

The magazine of the Society of Saint-Vincent de Paul - National Council of Canada

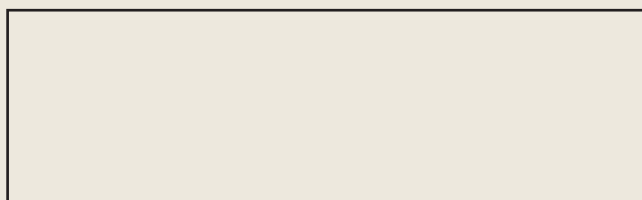
Volume 35 no. 1 • Spring 2007



Vincenpaul-Canada

“Come and Work in the Vineyard”

Return Address:
National Council of Canada
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Ottawa ON
K1H 6K9



Summary

AGA 2007 - Invitation



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**SOCIETY OF
 SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
 AGA 2007- KELOWNA, BC
 JUNE 20 TO 24**

“COME AND WORK IN THE VINEYARD”

BC and Yukon Regional Council look forward to welcoming you to Kelowna this June.

We encourage all vincentians to register early !

THIS YEAR, EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION DATE IS APRIL 1ST

THE SOCIETY OF
 SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
 NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CANADA

MISSION

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is:

To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

VALUES

The Mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians we

- see Christ in anyone who suffers
- come together as a family
- have personal contact with the poor
- help in all possible ways

A FEW HELPFUL REMINDERS:

Accommodation is booked directly through UBC OKANAGAN
 TOLL FREE 1-877-589-6073,
 ONLINE AT www.okanagan.ubconference.com
 or you can send us the registration form on page 19

More complete info as well as registration forms and accommodation booking forms can be found on our regional website:

www.ssvp.bc.ca/2007aga.html

or on the National Council website at **www.ssvp.ca**

- Please note the revision of meal prices on registration form (central pages of this issue)
- T-shirts are available to pre purchase with at least 2 weeks prior notice, see registration form for details (central pages of this issue)

SEE YOU IN JUNE!

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President's Word - Michael Burke

Dear Vincentians,

In Canada the Rich are Getting Richer and the Poor Poorer – it's a fact – so what are we doing about it, or more importantly, what can we do about it?

Recent articles in the Canadian press as well as the Catholic press are underlining the fact that in Canada the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, quoting from reports published in Perspectives on Labour and Income and Statistics Canada. During the past week, I have read two articles on the topic the first by Meagan Fitzpatrick from CanWest News Services in Ottawa and the second by Michael Swan in the Catholic Register. It is interesting to see these articles side by side and view the different perspectives of the authors. The Catholic press gives the topic a Catholic spin referencing the Scriptures and quotes from priests, religious and the Pope, while the lay press has a much more sterile presentation quoting Stats Can and economists who present their opinion. In the end both perspectives conclude that the rich are indeed getting richer and the poor are stagnating as poor people.

The articles refer to changes in families "Net Worth" which is defined as the amount an individual or family would clear after selling all assets and paying off all debt.

The articles quote "The median net worth of the top 20% of Canadian families grew by 19% between 1999 and 2005, according to Statistics Canada report released in December.

Over the same period the net worth of the households in the bottom 20% fell by 43%. Last year, those in the top 20% of the wealth distribution had a median net worth estimated at \$551,000. In 1999, it was \$465,000 and in 1984 it was \$336,000." Based on this information it is apparent that the Rich are indeed getting Richer and the Poor are not, in other words the Poor are getting Poorer. One thing we can conclude is that the gap between the Rich and Poor is widening.

I don't think there is a person reading this article that doesn't already know this, in fact the content of the articles in the paper hasn't changed in 100 years. However, an economist with the TD Bank trying to put this situation in context states "While at face value, the inequality in wealth in Canada may appear striking, when compared to other countries, Canada is well within the international norm." He went on to cite "an international study of 20 countries that showed the wealthiest 10% of Canada's population owned 53% of the total wealth, compared to the United States at 69% and Switzerland, where the share is more than 70%". Somehow I don't think that this type of analysis will make the poor feel much better. It will however, and unfortunately, be comforting to the rich who can all point to other countries and say 'you know, the poor could be worse off!' It's like saying "the poor in Canada can't afford food for their families or adequate housing, but the rich in Canada aren't as rich as the rich in the US or Switzerland!" (I had a professor in university once who told us that "if



*Michael Burke,
President National Council of Canada*

you torture the data long enough it will confess to anything".)

SO WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN YOU SAY?

We all see the gap between rich and poor everyday so we don't need to be reminded every year. What we don't see being addressed is what are we doing about it, and what can we do about it – these are not hard questions to answer. The answers are obvious. "At least 95% of families whose net worth puts them in the top 20% own their own homes. Among the bottom 20% all but 6% are renters." These statistics are very significant, and helps explain the vulnerability of the people in the bottom 20%.

For years now our Society has discussed and debated entering the realm of Advocacy, which is, and has been a part of the Society's work since our start, and even before by people like our patron Vincent "To the very best of their ability they claimed justice for the poor". In the words of Nelson Mandela "overcom-

President's Word - Michael Burke

ing poverty is not a gesture of charity but an act of justice – people have the right not to live in poverty.”

SO WHERE DO WE START AND WHAT DO WE DO?

As a start, I have formed an Advocacy or “Voice of the Poor” Committee at the National level and have named First Vice-President Clermont Fortin as its Chair. (“Advocacy is the act of speaking in support of human concerns and needs. Where people have their own voice, advocacy means making sure they are heard; when they have difficulty speaking, it means providing help; where they have no voice, it means speaking for them”. (from *Making Changes: A place to Start*, Ministry for Christians and Families.).

This committee is charged with formulating a position paper on one of the current social problems facing the poor in our country and to present their findings at the 2007 AGA. It is hoped that this paper will provide some guidance and direction for both the Regional and local Councils to establish “Voice of the Poor” Committees and produce statements for their areas.

