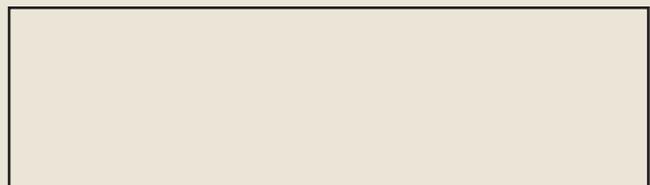


175th anniversary - SSVp

Vincenpaul-Canada

"Come and Work in the Vineyard"

Return Address:
National Council of Canada
1247 Kilborn Place
Ottawa ON
K1H 6K9



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SOCIETY OF
SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CANADA

MISSION

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

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The National Council of Canada's website has been updated. It contains a vast array of useful information for Vincentians. We therefore invite you to visit the site at www.ssvp.ca.

In the "National Council" section, you will find: the description of our logo, and our mission and values; you will see pictures of our Board members, the SSVP organizational chart, and the statistics and annual report for the year 2006-2007. That section also gives you access to the "Operations Manual", most elements of which are downloadable.

The next section is called "National President's Newsletter". The last text published in the Vincenpaul Canada appears in the section, and the former texts may be downloaded.

The "Spirituality" section presents a different reflection every month. Former texts may always be downloaded. Leaflets for the Blessed Frederic Ozanam feast day mass (September 9) and Saint Vincent de Paul feast day mass (September 27) are available at all times, as well as the leaflets for the Ceremony for the Installation of a President, and the Spiritual Advisor's Handbook.

Further on, in the "Vincentian Life" section, we present the special projects. It presently contains an article and pictures on expansion in the Far North. If you are currently participating in a project and wish to share your experience with us, send us your text and pictures and we will post them. In that same section, you may read the history of the SSVP and see a photo album of our various events. We also post obituaries and intercessions for

Vincentians. Do not hesitate to contact us by e-mail at the following address: editor@ssvp.ca.

Another section is dedicated to young Vincentians.

As for the "Upcoming Events" section, it contains everything you need to know about the AGA. You will find the invitation letter, the programme, as well as the registration form.

The "Forms to Download" section provides you with several documents to download, such as aggregation or institution requests, request for a business number, and all twinning forms. The SSVP leaflet is available as well. Please note that a new SSVP leaflet will soon be available. Keep an eye on our site.

Furthermore, you may consult the magazine archives in PDF format, under the "Vincenpaul-Canada" section.

The last section, "Promotional Items", contains pictures of various articles sold by the National Council, as well as a downloadable order form.

Finally, you will find links to other Vincentian sites, and contact information for the SSVP across Canada. If you wish to add a link to your site, or contact information for your Conference or Council, please let us know at: editor@ssvp.ca.

Enjoy your visit!

Penny's Piece

Dear Brother and Sister Vincentians

*Blessed are they who mourn,
for they shall be comforted*
- Matt 5:3-10

First and foremost, on behalf of my family, and myself I want to express our sincerest thanks and appreciation to all of you for the caring and support we received surrounding the death of my son Brian. The outpouring of prayers, Masses, flowers, cards and donation was indeed appreciated and comforting. It gave us the strength we needed to celebrate the 43 years of Brian's gift to all of us. His son, Tanner, who turned 16 the 27th of October, was very much a gentleman, caring for all who came to visit. He continues to do very well, and we are all very proud of him.

As per our Mission/Values, I can certainly say that we have exemplified what it means to "come together as a family". My dear brothers and sisters...thank you!

Board of Directors



In November we held our first two-day meeting. It was exciting to welcome everyone. The Friday was "Board Orientation Day". We came together to pray and be fed spiritually by Msgr. Peter Schonenbach who

conducted a mini spiritual retreat that included prayer and discussion. This was followed by introduction of other board members and staff and then, presentation regarding the role and function each of us has in our capacity as a member of the board. Each committee chairperson outlined the role of his or her committee, and staff presented office functions. Everyone shared how all members of the board can contribute to the success of their work. Regional presidents shared their experiences and defined what the pressures were in their regional areas.

The board members also had the opportunity to meet the staff. As well, Nicole and Joanne had a chance to put faces to names. Staff also presented the functions of their roles as administrative assistants. Everyone had the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback, all in the effort to make the flow of communications smoother and more efficient for all concerned.

As the day progressed, we took the time required to review parliamentary procedure to help meetings to be conducted efficiently. As we all know, with each new president comes a style of administration with which all members need to become acquainted. To that end, as the new president, I reviewed expectations that will enhance timelines and reports for meetings and facilitate communication.

The day was completed with small group discussions related to identifying and setting administrative goals for the coming year.

Everyone stated that they enjoyed the day and found the experience most



*Penny Craig,
President, National Council*

worthwhile.

*Our lives begin to end the day
we become silent about
things that matter.*

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Saturday, the official board meeting was held. This day included guest speaker Joe Gunn from Ottawa who is well experienced in the role of advocacy. This is an important aspect of the Society's work that requires education and formalization. Joe assisted us with information related to the role of advocacy and how we, as an organization, can and should prepare ourselves to conduct advocacy. We learned what advocacy is and what it is not; how to choose the areas where we can make our voices heard effectively. We had the opportunity to share and ask questions.

National Audit

As reported previously, we have been conducting an audit of all of our conferences and councils in Canada. This is a very important aspect of our Society in Canada. Not only does it justify our standing at the International Executive level, but also helps to establish our credibility throughout Canada as a true representative and Voice of the Poor. Of

Penny's Piece

course, it is always important for statistical purposes for government reporting and processing any grant applications. All regional presidents are hard at work on this project. It is hoped that a final report can be presented at the AGA 2008 in Quebec City.

*If love is a fire,
then zeal is its flame*

- Vincent de Paul

International Council General

In November, Canada was invited to attend the International Executive Meeting in Paris France. The invitation came from the international president José Ramón Díaz-Torremocha. This meeting provided the opportunity for both of us to meet, as well as for me to learn the process at the international level.

The International Executive Meeting brought forth reports from Vincentians all over the world. The depth of commitment by these individuals was truly awesome. Of course, the usual issues and concerns about reaching those who need us are evident from everyone. As we all know a lot depends on finances. The ICG is in the same position that all councils are in, dependent on conferences and lower councils for support. During the budget deliberations, in an effort to move toward a balanced budget, so many outreach line items were sacrificed. There were very concerned hearts regarding how to reach those who need us. President José Ramón will curtail traveling; coordinators will not be able to meet with the councils they serve. Administration will be streamlined, and the list goes on.

The most important message out of

that session was that out of 144 countries, only 38 – 40 could offer financial support to ICG to carry on its functions. I think Canada must evaluate its level of contribution to ICG and assist our brothers and sisters in everyway it can. It was interesting to note that small countries that can hardly afford to keep themselves going were sending their contribution. As I always say...like the loaves and fishes...if we give we will receive. Freely you have received, Freely give!

