

Vincenpaul-Canada

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CANADA

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5 loaves + 2 fish + Vincent = ?

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Made with the collaboration of : Ghislaine DuNord,
Josée Laforest, John Grocholski and Réal Payertte

Editors : Nicole Schryburt, Ellen Schryburt

Graphic Design : Caroline Gilbert

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Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
National Council of Canada
2463 Innes Road
Ottawa, Ontario, K1B 3K3

Tel. : 613-837-4363

Toll Free: 1-866-997-7787

Fax: 613-837-7375

Email: national@ssvp.ca

Exceptionally, **Caroline Gilbert**, our youth representative, designed this edition of Vincenpaul-Canada. Caroline is a graphic designer and wanted to renew the look of our magazine. Thanks for your involvement Caroline!

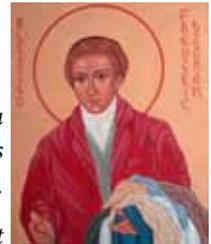
Photos of the AGM we have been provided by **Carmela Adante** and **Michael Lerman**. Thanks to both of you!

For comments, please contact the editors at: editor@ssvp.ca.

The next issue of the magazine will be sent in January 2010.
Please send us your articles by November 1st 2009. We will be happy to publish them. Don't forget to include pictures!

*By the hand of iconographer Donna
R. Rathert, based on image at St. Peter's
Church, Phibsboro, Dublin.*

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Penny's Piece

Dear brother and sister Vincentians

Yet another very successful Annual General Assembly 2009 in Waterloo has come and gone! Out thanks to Carmela Addante and Jason Hunt for their dedicated leadership in helping their team to make this year's event such a success! Way to go!

My thanks also to my administrative team and staff for their participation and help at the AGA. We are truly blessed with dedicated individuals such as these!

There is much to share in this issue of Vincenpaul. Many pictures of the membership enjoying the AGA itself, which is always such fun to remember. Of course, of special interest are highlights of the purchase of our new head office in Ottawa with pictures as well. These are very exciting times. In this issue, I will take the opportunity to share my annual report. I look forward to meeting with many of you throughout the year as well.

God bless each and every one of you with wisdom, understanding and strength as you continue on your Vincentian journey.

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 1, 2008 TO MARCH 31, 2009

Again, this past year has been spent in cultivating ways to assist the Society to grow and realize its full potential. The ministry of administration continues to evolve as a caring and spirituality based mission that more clearly defines who we are as "people of the water and the towel" in the administration of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

As in the previous report, it would be worthwhile to provide a quick snapshot regarding the health of each area of the ministry of administration. Each committee, as you know will provide a more detailed report of its activities. It is not my intention to reiterate these reports.

Administration: (Strategic Direction)

Several key areas that are visible manifestations of this ministry included revising the administrative staffing. We continue with one full-time and one part-time. As of October 2008, we welcomed **Sandra Melo** as the new full time staff member, and **Nicole Schryburt** in the Montreal office remains part time. Sandra has been quite busy learning about the Society and how it functions. She attended a training program in Gatineau,

Quebec. Our thanks to that group for their assistance. Sandra speaks English, French and Portuguese. She has a six year old son and lives in Ottawa.

Again, I have also been able to be present in the office for several days before all executive and board meetings, thus providing for better interactions, communications, staff meetings and coaching process for the staff.

Aggregations and Institutions

The defined process for Aggregations and Institutions and follow-up for inquiries has been working quite well. As you probably are aware, all certificates are now numbered for easier tracking.

Human Resources Committee under the leadership of **Clermont Fortin**, has also been very busy assembling all of the legal documentation requirements to practice due diligence as an employer that will care for our staff. Our employee benefits package has also been updated.

As always, a great vote of thanks to our staff, Nicole and Sandra, and to our consultants **Ghislaine Nord**, who does our translations sometimes with very little turnaround time notice, and to **Josée Laforest**, our graphic artist who does a great job of graphics and set up for our Vincenpaul magazine and other national council items such as the new brochures. We certainly appreciate all of you!

Board Orientation Day

The Board of Directors had two-day meetings both in November and May. The Friday of the November meeting is considered a **Board Orientation Day**. New board members learn all aspects of the administration of the National Council and meet the staff that assists members to learn their staff functions. As well, all board members learn their own role in the administration and communications between the national council board and the members of their regions.

Board Retreat Day

In May, the Friday is spent as a day of retreat/spirituality. The time is spent reflecting on the importance of who we are as stewards and members of the board and the members of the administrative team. We celebrate the gifts each of us brings to the ministry of administration and within the Society. The day begins with prayer and recitation of the rosary and ends with the celebration of Mass.

Also during this day the theme for the following year AGA is developed and decided upon along with possible workshop topics that will help to develop this chosen theme.

As members have stated, “a very full day and very worthwhile for both events”.

Spirituality Committee chaired by **Yvon Bussieres**, has been instrumental in making the May Retreat Day a very remarkable and edifying experience. Our **National Spiritual Advisor, Msgr Peter Schonenbach**, provides the insights needed to ground our decision-making both at the board level and at the executive level. The terms of reference for this committee were expanded to allow for a number of spirituality focused areas to emerge. Under the strategic planning process one area identified was that “There are no visible signs of spirituality within the Society”.

Through the efforts of this committee measures are now taken to ensure that there ARE visible signs of spirituality within the Society. Yvon and his team will endeavor to ensure that Spirituality is a viable and visible presence at all Society gatherings and communications. This task does not rest with Msgr Peter alone, we all have a responsibility to animate the Spirituality of the Society! Yvon will have much more to report on this topic.

Education/Formation(StrategicDirection)

Under the leadership of **Carle Horne VP**, meetings and communications have taken place that will generate the results that the Strategic Planning had identified as important concerns for membership.

The establishment of the Education/Formation committee has begun to manifest signs as a very fruitful endeavour. Carol is very excited about the results over the last year and will have much to report.

Strategic Planning will also continue under **Carol Horne's** leadership. It is so life-giving when strategic issues are identified and attained. This gives life to both the committee itself and the organization. As a council we have met objectives in a timely fashion with tangible results. This is due in most part to the dedication of all of you as members of the Society wanting to see the Society grow and flourish in your local areas. Carol will be having ongoing meetings at each AGA that will assist in continuing to develop the strategic planning process as a viable process to assist the Society in Canada toward healthy growth and sustainable vitality.

International Emergency/Disaster Relief remains under the stewardship of **Clermont Fortin, VP**. He will provide a complete report.

Twining

Kathy Weswick, continues as the national chair. She and Nicole have worked very diligently to maintain the integrity of the twinning process for all concerned. Twining has once again been very busy developing relationships and providing safe mechanisms that will see twinning connections made and the provision of monetary support find its way to those twins that rely on assistance both internally and externally outside Canada. Kathy will provide a comprehensive report.

Finance

The Finance Committee, chaired by **Marcel Tremblay VP**, has met a couple of times to develop processes that will provide for good stewardship of those funds that come to the national council for whatever reason. Our **Treasurer Germain Souigny and Francois Dufault, finance committee member**, continue to be instrumental in assisting the administration of the national council with the development of practices that enable sustainability throughout the fiscal year.

You will remember, that last year I reported that the finance committee developed Financial Guidelines that will assist everyone to understand the basics of financial practices as they relate to the national council administration. These new guidelines have assisted in the annual council budget preparations.

Last year we budgeted \$240,000.00 in conference and council contributions for the last fiscal year 2008-09. I am pleased we attained 98% of the goal!!!

Bravo and congratulations to all of you that supported the national council in this fashion. A huge BRAVO to all of you that send more in order to help those conferences and councils that cannot afford to send the annual contribution! Together, we made a difference! The National Council of Canada now has the necessary resources to help the Society attain its mandate...to live the Gospel Message and help in all possible ways not only in Canada, but to all of our brother and sister Vincentians all over the world!!!

Of further note:

The Vincenpaul Spring Issue contained an article that explained the necessity of the \$240.00 contribution to the national council. This was in response to questions posed by conference/council presidents. Of course, they have a right to know so I called it "a teachable moment". I asked Marcel, Finance Committee Chair, to help me write an article to help answer their questions. We received very positive responses, both from the article's value and obviously from the generous support to help us get to 98% of the goal.