The selection of a topic for this first Society statement is not easy; however I believe that Housing and access to safe affordable housing is a universal North America wide problem facing the poor. The earlier statistic about only 6% of people in the lower 20% economic level owning their own homes is very significant in the discussion of housing. The top

20% which probably includes many of us, all own their own homes. Home ownership is a significant part of most people’s net worth.. This home ownership is what separates many rich people from the poor. In essence we are rich (or at least not poor) because of the Capital assets we own – our homes, cars, shares of company stock etc. As a result we (the rich) can borrow on the equity we have in our homes etc., poor people cannot do this.

For additional information on property ownership and its effect on the poor, I would recommend reading a book entitled *Curing World Poverty – The New Role of Property* edited by John H. Miller, C.S.C., S.T.D.

This book describes the Binary Economics principles developed by Louis Kelso in the 1960’s. Kelso was the initiator of the Employee Stock Option Plan during the Carter administration. Kelso suggests that the definition of poverty must be corrected if we are to address the real issues, the following quote is an example of Kelso’s thinking – “It becomes abundantly clear that the disease of poverty has been misdiagnosed. Although the symptoms are well understood, there is a tendency to define the problem in terms of those symptoms, rather than in terms of the cause. Since the obvious trait of poverty is a lack of wealth, it then follows that giving handouts will cure the disease of poverty. Although the cure does not appear to work, the diagnosticians insist that to be effective, it is only necessary to apply greater quantities of medicine. Yet, in addition to being ineffective, the amount of medicine is not unlim-

ited. What is needed is a different analysis of the situation in order to develop a cure that is not only morally sound, but economically viable. People must be empowered with a moral and effective means of acquiring productive property.

Any cure must begin with a correct diagnosis. Rather than diagnose poverty in terms of its obvious trait – lack of wealth – the Kelsos define poverty in terms of its cause: lack of access to the means of becoming owners of productive assets.”

John Miller goes on to write “There is a workable means of effectively combating poverty, and this is not through a redistribution of past wealth accumulations, but through the expansion of future ownership and profit sharing opportunities among working people.

Additionally, this new approach to economic development would provide a genuine preferential option for the poor, based on the principle of equality of opportunity, not equality of results. Through programs which equalize access among all persons to the means for becoming owners – including access to such uniquely “social goods” as monetary credit – these ideas and applications would systematically lift unjust historic barriers between those at the top of the social ladder and those most affected by the lack of equal opportunities, privilege, status and personal sovereignty. Distributive justice would then follow naturally from full and equal justice in participation.”

Most of the ‘Affordable Housing’ programs in Canada are geared

towards 'Rental' units, which in effect ensure that those people in the lower 20% social level remain there. There are a few programs that offer 'Affordable Ownership' plans but even these programs are geared to more middle class individuals. For example there are programs in Ontario like the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program – Home Ownership Component which offers homes ranging from \$100,000 to \$165,000, but even with a 5% down payment and a government contribution of \$10,000 or so the prospective owner would be carrying a +/- \$100,000 mortgage. This program will not be something that "working poor" or people on assistance will be able to take advantage of. There is also a requirement in this program that states, if the home is resold within 10 years, the entire government contribution must be repaid – which would result in a substantial

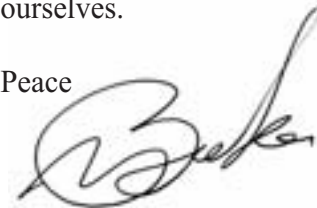
reduction in the owner's equity.

We all remember the old adage of "give the poor a fish and you will feed them for today, teach them to fish and they will feed themselves for life". This of course does not work in affluent countries as not only do you need to know "how" to fish but you need a license that can cost over \$1,000,000 and a boat that can cost \$5,000,000 +, so we have to find ways to help people get "the means of production" so they can be self sufficient. We have to think of ways of getting the poor into their "own homes", or we will be like the governments that help pay the rent month after month forever. For example what if we could come up with a method of converting Gower Park (Toronto Central Council's housing development from the early 90's) into a Condominium Corporation and help the poor buy

the units (maybe the people living in them at this time)? They would need help with down payments (which could be loan guarantees) as well as help to get mortgages etc. The poor would become owners of the properties and over time amass equity of their own, not just continue paying rent.

As Vincentians, are we seriously concerned about the disparity between the rich and the poor, or will we continue to remark that it still exists or will we think outside the box and advocate on behalf of the poor to get these programs established, or even start the programs ourselves.

Peace



Michael Burke

Subscription

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Reflection

A TOPIC THAT IS ALWAYS OF INTEREST: ECUMENISM.

The importance of this subject was underlined when Pope John XXIII said, "The great scandal of Christians is their disunity". The work of ecumenism is largely one of liberation. In sorting out history one understands how much of our religious disunity relates to very human origins. Here I insert an example from my own history. My parents were born in the German city of Siegen in Westphalia. In Martin Luther's time, Siegen was split into two sectors. The part belonging to the Count who stayed in obedience to the Emperor remained Catholic while the other group, under the Count who espoused the Reform movement, became Protestant.

Ecumenism requires study supported by prayer. It also needs dramatic gestures. One of these was when Pope John-Paul II prayed at the Wall of the Temple in Jerusalem; similarly Pope Benedict XVI made a far-reaching gesture when he prayed in the Blue Mosque in Istanbul.

Has there been progress in this matter of Christian unity. I give you three examples taken very much at random:

1. The monthly newspaper Christian Week, coming from the Canadian Evangelical movement, had on the first page of the December 2006 issue a report on St Joseph and the devotion to him by Catholics. The text was written in honest and sympathetic fashion, a far cry from previous diatribes against the

devotion to Saints!

2. The same publication, in the January 2007 issue contained a very positive report about the Pope's visit to Turkey. What a difference from the previous fundamentalist habit of describing the Pope as the Babylonian prostitute, from the Book of Revelation!