I have to say that traveling to Paris was an experience. I was accompanied by past president Ellen Schryburt. Ellen, of course, knew most people attending, so this was most helpful. It was so meaningful to witness the proceedings with brothers and sisters from all over the world. To put names to faces and understand that there really is no difference in work among those present except for distance and the degree of poverty. There were presidents or representatives from places like New Zealand, Africa, Thailand, Brazil and even from China. There was some excitement at the report that there were two or three conferences working in China. While it is not advertised, they do work quietly and spiritually.

Mr. President was very spiritual in his proceedings with those present. He was very concerned about the significance and presence of the Society throughout the world.

We had the opportunity to meet Ernesto Balladares from Nicaragua. He wanted me to thank everyone for the generous support Canada gave for the repair of the X-ray machine module. They are so very grateful to each of you!

When there was time, both Ellen and I went to visit the church where St. Vincent de Paul is exposed in a silver casket. He is visible through the glass front where he is laid, high up in the front of the church above the altar. We climbed the stairs to the area and I took the opportunity to view his incorrupt body closely. What an experience! His heart is exposed high on the altar in the Chapel of the Miraculous Medal. Again, what an awesome experience!

*“Hunt down poverty in order to
give humanity its dignity”*

- Sr Rosalie Rendu

We also visited a good friend and collaborator of Saint Vincent, St. Louise de Marillac, (1591 – 1660) in the church of the Miraculous Medal. This chapel is located on rue du Bac. She is also exposed incorrupt in a silver and glass casket. Again, history came alive and again what an experience! I thought that this was a wonderful way to begin my own presidency. I hope that the graces of wisdom, understanding and strength would be mine to share with everyone back home.

The other exciting and historic moment was to see the chair in which the Blessed Virgin sat when she visited Sister Catherine Labouré (1806 – 1876). As you may know, Sister Catherine was a Daughter of Charity. She saw the Blessed Virgin, she saw Christ present in the Eucharist, she saw the heart of St. Vincent de Paul. But, more than anything, she lived the “Gospel Message daily and simply! The body of St. Catherine was found intact in 1933 and transferred to the Chapel, underneath the Virgin of the Globe.



“The poor people are dying of hunger and are damned”
- Saint Vincent de Paul

We had taken the time to also walk down the historic rue Mouffetard. One could just envision the activities of Sister Rosalie, Frederic and his companions. Sister Rosalie was a heroic and very significant woman in 19th Century Paris. She was loved and highly thought of by all the ordinary people of the Mouffetard District.

Finally, we visited Notre Dame de Paris church. We were truly impressed with its historic beauty while we attended Mass. Of course I will not say how Vincentian I was when someone stole my wallet while in the church!

AGA 2008

As we all know by now the Annual General Assembly will be held in Ville de Beaupré, June 18 -22, 2008. The theme is “I will show you my faith by my works, let us go to the poor...”. Those are the famous words that got everyone excited and moved to action to serve the needs of the poor. The planning committee has been working most diligently to

ensure that each of you attending will be most welcome. In order for this theme to be meaningful we should keep the words of Vincent de Paul uppermost in our minds:

I should not judge the poor according to their exterior nor by their apparent capacities...but turn the medal and you will see by the light of Faith that the Son of God is represented to us through these poor people...He who hardly had the appearance of a human being in his passion.
- Saint Vincent de Paul

I look forward to welcoming you during this special celebration of the 175 years of the Society and its work with the poor. It is hoped that we will welcome our international president, José Ramón Díaz-Torremocha as well.

Please remember, accommodations are limited because of the Eucharistic Congress which coincides with the 400th anniversary of the city off Quebec. It will be a humming, and yet fun place!

Call for workshops: If there are any topics related to the theme that could be presented, please contact Nathalie for room and AV requirements.

Easter Message

The Easter season is a very special time for all Vincentians. It is throughout this period of the liturgical calendar that we have a unique opportunity to reflect about what it truly means to be “people of the water and the towel”.

We learn much from John’s gospel as

Christ demonstrates exactly what he means by “serving”. When we can learn to shed the “old self” in favour of the new mantle, or the “new self in Christ”. This time can be viewed as a time of renewal and rebirth. A time for re energizing our spirit and commitment to the Vincentian way of life so that we may serve “Christ in the poor” with love, respect, justice and joy!”

I pray that each and every Vincentians will have and take the opportunity to pray for the graces needed to take up your towel, pour the water, cleanse the spirit and smile with joy as you move through all of your daily activities as members of the Vincentian Family.

May each of you and your family have a blessed and healthy Easter season.

Remember, as St Louise de Marillac pointed out “We must love them tenderly and respect them deeply”.

As your president, I ask that you leave everyone you serve with a measure of hope!

“...all one in truth and charity”

Penny Craig
President, National Council
of Canada

Quiz

A FEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE QUIZ ON THE INTERNATIONAL WEBSITE:

Which are the main virtues of the Vincentian?

There are five: simplicity; humility; gentleness; unselfishness; zeal

The Rule (2.5.1) invites us to imitate Saint Vincent de Paul in each of these virtues « that are the essence of a real love and respect towards the most disadvantaged ».

Does the SSVP depend on the Catholic hierarchy?

No. If she is not « of the Church », the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is nonetheless « in the Church ». She maintains a relation of filial respect with the bishops. In particular, the bishop must be consulted for any admittance of a non catholic volunteer in the Society. At all levels, the officials, all lay, keep the Church hierarchy informed about their activities and, if it comes to it, request their advice. One of the merits of the SSVP is to have contributed to develop a « lay apostolate » within the Church.

For you, what does the word « Rule » mean?

The Rule is a document that determines, with legal force, the main elements in the life of a religious community. The most known Rule is St. Benedict's one (540). The SSVP provided herself with a Rule so that the life of the Conferences and Councils, and the conception of the service to the poor could be ruled by principles of religious nature, common to all members.