Voice of the Poor - Advocacy

The Voice of the Poor Committee is now underway. Both **Clermont Fortin VP**, and **Michael Burke PP**, along with **Msgr Peter Schononbach** have undertaken to make this committee an audible voice within the Society for and with the poor that we serve. Issues will come forward for input and action as the committee plans strategies to make our voice heard. There indeed will be no shortage of issues and concerns. There will be an orientation type meeting come October 2009 that will begin to set the pace and gain everyone's interest I am sure.

Youth Committee

Our Youth Committee is under the able leadership of **Caroline Gilbert**. Caroline attended the International



Youth Conference in Salamanca Spain in the beginning of June 2008. There are some interesting opportunities for youth engagement in activities especially in the Western hemisphere. Caroline will also have a comprehensive report for all of you.

Board Administrative Communication

This aspect of administrative communication continues to be well provided for by having **Diane Pearson** continuing in her role as secretary of the board. Her knowledge of both French and English assists with the comprehensiveness of her minute taking. The time lines we have established have been working well for both the notices of meetings and the dissemination of minutes. **Sandra** remains the main facilitator throughout this process as she communicates with the translator **Ghislaine Du Nord**.

Communications/Public Relations (Strategic Direction)

Communications/Public Relations remains as one of the identified strategic directions that members identified as important for continued growth of the Society throughout the country. Last year, our National Council materials were developed to have the look of the organization in Canada. We have created a new Society of Saint Vincent de Paul National Council brochure, a new Twinning brochure, prayer cards, mission cards, etc, all with the distinctive international logo and blue and white colours that define the Society in Canada. As I travel around the country I can see the Society logo, colours etc being consistently utilized....we are becoming a recognized symbol in our communities.

As part of updating the communications element, we now have a 1 800 number for individuals to use when contacting us.

Website/Operations Manual (Strategic Direction)

The Operations Manual and Website: both of these have been updated. I have been told that more and more individuals are stopping and using the web site. We now have an on line donation format. Our thanks to **Nicole** for her diligence in managing that aspect for us.

Vincenpaul Magazine

Vincenpaul Magazine continues to be managed by both **Nicole and Ellen Schryburt**. Both of these ladies have been gathering news stories and with the help of our translator and our graphic artist, have assembled a very informative magazine. We continue to receive a number of compliments on how well done it is. Thanks to each of you, **Nicole, Ellen, Ghislaine, and Josée** for your hard work.

A great big vote of thanks goes to all of you for submitting interesting articles...especially if there are pictures! Keep them coming!

Please Note

We continue to get a great deal of magazines returned to the national office as undeliverable. This can be due to deceased members, change of presidents, etc.

Screening Process

Screening process is well underway in most regions. It is a tribute to those who have helped to make it all possible. Each region has truly worked diligently to ensure that the process is understood and is indeed moving forward.

President's Travel

As I reported in the Vincenpaul Magazine I have attended meetings in Australia, Louisville KY, Haiti, Ottawa, Costa Rica, Calgary and Spain in June. These have been wonderful opportunities for me to see the many good works conducted in the name of the Society and to meet so many brothers and sisters. Presence means so much to all of these persons and taking the time to go to meet with everyone is very life giving to all concerned. What an invaluable resource we are to one another!

Council News Item

The house that belonged to the National Council that was located in Quebec City was finally sold in November 2008. However, since that time, our present landlord, the Archdiocese of Ottawa, has given us notice that they

require the space that we presently occupy. Therefore we must vacate the premises by October 31, 2009.

The Executive Committee set about to determine what our space requirement would have to be.

Since commercial options are rather costly, the ideal would be to find another "house" that would accommodate administrative office space, meeting space, accommodation and office for the president and of course storage space and parking.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, in January 2009, we enlisted the help of a real estate agent, who is also a Vincentian, to assist us in finding such a place. He worked with us to find something that would suit our needs.

We are now pleased to report that we have found a suitable location that meets all of our requirements. It is a corner lot in the east side of Ottawa in a place called "Blackburn Hamlet", in a quiet neighbourhood. The really good news is that it comes all furnished and is in "move in" condition. This will also include with sufficient parking. It is close to transportation, train station and the airport. It is 5 -10 minutes from the hotel that we use.

Michael Burke has conducted an engineering assessment and finds the home quite solid and a very worthwhile investment for the Society. Thanks Michael for your assistance!

A full report will be presented at the statutory meeting on the Saturday, complete with pictures!

Summation

I will endeavor to continue to assist my brother and sister Vincentians to continually move forward in sharing their gifts in the ministry of administration. For in sharing who we are as gifts, we become more of who we are! Those who receive our gifts in the spirit of good stewardship can only be graced and blessed with the desire to do more!

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

Penny Craig, President
National Council of Canada



*AGA 2009
Thursday night*



International

Paris, June 30th 2009

CIRCULAR LETTER

To my dear colleagues, members of the conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul around the world

Dear friends and fellow-members,

This year, if we want to help in bettering the world, when it is suffering such a serious situation of economic and financial uncertainty, the President General, to whom you have entrusted responsibility for the Council General, cannot, must not and would not wish to forget so many families whose situation has worsened.

Throughout the 175 years of our existence, ever since the birth of the Conferences, wherever we have practised our vocation, with truly humble means but always with great determination, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has constantly strived to adapt to changing times.

The current times are no exception to this rule. The enormous and profound economic and financial crisis that is currently affecting the whole of our highly interdependent and globalised international economy must not be forgotten in the service that we owe to the poor. In other words, our Conferences cannot and must not exist without constant concern for the suffering that this new situation is causing among the weakest of our brothers and sisters.

The greed of a few, a lack of business ethics and a search for quick profits over and above any moral considerations, in short, sin itself and also the structures of sin¹ have brought despair and suffering to millions of people all over the world. This is particularly true in the developed world, however it has a domino effect on all economies due to the globalisation that I mentioned

earlier. This profound economic and financial crisis is driving millions of people all around the world into unemployment and family hardship. Furthermore, the number of people living in poverty and suffering has been added to by many who just a few months ago were able to control their financial situation with relative ease and were even able to devote part of their income to helping others in need in their own country or in other, poorer parts of the world.

I am particularly concerned about the effect of this global crisis on those who were already very poor at the start². Indeed, the wealthier economies which have, until now, been able to help less developed countries, either through government channels, associations or at a purely individual level, may have to reduce or even suspend this kind of aid. Aid which is so necessary to the world's poor. The crisis could have a devastating effect on large parts of the world.

For this reason, the poor are now poorer and their suffering is greater, wherever they may live. The challenge to reduce poverty, taken up a few years ago by various international organisations, now appears more and more remote each day. As a result of the current crisis, the number of people who lack the most basic resources has not decreased, as was hoped, but instead increased.

The Conferences and their supervising Councils, wherever they provide their services, must now think very seriously about how they are dealing with the effects of the global crisis. They must look at how they can help to fight its effects, no matter how modestly, without forgetting its causes. In other words, we must purposefully concern ourselves with the people who need immediate and urgent help with basic necessities. There can be no doubt about this. However, at the same

(1) It is nevertheless an indisputable fact, as I have often pointed out, that the interdependence of social, economic and political systems creates multiple structures of sin in today's world. (Catechesis of Jean Paul II, Audience of Wednesday 25th August 1999).

(2) In a recent report, the World Bank estimated that during the year 2009 the number of people living on less than 2\$ a day will increase by 53 million.

time we must also think about the future and seek to change the situation in which they are living. It is true that Conferences must always direct their efforts towards changing the lives of the poor but this is especially important now when even extreme poverty is affecting people who just a few months ago had comfortably secure lives and could even provide help to others, as I mentioned before.

Indeed, if we work together in the hands of such a large institution as the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, we will be able to find countless ways of tackling the effects of this global crisis. However, this will only happen if we are generous and determined enough to use and share all our resources, if we are able to dream and find ways of realising our dreams.

During my travels around the world, visiting fellow-members and Conferences, I have seen places where this ability to dream, so alive ever since the beginnings of the first Conferences, has led to the creation of small businesses, modest businesses, which have nonetheless created thousands of jobs throughout the world. It is true that these jobs are humble but they have succeeded in saving many human beings from situations of extreme poverty.

Now is the time to spread hope, but it must be active hope, as the Holy Father reminded us in his recent Message to the Young³. A hope that will enable us to

work for others, to give them what they need from us: help to find a decent way of life and recover the personal dignity that they have so often lost.