3. A few years ago a Canadian Bishop who was giving a course to laity, cited a Eucharistic text and asked about the authorship. The students offered the names of several Catholic authors. The text was from the Lima Document, an ecumenical agreement on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry of 1982.

It is well to remember some of the foundation texts of our Roman Catholic understanding of ecumenism. In 1964 the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism was published and in 1967 the Ecumenical Directory was released. These documents enabled the Canadian Bishops to begin negotiations with the Canadian Council of Churches, established in 1948. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops became an Associate member of the said Council and is now a full member.

In your Vincentian work there are occasions of cooperation with non-Catholic churches. Never hesitate to establish good relations with them.

In 1995, Pope John-Paul II published the Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, on ecumenical endeavours. It provides an action plan for working on Christian



*Mgr Peter Schonenbach
National Chaplain*

unity and is a great document for spiritual reflection with the Vincentian community. The Pope concludes the encyclical with a quotation from St Cyprian:

God does not accept the sacrifice of the sower of disunion, but commands that he depart from the altar so that he may first be reconciled with his brother. For God can be appeased only by prayers that make peace. To God, the better offering is peace, brotherly concord and a people made one in the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Msgr Peter Schonenbach
National Chaplain

We wish to inform you of an error in the last Vincenpaul-Canada. We published the picture of Mr. Grant Regalbuto rather than the picture of Mr. Viateur Gervais in the latter's funeral announcement.

Confeder@tioNews

News from the Society
throughout the whole world
N° 3 – 6 November 2006

Special Issue

The Society of Saint Vincent de
Paul in the Middle East
I.E.C - Paris – 16-20 October 2006

On the occasion of the United Nations World Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October), which coincided with the meeting of the Society's International Executive Committee, and because of the pressing news from the Middle East, Council General invited representatives of the SSVP in this region to come and talk about their impressive work among the poor in this situation. It was the most moving moment during the days of the meeting.

Although the next issue of Confeder@tioNews will cover the results of this IEC in more detail, here is a summary of the contributions from our Vincentian friends from the Lebanon, Israel and Palestine, as well as from Syria.



*MF Salésiani (ITVP ECM group),
A. Kashram (SSVP Jerusalem),
M. Thio (VPG), JR Torremocha (PGI),
A. Zogbi (SSVP Lebanon), S. Hindo (SSVP
Ramallah) and M. Bittar (SSVP Damascus)*

LEBANON: Love and Hope against hatred

Around 16 years after the war which ended in 1990, Lebanon was beginning to recover and dream of a flourishing summer. But in the space of 33 days of hatred and destruction, these dreams vanished, and the infrastructure was set back years, the economy plunged into billions of debt, and Christians were fleeing the country en masse.

33 days of fighting, destruction
and fear...
33 days of service, love and sharing.

The Vincentians, and hundreds of their volunteer friends were present every day, serving their brothers and sisters in distress. Food was needed for thousands of people, living in inhumane and unsanitary conditions, completely unacceptable today, requiring clothing, care and love.

The needs were enormous and the resources limited. But God never abandons his children. From the very first day of the war, Vincentians were present in all the refugee centres to help these people.



*Lebanese kids with their mothers are posing
with the volunteers of the SSVP*



At the end of September, more than 5500 food parcels, 500 portions of bread, fruit and vegetables, together with cake, had been distributed, as well as nappies and other items for 300 babies, 700 packages of toiletries, 3500 packs of medication, first aid products, sheets and towels, clothing and underwear, etc., with a total value of 426,090,000 L.L., around 230,000 euros.



*A truck of help ready to leave
for Southern Lebanon*

Despite the blockage, the cries of pain and hunger from the besieged villages in the South were also relieved.

Convoys with food, medication and water set off. Desperately needed supplies of bread for the people were turned back twice. But two other shipments did get through thanks to the help of the Red Cross.

Since the fighting stopped, a Vincentian delegation visited the villages in the South (Marjeyoun, Klayaa, Rmeich, Ein Ebel, Debel, Majdel Silm, Rachaya El Foukhar,

Deir Mimas, Kawkaba, Yaroun, Beraachite) to provide moral and material support. The Society has laid power cables to some villages to restore the electricity supply quickly, provided 244 tanks to supply villages and single homes with drinking water, and has paid fuel oil bills to ensure power and water to some villages. It has also helped in disinfection work in other villages, provided school equipment for 1150 children returning to class, and has undertaken to pay heating bills for 123 families this winter, for a total cost of more than 60,000 euros.

There is a very serious problem at the moment, as the Catholic schools in South Lebanon are threatened with closure, meaning 2860 children will be on the streets, and their teachers out of work. The average cost of education for a child is one thousand dollars. After several meetings with those responsible for Catholic schools and the charitable associations in the country, a decision was made to cut school fees for this year to \$600. The Society of St Vincent de Paul has undertaken to sponsor 1300 children. The budget for this will therefore be \$780,000.

This is a very onerous responsibility. But by the grace of God, we will relieve these families; we will give them back the trust and faith they have lost. Our Christian and Vincentian duty is to walk beside each person.

Finally, we recall that Council General is currently researching a project for building a bakery, in collaboration with the Council in the Lebanon. The objectives of this are many: to supply bread, at cost or free of charge, depending on the re-

sources of the people concerned, to hundreds of people in a region where no-one is making it at the moment, to provide jobs for 5 people, to provide the Society with a small income for its many activities...

« Our love for the Lord is more powerful than hatred. Help us to spread love, Help us to make known the message of Christ more widely, through the people we meet. »

Thank you for your support!

JERUSALEM... Concern for Christians

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Jerusalem, the cradle of Christianity, is one of the oldest in the world, founded in 1851. For 155 years, the Conference of the Holy Sepulchre has been serving the poor of the community in the Holy Land, where the Christian population forms less than 2% of the region's population, and has serious problems (unemployment, poverty, etc.). The Society is initiating several programmes on their behalf over the next five years.



The Society helps Christians attending Mass, and has fundraising events during it.