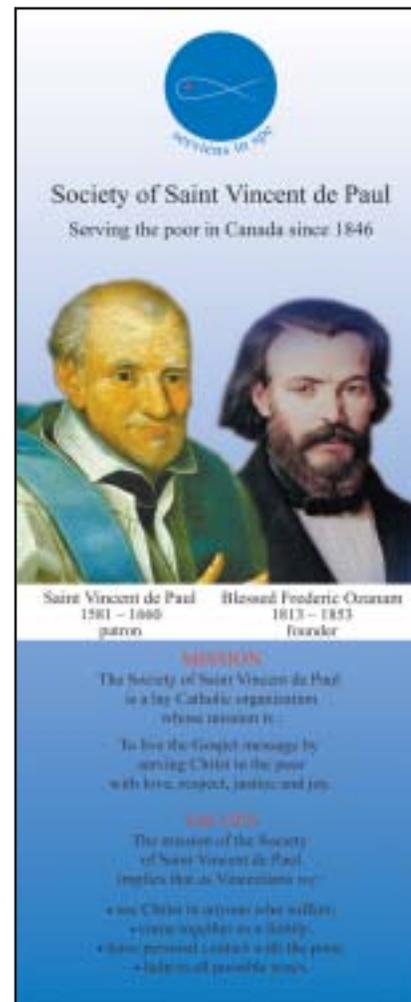
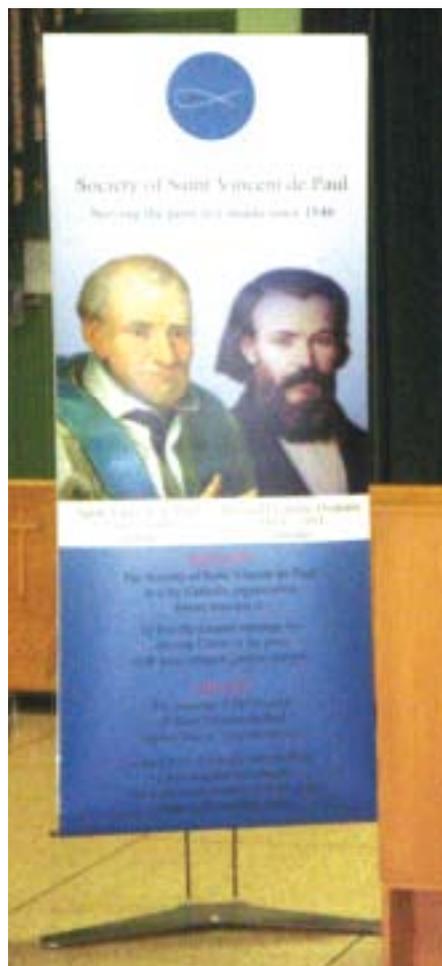
All in all, the Rule is a set of life regulations that Vincentians throughout the world wish to apply in their daily lives; it is aimed to the service to the most disadvantaged.

Sign Holder

The SSVP National Council has invested in a sign holder that can hold a 750 mm (29,5") wide by 1800 mm (70,9") high roll-up banner. The unilingual roll-up banner includes the elements shown on this page. If necessary, it is possible to assemble the sign holder to display a French language roll-up banner on one side, and an English language roll-up banner on the other side.

The display unit is solid, easy to assemble and to move, thanks to a practical carrier bag. It will certainly enhance your future events.

The National Council makes the sign holder available to you, provided you cover transportation costs. To reserve it, please contact the National Council office in Ottawa.





Mgr Peter Schonenbach
Spiritual advisor, National Council

Some years ago, I had occasion to spend a short time in Hong Kong. During an early morning walk in the business district, I noticed work being done on the walls of the first floors of a new high-rise. The scaffolding used by the workers was constructed of bamboo held together with lashing.

Why is bamboo so strong? It grows quickly and is composed of short cylinders one on top of the other. Rather than being one long

cylinder the plant is 'cut' at short intervals. These 'cuts' are the secret of the bamboo's strength.

Our spiritual life becomes strong if we intersperse our day with such prayer 'cuts'. They need not be long spiritual exercises but they should be times of deep spiritual communion.

The image of the bamboo in relation to prayer was first published in the Japanese book INORI by the Augustinian Father Ichimo Okumura in 1974.

The text was translated into English in 1994 and published by ICS Publications, Washington DC, under the title *Awakening to Prayer*.

As Vincentians, I believe this can be a useful image. Without a disciplined approach to bringing

prayer into our life, we will merri-ly go about our business as hollow social activists. Vincentian work is to bring Christ to the poor. It does not mean bringing a theologian to the poor. What I am saying is captured best by an experienced Vincentian, who shared during a meeting, that every time he visits a destitute person, before knocking on the door, he recites an Our Father. That is a prayer 'cut' bringing strength to our work.

I conclude with a short quote from *Awakening to Prayer*:

To say that 'everyday life itself is prayer' is like a bamboo without joints. The important thing about prayer is not duration but to **interrupt** what one is doing.

Mgr Peter Schonenbach,
Spiritual Advisor,
National Council

SUBSCRIPTION COUPON

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SSVP National Council, 1247 Kilborn Place, Ottawa ON K1H 6K9

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Vincenpaul-Canada 2008 Edition - Subscription - 20^{\$}

175th anniversary - SSVF

On April 23, 2008, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul will celebrate its 175th anniversary.

We take this opportunity to present you a summary of the history, origin, development and presence of our Society across the world.

From the Conference of History to the Conference of Charity

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was created in Paris by a group of Catholic students, called the Conference of History, led by Emmanuel Bailly, founder of the Catholic Tribune and colleague of Félicité Robert de Lammenais.

During this period, just after the revolution of July 1830, the conflict of ideas was lively. Bailly brought together some Christian students to explore questions of history, law, literature and philosophy. Among them was a young law student from Lyons, Frédéric Ozanam.



E. Bailly

At this time, at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in France, Ozanam believed fervently in the deep convergence between the

Gospel, the 1789 declaration of the Rights of Man and the principles of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity."

The discussions were sometimes stormy. One day, a student, praising the scepticism of Lord Byron, objected: "Christianity has done wonders in the past; but now it is dead! You, who boast of being Catholics, what do you do? What are your activities, activities which prove your faith and which might persuade us to adapt it?"

Impressed by this opposing viewpoint, Ozanam and a few friends reflected: "Let us not speak so much of charity - let us rather do it and let us help the poor!" Auguste le Taillandier, one of the group, suggested they combine as Christians, not just to speak but to act, namely to found a Conference of Charity. He proposed this thought of his to Emmanuel Bailly and, through him, to depute Frédéric Ozanam to promote the idea of founding an undertaking for the young which would embody the ideal of charity by visiting the poor. Bailly approved their idea, giving them as a meeting place, the editorial office of the Catholic Tribune while also agreeing to lead the new group.

Birth of the Society of Saint-Vincent de Paul

The first meeting took place at 38 Rue de Saint Sulpice on 23 April 1833, the Feast of Saint George, at eight o'clock in the evening, comprising by order of age:

Emmanuel Bailly, 42

Paul Lamache, 23, second year law student, doctor's son.

Félix Clavé, 22, student, teacher's son.

Auguste le Taillandier, 22, second year law student, merchant's son.

Jules Devaux, 22, second year law student, doctor's son.

François Lallier, 20, second year law student, doctor's son.

Frédéric Ozanam, 20, second year law student, doctor's son.