We must never forget, dear fellow-members, that each poor person who remains in poverty after receiving the fellowship and help of the Conferences, any such continuity, should be experienced by each member, each Conference and each Council as a painful failure in our vocation⁴. Our vocation must be bound to the utopia of eliminating poverty, never limited to providing temporary relief. However, we should not forget that, to our great sorrow, such relief is at times the immediate and sole solution. Nevertheless, we must always dream of strengthening the potential of each human being that we meet, of helping them to overcome the situation in which they find themselves.

“To serve in hope” of the Conferences, and the Councils that unite them, must always seek to provide liberation and overcome the situations of poverty that are brought to our knowledge⁵. It is not and never has been enough to fight only the effects of this suffering without committing ourselves to the ongoing battle against its causes. It is true that we have limited resources. However, the resources that we do have must be used unreservedly to serve towards liberating those that suffer. Indeed, only in this way can we be true followers of Christ, He who suffers in the man in whom he is reflected.

(3) My dear friends, follow the example of Paul and be witnesses to the Risen Christ! Make Christ known, among your own age group and beyond, to those who are in search of “the great hope” that would give meaning to their lives. If Jesus has become your hope, communicate this to others with your joy and your spiritual, apostolic and social engagement. Let Christ dwell within you, and having placed all your faith and trust in him, spread this hope around you. Make choices that demonstrate your faith. Show that you understand the risks of idolizing money, material goods, career and success, and do not allow yourselves to be attracted by these false illusions. Do not yield to the rationale of selfish interests. Cultivate love of neighbour and try to put yourselves and your human talents and professional abilities at the service of the common good and of truth, always prepared to “make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 P 3:15). (Benedict XVI, Message to the Young, 22nd February 2009).

(4) Vincentians endeavour to help the poor to help themselves whenever possible, and to be aware that they can forge and change their own destinies and that of their local community. (The Rule of S.S.V.P., Art. 1.10)

(5) 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 Rule of S.S.V.P., Art. 1.2)

By way of example, how many Conferences and Councils have financial reserves set aside, misled by the promise of future services to the poor which so often never materialise?⁶ Those that have such reserves, part with them now! Use them in real and direct service to the poor, use them to provide modest solutions to those that need them.

How often do we talk about micro-credits as a truly dignified salvation for so many families? How many micro-credits, how many grants for small businesses could we provide with our reserves, thereby creating jobs and preventing the destruction of others? These reserves that are kept for the poor but so often fail to reach them. I have no doubt that the Conferences and Councils that are currently hoarding financial resources, whatever they may be, rather than fighting to change the situation of the poor, are perpetuating a sinful situation for which the Good Lord will call us to strict account. Those that behave in this way are maintaining a situation as unfair as that created by those who have brought the world to its current predicament through selfishness and malpractice. Obviously, we will not cause as much harm as they have caused. That is true. However, we will not be doing all the good that is within our reach.

My dear friends, it is not only anonymous financiers and obscure entities that are guilty for causing the distressing situation that we find ourselves in. The guilt also lies with those of us who forget the strength that we have in He who remains by our side, those who cease to act as He would wish: with generosity and with all our intellectual and material resources, to fight the suffering that is to be found nearby and further afield, without keeping anything back for the future when so many people are suffering now.

Above all, we should do this through social projects that employ paid staff, wherever they may be. We must not only guarantee the jobs of those who are already employed. We must go further and work to hire others so that they can receive the benefits of a decent and dignified job.

This year, dear fellow-members, my Circular Letter is shorter than in other years. It does not need to be any longer in order to make us reflect upon on what we can achieve if we work together, to think about what we must aim towards in each of our Conferences and Councils.

The wine had run short and She took pity on the couple⁷. She asked Him to help. Right then. Not later. Not the next day. When it was necessary. As could only be the case, He agreed.

Will we have Mary's confidence? Will we be able to do what is needed, as She did when she saw that it was necessary?

The ability to dream, the ability to alleviate so much poverty is now in our hands. We simply have to put all our resources, every single one of them, at the service of those among us who best represent the Good Lord: the lowly, the forgotten, the abandoned, those that suffer. In short, the poor.

Under the guidance of Mary, let us start work. Let us unite our strengths, all Conferences together, all Councils together. Let us give of ourselves and offer everything that the Society represents, everything, to serving the poor that are by our side. Many will suffer less and will recover the personal dignity that belongs to the children of God.

May She help us to achieve this by touching and illuminating our hearts.

With my prayer and affection,

José Ramón Díaz-Torremocha
XIV. President General (I.N.E.D.)

(6) Money must not be hoarded. Decisions regarding the use of money and property are to be made after reflection in the light of the Gospel and Vincentian principles.(The Rule of S.S.V.P., Art. 3.14)

(7) John 2, 1:12.

SPEECH

OF THE PRESIDENT GENERAL

OF THE SOCIETY

OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

GATHERED IN THE TOWN

OF SALAMANCA

IN JUNE 2009.

My dear friends:

Welcome, once again, to the meeting of this International Executive Committee that, according to our International Statutes, stands in for the Confederation's General Assembly when it is not gathered.

Thus, by virtue of this statutory delegation, through each of you, I address the whole of the Society throughout the world, because we should not forget that you represent more than 80% of the world's fellow members and Conferences.

I refer and submit to you the management of the year 2008, such as it appears in my Report to the Society that, on January 31st 2009, was sent to all Superior Councils in the world and that I assume that it has been fully reproduced. As it is normal, I will be at the end of this speech at your disposal to clarify any doubt that could arise concerning its contents.

There have been many years since that 27th of September 1999 when, before the mortal remains of Saint Vincent de Paul in Paris, I assumed the General Presidency of the Society. At that time, I received the trust of the fellow members throughout the world, and subsequently this trust was renewed in the year 2005 for a second term.

It is true, and I want to remind it, that the renewal to which I submitted in the year 2005, was in my opinion only justified by the special circumstances through which the Society was going at that time, and in particular the General Council. Otherwise, as it had been my intention from the beginning, I would have remained only one mandate at the head of the Society. But it is not always possible to follow the dictates of one's wishes, when the intention is really to serve; and all of us, Vincentians have always come to the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul in order to serve.

The situation of some countries of great significance, the necessary adaptation to the new Rule and International Statutes published in April 2004, the opening of our new head office with all that this entailed, the absence of an agreement concerning the financing of the General Council, or the never solved challenge of a regulated formation in the Society, were problems that neither could nor should if possible, remain unresolved for my successor.

In those moments, the service, the reason being opposite to the wish, demanded the continuance and thus I accepted to continue by virtue of the trust that all of you renewed for it.

Therefore I have now been serving for ten years at the Presidency of the General Council. Throughout such a long period, my dear friends, there had been deep changes in the General Council's service to the fellow members, Conferences and Councils all over the world. The Society's real

internationalization requested and nearly demanded by the General Assembly in Fatima (Portugal) in the year 1999, has become today an absolute reality which you, fellow members coming from places and cultures of the world so different, represent.

But we have also fulfilled, practically all the missions which that General Assembly had entrusted us and to which I referred and recalled in my speech when I took my post on September 27th 1999. This address was sent to all the fellow members in the world and this became, retrieving an old tradition from some of my predecessors, the first of the Circular Letters to the Society that I have been sending to the fellow members during these years in the month of June.

We have our own flag and logo that we can already find in any of our offices and works anywhere we travel and which gives us an image of truly international Institution.

There is also from today, a firm proposal for our hymn. Indeed, at the solemn Holy Mass for the Closing of this Executive Committee, we will hear an important Choir, performing for the first time in an event of this kind, what could very well become the hymn of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul. I hope you like it and you can follow it through the information you should have been provided with, in the basic languages of the Society.

After decades with our present Structure of international service, the Deputy General Vice-president for the Structure will show you during this Committee, the new parameters on which it is been working in order to improve it. Your opinions will be very useful to modify a tool of the General Council so necessary for the efficient running of the Society, both in its daily work and in its capacity of service and growth.

In more pedestrian matters but of huge importance, we have fulfilled or are on the point of doing so, the mission entrusted by the Assembly in Fatima concerning the appropriate funding of the General Council.

As you know and thank to the collaboration of the Superior Councils with a higher economic power in the world and led by the good management of the Australian fellow members that have made a big effort (I would like to remind here our friend the fellow member Raimond James, to whom i send a message of gratitude as one of the most efficient collaborators, and i pray the Lord for his quick recovery because i have learnt recently that he is very ill actually) we are on the point of attaining an orderly balancing of our accounts. A balancing that will take us possibly in the next years, to obtain a small surplus that allows us to go a step further in the service provided by the General Council. The funding sources of the General Council are not any more a distressing and ongoing concern for the President General.