The main programme consists of giving young people without qualifica-

tions solid training and the chance to study so that they can try to find work in Jerusalem, and start them out in life with a decent income so that they can stand on their own feet and do not have to leave Jerusalem for economic reasons.

The Society is also launching a programme to « adopt » children, allowing them to benefit from education, medical care and a good diet, thus giving them hope for a better future, a loving family in which to grow and a lasting relationship with God.

The Conference also provides basic help to dozens of poor families and elderly people, identified by the Society's social worker. It provides help, including travel costs, for drug addicts to travel to Italy where they can undergo rehabilitation, in collaboration with a local organisation. The Conference gives some financial help to several families identified by the Society's social worker to send their children to nursery school, the costs of which are very high in Jerusalem.

The Conference has a very limited income, and it needs financial support from all sources if it is to continue its work with the poorest people.

At Ramallah, in PALESTINE...

The Ramallah Conference has been working since the mid-60s, and currently has more than 20 members working every day, in humility and compassion, to raise the spirits of those who are suffering. They undertake to give financial, material and spiritual help to the least fortunate, within their very limited means, to alleviate spiritual problems and

physical need.

The Vincentians in Ramallah visit the poor and the elderly. At holiday times, or festive occasions such as Easter or Christmas, they organise social events and celebrations, distributing gifts, to make people feel comforted and loved.

For instance, on the 5th of October every year, the international day for the Elderly, they attend Mass celebrated on their behalf by the Conference's Spiritual Director. This is followed by a meal and by various activities throughout the day. Similarly, other celebrations are organised for children on the International day of Childhood, and presents are also distributed then.

The Conference helps many elderly people with health costs, electricity or water bills. It also helps some children continue their education, when their parents do not have the means to meet school fees.

In order to fund this work, the Conference organises some small fund-raising events: meals, a monthly cake sale known as the « charity plate » after Sunday Mass. When circumstances allow they also organise social events such as dances or bingo games, which as well as raising funds also provide an opportunity to bring people together and raise morale. Lotteries are also organised regularly to raise funds, and calendars are sold every year. At funerals, people are encouraged to make donations for the poor.

Palestine, as we all know, is in an extremely fragile political state at the moment. It is very unstable and living conditions are particularly hard.

The quality of life is reduced to zero by all the restrictions imposed, the invasions and the killings. The economic situation is catastrophic, and affects the entire population, young and old, Christians and non-Christians. Many, many people are homeless, families are separated and divided. The level of unemployment is one of the highest in the world, with more than 50% of the population of working age affected. Public employees have not been paid in 7 months because of restrictions on international aid and access to health care is almost non-existent because of the cruel lack of health centres and hospitals. In education, many parents are unable to afford school fees for their children.

The help the Society can give is limited because of a lack of funds. The Society is therefore forced to give priority to Christian families, but it is well aware that this is not the policy of the Society, and it never turns its back on non-Christian families who come knocking on the door.

After the Second Intifada, 170 families were helped. At the moment, 70 families are being supported, with 145 people being helped monthly, and the school fees for 15 children are being paid. In order to assist the largest number of people, the Conference is forced to alternate its help among several families. We help them as much as possible!

SYRIA - Damascus

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Damascus now has 14 Conferences, and with the generous help of its members, in their enthusiasm and their love, devotes itself to many dif-

ferent works and activities to help the poor.

A monthly grant is therefore made to 350 needy families; 39 residents of the old people's home in Seydnaya, north of Damascus, are visited; hospital and other medical costs are met for many people.

The Society supplies second-hand clothes to around 1000 families, distributes food parcels to 600 families, particularly at holiday times, and visits prisons. Help is also given to 150 refugee families from Iraq, in the form of food, medication, mattresses and bed linen, and help with employment and housing. The Society's Clinic helps 2000 families, at the « Oasis of Hope » Centre, where training sessions in information technology are also organised for children.

Following the tragic events of the summer, 250,000 Lebanese refugees, mostly non-Christians, crossed the border into Syria. The Damascus Council has made every effort to house, clothe and feed families in distress. Day nurseries and old people's homes were converted to welcome the refugees; the dispensary provides care and medication to the sick and wounded.

**Help us to support the Society
in the Middle East
A prayer...
A donation ...**

**Please send the funds to your
National Council.**

Confeder@tioNews

News from the Society
throughout the whole world

N° 4 – 22 December 2006

PHILIPPINES : no rest...

Whereas Council General was congratulating the Society of St Vincent de Paul in the Philippines for the success of its reconstruction programme after the tremendous February 2006 mudslides, the country has been badly hit, twice in two weeks, by two tropical hurricanes, Durian and Utor, making hundred of victims and causing enormous damage.

On the 21st of October 2006, the Society was inaugurating the 31 houses built with the support of the international Society after the February disaster, and the Technical Commission at its November meeting approved funding for Superior Council's request to build 8 additional houses to complete the project. Actually a whole village has been built, and it received the name of "SSVP Village".

But on December 1st and 10th, typhoons Durian and Utor struck again, causing once more grievous mudslides. There have been hundreds of deaths and injuries, and hundreds of homeless people. SSVP Philippines responded immediately with emergency assistance from the outset of the disasters, and served meals and distributed assorted first necessity goods. They will then be engaged in the rehabilitation phase assisting survivors in getting back to normal living conditions.

Council General has decided on

immediate help of euro 5.000 to be sent to manage emergency needs, and is waiting to know local SSVP long term plans. A worldwide appeal for generosity is launched, to face this new challenge.

GUATEMALA : blessing and inauguration of the new houses



On September 9th, 2006, on the feast of the Blessed Frederic Ozanam, the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Guatemala inaugurated the 22 houses that have been built with the support of the world wide Society after hurricane Stan which hit Central America in October 2005.

While the village built in the Philippines has been named SSVP Village, the members of Superior Council of Guatemala have given the name of St Vincent de Paul and Frederic Ozanam to two streets in the village. A video is available on ozanet.org.