Emmanuel Bailly headed the group with Jules Devaux as treasurer.

The principle of a weekly meeting was laid down and the fundamental activity of visiting the poor in their abodes was agreed.



Sister Rosalie Rendu

The group placed itself under the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul and under the protection of the Virgin Mary.

The team approached and became in close touch with a Daughter of Charity, Sister Rosalie Rendu who organized the distribution of needs from the office of Charity in the area under the Rue Mouffetard, then in the XII municipal district of Paris.

The collaboration continued and certain members of the first Conference, established at Saint Sulpice, obtained the singularly official title of "Charity Commissioner" on 1 February 1834.

Astronomic growth

Frédéric Ozanam wrote on 24 July 1834 to one of his cousins: "I would like to see all young people, with head and heart, unite for some charitable work and that a vast, generous association for the relief of the working classes be formed". His wish was not long in being realized: from November to December of the same year, the group comprised more than a hundred members. It became necessary to split up, not without hesitation and regret. Two sections were established on 24 January 1835, Ozanam becoming vice president of the first. The provinces followed: the students leaving after their studies, founded Conferences in Nimes on 10 February 1835, at Lyons on 16 August 1836, followed by Rennes, Nantes and so on. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was evidently growing. Faced with this growth, it was necessary to be organized. The first Rule, the general lines of which were written by Bailly and the articles by Lallier, was promulgated on 8 December 1835, Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

After the provinces, the contagion crossed the frontiers:

1842 Rome

1843 Belgium, Scotland, Ireland

1844 England

1846 Germany, Holland, Greece, Turkey, the U.S. of America, Mexico

1847 Switzerland, Canada

1850 Austria, Spain

It became urgent to create a Council of Direction which took the name of General Council, and which has been kept ever since. The Bulletin of the Society, which was to form the link between members, began in 1848. Thus, the wish of Ozanam came to pass: "I would like to envelope the whole world within a ring of charity."

Twenty seven years after its foundation, the Society could count, worldwide, around 2500 Conferences and 50,000 members. Its budget represented about four million French francs at the time. In 1913, 8,000 Conferences, 133,000 members, fifteen million French francs. There were thirty three countries represented during the 1933 centenary of the Society, 12,000 Conferences and around 200,000 members throughout the world.

In 1983, the 150th anniversary, there were 38,000 Conferences and 750,000 members.

And now, for the 175th anniversary, there are 144 countries represented, 50,238 Conferences and 703,093 members throughout the world.

Men and women, the young and not so young

It is certain, that given the Society was initially founded by young students, Bailly excepted, its composition and the pyramid of ages have evolved over the years, and its members are now recruited from the most divergent backgrounds and age groups.

Initially, women were almost entirely absent from the Universities and did not, conse-

quently, participate in the Society's creation. Nevertheless, despite the existence of the Dames de Charité founded by Saint Vincent de Paul himself and those of Louise de Marillac for young girls, they wished to join the Society and adhere to the Rules fixed by the founders. It was much more natural that the wives of Confreres should help their husbands when the situation of those being visited made the presence of a man a shade indelicate.

The mixing of the sexes at the time was a long way from being customary. This is why in 1856, a branch for lady members of the Society was formed in Bologna. The times having changed, and the constant presence of the young is certainly not considered strange, the two branches were merged on 20 October 1967, at the time of the International Assembly in Paris, sanctioning a factual situation which witnessed men and women sharing the same ideal and the same meetings.

It was in the same spirit that the merger took place on 15 March 1969 in France of the Society and the Movement of the Louise de Marillac. This movement was launched in 1909, encouraged by the Abbé Lenet, priest in charge of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, Paris, as an auxiliary of the Dames de la Charité.

Whither now?

The Society has undergone many trials, revolutions, wars and natural disasters. From 1861 to 1870, the circular Persigny, prescribing the dissolution of Councils implied the

175th anniversary - SSVp

placing in obeisance of the Society in France. The world conflict of 1939-1945 was murderous, leading to the disappearance of many Conferences. The Society has been exposed to anti-Christian ideologies which have forced Conferences in some countries to cancel their meetings, which have been considered subversive while they and their work became clandestine.

Their ideal, however, has been preserved as news reaching the General Council can confirm. Sadly, the Council cannot restore these suffering brethren to working order. Let us not lose sight, regardless, that this situation persists in various places.

The changes which have taken place in the last few years in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, have led to the Conferences in those parts of the world blossoming and their growth continues.

Nowadays, the Society of Saint-Vincent de Paul is present and active in 140 countries on the 5 continents. The distribution shows two thirds of the Conferences to be in developing countries; by this fact and its spirit of brotherly sharing, it

is a forerunner in thought and action which favours development with Third World partners.

It can be said that the growth of the Society is in response to the evident needs which vary according to the times and countries. "Faithful to its Founders, it is the Society's constant concern to renew and adapt itself to the changing conditions of the world... no work of charity is strange to the Society. Its work involves all forms of aid by individual contact in order to promote the dignity and integrity of man" (fundamental principles of the Rule of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.)

Vincentians must endeavour without ceasing to look beyond individual planning - the normal framework of activity - to institutional planning; the enlarged framework for all humanitarian thinking. Simple goodwill is not enough. It must give way to serious beneficial work, lucid, organized and respecting the dignity of others, and capable of aiding the poor to emancipate themselves from their own impoverishment.



DEATH OF ERNESTO BALLADARES, TERRITORIAL VICE-PRESIDENT FOR SOUTH AMERICA

The territorial Vice-President for South America, Mr. Ernesto Balladares, passed away in the city of Leon, Nicaragua on January 27.

Ernesto had been seriously ill for a few weeks, although a slight improvement in recent days seemed to indicate a possible recovery. However, God finally called him home.

Mr. Balladares is mentioned in Penny Craig and Kathy Weswick's articles published in this edition of Vincenpaul-Canada. He was president of the National Council of Nicaragua, and was its treasurer at the time of his death. Canada and Nicaragua are currently twinned and we have always had an excellent relationship with Mr. Balladares.

To Vincentians who wish to share his family's grief, especially his spouse Yolanda and daughter Maria Celia, we give you Maria Celia's e-mail address, to which you can write:
maceballadaresg@hotmail.com

SSVP PROPOSED FOR "NOBEL PEACE PRIZE" 2008



In December 2007, the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was proposed for the Nobel Peace Prize 2008.

The Society was proposed to the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo, Norway by the FEBESP (Federation of Charity, Philanthropy and Religious Institutions of the State of Sao Paulo, Brazil), for the extraordinary work done in the last 175 years. The work is presently done by over 700,000 members in 144 countries.