Last year, in this same house where we are, was held for the first time the meeting of Young Vincentians, whose outcomes were very worthy

considering the number of participants, the workshop's results, and the quality of the Conclusions presented by our Young friends. The International Youth Committee has started to work now, and I have great expectations about its role for the future of our Society.

In my last years, only a big concern was remaining: The General Council was still unable to offer to the rest of the Councils in the world the suitable regulated and standardized formation for the fellow members. It seems nonetheless that the time has also arrived when we have at hand the possibility to have it, at least at its basic levels, during the near months.

Thus, having submitted to the General Council's Board in the last months of November and December the proposal of setting up the "Bailly & Lallier Foundation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul" and its creation having been enthusiastically approved by the Board, it seems that the time has come to start thinking of closing the period of my service to the Society at the General Council's Presidency.

It seems that the time has come to declare as finished the mission I was entrusted with at the international level of the Society.

One of the most interesting and important, and possibly difficult, moments in the life of any human being, specially when the intention was to serve fully, is to know how to identify when the mission entrusted gets close to the end and it is time to smooth the way and not to obstruct so that others receive the baton and move forward.

It is the right time for an examination: when is time to make easier to another fellow member the taking on of the responsibility that you have assumed for years and encourage and facilitate that the Society could choose the course deemed appropriate and the person called to lead the new period? It is time to identify it when, the fact of continuing and trying to extend or finish the term of service you had been entrusted with, means to serve yourself rather than the Society.

This is the moment I am living now and that I want to share with all of you, representatives of the Society in the world.

The time has come in which I am convinced that the team that serves today at the Board of the General Council, has met most of the objectives that the fellow members had entrusted them with, and it does not seem sensible nor good for the Society, to finish the period for which I was elected in the year 2005 and that finishes, as I have already mentioned, in September 2011.

The Society, my dear friends, especially at the General Council and in the Superior Councils, always needs a constantly renewed team that takes heed to the wishes and yearnings of the Vincentians in the world, wishes expressed at General Assemblies.

The Society needs for the future, dear friends, other men and other plans that take beyond the place and the time where we find ourselves. It needs a new President General who, with an also new Board, with new ideas and another vision of the world and of the challenges of today's new forms of poverty and suffering, serves the Conferences in the world, with new and surely renewed endeavours.

Therefore, once the goals of the last Assemblies have been reached as I have said, I must inform you that I have decided, after the consultations that I have considered appropriate, under what the International Statutes' Article 2.2.1 allows me, to call an Extraordinary General Assembly of the Society for the days 29th of May to the 1st of June 2010 in Salamanca (Spain). At the same time, I propose to you three subjects to be extensively tackled during the three days of the Assembly.

These three topics, (you will receive a small additional paper at the end of my speech), will be: 1st the systemic change in and for the poor, 2nd the formation in the S.S.V.P. and 3rd the young and the recruiting in the Society.

At this General Assembly, my successor will be also elected and will take office, God willing, on September 9th 2010 in Paris according to the terms established by our International Statutes.

According to what I have just set out, I entrust the General Vice-President to open the due electoral period pursuant to the provisions of Article 3.6 and following of the International Statutes.

All of you, dear friends, know how extremely privileged I have been with the people of the team that the good Lord wished to grant me as collaborators during these years. All of them have worked with absolute dedication throughout such a long period of time. They have been a real blessing for the Society and for me personally, due to their commitment and courage.

Nonetheless, we are entering new times. The internationalized Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent, upon choosing a new President General, has fortunately not any more, the narrow limits of the time in which only Europe was the Continent able to provide it with General Presidents. Far from that. Today, the evidence of having really reached such internationalization can very well show in the possibility that the person called to be my successor could come from other places of the world. From other Continents.

A call to a fellow member that undoubtedly will have to possess an international experience and the knowledge of the real globalization of our activity. We have to look for the best, and I repeat that fortunately today we can and should look for him/her among all the fellow members in the world that have these characteristics of devotion, knowledge and capacity.

The onset of our presence in a great Asian country as it is China which offers so many possibilities for the future of our activity at the service of the poor and the Holy Church, the extraordinary growth expected for our Conferences in Asia, should in my opinion, hint the main clues concerning the direction and the men on whom rely for the election of my successor. In this regard, it is very clear to me what would be best in these moments and in the future for the Institution we all love.

Before the forthcoming change at the Society's General Presidency, I do not want, nor should, duck out of my personal responsibility as to propose candidates.

With the higher respect towards the final and sovereign decision of the Society which will speak through the Council's votes, but without nonetheless giving

up my right and essentially moral duty as another member of the General Council, I will when the time comes, propose it accordingly to the Society in the world through the right procedure of presenting candidates. A proposal of a certain fellow member, which I hope will coincide, without any doubt, with many of my fellow members of the General Council.

Dear friends, any change entails risks. Any change raises expectations. Sometimes it even causes fear. Unfortunately, we get very often used to what is settled. To what is comfortable. But all of us, who have been entrusted with the Society's international leadership by the fellow members from all over the world, must be able to look to the future and dream of the new goals that the new times bring and demand to us.

Once again, let us forget about fears and let us look towards the future. Let us forget about our own convenience and the wish that every thing remains the same. The wish that nothing changes. A period of service gets to an end and we should look forward and get ready for the new challenges that the service to the poor requires. A service to the poor from which, we also serve intensely to the very Holy Church in its preferential commitment to those who suffer.

To get prepared in order to dream of a new time at the service of the Society. A time in which the needs are not the same than ten or twenty years ago. To be aware that our organization has changed, that the world has become globalized and that, therefore, our answer of service, should also be global and open to all trends.

Let us remember that “we serve in hope” such as our motto demands and urges us.

Therefore, let us live with hope this new time that our good Lord grants us and let us beg the intercession with his dear Mother, Mary's intercession that is with us in this moment when the Society continues with its path of service to the poorest and most disadvantaged of the world. Of service to the Holy Church of the poor. Servants of the poor, in an ever changing world that we try to know and adapt ourselves to its needs in order to better serve.

As the next Assembly's motto will remind us from now on: “From hope to service”.

Thank you very much and God bless you

José Ramón Díaz-Torremocha
XIV President General

STRUCTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL GENERAL COUNCIL (PART I)

International Confederation of the Society of St Vincent de Paul

The Society of St Vincent de Paul is united across the world through the International Confederation

The Confederation is comprised of 144 countries in which the Society is currently established

The Confederation is the sole owner of the Society's name

The peak body of the Confederation is the International General Council

International General Council

The International General Council is the supreme democratic body of the International Confederation

Members of the General Council are the 144 Presidents of the Superior/National Councils of the countries in which the Society is currently established

The General Council is chaired by the President General elected by the 144 National Presidents

The General Council meets in General Assembly once every six years

International General Council

Service Structure

President General

Board of the International General Council

International Executive Committee

Permanent Section

Permanent Section as the Governing Board

Board Commissions and Committees

President General

Since the founding of the Society in 1833 the President General has represented the link and bond of the union and moral authority of the Society.

The President General personifies the unity of the Society worldwide.

IGC Board

The President General presides over the Board

The President General appoints to the IGC Board :

Vice-President General

Secretary General

Treasurer General

Deputy Vice-Presidents

International Youth Delegate

International Spiritual Advisor (non voting)

Deputy Vice-Presidents General – as considered necessary

Role and Responsibilities

The Board develops strategy to implement agreements of the IGC General Assemblies and recommendations of the International Executive Committee

The Board is the closest body to the President General whom it advises and counsels

The Board meets at least three times a year as prescribed in the Rule

The Board prepares the IGC annual budget for approval by the IEC

The Board manages the budget on behalf of the IEC

International Executive Committee Members

IEC Permanent Members

President General

Vice-President General

Secretary General

Treasurer General

Deputy Vice Presidents appointed by the President General

International Executive Committee Members

IEC Legal Members

Presidents of the National/Superior Councils with more than 1,000 active Conferences

Five members may be appointed from National/Superior Councils of countries with less than 1,000 Conferences

International Executive Committee Members

Role and Responsibilities

IEC coordinates the Society's international strategy in the six years between the International General Council assemblies

IEC gives special attention to complying with the requests and matters approved at the General Council assemblies

IEC assists and advises the President General in supervising the Society progress world wide

IEC reports to the six yearly General Assembly meeting on the results of its management and administration on behalf of the General Council