Let us remember that this type of action by the Society, whatever the country is, is only possible thanks to the financial support of the Vincentians of the world who send their donations to Council General, through their Superior Councils.

MICRO CREDIT : Nobel Prize activities also in SSVP!

As you know, the 2006 Nobel Prize for Peace was awarded to Mr Muhammad Yunus, a Bengalese economist, the "banker of the poor".

It is interesting to note that the Society of St Vincent de Paul is also practicing micro credit in several countries.

The loan of small amounts to allow beneficiaries to buy tools and start an activity is the principle of the "Ozanam Mutual Insurance" which was started this year in Congo Brazzaville, with Council General's support.

The idea works especially well in India, with very good results, through animal raising projects that provide employment and livelihood to a lot of needy families, and that also supply milk and milk products to community dairy farms and manure for farming.



Goat distribution in Irinjalakuda

During the past five years, the Society in India has implemented 115 cow bank projects, 65 goat banks as well as with pigs, poultry and buffaloes, and reproduced the scheme with coconut farming and plant nurseries.

In total, over the last 5 years, some 7,000 families, or more than 25 000 unemployed and very poor people have benefited from this system that gives them the opportunity to educate their children, repair their houses and to meet the daily expenses of the families.

It is important to stress that the system is self fed, as beneficiaries are involved in the Society's work. In addition to the fact that they are selected for their skills to rear the animals, each animal is insured before distribution. Above all, they will give their first calf or offspring to the Society, who will give it to another family, thus having a real chain of activity.

The Society, in addition to its financial contribution to the progress of these projects with the support of twin Conferences in England, Scotland, Australia, and the Netherlands is involved in the visit and evaluation of each of the projects, always trying to improve the system, and also provides veterinary assistance for animals.

Other cases exist throughout the world, and this is an exemplary participation of the Society in the eradication of poverty. Please note that the Technical Commission has recently approved a goat raising project following this scheme in Eritrea.

TESTIMONY: BACK TO LIFE THANKS TO THE SOCIETY (UKRAINE)

"I am writing you about a small miracle which happened in our Society with your assistance. When we organized our computer training project, we invited several disabled people. One of them was Marina, an 18 years old young girl, who had broken her back in a car accident. She was extremely sad and uncommunicative, but after she participated in the computer project, she had wonderful changes in her life. She became a Catholic and got married to



Marina and her baby

a handsome young man. And more! She has had a baby! She mentions that the computer Project was the first step in changing her life. Sometimes we serve the needy and never now how much we do. Heavens, Thank you so much!"

Olesya Popova, President of
Superior Council of Ukraine

The Society in Ukraine has also set up a project that deserves to be mentioned at this time of the year, especially as it is a good example of international solidarity within SSVP: this project, which is funded by the Society in Ireland, will allow 15 disabled people, 20 old age people and 215 orphans to have a Christmas dinner, as well as receive a little present. Sometimes, the simplest ideas turn out to be the best ones!

LEBANON

In the previous issues of *Confeder@tioNews*, we were announcing that the project of the construction of a bread baking oven in a Christian village in South Lebanon was being studied at Council General. We have the pleasure to announce that this project will soon come true, as the Technical Commission, meeting last November

30, has decided to fund it.

In addition to the free distribution of bread to the poorest families in the region, this oven will contribute to the stabilization of local populations, especially Christians, and to a slow move back to life, as no one has been making bread there for long time. It will also allow the Society of St Vincent de Paul to provide jobs and, in a few months, the project will not only be self-sufficient, but also income generating, and that will provide an opportunity to fund additional activities of our Society, which is so active and needed in Lebanon.

Thank you for your generosity on that!

FEBRUARY 2007 - NAIROBI: AFRICAN COMMISSION MEETING

From February 22 to 28, 2007, the first meeting of the African Commission with all Presidents of Superior, National and Assimilated Councils in Africa will take place in Nairobi, Kenya.

The purpose of the meeting is to make recommendations to the CGI for a project/projects that are of the most urgent need, manageable and sustainable in which the Society can be actively involved.

We will inform you of the results of this meeting in future issues of *Confeder@tioNews*.

Councils in Action

SHAWINIGAN PARTICULAR COUNCIL

Not so long ago, as is still the case, our St. Vincent de Paul Conferences occupied parish premises. A sign of the times, the Shawinigan SSVP "Entraide populaire" recently bought a church. The Society has thus become the owner of the Christ-Roi church, where it has set up the food store, the clothing and household items store, as well as help services. Beneficiaries now have access to large functional spaces where members can work at ease.

During the entire summer, the members worked at preparing the premises, giving the walls a new coat of

paint and transforming various spaces according to needs. Last October 11, the SSVP inaugurated the new premises. Having visited both the previous and the new premises, I was able to see the difference.

The SSVP Particular Council is active in the Shawinigan "arrondissement" which, following parish restructuring now has two parishes and five churches. Seven Conferences (soon five) are active in the area, with a total of approximately 20 members. Twice a week at noon, the Society provides good hot soup to students of two elementary schools located in disadvantaged districts, and gives those same children a snack every morning during the last

week of every month.

During the Christmas holidays, the Council partners up with local Tim Horton restaurants where people are invited to deposit non-perishable food items.

The SSVP "Entraide populaire" is managed by Brother Jean Gervais, and the Particular Council's President is Brother Benjamin Lafrenière. Both, as well as every volunteer involved, give much time and energy to ensure that more disadvantaged local people receive quality help. They aim to serve people well and listen to their needs.

André Boyer

NOW THIS WAS TEAMWORK!

Sometimes our work in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul requires teamwork on a grand scale.

This winter I had the blessing of being part of a group of Vincentians from Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton and Yellowknife who worked together to bring a mother and her baby son home to the Northwest Territories from Ottawa.

She had gone to Ottawa when she received word that her mother, who had cancer, had a heart attack. As her mother recovered, her step father made it clear that this young mom and baby were not welcome in his home.