**GEORGE MANLY MUIR
(1807-1882)**

George-Manly Muir was born on April 16, 1807, in Upper Canada, in Ontario, from a military father, Scottish and Presbyterian, and a Catholic mother. He studies in Montreal, at the Saint-Sulpice College. In Québec, he weds Sophie Melvin Place, also born from a Protestant father and a Catholic mother.

Mr. Muir becomes Senior Clerk at the Quebec legislative assembly, where he remains from 1867 to 1874. The Muirs, parents of an only child, lose her at a young age. They then decide to dedicate their life to charity. Mr. Muir will remain member of a Conference of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul his entire life. He visits prisons and is particularly concerned with former women prisoners, trying to set up a shelter on their behalf. On January 11, 1850, under his direction, Mrs. Roy, born Marie Josephite Fitzbach, opens the modest Sainte-Madeleine shelter. Mr. Muir and Mrs. Fitzbach are at the origin of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

Mr. Muir becomes a member of the Montreal Society in 1848, the year

the first Conference was founded there, through the inspiration of Bishop Bourget. The Bishop had heard about the Society on a visit to Paris and brought back a copy of the Rule and Manual of the Society. In 1849, when Mr. Muir's work brought him to Quebec, he requested admittance to the Quebec Conference and was unanimously admitted.

A year later, his employment takes him to Toronto, and he is asked by the Quebec Council to try and found a Conference in that city. Once in Toronto, Mr. Muir attends daily Mass at St. Michael's Cathedral and notices several other men, also attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion daily. One by one, he approaches them and convinces them to meet and discuss the creation of a Conference. As a result, the first Ontario Conference (the Conference of Charity of Our Lady of Toronto), is founded at St. Michael's Cathedral in Toronto, on November 11, 1850. Mr. Muir is soon transferred back to Quebec.

In 1864, he is once again behind the creation of a school under the patronage of Saint-Vincent de Paul, on behalf of poor children who do not attend regular schools. Twenty years later, he is part of a group of people who invite the Paris Saint Vincent Brothers to come and take charge of that small school located on Côte d'Abraham.

He becomes in 1866 the first National President of the Canadian SSVP Conferences. Finally, as his one last work, he resides in the summer in Notre-Dame des Laurentides, in a poor district, and

he asks the Sisters of the Good Shepherd to take charge of a school that he builds, as well as the Saint-Pierre chapel.

He passes away on July 7, 1883.

This year we celebrate the 200th birth anniversary of that hero of charity and the 125th anniversary of his death.

Obituaries

On behalf of John XXIII Conference members in Gatineau, it is with great sadness that I must inform you of the death of one of its members,
Mrs. Jeannine Labrie.

Mrs. Labrie joined our Conference in November 2005 and, after a lengthy fight against cancer, she died at the end of October 2007. The funeral took place in the Saint-François de Sales church in Gatineau, on October 27, 2007.

Claire Cayer

Mr. Erik Ole Hassel,
President of the Chicoutimi Central Council, died of cancer last January 3.

Our sympathy to his family and friends.

Confeder@tio News
News from the Society
around the world...
N° 9 – 26 September 2007

Natural disasters July – September 2007

Flooding in Africa, India and Bangladesh, earthquake in Peru, storms in Central America and the Caribbean... in the last three months, the planet has suffered from many natural disasters, and as usual, it is the poorest of the poor who have been most affected, who have lost the little that they had.

Wherever the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is present, it responds with its modest resources, as well as with the immense power of its love, its faith and its local presence. It responds first by providing emergency help (distributing food, medication, drinking water and clothing for example), then and most importantly by planning the provision of long term support (reconstruction, care of orphaned children, etc.)

The extent of the damage is such that the generosity of Vincentians throughout the world is vital to the work of the Society in the field, and



hence to the survival of countless people. Without your generosity, it would be helpless to deal with such distress.

The Fury of Nature

At the beginning of July, the area of Bandiagara, in Mali, was affected by very serious floods, destroying houses, infrastructures and harvests. Shortly after, and throughout August, in Burkina Faso, the rainfall was very heavy and destructive, breaking all records and flooding considerable parts of the country. Water, so often scarce in this Saharan country, became a source of distress, affecting every region. Tens of thousands lost all they had: thousands of houses were destroyed, crops lost, stores of vital necessities used up, scores of people died.

The heavy rains affected many other African countries during the same period. Official statistics from the Sudan show that as a result of the rains, 119 people died, 200,000 were made homeless, 300 were injured, 36,000 farm animals were killed and 42,000 hectares of crops destroyed, altogether affecting around 3 million people. Similarly, 25 districts in Uganda were affected, and almost 6 million people affected by the floods and the landslides they caused.

In total, 22 African countries have suffered from the effects of the torrential rains since July, from Ethiopia to Ghana, from Kenya to Togo, with one and a half million casualties, crops destroyed and



infrastructure ruined. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is present in most of these countries.

In Asia, the water has also caused huge amounts of damage. Bangladesh, the poorest country on the continent, and India, are the most seriously affected. 34 of Bangladesh's 68 regions were flooded in only a few days, affecting almost 12 million people. Huge numbers of homes, schools, markets and administration centres were destroyed; there are terrible shortages of food and drinking water, and disease is spreading fast.

The Bihar region of India is most seriously involved, with 6046 villages, and more than 12 million people affected, hundreds of thousands houses damaged or totally destroyed, and thousands of hectares of fields destroyed, harvests and crop reserves lost.

The American continent has also been involved in these catastrophes. During the night of August 28, a terrible earthquake struck Peru, especially the towns of Pisco, Ica, and Humay south of Lima. More than 500 people were killed and 1000 injured, around 35,000 affected by the destruction and collapse



of homes and other buildings. The « Villa Ozanam », a multi-purpose centre for young orphaned children, and the main special work of the Peruvian SSVP, suffered serious damage, but happily no one was injured.

In Nicaragua, the northern part of the country, home to many indigenous people, among the poorest in the country, was particularly badly affected. As an example, 99% of homes in the town of Sandy Bay were destroyed. In Honduras, official statistics report that over 32,000 houses were destroyed or damaged, tens of thousands of people had to be evacuated, and agriculture and cattle raising suffered terribly.

This is sadly only a brief overview of the damage caused by nature in the last few months.

Fast response

Once again, such tragedies are an opportunity for us to stress the courage, the commitment and the effectiveness of Vincentians in these countries, and although emergency aid is not the primary vocation of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, circumstances force our Brothers and Sisters to respond,

where they are, as fast as they can. Some use what they have on hand, others ask for help from the Council General. Such help can only be limited, since particularly for reasons of transparency and accounting, the CGI mainly works in the long term, especially since governments and major international institutions are normally present in the days immediately following these tragedies.

Hence in most of the countries affected, local Vincentians go to find the victims where they are, to evaluate the situation, and provide help, support and assistance to victims.

