

TWINNING COMMITTEE REPORT FOR 2006-2007

I am **very grateful** to God, for all that we have been able to do for the poor through twinning.

I am also grateful to all who have made it possible for me to work on twinning, including Michael Burke and the National Executive and Board and staff, the National Twinning Regional Representatives, and Nicole Schryburt, who assisted and encouraged me in innumerable ways.

Following is a summary of what I have reported on over the past six years that I have been addressing my goals for the Task Force on Twinning.

Goal 1.) To increase the understanding of twinning as it relates to the mission of the Society.

We have appealed to National Board members and National Council members, to remember twinning as a work of the Society.

I have submitted articles for the Vincenzapaul magazine, on Pre-Aggregation Twinning, on the task force goals, on Peru, on Twinning Guidelines, on the historical development of the definition of twinning, and on the response to why we twin from an AGA twinning workshop.

In an appeal letter sent across Canada, we reminded members of the mission, as part of what we are trying to do in the work of twinning.

Vincenzians of conferences and councils, who pray with, correspond, and send funds to help Vincenzians in other countries, are some of the Vincenzians who live our mission - of living the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor, with love, respect, justice and joy.

Goal 2.) To develop conferences with which to twin in our northern Dioceses.

The concept of Pre-Aggregation Twinning (PAT) originated in Ontario, when Doreen Simmers, Ontario twinning representative, responded to requests for twinning with northern Ontario. PAT is twinning by an aggregated conference, with a parish in a northern Mission area, by the honoring of invoices for Vincenzian work by the Mission conference, with the hope that the conference will form to the point of aggregation, ideally within two years. A description and two-year follow-up action guidelines were developed. Attempts were made to connect with the extension committee.

Doreen met with two presidents of Missions Canada, who each circulated a letter and pamphlet to the 26 missions. As with all internal twinning, more donors were available than recipients were. Five PAT twinings were established, with recipients in Puvirnituq, QC, Our Lady of Grace, NL, Slave Lake, MB, Nunavik, NWT, and St. Vital, AB.

Pre-Aggregation Twinning continues to exist as a concept of help for churches and communities in the Mission areas of Canada. Missions Canada is reserved about the possibility of PAT in its current format of assisting the churches within its fold. It is the belief of Doreen Simmers, who founded the concept of PAT, that PAT could work if someone would take it on as a special work, and visit the areas in an extension effort.

At this time, seeking of Pre-Aggregation Twinning is on hold.

Goal 3.) To make twinning an efficient and expeditious activity.

Representatives from the provinces and regions were sought to be part of a twinning committee, to aid in the work of twinning. In 2002, Doreen Simmers from Ontario and Viola Corbett from the Atlantic Region were part of their councils. Role descriptions for the National Twinning Coordinator, the Regional representatives, and the twinning responsibilities of the General Secretary were formulated.

After discussions with Michael Burke and the Board and others, twinning guidelines were established, to clarify and encourage the process as it is and could be practiced. Terms of reference for the twinning

committee, and twinning policies about the countries with which we twin, Pre-Aggregation Twinning and amounts of external contributions, were also developed.

Nicole Schryburt, who manages the transmittal of funds, made changes that helped the efficiency of twinning. Transmittals were changed to quarterly instead of monthly, were deposited into a separate account, and were made National/Superior Council to National/Superior Council. With her help with the structure, I developed a twinning brochure, updated the Annual Twinning Report, and requested that she change the twinning application form. Nicole established a comprehensive database for tracking current twins.

International contact was established. To make twinning possible for the volunteers and staff, new twinning would occur with no more than six countries, in a north/south line in the Americas. Contact was made with these countries. Contributions to the International Twinning Manual assisted in its development, and it was circulated to the Regional twinning representatives when it was completed.

A workshop on twinning was given at the AGA in 2004. About 30 people attended. Working material on the definition of twinning, and "How to Twin in Canada", are now resource material to twinning. Twinning displays started at the AGA in 2005, and has continued since. A 'twinning ad', listing international twins available, was published in the Vincenpaul.