She had no means to get back, so she contacted the President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Yellowknife and he contacted the Western Regional President who in turn contacted a Vincentian in Ottawa. Arrangements were made for her to fly to Calgary, where Vincentians met her and gave her and the baby lunch and much needed diapers.

Then she carried on her journey, to her next stop in Edmonton. This is where I met her at the airport. She walked right to me, as if she knew who I was and her baby boy came into my arms without hesitation.

I bought them something to eat then took them to a nearby hotel for the

night. I stayed to visit for awhile and made sure they were comfortable. Then I made arrangements for her to be taken to the airport in the morning for the last leg of her journey to the Northwest Territories where she was met by Vincentians who had made arrangements for her to get to her town 300 km. west of Yellowknife.

I am constantly reminded in my years of service with the society that there is not an act of charity that is foreign to us, nor a means to do it.

Pat Bennetto
St. Joseph Basilica Conference
Edmonton AB

OUR SSVP GETS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP THE GINOOGAMING FIRST NATION

On October 25, 2006 Nick Volk (Ontario Provincial President - now Past President) – (John Staley new President January 1, 2007) received an email from Carmela Addante (VP Ontario Youth Program) in Waterloo, asking for help for the Ginoogaming First Nation.

Carmela's email forwarded an email from a Waterloo woman who had been to Longlac, Ontario - 305 km northeast of Thunder Bay. She visited her friend Bob (and wife Frankie) Misner. Bob and Frankie have lived in Longlac for 6 years.

On a visit to the Nimki Migizi High School a Councillor asked Bob (Bob is the Principal) if they could help in getting warm clothing, boots, coats, hats, scarves, blankets, etc, as the cold weather was already upon the

residents.

Carmela's friend thought of our SSVP and contacted Carmela, who emailed me.

I immediately emailed Eileen Pelletier, President of the Thunder Bay Conference. Eileen responded instantly and spoke to her Vincentians at Mass on Saturday, October 28th.

By Wednesday, November 1 Eileen, with Vincentian determination to help, had a blanket drive scheduled in her parish; 2 Catholic High Schools doing a one week drive for teen jackets and boots; 4 senior elementary schools doing a drive for kids in grade 7 and 8.. The Catholic Action Store donated all the toddlers clothes.

By Friday, November 10 Eileen had her SUV packed full of warm clothes, blankets, boots, etc. More

goods were still coming in. Eileen and husband Gary had to rent a cube van to make the trip.

On Tuesday, November 21 Eileen and Gary drove to Longlac and delivered the clothes, etc, to the great delight and tremendous appreciation of the recipients. When they returned to Thunder Bay there was another pile of boxes of more goods - which were shipped by bus.

Eileen noted "It is amazing how a simple little email can get the Lord moving us all so fast" and "this was a really enjoyable project, although exhausting". As a special add on Eileen said a friend gave them \$50.00 "to do something for the kids in Longlac". She bought 11 boxes of Japanese oranges - "the boys unloading the truck were quite excited about getting them" and sharing with the rest of the students.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO ALL VINCENTIANS OF CANADA

As of January 1, 2005, all receipts issued by charitable organizations registered with the Canada Revenue Agency must mention "Canada Revenue Agency" as well as the pertaining government Web site www.craarc.gc.ca/charities. If your receipts do not show this information, you may add this information through other means than regular printing (e.g. sticker, stamp, manuscript). The Canada Revenue Agency will accept receipts that do not show this information until the end of 2005. However, the CRA expects all registered charities to add this new information starting January 1, 2006.

Germain Souigny

INSURANCE PROGRAM FOR THE SOCIETY OF ST-VINCENT DE PAUL

For some time now, there have been discussions around the idea of setting up a national insurance program for the Society of St-Vincent de Paul. The purpose of implementing such an insurance program is to protect the Society and all of its more than 1,000 Conferences/Councils including the 9,000 volunteers working across the country.

The Vincentians' mission to help people in need is done through a variety of activities and projects such as: helping victims of a disaster, running summer camps, operating women's residence, providing affordable apartments, making home visits...etc.. These are but a few of the many projects and activities provided by the Society of St-Vincent de Paul.

But such a diversity of activities and projects can bring potential concerns. The combination of volunteers interacting with clients while performing these various activities increases the risk of having a situation result in a loss of some sort. This loss could pertain to your property (for example a fire) or be the result of liability (lawsuit). In the case of the later, lawsuits have increased tremendously over the past few years. People have become more litigious and damages awarded by the courts have increased.

Here are a few examples of the different exposures the Society might

have:

- As a board member you have to comply with certain duties. One such duty is the "duty of care". For example, when you implement a screening process for all members, you are acting as a reasonably prudent person would do (i.e. duty of care). And not enforcing this could make you liable as a board member.
- Employment Practices: an employee is not happy with his/her dismissal and decides to sue the employer.
- A client visiting a store slips and injures himself giving rise to a lawsuit.
- A child is injured while playing at a summer camp.
- A volunteer is involved in a car accident when doing a home visit.
- There are allegations of a volunteer using his/her position of power to abuse a client.
- A fire destroys a store or a building owned by the Society of St-Vincent de Paul.

These few examples are possible scenarios that would put a mental and financial strain on the Society. However, the effects could be reduced. One way to achieve this is by working within the organization to try and reduce the exposure to such losses where it is possible. But you are still exposed to the uncertainty of a financial loss. The most effective way to reduce the risk is to transfer the exposure to an insurance company by putting together an insurance policy with the proper coverage and limits.

Twice I have had the opportunity to talk on insurance matters with

Vincentians coming from all parts of Canada. In speaking with them, I noticed a general concern amongst the delegates about insurance or lack there of. Some Councils or Regions were happy to say they had insurance; however, their policies had not been reviewed or updated in a long time and had crucial gaps in coverage. Others were not even sure what they were covered for. While other regions had not been able to secure any insurance. This is not reassuring for the Society or the Vincentians.

