti. They have been there for three years helping to form and strengthen the Society in Haiti. Now Canada and the USA have been asked to take up the task of continuing the work in Haiti. A special meeting will be held with Larry Toumey from Ireland, Ed Gomez, the Vinpaz Coordinator, the USA Vice president or the Executive Director, Clermont and myself to establish priorities and decide the best approach required to continue to assist our brothers and sisters in Haiti. It is our aim to establish an advisory committee that will act to guide and direct the National Council of Haiti. Of course this will be done with an eye to empowering them to take on responsibilities as they are able to do so.

We will keep you informed as to the progress and any assistance that may be required.

United States

Please keep President Joe Flannigan in your prayers as he moves through his illness.

AGA 2008

I look forward to welcoming and seeing everyone in Quebec City! Please bring your fellowship, ideas and smiles! You will certainly enjoy a real French Canadian good time!

Special note: We will be looking for hosts for future AGA's. We know that 2009 will be in Waterloo Ontario. The years after that are open!

“all one in truth and charity.”

Penny Craig, President
National Council of Canada