Permanent Section Members

IGC Board members

Territorial Vice-Presidents

Territorial Correspondents

Presidents of National/Superior Councils or Assimilated Councils are entitled to attend Permanent Section meetings with a voice and to vote as full members

Permanent Section

Role and Responsibilities

Performs the role of the Governing Board established under French Law for Governing Boards of Non-Profit Associations

Supervises and monitors activity of the Society world wide

Helps President General achieve better international service for the poor and the members

Makes appropriate decisions within the scope of the Rule and Statutes and Society traditions

Complies with resolutions adopted by General Council assemblies and recommendations of International Executive Committee

Monitors implementation of the resolutions by the IGC, the National/Superior Councils and Assimilated Councils

IGC Service Structure Team

76 members & 10 staff

IGC Board : 10 Standing Members & 2 Spiritual Advisors	12 members
International Executive Committee : Board members plus	14 members
Permanent Section Board : Board & 8 ITVPs plus	11 members
Territorial Technical Commission : 4 Board & 5 staff plus	9 members
International Territorial Vice-Presidents :	8 members
International Coordinators :	22 members
IGC Volunteer Team	76 members
IGC Paid staff	10 employees

Home Countries of the 76 Members of the IGC Service Structure Team

North America : Canada, USA

 Caribbean : Nicaragua, Haiti, Antigua

South America : Columbia, Venezuela, Chile, Brazil

 Ireland

 UK : Northern Ireland, Scotland, England/Wales

 Europe : Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Rumania

Middle East : Lebanon

 Asia : India, Singapore, Hong Kong

 Africa : Algeria, Eritrea, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Congo, Zambia, Botswana, South Africa

 Oceania : Australia, New Zealand

To be continued...

Spirituality

ABOUT THE WORK OF THE SPIRITUAL ADVISOR:

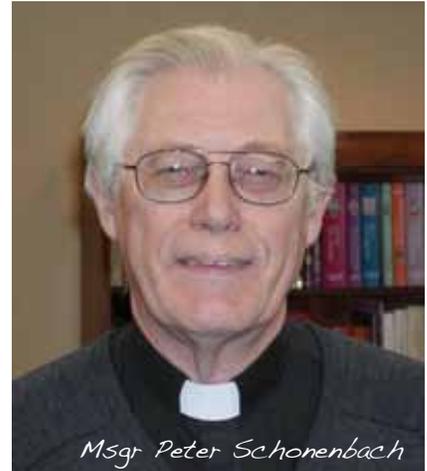
That each Conference should have a spiritual advisor is evident. But what should such a person do? There are two paths that may be followed. One is simply to raise spiritual reflections according to the situations at hand: a rather pragmatic responding to needs. The other is to follow a more systematic, planned approach.

Here are a few ideas to help if one wishes to follow this second path. One idea is to exploit the annual AGA theme. For example, this year's theme, "5 loaves + 2 fish + the Vincentian=?" offers many possibilities for the entire year. One could develop the notion of dealing with problems with what is at hand and one's baggage of experience and spiritual strength. One could also exploit the various traditional notions related to the number seven:

- The seven spiritual works of mercy: teach the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, console the sad, reprove the sinner, forgive the offender, bear with the oppressive and troublesome, pray for the living and the dead.
- The seven corporal works of mercy: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit prisoners, bury the dead.
- The seven sacraments
- The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit
- The seven verbs of love: to welcome, to invite, to give, to forgive, to ask, to refuse, to pray
- The seven elements of Christian Management, with Faith and Love: be on time, do what you say you will do, finish what you start, give more than what you promise, do all with energy and passion.

Other ideas to exploit: the lives of Saint Vincent de Paul and of Frederic Ozanam, the Liturgical year, ferial and sanctoral, the New Testament readings suggested by the day of the Conference meeting.

Whatever the spiritual advisor does, there is another matter to consider and that is the attitude of the members toward the spiritual message. The input of the spiritual advisor must be seen as a very valuable part of the meeting, a part that truly distinguishes the meeting as Vincentian and not merely a meeting of good people assembled to do altruistic endeavour.



Msgr Peter Schonenbach
National Spiritual Advisor

The theme for the 2009 National Assembly was “5 loaves + 2 fish + Vincent = ?”. The source for this is the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 14.13) when Jesus said, “They need not go away; give them something to eat.” And, as we all know, they fed over 5000 people with only five loaves of bread and two fish. As Vincentians, we know only too well how much food we bring to those we serve. Someone once told me that we are often referred to as the Food Bank that delivers. But the Gospel calls us to be so much more than that.

There are so many ways that we need to care for people other than food. Of course, a person's well being must be looked after, but we need to remember that our Beloved founder believed that the most important thing is the sanctification of souls – ours, as well as, those we serve. If someone is hungry or thirsty or in need of shelter, this must be dealt with first so that the immediate needs are taken care of. It is only then that they will be more open to listen to the Gospel message of love which we are called to bring to them. We must always be gentle when we speak of God and His love and must never try to force our beliefs on the poor.

This is not always an easy task so we must remember that we are His hands and His voice and His heart and we are blessed to be the instrument through which God works. To help us carry out His work we must always try to enhance our own spirituality. We try and do this through Scripture reading, meditation and prayer, and the Eucharist. This can be done in isolation, but we also must help each other grow closer to our God and we do this by sharing our faith with one another because we know that He said that when two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them. This it is why is it so important that we come together on a regular basis - at the Conference level, the regional level and the national, as well as, the international level. All of us are poor in some way and we must help each other so that we can better carry out His work.

As we work together and pray together we develop strong bonds of friendship, fraternity, as well as, an ever- increasing faith. All this helps us to grow into a community of loving and compassionate people. This community of love and compassion is what feeds us as we try to respond to the needs of His poor. This community not only serves those in need but also serves one another. Humans are social beings by nature and we desire to be part of a community that thinks and believes in the same way as we do. Many of us have belonged to parishes where we had a strong sense of community only to have the parish closed for lack of funds or priests and we struggle to develop a new community where we can feel a sense of belonging.

My parish church was closed over a year ago and it has been a struggle to get to meet and form friends in the new parish and to feel a sense of belonging. I have been attending the Annual National Assembly for a number of years and have always come away from the meetings feeling renewed and uplifted. This year was no different, but I finally came to understand why I left feeling so renewed. Thursday morning, as usual, began with daily Mass and as I sat in the church, I had the opportunity to look at the people in the pews. I remember thinking to myself-“Here I am in new city, coming to Mass for the first time in this church and I know more people here than I do in my own parish at home!” This is when I realized that it is in the coming together that we become as one. This is my community. This is where I belong. From this community is where I draw my strength.



As much as I feel blessed to be called to serve His poor, I feel that I would not be able to carry out this work without the support of this Vincentian community of which I am a part. This is where our founder was so wise when he said that we must meet regularly to pray together, share and work so that we can help one another become closer to God. Most of us would agree that our Conference meetings are very important but it doesn't stop there. Many times I have heard that the money should only go to the poor and not be used for travel to meetings or workshops or retreats. However, this is where we can work together to help one another so that we can continue His work. When we don't have what we need for our own physical and spiritual needs, **we** are the poor and we need our fellow Vincentians to help us. In order to serve Him by serving His poor, we must do all we can to ensure that our faith and belief in Him is strong and we do this by encouraging one another with love and compassion. As we continue to carry His call to serve, let us not forget that this also means that we serve each other. By helping those in need as well as one another we help to build up His kingdom.

May He bless all of us as we continue to serve Him though His poor.

Maureen MacIsaac
Spirituality Committee



HERE ARE THE ANSWERS, GIVEN BY VINCENTIANS, TO THE QUESTION THAT WAS OUR THEME.

FIVE LOAVES + TWO FISH + VINCENT = ?

- Creative Vincentianism
- Still feeding the multitudes
- Multiplying the bread and the fish to serve the poor
- We need more food banks!!!
- Continuation of God's work here on earth
- Jesus' miracle
- Witness
- Love
- Support and teach life skills, and inform ourselves and others of available community resources
- Abundance and possibility
- St Vincent provided, on behalf of Jesus, food for the body as well as the soul
- Charity
- Whatsoever you do...
- Whenever you did it to the least, you did it to Me
- Never despair - have faith
- Your will, Lord - not mine



Youth

Québec – May 5, 2009

For immediate release

SAINT-VINCENT DE PAUL AT THE CÉGEP DE SAINTE-FOY

Québec – May 5, 2009 – *After a few decades of inactivity, the Saint Vincent-de-Paul, created in 1921 at the Académie de Québec, was recently revived at the Cégep de Sainte-Foy. Let us recall that the Académie de Québec is one of the founding institutions of the Cégep de Sainte-Foy.*

This news shows the wish of the cegepian community to “renew a long tradition of assistance to the needy”, according to Mr. Grant Regalbuto, President of the Sainte-Foy Saint Vincent de Paul Particular Council. “In the beginning, the Conference collected funds and small articles to help needy families, particularly those of old Québec, but times have changed; it will now help students and their families.”