There is no doubt that the Society recognizes the importance of protecting its members and assets through an insurance policy. While reading some material from the Society, I came across this article where it talks about insurance: Insurance Coverage ..."the Society has a legal and ethical obligation to protect its members while they are involved in mission activities on behalf of the Society in Canada..." (Section 4.17).

Should all Conferences be insured? Should all volunteers be covered? Should all the Society's assets be protected?

The answer is "yes". Through collaboration between the National and Regional Councils, work should begin to set up a national insurance program with the objective of protecting all levels, volunteers and assets of the Society.

How to begin?

The first step is for the Society to work with an insurance broker who

understands the organization so as to provide the proper insurance coverage suited to meet your specific needs and budget. Then, it is up to the broker to find the appropriate insurance company that understands non-profit and charitable organizations; the insurer must also understand regional diversities which your organization faces. And as your needs evolve, you should work with the insurance broker and the insurer to ensure your organization will always maintain the most suitable coverage.

What is the next step?

For starters, it will be important to gather all the available information regarding the various activities, projects and assets within the Society. This will be essential in providing an accurate picture of the organization for the broker to analyze the exposure and provide the proper coverage whether it be Liability, Property or Criminal coverage. It can also help to avoid any gap in coverage that could jeopardize the settlement of a loss. Providing these details will also assist the insurance company in determining the appropriate rate to charge and ultimately benefit you.

Because the information gathering is so important, it will be necessary to have cooperation and communication between the various regions and levels of Council. The information needed will be outlined in a questionnaire or application. Once all the information is received, it will be put together for the broker and insurer to analyze and provide a

quote. For subsequent years, the renewal process will simply consist of updating the current database.

Advantages of a national insurance program

- Protection: obviously, the most important reason for this program is that all levels, from Conferences to the National Council, will be covered under the same insurance. The policy will adapt to fit the needs of the various entities and their activities. This would give every volunteer, in each province, the possibility of going about his or her mission with peace of mind.

- Definite cost: all parties will know the cost of their insurance protection as opposed to the unknown of a potential claim.

- Lower premiums, better protection: another important point is that all levels will benefit from the best insurance protection at the lowest possible price. This is made possible by "spreading the risk" over the entire organization. Certain smaller Councils wishing to purchase insurance would avoid paying minimum premiums, as they normally would have to do. You could compare the program to "buying in bulk"; the more people participate the lower the premium.

- Access to resources: the Society could also make use of certain resources made available by the insurance broker and/or the insurance company, such as conferences on abuse or risk management sessions.

- Claims assistance: should a loss occur, you would be indemnified for the loss instead of having to absorb it from your budget. You would also have access to a toll free line 24/7, wherever you may be, to report a claim.

A few years ago, people were not concerned about working or managing an organization without insurance. However, as I mentioned, times have changed; and so, society has changed. We have become more litigious and are always looking to blame someone else. Unfortunately the courts allow this to continue. Another example of the change in society is the National Council's decision to implement the screening process. This is a new reality for all types of organizations, even charitable organizations.

We talked a lot about responsibility and lawsuits. But we must not overlook the financial devastation the loss of a building and its contents would have on the organization and the people who look to you for assistance. Since the National Council realizes the importance of such a program, it is logical to move towards the implementation of a national insurance program.

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Twinning

As defined by the Rule of the Society that in part reads ... "The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries and the Vincentian preferential option for the poor spur Councils and Conferences to assist others with less resources." The activity between two Conferences, Councils, a fundamental activity of the Society, is the expression of Vincentian fraternity and solidarity. In many parts of the world, Councils and Conferences do not have sufficient resources to alleviate suffering. Twinning is a 'special work' of the Society. It takes place when Councils and Conferences in more affluent countries reach out to help their Vincentian Brothers and Sisters in less affluent countries with their work. The three basic elements of Twinning are prayer, correspondence and financial/material assistance. Assistance can be interpreted broadly and may, for example, include technical experience in a specific field.



Twinning France - Romania

In 1844, the president of a Conference in Paris talks about "the spirit of communion that must inhabit all members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Conferences that have more resources, either in money, or in

members, must call themselves mother-conferences, and [...] dispatch their members to conferences that need them." (Excerpt from the Minutes of the Particular Council of January 30, 1844) Twinning is therefore an old concept born out of the spirituality of the Society, based on exchange, solidarity and sharing. Through all of the Society's history, this mutual assistance was always encouraged by the various Presidents General.



Twinning India - Australia

The current President General, José Ramón Díaz-Torremocha, remarked, in his Vincenpaul Magazine editorial (n°266 - Spring 2001), "It is because we believe that we are part of this 'unique' World Conference that we are able to focus our efforts on the country which needs it most. Sometimes we will do this by praying, other times, by sharing our resources."

The General President says: "Since it's beginning, the Society of Saint Vincent has always wanted to realise it's potential to spread throughout the world into many different nations and cultures for the service of the poorest. Conferences have always tried to assist one

another, (for example, those of Paris did so with those of Lyon), by sharing with others their new experiences so they may in turn better serve the poorest and the members. The rapid growth of the Society soon favoured the transfer of financial resources from wealthy areas to others where the existing Conferences had difficulty coping with natural disasters or human catastrophes. Later, in the 20th century, the Society started to transfer important resources from the Conferences of wealthy countries to those with fewer resources. However, at the beginning while the aid was punctual, it was limited to any single catastrophe that may have occurred. On later occasions, aid was no longer limited to single disasters and developed into a constant and smooth relationship between the two Conferences or Councils: the donor and the beneficiary."

Soon an International Twinning Manual will be available at the Council General.