Vincentians in Mali for instance, immediately called on the Council General. Emergency aid (5000 euros) was quickly granted to provide essential supplies. This also happened for Bangladesh (5000 euros) and Peru. First aid here could only deal with the immediate need: food, clothing, care, etc.

In other countries, the initial phase was handled locally. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Sudan, together with the government and other organisations helped to provide material and personal assistance in collecting funds and material resources, then distributing this



to the victims: medication and medical resources, consultations, food for children, etc.

In India, the National council and the Central councils of the regions affected worked together to evaluate need, and funds were released to distribute rice, lentils and medication on a large scale.

In Honduras, the Society of St Vincent de Paul provided food to centres in the region, whose workload suddenly increased. In Burkina Faso, donations from National Council allowed most of the casualties to be rehoused in schools, and provided purchase of cereals. This too only gives a snapshot of the huge personal and financial efforts made by Vincentians in these regions, already impoverished before these catastrophes.



*Food distribution in Dhaka
-Bangladesh*

Longer term projects

We now have to think of the longer-term picture, and take advantage of the permanent presence of Vincentians locally. In each of these countries, when the media have already gone home, and there is still

not enough aid, our Vincentians are ready.

While in Mali the Society works hand in hand with Caritas, in other countries, Vincentians are often alone in dealing with the problems. The needs are huge and varied. The Society in Bangladesh, for example, gets no help other than from the Council General of the Confederation. Working with the dioceses of the affected regions, they were quickly able to evaluate needs as well as available resources and establish priorities. A full, well planned project was therefore presented to the CGI, which approved its funding. Across 5 different dioceses, it included building or repairing 500 houses, as well as supplying or restoring access to drinking water for 500 families, in 5 villages. This project will be completed within about a year, at a cost of around 111,000 euros.

In Burkina Faso, where donations from various organisations and institutions are still inadequate, needs are great. The Society of St Vincent de Paul, which has a good structural basis in this country, plans to supply mats, tents, blankets and clothes, school equipment, medication and mosquito nets as well as cereals. Housing is the most crucial requirement, and Burkinabé Vincentians intend to begin a house-building programme. Those needing accommodation, together with the Vincentians, in collaboration with the local and National SSVP Councils, the CGI and government departments, will provide the labour. The total budget of the

project submitted to CGI amounts 78,000 euros approximately.

Council General has also received a 22,100-euro project to organize the distribution of food, medicines and blankets to the affected people of Uganda. England and Wales Superior Council has already sent half the amount to Uganda, as its twin country. The rest is being considered at Council General.

In Peru, apart from the general help provided by Vincentians, the « Villa Ozanam » needs repair since significant cracks have appeared in several of the houses where the children live, and there is still a serious threat of collapse. The National Council is asking Council General for help in making these repairs, so the children can grow and develop in safety.

Some examples of Vincentian work

Here are a few examples of what the Society of St Vincent de Paul has been able to achieve in the past through your generosity, in these countries that have suffered natural disasters.

Following the tsunami in December 2004, after two years of work, Indian, Thai, Sri Lankan and Indonesian Vincentians have enabled several thousand children orphaned because of the tsunami to obtain normal schooling, and helped hundreds of families to find accommodation, or take up their working lives again, as the Society has been able to provide them with

boats, fishing or other equipment, or train for a new profession.

The hurricanes (Stan, Katrina) and tempests (Alpha, Gamma) of 2005 left their mark on Central America, but the Vincentians in Guatemala or Mexico were able to build dozens of houses, as in the Philippines, following the repeated mudslides in 2006, where the « SSVP Village » was built at St Bernard (opposite)

As ever, Council General would be completely helpless without the generosity of our brothers and sisters throughout the world. The Confederation could not support Vincentians in so many countries after this unprecedented wave of disasters without the mobilisation of such ever-ready financial resources.

From Council General...

On 3 September 2007, after many of these catastrophes had happened, but with more to come, the President General sent a special circular to all the member countries of the SSVP, covering a number of essential subjects. About the catastrophes, he wrote: I am asking, in the face of such suffering, that we all try to comfort them with our prayers, and relieve them with our financial help. As usual, the Council General was speaking to all Conferences around the world, through their Superior Councils, asking them to collect funds, which will then be sent out for careful distribution.

Council General has no resources

other than those it receives from Conferences and Councils for specific purposes.

Council General distributes only what you send. That's all.

Help us to support the Society

You can send your cheque to the National Council of Canada's office in Ottawa, with the mention "International emergency help" (you may also specify the country you want to help).

Confeder@tio News
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The Society needs to expand

Although it is already present in more than 140 countries, the Society of St Vincent de Paul wishes to establish itself in as many new countries as possible, because there is unfortunately nowhere in the world where poverty does not exist. For example, it recently established a Conference in Greece, a country with very few Catholics, after previously entering Kosovo in 2006. Let us focus today on two very special countries: Iraq, where the Society is being set up in the face of the terrible situation there, well known to the whole world, and China where the political situation impedes its implantation, but where the first efforts are being made with long term plans in mind.

SSVP at last in Iraq!

For many years now, despite the serious and ever-present problems of Lebanon and its population, along with the instability in the region, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has been trying to assist the many Iraqi refugees in the country. Its help has been given to several hundred families, driven out by repeated, intolerable violence practised against Christians in Iraq, together with the extreme difficulties of daily life in a country whose unhappy situation is well known throughout the world. The Society provides all kinds of help to these displaced people: food, school fees, arranging holiday celebrations, help for the elderly, etc.



Charity dinner for Irak's refugees

The everyday experience of Iraqi citizens consists of fatal explosions, assassinations, kidnapping, theft, etc. This daily violence results not just in loss of life and destruction of property but also in the departure of almost all humanitarian associations working there, especially since the members of these organizations have been targets of many bombings, kidnappings and murders. Only families unable to flee have stayed where they are, and their situation can only deteriorate,

with no prospect of improvement: violence, unemployment, sickness, etc., are all that remain for those who stay. Christians, who were already badly neglected by public services, are now completely ignored. They are also the target of the extremists who try to expel them by attacking churches, convents and homes. 75% of the Christian population has already fled, leaving everything behind them.

For several months now however, the Society in Lebanon has been providing the support needed to set up a conference in Baghdad, in Iraq, hoping that it will be the first of many. Faithful to the spirituality of Saint Vincent de Paul, the Lebanon SSVP has formed « the national committee of the SSVP in Iraq». It has thirteen members, including a journalist and graduates in management, auditing and information technology.

The purpose of the committee is to help poor families, especially Christian families, to establish themselves firmly in their own country. Their work takes several forms: a medical assistance programme (distributing medication, helping with hospital costs), especially for people suffering from chronic diseases or cancer, a programme to help needy and displaced families (housing, food aid), a programme to help rebuild and restore houses partially or completely destroyed, as well as a professional training programme and help in finding employment, catechesis programmes in parishes and

International

of course, a programme for visiting and sharing in old people's homes and shelters for the homeless.