Student couples and their children are those targeted by the Cégep de Sainte-Foy Conference.

Mr. Nicolas Desbiens, of the Cégep student services, was elected as President of the Conference.

Initially founded in 1921 by Académie students with the help of the Brothers of Christian Schools, the Académie de Québec Saint-Vincent de Paul had been inactive for a few decades.

The Society of Saint Vincent-de-Paul in Québec now has two chapters in the educational environment: one at Laval University, the Marie-Guyart Conference, and the other at the Cégep de Sainte-Foy.

Information

Mr. Nicolas Desbiens
Telephone : 418 659-6600 # 4003
E-mail : nicolas.desbiens@cegep-ste-foy.qc.ca

Mr. Grant Regalbuto
Telephone : 418 651-0874
E-mail : regalbuto@videotron.ca



Twining

TIPS ON WRITING TO YOUR TWIN

We are always looking for ideas that will help us with our communication.

Following are some of the tips about writing to your twin, as published in an Australian pamphlet on twinning (with permission):

Keep letters simple — write at least twice a year and send Christmas, Easter or even Birthday cards.

Send photos of your members and church — write about your members and Conference activities, projects and special masses.

Describe your parish and the work you do.

Over time, share information about your friends and family and what they do.

Refrain from discussing politics, within either your country or theirs.

Enclose an (international reply coupon) — this can be bought from a (Canadian Post Office) for (\$3.50). Take care to inform them that the coupon can cover airmail postage for a standard letter back to you.

Enclose a self-addressed envelope for them to use.

Check and confirm their overseas address.

Preferably type your letters for ease of reading.

Do not be discouraged if they don't write back. Often there may be insufficient English skills within the conference; but there may come a time when someone visits who does have the skills, and then they will appreciate your letters and may even write back.

For more information on twinning with another Conference overseas, please contact your (regional twinning) representative or your regional president. (Or write to the National website at twinning-chair@ssvp.ca).



*Youth
AGA 2009*

Vincentian Life

THE HAND OF GOD

Lynn L'Heureux

We all know as Vincentians that we are much more comfortable giving than receiving. A tribute while nice, makes us cringe. We do our work because God calls us and we don't expect to ask for nor have the need for help.

This message is to thank you Vincentians and CWLer's across the country and in the US. I am so humbled by your prayers, masses, emails, calls, tons of soup and fruit, flowers and hundreds of cards. However, what moves me the most and brings me to my knees is the amount of prayers that have been offered for me, not only in the last month but over the last two years.

So it begins with the hand of God reaching out to you and me. I was sick for a few months from what I didn't know. I had to miss many important events including my final Western Regional AGA as president. Then I received the news I had cancer. It was a simple cancer of the uterus and should be cleared up with surgery. Prayers began to flow. I was very much at peace and I saw the hand of Jesus reaching for me to tell me all was okay. The surgery went well, I had no complications and with me being allergic to everything related to a hospital, that is a miracle.

It did not stay that way. In the hospital I developed an infection which severely attacked my bladder and led to open sores on my body and incision. Without going into details, almost years later the problem is still there and I am being treated for it. In this time period as most of us do, I was dealing with sick parents and lost my stepfather of 47 years on Boxing Day. This was another blow. The tragedy was not finished.

One week after we buried grandpa, my son-in-law was rushed into the hospital with a stroke. Gerald is 42 years old, strong as a horse, no heart problems, cholesterol or high blood pressure. He was sent home with medication and a diet. Two weeks to the day of his first stroke he had another and then a third a week later.

We are now two months into 2009 and our New Years Cheer with the family is that 2009 would be a better year. At first glance, and judging from the first two months, that would seem a mockery. Gerald has mostly recovered speech and movement, but still has blood clots on his brain. So now we discover a lump on my breast. I thought it was nothing and then got the news. How could I tell my family? I told my daughter first in an off handed light way and then my mother who has still not stopped crying. (Mother's, you gotta love' em). She journeyed with me every step: biopsy, doctor, surgery and follow up. I had a mastectomy on April 8 and am doing quite well. I was lucky to only have one radiation treatment and am now on pills and of course will be evaluated every few months.

Through all this, literally we received prayers from many parts of the world. My daughter would respond to people that the prayers were hugs from God to let us know we were not alone.

The Hand of God – My story

Cancer is frightening. Tony and I clung to each other, cried and prayed and then the word “Believe” came to mind and that was our word. The prayer team prayed over and with me and I received a special vision. It was the hand of Jesus reaching to me. I am terrified of bridges and Jesus was standing on a bridge reaching for me hand. This disease, twice now, was my bridge and Jesus was there to guide me over my bridge.

On the day of the surgery, they had to strap my arms outward. It was Holy Week. I lifted my eyes to pray and I saw my vision with arms out stretched and it was the cross. So my prayer was thank you Jesus for giving me the cross again. He was there with His hand out and I knew I was not alone and very safe. He was there earlier when I was praying over Gerald when I thought it was all over and I knew the Hand of God was with us.

I believe in the power of prayer and I believe that all of you were my healers with your prayers, love and support. The two greatest organizations I have every attached myself to, were CWL and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Oh by the way, 2009 is a good year. We are closer if possible as a family and for me each pain is a reminder I am alive and in the Hand of God. Bless all of you.



Tony and Lynn L'Heureux, AGA 2009

Councils in Action

Address to the Western Regional Assembly of the SSVP on May 23rd, 2009, at St. Bonaventure parish, Calgary, by Don Hunter, WRC president, 1997 – 2002

I would like to thank you all for inviting me to your 25th Anniversary celebration of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Calgary. I am honoured and would certainly be there to celebrate with you if I was in town. However, May 23rd is our 50th wedding anniversary, and all of our family is converging on a resort in Osoyoos where we will be celebrating an anniversary today as well.

However, I have been asked to give you a little background on the Society from my experience during the early years, so here goes.

It is so appropriate to be holding this at St. Bonaventure, because they were the first Conference formed in Alberta in recent times, and also where we held the first AGM of the Western Regional Council when it was formed.

Chuck Heffernan was a Vincentian who came to this parish from Toronto, was surprised that there were no Conferences in Calgary, and so proceeded to set one up in his parish. He then continued to set up 5 or 6 more, as well as the first Particular Council, before he retired to Kelowna in about 1989. He was our Johnny Appleseed for the SSVP in the West.

Brian Sipe was the first Particular Council president, and as his vice president, I took on the responsibility for Extension of the Society in Calgary and Southern Alberta.

We continued to grow in Conferences and Councils in Calgary and southern Alberta, so in 1997 we applied to form a Regional Council to represent Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the North West Territories. The National Council approved our application, and I was voted to be the first Western Regional Council president. Sounds impressive, but to be honest, the other two candidates backed out just before the vote, so I swept into office with an overwhelming majority.

I really enjoyed my 5 years as Western president, especially travelling to all the cities and towns in our

Region and meeting so many wonderful people. I always felt so rewarded when we were able to start up a new Conference. There were some disappointments of course, but the successes always outweighed them.

My two most reliable companions and fellow travellers to give the talks and help grow the Society were Tony and Lynn L'Heureux. Without their help and companionship I would not have been nearly as successful with our Extension results. I think back and chuckle at some of the situations we encountered.

We, of course, tried to keep our expenses to a minimum, so on one trip to Blairmore we ended up sharing the one motel room for the three of us. I remember the look on Lynn's face, and I don't think Tony was too keen either, but we worked it out and all survived with our dignity.

On another trip to Morinville to make a presentation, we stayed overnight with the priest. In the evening we all watched a Flames – Oilers play-off game, and of course enthusiastically cheering for the Flames. I think we forgot we were in Oilers country and I am sure father was wondering about our love of mankind, so we convinced him that we really love our northern neighbours, just not the Oilers.

One of our greatest supporters was Bishop Tom Collins, who invited us to speak at his priests' council meeting in St. Paul, and we stayed with him that night, at his residence, when he was Bishop of St. Paul diocese. About a year later, he was appointed as Archbishop of Edmonton archdiocese, and he helped us again as he told us he wanted every parish in his diocese to have a SSVP Conference.