Twinning France - Cameroun

AGA 2007 - Program

2007 NATIONAL ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY KELOWNA, BC PROGRAMME AND ITINERARY

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20

10:00 am -10:00 pm	Registration & Hospitality-	Monashee Lounge
10:00 am - 4:00 pm	Optional Wine Tour	tba
8:00 am - 10:00 pm	Airport Shuttle	As required
5:30 pm	Dinner	Sun Room

THURSDAY, JUNE 21

8:00 am - 10:00 pm	Airport Shuttle	As required
7:00 am -7:15 am	Rosary	Arts 103
7:15 am - 7:45 am	Mass	Arts 103
7:30 am - 8:45 am	Breakfast	Sun Room
8:15 am – 8:30 am	Opening Prayer & Remarks	Sun Room
8:00 am - 5:00 pm	Registration,	Arts Atrium
10:00 am – 5:00 pm	Hospitality Room	Arts Atrium
	National Sales Table	Arts Atrium
9:00 am- 5:00 pm	National Board Meeting	Arts Classroom
9:00 am – 10:30 am	Workshops – Session I	5 Arts Classrooms
10:30 am – 11:00 am	Nutrition Break	Arts Foyer
11:00 am – 12:00	Workshops – Session II	5 Arts Classrooms
12:00 -1:15 pm	Lunch	Sun Room
1:30 pm-3:00 pm	Workshops – Session III	5 Arts Classrooms
3:00 pm- 3:30 pm	Nutrition Break –	Arts Foyer
3:30 pm- 4:30 pm	Workshops – Session IV	5 Arts Classrooms
5:30 pm – 6:30 pm	Dinner	Sun Room
8:00 pm	Welcome Reception	Multi-Purpose Room, lower level of Student Centre
8:30 pm	Official Welcoming	

FRIDAY, JUNE 22

7:00 – 7:15 am	Rosary	Arts 103
7:15 am - 7:45 am	Mass	Arts 103
7:30 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast	Sun Room
8:00am – 4:00 pm	Registration	Arts Atrium
10:00 am- - 4:00 pm	Hospitality Room	Arts Atrium

AGA 2007 - Program

FRIDAY JUNE 22 (CONT)

10:00 am- 2:00 pm	National Sales Table	Atrium in Arts Bldg
9:00 am – 10:30 am	Official Opening and Keynote Address	Grand Theatre
10:30 am - 11:00 am	Nutrition Break	Arts Atrium
10:45 am - 12:00	Workshops – Sessions III	Arts Building
12:00 – 1:30 pm	Lunch	Sun Room
	Spiritual Advisors Luncheon	tba
1:30 pm– 3:30 pm	National Committee Meetings	Grand Theatre SSC 026
	Strategic Planning	
	&/Provincial/Regional Meetings tba	
3:30 pm - 4:15 pm	Nutrition Break –	Arts Foyer
5:00 pm	Buses Leave for Father Pandosy Mission	Tours en route
6 :15 pm	Arrival at and Tour of Father Pandosy Mission	
6:30 pm	Rosary of Service at Father Pandosy Mission	
7:00 pm	Dinner and Social at St. Charles Garnier Parish	

SATURDAY, JUNE 23

7: 30 am – 9 am	Breakfast	Sun Room
8:00 am -3:00 pm	National Sales Table	Arts Atrium
	Hospitality Room	Arts Atrium
9:00 am -10:30 am	Provincial/Regional Reports	Grand Theatre SSC 026
10:15 am	Quebec City 2008 Presentation	Grand Theatre SSC 026
10:30-10:45 am	Coffee	location tba
10:45 am - 12:00	National Committee Reports	Grand Theatre SSC 026
12:00 – 1:30 pm	Lunch	Sun Room
1:30 pm - 3:00 pm	Statutory Meeting	Grand Theatre SSC 026
	Closing Remarks by National President	
	Introduction of New President and Executive	
4:45 pm	Buses leave for Immaculate Conception Parish	
5:30 pm	Mass at Immaculate Conception Parish	
	Commissioning to follow Mass	
7:15 pm	Buses return to UBCO	
7:45 pm	Banquet at UBCO	
	Entertainment and Dance to follow	

SUNDAY, JUNE 24

7:00 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast	Sun Room
As required	Departure from Residences	Monashee Lounge
	Hospitality Room	Monashee Lounge



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GROUP RESERVATION FORM

Please complete the following Reservation Form and return it by mail or fax with your deposit. – Or better yet phone our Toll Free Number Reservations are not definite until confirmed by our office. by the Conference Centre. A confirmation letter will be emailed or mailed to the address below upon receipt of reservation request.

Name: _____ Address: _____ City: _____

Prov./State: _____ PC/ZIP: _____ Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Name of Group/Organization: Society of St. Vincent de Paul Annual General Assembly June 20-24, 2007

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Room Type	# Rooms	Arrival Date	Departure Date	Room Rate	Deluxe ✓
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Single Room – 1 single bed and desk, shared washroom facilities down the hall				\$25 May - June \$29.25 w/taxes	N/A
Quad Apartment – 4-bedroom apartment, each bedroom has a 1 single bed and desk, sharing a kitchen and private bathroom, with shower.				\$100 May - June \$117.00 w/tax	N/A
Studio – 1 room studio with 2 single beds or 1 queen bed, a kitchen and a private bath with shower.				\$60 May - June \$70.20 w/taxes	\$75 May - June \$87.75 w/taxes
1 Bedroom Apartment – 1 queen or 2 single beds in the bedroom, a hide-a-bed in the living room, with a kitchen and full bath.				\$80 May - June \$93.80 w/taxes	\$95 May - June \$111.15 w/taxes \$122.85 w/taxes

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Kitchens (except for the deluxe rooms) are not equipped with plates and cooking utensils. They may be rented for a small fee. Roll away beds are available for an additional \$10.00 per night and can be used in the Quad or 1-bedroom Apartments only. We recommend that roll away beds and kitchen kits be reserved in advance to ensure availability.

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In order to confirm your reservation a credit card guarantee or a deposit of the first night room and tax is required. For cancellations within 48 hours of arrival, a one night room & tax charge will be processed. Full payment is due upon arrival. Cheques make payable to UBCO Conference Services.

Please Circle Payment Method: Master Card Visa Cheque
Card #: _____ Expiry: _____ Deposit Paid: \$ _____

We look forward to welcoming you to UBCO!