Since July, Council General has been supporting this initial group, giving them 5000 euros to help start up their work: buying office furniture and equipment, and in particular helping those in distress: supplying medication, contributing to medical and surgery costs for victims of bombings, buying food aid, bedding or gas heaters for refugees, food and clothes for widows and orphans, etc.

The projects initiated by the Iraqi SSVP group are ambitious, to deal with tremendous needs.

“In order to cope with the flood of refugees, we have formed two conferences of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul: St Daniel’s conference, with eight members, in a region where Christians expelled from their homes have taken refuge, and the St Georges conference, with six members, in a region where there are also many refugees” says the President of Bagdad Conference to Albert Zoghbi, Lebanon SSVP President and to Marie-Françoise Salésiani-Payet, International Territorial Vice-President, claiming every Vincentians’ prayer.

The generosity of Vincentians around the world has meant that since September, Council General has been able to support a medical programme on a larger scale, as well as a food distribution programme, providing monthly rations

to around sixty poor or displaced families. The resources available are small, however, and the needs are huge, so once again we are relying on your solidarity and your generosity!

**Support them...
through individual or collective
prayer through information,
sharing it around you
through your donations, to CGI,
mentioning “solidarity”**

China... preparing the ground

Since there are no diplomatic links between Vatican and China, there are no SSVP conferences established in mainland China yet. The only SSVP conferences are in Hong Kong and Macau which are the Special Economic Zones of China.

Up to now, the Chinese Government does not allow any Society to be formed with connections abroad (SSVP is a worldwide Catholic charity organization which worries them). What can be done is to plant the seeds of the SSVP in various parts of mainland China. SSVP in Hong Kong is working with the Catholic Churches that are recognized by Chinese Government at the moment. In the past few years, the SSVP in Hong Kong has been supporting "Charity Communities" in the Dioceses of Guangdong Province (4 dioceses) to help the poor in China.

Bro. Dominic Cheung, a Senior SSVP member and Bro. John Lee, International Territorial Vice-President visited Northern China

(Tianjin, Chengde and Beijing of Hebei Province) from 5th October to 13th October. Fr. Joseph Loftus, CM who has been working in the northern part of China for over 8 years, arranged this trip. They were invited by both the Charity Communities of Laoxikai Church in Tianjin and Fr. Zhao of Chengde Diocese to share their experience of SSVP in serving the poor. With great support from the Central Council of Hong Kong, they brought along 20,000 ¥ to assist their work.. First, in Tianjin, the Vincentians met the leaders of the Charity community of the Church. They ran two sessions for sharing views about serving the poor, one for the parishioners (more than 50) and one for the leaders (more than 15) of the Charity Community.

They also visited one of the Homes for the Aged and some families served by the Charity Community. As they are not too well organized, the experience of the Vincentians is very useful to them. Fr. Zhao, a 30-year old priest running a parish with 7 churches, took them to Chengde City, about 300 km from Tianjin, Hebei Province. They met the Head of the Diocese (no bishop) with 5 priests working for him to cover an area of around 50,000sq.km. It is a poor diocese with about 40,000 Catholics. They went to Fr. Zhao's parish in Chengde Weichang that is



220km from Chengde City. They received a warm welcome from the parishioners. There are two Charity Communities, one for men (18 members) and one for women (22 members) at the church where they stayed. Here too, Bro. John Lee and Bro. Dominic Cheung held two sessions to share their SSVP experiences with one for the parishioners (more than 300 from various churches) and one for leaders (more than 50). Fr. Zhao is very keen to have a Charity Group in all the churches within his parish. He was very happy that Vincentians could share their experience with them. They visited some poor families, as they are in the remote part of the Chengde County. Fr. Zhao is very keen to adopt the spirit of SSVP in forming their Charity Groups.

On their way to Beijing, Fr. Loftus received confirmation from the offices of the Beijing Diocese that they could meet the new Bishop of Beijing, the Most Rev. Li Shan, who was installed on the 21st of September 2007. They met Rev Li Shan, the Chancellor of the Beijing diocese Fr. Zhang and Fr. Hou on the morning of October 12th. Rev. Li Shan was very interested in the work of SSVP for the poor and told them that there are some Charity Communities in the Parish of

Beijing Diocese. He invited them back to Beijing to exchange their experiences of SSVP in serving the poor with their parishes.

This is the first visit to the principal cities of Hebei Province in China by SSVP members. Their main aim is to plant the seed of the SSVP in this political centre in China. They left the fund they brought along to the priests of various dioceses for their work for the poor. Bro. John Lee has informed Fr. Zhang Liang, Mr. Ma Bao (Tianjin) and Fr. Zhao (Chengde Weichang) that if necessary, the SSVP can support their work for the poor if they required. However, the Charity Communities they visited were not ready to be established as SSVP conferences in either the practical or the political sense at this stage, but they do have great hopes for the future.

EMERGENCY: NEW NATURAL DISASTERS

The tragic series of events continue after the disastrous months of July to September. The tropical storm Noël has caused considerable damage in the Dominican Republic and in Haiti, as well as in Cuba, the Bahamas, and the state of Tabasco in Mexico, which has been devastated by floods.



Noël swept through 32 provinces of the country, destroying homes, roads, bridges and infrastructure, isolating very many villages and communities. It is very difficult to calculate the number of victims, but it is likely to be huge, especially as the rains are still falling. Without

financial resources, and because the affected areas are still inaccessible, the SSVP has not yet been able to act, but it is planning to distribute food, clothing, medicines and bedding, among other things, and then in the longer term hopes to be able to help with reconstruction needs.

In Haiti, thousands of people have had to seek shelter in schools, with no security or food, and in Cuba almost 30,000 people had to be evacuated, and are facing destruction and flooding.

In Mexico, estimates are of 250,000 to 400,000 victims of the floods in the state of Tabasco, in the south east of the country, who have lost their homes and everything they possess. All of the crops (bananas, oranges, maize, and sugarcane) were also destroyed. The Society in Mexico wants to help the victims as soon as possible, and as much as possible: drinking water, beds and sanitary products, medication, clothing, food and shelter, as well as reconstruction materials after that.

**As elsewhere, the Society
needs your help and
your generosity here!**

From Council General...

The second meeting of the Africa Commission of the Council General was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 22 to 24 September 2007, to approve projects and establish the rules for their implementation, to ensure their successful, long life. It brought together

members of the Commission and the Group coordinators, but not the national Presidents this time.