We decided to set up an evening in a parish in Edmonton to talk about our Society and also have several Catholic musicians perform. It was attended by representatives from parishes in the diocese, and Archbishop Collins was our key speaker, and did a great job of supporting us.

I really feel that one of the main reasons that Edmonton has done such a good job of expanding was because of Bishop Collins' support.

We had a great session at the Bible College in Radway, where we also had Dennis Grady along, a local Catholic musician, who sang and played his guitar. Lynn can make you cry with some of her stories and Tony will crack you up with his jokes. A great combination.

But one of the times we still chuckle about is when we went up to Inuvik, NWT, to speak at a CWL convention. I gave my talk to the ladies, and also at the Saturday evening Mass at the Igloo shaped church, Our Lady of the North, I think it was. But Lynn, always looking for opportunities, had lined up a talk to the students at the local high school. For some reason, my intuition told me that this was not too good an idea, so I elected to join two priests and take a trip on the Ice road to visit the parish up in Tuktoyuktuk, an Inuit village on the coast of the Beaufort Sea. It was a great experience and I learned a lot, so when telling the L'Heureux about it, I asked how the high school visit went.

I could tell from the look on their faces they were not enthused, so Tony told me it was a rather shocking experience, and this coming from a retired police officer.

Apparently some of the students seemed to have little restraint on what language they used in critiquing one another, and as gently as I can say it, four letter words were a big part of their vocabulary. The teacher appeared to be helpless to control them, or maybe she was just used to it. Needless to say, this was not the normal reception we get when talking at parishes, and I am sure Tony and Lynn still laugh when they think back about that day.

I am so impressed in how the Society has grown since my term ended in 2002, under the leadership of Lynn L'Heureux and Pat Bennetto, as Regional presidents, and also by all the Council and Conference members who have worked so hard to start up new initiatives.

I know that most of you are doing the good works of helping our friends, the poor, in whatever way you can. But I also want you to consider helping with the Extension of the Society as well. It does not mean you have to go to Inuvik or Winnipeg or some distant place, for that is the role of the Regional Council, but if a neighbouring parish has no SSVP Conference, then meeting with that priest and their parish Council if need be, and hopefully getting them started, is so rewarding.

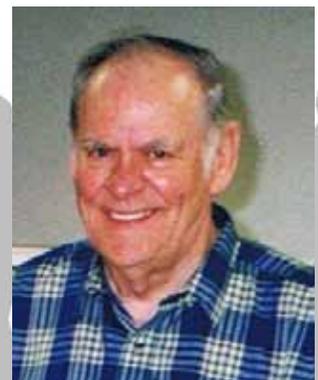
Remember that without the work of Extension, St. Bonaventure Conference would never have been formed, and likely there would be no Conferences or Councils at all in our entire Region; much like it was in 1980.

Today, I don't think we exist in more than 20% of the parishes in our Region, if that, so there is still much to do and many who need help. I ask all of you who feel that this calling of being a Vincentian is strong and spiritually rewarding to you, do consider continuing on and being part of the senior Councils when you can, and consider running for president of the Western Region when Pat has completed her term. I guarantee you will really enjoy it, as you get to make friends not only in our Region, but also meet many great Vincentians from Coast to Coast in this great country.

Thank you again for your invitation, and hoping you all have a great time at this 25th Anniversary celebration. May God bless you all.

Your Vincentian brother.

Don Hunter
Past-President
Western Regional Council



ONTARIO REGION TAKES STRONG STEPS FORWARD TO IMPROVE LIVES

The Ontario Regional Council (ONRC) is taking action in key areas of Vincentian work.

1) Most exciting is the development of a whole new youth conference, The Mississauga North York Youth Vincentian Conference. There were 4 meetings of very interested youth from 6 schools and York University. They were brought together with the hard work of Bill Graham, President, Peel North Particular Council.

On May 2 an election was held and the President elected. The Conference was formed, planning sessions held on best projects to help our neighbours in need and fundraising to carry them out. The Conference members took part in our AGA and were fully commissioned along with all Vincentians.



2) Most importantly ONRC has developed a fully active advocacy committee, known as The Voice of the Poor (VOP). Its purpose is to build government and supporting agencies' policies to provide a decent living, job training skills, affordable housing and opportunities for family and individual growth and development.

Our driving force is not just to feed, but also to create opportunities to succeed to self-sustaining lives. Small example Toronto Central VOP members stood outside the Ontario Parliament for 3 weeks before the Ontario budget. Praying for our neighbours in need and for our MPPs to recognize and correct that need. It definitely achieved some helpful better life supports. Great VOP work helped achieve the Ontario "Poverty Reduction Strategy" passed unanimously in the House. VOP members are participating in 12 Ontario consultation sessions to make affordable housing far better.

3) ONRC has established a Special Projects Committee to provide start-up money to Conferences/Councils of the SSVP for a new program/project that will help the needy. The Committee has the authority to approve up to \$2,500 for each project.

4) Improved fundraising is always a concern. ONRC has signed on to CanadaHelps (www.canadahelps.org) and you will find it on the home page of the ONRC website (www.ssvp.on.ca). It is a charitable organization that provides online donations with quick, efficient and secure service. A number of SSVP use it already - if you do not we recommend it.

We can make so many improvements in the lives of those whom we serve. Not just feed - but succeed. We Vincentians will do it together with dignity, respect, joy and the love of the Lord.

Respectfully submitted, Blessings,

Nick Volk - Past Pres ONRC (further questions, comments? Email - nick_volk@yahoo.com, 416-924-2160)

AGA 2009

2009 NATIONAL AGA – WATERLOO-KITCHENER, ONTARIO

The National AGA in Kitchener/Waterloo was a wonderful experience. God blessed us with a week of warmth and sunshine to enjoy the short walks to the church, dining hall and meetings.



Wednesday began with registrations. A wonderful smiling group of volunteers welcomed us and gave us each a beautiful bag. We chose which workshops we wished to attend and coordinated with others from our regions so that many workshops could be shared with Vincentians back home. This was also a time for greeting old friends from across the country and meeting new ones.

Something new was established this year; a “Wall of Remembrance” for Vincentians who were called Home was set up in the hospitality room. All had been invited to bring photos of recently deceased Vincentians in their Councils so they could more readily be in our thoughts and prayers.



Every day began with rosary and Mass at St. Michael’s Church, right on campus, and then by a wonderful breakfast. Thursday was spent in workshops and sharing with one another at breaks and lunch. We had a lovely dinner and then walked over to the Atrium for wine and dessert, which accompanied the official opening of the AGA. Greetings were read from the Prime Minister of the Province of Ontario and the Mayor of Kitchener/Waterloo welcomed us in person. Monsignor Peter blessed the assembly and us. We then mingled to the soft background music of a pianist.



Friday activities started in the auditorium with the “Parade of the Banners”. The Regional Presidents, bearing their respective banners, came through an honour guard of youth lighting their way with candles. There was much symbolism there and it was very moving. Following the presentation of our guests and a few words of welcome from our national president Penny Craig, Sister Anita Charpentier our keynote speaker gave a wonderful presentation on the history of the Society in Canada and on the spirituality of George Manly Muir, one of our first presidents.

The spiritual advisors' luncheon is a yearly event held on the Friday and regroups all Spiritual Advisors in attendance at the AGA as well as the local ones who receive an invitation and wish to join us. Congratulations to our Spiritual Committee chair, Yvon Bussièrès from Quebec, who conducted the whole meeting in English and did a wonderful job.

That evening we all loaded into yellow school buses for our outing to Oktoberfest! This is a big event in Waterloo/Kitchener and we were privileged to be given a special opportunity to experience it in June. It was so much fun. The food was great, the band was fabulous and there was much dancing. The highlight of the evening was the tapping of the keg by President Penny (wielding the mallet) and Monsignor Peter (holding the tap). Talk about trusting your president! Penny had to whack the tap into the keg accompanied by suitable oompah music. Jason Hunt, one of our youth and co-organizer of the AGA, looked very fine in his lederhosen. The youth kept us dancing and seemed to be having a wonderful time...particularly during the chicken dance.

Saturday morning began with a spiritual reflection on the theme, given by our National Spiritual Advisor, Monsignor Peter Schonenbach. Then followed the Regional reports and the committee reports.