A proposal for twinning projects was brought to the Board in November '04. It is a way for Canadian twins to be able to send more than the annual twinning funds, if their receiving twin had a particular plan for their use. Guidelines and application forms were developed, based on the International Twinning Manual Project Cycle, and information from Scotland and Indian twinning coordinators. Projects will be a way to increase contributions to your twin, for a specific planned use.

Twinning actions at the National level have been as follows. Contributions to the Grenada National Council were made from the International Emergency Fund, following the destruction of most of the nutmeg trees by a hurricane. Help was given following the Tsunami in 2004. Efforts have been made to establish a form of twinning with Haiti, taking into account the limited infrastructure that exists in this country. In the past year, twinning with Sri Lanka has resumed, after it was stopped in November '06, following reports of funds not reaching twins. The new administration of the National Council of Sri Lanka responded, and twinning has normalised. Other historical twinings needed attention, such as with Cameroon, Zambia and Brazil. Problems with twinning with Peru, Nicaragua, and El Salvador were addressed, such as requesting a designated twinning account at the bank, seeking of banking information, and receiving of a project. In the past year, we have changed the system of notifying conferences and councils, acknowledging receipt of funds and when funds are transferred.

One of the most persistent questions is about correspondence, specifically when we haven't heard from our twin. Many reasons could account for this, including a change in executive, change in lives of correspondents, and increase in the needs of and work for the poor in their area.

My advice is that you should hear from your twin once a year, even if it is just a card at Christmas or Easter. If you have not heard from them for a year, send a transmittal of funds as usual through National. Also send a separate letter that you mail to them (or email), notifying your twin that the funds are coming, but you that you need to hear from them before you can send any more funds. Remember them in your prayers. If you still do not hear from them after four months, notify the National Twinning Chairperson, who can write to the twinned National president or twinning chairperson, historically an effective action.

The Regional chairpersons are instrumental in the advance of twinning across Canada. Chairpersons are available at regional meetings for questions about, and support of, twinning. I am grateful for the efforts of Viola Corbett in Atlantic Region, Claude Roy in Quebec, Doreen Simmers in Ontario, Pat Bennetto in Western Region, and Thomas O'Flynn, president, in British Columbia. They report to their regional councils, and at twinning meetings at the National AGA.

Goal 4.) To have almost all Councils and Conferences twinned by 2007

In my first report in February 2002, I reported that we had 51 twinned conferences or councils, out of 850 in Canada. We sent \$40,000 in external twinning.

Appeals for conferences or councils, who were interested in the work of twinning, were made through your chairpersons and through the Vincenpaul magazine. Nicole sent an appeal letter in 2004 to conferences and councils across Canada.

New twins came from all areas of Canada, but most regularly from Ontario. Twinning have been made at a rate of 3 to 4 a month. In all, between April 2003 and April 2007, 101 twinings were made, including 5 councils. Twinning do lapse, as conferences and councils change executive, or lose the twinning contact people who have done this work as part of their Vincentian vocation. New twinings can fail also, most frequently as a result of lack of response from their twinned conference.

In June 2007, we have 119 twinned conferences or councils, out of 932 conferences and councils across Canada. We have sent \$45,121 through external twinning over the past year. This sum would have been, on the average, \$11,000 more, but the twinning with Sri Lanka was stopped for a time, due to reports of twins not receiving their funds.

New this year is the start of response to projects. Contact was made with the Ontario and Western Region youth leaders, to assist with a project in Guatemala, a primary school for underprivileged kids called the St. Vincent de Paul House. This ongoing project involves the construction of a 3rd floor to the school to serve as a meeting place for activities. Twinning has been established; funds are being raised; and Spanish is being studied. "The most important aspects of the twinning is to treat our Guatemalan Vincentian youth with respect (many are of Maya descent) and develop genuine relations with them, and also to pray with them."

Another project is being considered, between the Dominican Republic and a conference in the Atlantic Region, using the process described in the guidelines.

Many thanks to all who do the work of twinning as they seek the face of Christ in truth and sincerity, and serve the Lord.

May God bless all that are involved in twinning.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Weswick, 3rd Vice President, National Council
Chair National Twinning Committee