We then viewed a Power Point presentation of the National Council's new property in Ottawa, which they were in the process of acquiring to serve as National Headquarters. All agreed that this was a wise purchase and we now once again have a permanent home office.

The Statutory Meeting was held after lunch, followed by the invitation to attend the 2010 AGA to be held in Toronto. The event will be co-hosted by the Toronto Central Council and the Ontario Regional Council who stepped up to fill the void on very short notice. What a great Vincentian spirit they have!

Saturday evening we gathered once again in our yellow buses for a drive to Guelph to attend Mass at the beautiful, historic Church of our Lady. After mass the traditional ceremony was held commissioning each Vincentian to "Go forth and serve the poor in the name of the Church and according to the Rule". Everyone received a beautiful t-shirt with Jesus' footsteps across it with the caption "Follow Me".

Then on to the banquet held in the sports centre where we were served a delicious meal including chocolate

mousse for desert. We were then treated to music by a young band from South America. Then a DJ who really knew how to choose the music followed them. The dance floor was filled all evening and the Conga Line had youth, middle age and seasoned dancers up there enjoying themselves immensely.

We were blessed with about 25 exuberant youth in attendance at our meeting this year! What a wonderful presence they were. It is so encouraging to see them there. We hope and pray their numbers will keep increasing.

Pouring rain greeted us on Sunday; even the weather seemed to know our time had come to a close. It was with sadness that we realized that another wonderful time of learning, fellowship, sharing and decision-making was almost over.

A Youth meeting was held from nine until noon and then we were done.

Thank you to Carmella, Jason and all the many who shared their time and talent to host a wonderful, memorable AGA.

Pat Bennetto
President Western Regional Council



AGA 2009 WATERLOO ONTARIO - JUNE 24 – JUNE 28

What was the best of AGA 2009? That question is easy. The best are the people who attend. What you learn is grass root information during the coffee breaks; lunch breaks; sharing concerns and good things at dinners; discussions at sessions; morning prayer and mass; walking to and from the sessions and the free time evenings. Sharing information, concerns and good times with other Vincentians is the best of the AGA. It is the one place you can go where everyone knows what you are talking about and can relate. It is the one place you can go where you can re-energize knowing you are never alone.



I was really only able to attend two workshops due to meetings and presenting my own workshops. My favourite workshop was the theme development by Fr. Joe Quinn from Windsor Ontario.

“2 loaves + 5 fish + Vincent =?” was the theme this year. The statement of this theme is great to place before the Vincentians at your conferences. It is interesting to see the many answers and interpretations. We should remember that this theme will be our theme all year through and we should try to always reflect on it in our meditations, spirituals and reports. This theme is chosen by National so that we are all moving in one direction as family. This theme is so rich and leads to many conclusions and thoughts. Try asking your Vincentians and see the different meanings they have on this equation. I’m sure you will get a few different interpretations.

Father Quinn developed the theme from Scripture. He read each Gospel from quite a modern translation. Each Gospel writer had a different inflection. We also learned that it is the only story that is in all four Gospels. Father spoke without notes and I had remembered that about him. I told him I was writing up his presentation so that it could be given to others for a workshop.

He said, “Please send it to me, I’d love to see what I said.” He spoke with such authority and gently. You could see the love of Jesus and the love for Vincentians in his wonderful presentation. One of his statements was, “**Jesus was a marvellous teacher, but He has the worst class in history.**” That is why we have to keep learning and learning and praying and praying. Fr. Joe is a marvellous teacher and he also may think that he often has the most pitiful learners, but he keeps on teaching, just as Jesus and one day we will get it. Alleluia!

Another aspect of the theme developed by Msgr. Schonenbach and that was the number 7. in the equation $5 + 2 = 7$. The number seven is very rich in the bible and one could explore each 7. The tribes of Israel, deadly sins, gifts of the spirit are a few. This is also something I hope to develop into a Spiritual programme for conferences. Another Board member from National Yvon Bussières who I think is a most outstanding speaker and I wish I understood French better when he speaks. He is a great addition to the National Board as Spiritual Rep. He also gave his report on the Spiritual committee and developing the theme and also spoke of the number seven. One of the cute memorable

statements for me was. “Yes $5 + 2 =$ equals 7. You know all about 7 and we all love to be in 7th heaven.” He of course developed a more serious reflection on this but I liked that line. It reminds me of our work as Vincentians. We answer the call, we pray and we don’t know what to expect. We visit and then leave and pray and we often find ourselves in a euphoria which we can now describe as 7th heaven.

The other highlight for me was the wonderful report our president, Pat Bennetto gave to the AGA National Council. She glowed as she was reporting the wonderful work we do at WRC and I felt very proud to be a part of the Western Regional Council

Next year’s AGA is in Toronto which is a wealth of knowledge. Plan now to go. Each Particular Council President gets a vote as well as Central Council and Regional Council. You should be planning and budgeting for yourself or a proxy to attend from June 9 – June 13 2010 at Ryerson University in the heart of Toronto.

Blessings to all – **Lynn L’Heureux**

AGA 2009



AGA 2010

Co-hosted by the Toronto Central Council and the Ontario Regional Council

Wednesday, June 9 to Sunday June 13 2010

Ryerson University, in the heart of Toronto

THEME: DISCIPLESHIP : « HE HAS ANOINTED ME »

proposed workshops

Around the theme:

How to keep your lamp lit - Sharing the flame

Answering the Baptismal call

Vincentian Discipleship today - The poor are your Lords & Masters

Recognizing the call to Vincentian Discipleship

Blessed are the poor

Come and see

Abide in Me

Educational workshops :

How to chair a meeting

How to take minutes

Treasurer's workshop

Anyone interested in presenting a workshop on one of these subjects please send you name and contact information to Carol Horne, chair of the education committee: svdp.horne@gmail.com

News!

THE SOCIETY OF SAINT-VINCENT DE PAUL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CANADA HAS A NEW HEAD OFFICE!

The National Council of Canada is pleased to announce that on June 30, 2009 it purchased a home and property located at 2463 Innes Road, Ottawa, Ontario. This property and home will act as the head office for the National Council. The head office has been located in Ottawa since 2005, having been moved from Quebec City. Our thanks to the Archdiocese of Ottawa located on Kilborn Ave and to the staff for accommodating us until now.

This new facility is large enough to accommodate offices. As well, it provides a permanent location for archives, inventory and the library. The residence will also provide accommodations for the National President and other visitors to Ottawa. As a home, it offers full kitchen and laundry amenities and parking for the staff and members.



Attention!

HERE ARE THE NEW COORDINATES OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL:

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
National Council of Canada
2463 Innes Road
Ottawa ON K1B 3K3

Telephone: 613 837-4363
Toll Free: 1 866 997-7787 (997-SSVP)
Fax: 613 837-7375

Email : national@ssvp.ca
www.ssvp.ca

THE POSSIBILITY OF TWINNING WITH HAITI

We are twinning with Haiti, as requested by Penny Craig, our Society president, by asking Canadian Regional Councils to send funds to a Regional or the National Council of Haiti. We send the funds to their National Council, and the funds are distributed among all the Haitian aggregated, and to a lesser extent, the non-aggregated, conferences. A kind of 'distributive justice' model, as Penny Craig describes it, which is needed in this country.

This changes the way that conferences normally twin. If you wish to twin with a Haitian conference, you should know that your funds will not go to your twin only. They will be part of what is distributed as described above. Your twinning would be of a spiritual and corresponding nature directly, and of financial assistance indirectly. Correspondence with your twin is the blessing to us of twinning, and I will do what I can to encourage this correspondence.

Monsieur DuPortal, the treasurer of the National Council of Haiti, has described the work of the Society in an email in July. He talked about the work of the National Council, for administrative costs, travel to two

Regional Councils, and extension near the Dominican Republic. In the Regions, funds go mostly for visits and distribution to conferences. The conferences provide direct assistance to the very poor, those dying from hunger, old people requiring medical attention, and children with no means to sustain themselves. The Regional Council of the North Region – Cap Haitian – Port de Paix is thinking of creating a farm. The National Council of Haiti also distributes some funds to specific conferences affected by hurricanes.

« **Would you and the members of your conference be willing to twin with a Haitian Conference, writing to them and remembering them in the prayers of your conference, but having the funds that you send up to be distributed to go to conferences in all of Haiti?** »

If so, I have some Haitian conference applications with which I would be able to send you a twin in Haiti.

Kathy Weswick
President - National Twinning Committee



*Oktoberfest
AGA 2009*