The members of the commission

The National presidents, representing their Councils, are responsible for the projects, and therefore have to prepare applications for support for their own project, to send to the Commission president, as well as to the Coordinator and the Territorial Vice-President, who must study them, make their comments and then validate them. The National presidents must then send these requests to the Commission President, who consults the members of the commission. Once approved, the requests are sent on to the Territorial Technical Commission, so that the funds can be released.

29 projects have been submitted. Shortage of funds means the Commission has been forced to accept only projects not exceeding 50,000€. 14 projects come into this category. It was decided that only one project per country would be approved. The 9 projects finally selected will be studied by the Technical Commission in November, with the total for all

these projects coming to 163,114€. The projects given preliminary approval by the Commission are very varied, although many are development projects relating to agriculture: Zambia and Liberia, for example, have suggested food-production projects, while Madagascar has produced a bee-keeping project, intended to train young unemployed people and young mothers in this trade, while Senegal has a pig-farming project.

There are often multiple advantages to farming projects, since they normally allow food to be produced for the very poor, while sometimes surplus production can be sold (giving self-sufficiency and even generating an income), or else they provide work for local people. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has put forward an original idea for craft work production, the profits from which would go to educational programmes the Society runs in the country.

In Eritrea, the plan is to provide 600 families with efficient, economical stoves, allowing them to make significant savings on energy in households where children and women work very hard to collect wood for heating.

Finally, other countries want to encourage the work of the Society directly: so Guinea-Bissau will benefit from the purchase of a vehicle for transporting the sick, as well as for transport and distribution of food, two very important works of the Society in this country. In Sao Tome and Principe, there will be a

Vincentian training project for strengthening Vincentian spirituality and charisma in the local Society, as well as for restructuring and reorganising the Society, seriously deficient at the moment, so that the Vincentians in this country can work effectively in the service of the poor.

We will of course keep you informed of the development of these projects and the work of the Commission.

Help us to support the Society

You can send your cheque to the National Council of Canada's office in Ottawa, with the mention "International emergency help" (you may also specify the country you want to help).

Important ...

The legal name of our organization is Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Even though we use the article "the" before the name in a text, we do not use that article when the name is used alone, for example in a document title or on a poster.

The only official acronym for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is "SSVP".



Kathy Weswick,
National Twinning Rep

EVEN YOUR NATIONAL BOARD HAS A TWIN

In December of 2004, the National Board passed a motion; “that the National Council of Canada is twinned with the Superior Council of Nicaragua, to whom we will send the funds that are collected in the black bag collections of the National Board and Executive Committee meetings, minimum amount of \$500.00.” These twinning funds are sent at the close of each financial year.

In October of 2007, we received an appeal from the treasurer of the National Council of Nicaragua, Ernesto Balladares. He wrote to ask us for “US \$3,000 in order for us to repair a module of X-rays...which burned one week ago (after 8 years of use)”. With that module, the SSVP conference, El Sagrario, of the city of León was offering X-ray and dental service to the poorest of the city and its bordering regions. Besides this service, they also provide free housing with 20 beds and

meals, medical consultations and medications for 85-90 persons a day, special service for undernourished children, and service of X-rays for about 60 patients a week. The request was closed with the words; “We ask our Lord that He fills the SSVP of your country with Blessings.”

Penny Craig, our National President, asked each region to consider this appeal from Nicaragua, and to aid in the funds that we could send to them. Regions that were able responded quickly, and we were able to send funds in November. The National Board appreciates the contributions of the Regions.

We have received acknowledgement of the receipt of funds, from the president of the Nicaraguan conference, Graham Tercero: “Thanks (again); as you can see the Dental team is working (again). I'm sending some photos of the people we work with. God bless you all. Graham”

Thank you again to the Regions who contributed to this appeal from our National Board twin. As described in why conferences twin, this is an example of reaching out to the desperate poor, who are more than just needy. It establishes connections and solidarity, connecting us with the international family of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. As Graham says, God bless you all.

Kathy Weswick
National twinning chairperson



We always have conferences waiting to twin. If your conference is interested in a twinning *project*, please fill in the twinning *project* application form. If you are interested in a *regular* twinning, please fill in the twinning application form. Both forms are available on our Web Site:
www.ssvp.ca

Vincentians at work in the Vineyard

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Guignolée

A wonderful success at the Saint-Joseph d'Orléans Conference !

The Saint-Joseph d'Orléans Conference regroups three French-speaking parishes in the Ottawa Eastern district. They are the Saint-Joseph, Sainte-Marie and Notre-Dame des Champs parishes. The Conference has approximately 40 members and auxiliaries, and their Spiritual Advisor is Monsignor Peter Shonenbach, also a member of the national Council. The holiday season door-to-door collection on behalf of needy people is a tradition that has remained very alive in Orléans. In spite of the persisting snow and cold weather, the 2007 Guignolée, on December 2, was very successful.

Thanks to the work of over 300 volunteers and generous contributions from numerous benefactors, thousands of food articles were collected, in addition to loads of clothing, many toys, and the impressive sum of \$27,000. The collection helped us prepare approximately 125 Christmas baskets as a gesture of solidarity and sharing, to ensure a joyful celebration on this day of the birth of Jesus. Furthermore, in addition to creating an atmosphere of joy and love at Christmas time, the donations received will meet several needs during the entire year in 2008. As an example, thanks to the emergency assistance fund, in 2007, we helped a family re-establish power in their home after



Hydro-Ontario had cut off electricity, in the middle of a very cold February, due to non-payment of their bill. While visiting the family in their home, the two visiting Vincentians had noticed that the family had to wear boots and winter coats in the house to keep warm. Such help is only possible because of the generosity of people in our community.

Jesus has always looked upon the needy with a sympathetic heart, always listening to them without judging them. Jean Vanier states that "Jesus has come to transform weakness from 'something to escape from' into a donation, a call to communion, that awakes and attracts compassion, that opens hearts and reveals light. He came to make a sacrament, the house where God lives, out of weakness and flesh." (Jésus, le don de l'amour, Fleurus-Bellarmin, 1994, p. 202.) Thus Jean Vanier helps us understand the word of our patron saint, Vincent de Paul, "You need the poor that you help as much as he

needs you."

It is in the name of every actually and eventually needy person that the Conference has sent a big THANK YOU to everyone for their extraordinary generosity though publication of a report in parish newsletters.

May the Lord bless you, and fill you with joy and love throughout the entire year in 2008!

"Christmas is joy, it is sharing, it is peace and it is love" (Jules Beaulac)

Claude Lalonde (Conference President)

Ronald Leduc (President of the Saint-Paul Particular Council)



Vincentians at work in the Vineyard

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul begins in the Far North

The Western Region encompasses Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, which is a large portion of Canada. The north is in many respects Canada's third world. Here the majority of the population often lives in unemployment and poverty. SSVV has been blessed to start two new conferences in the far north; one in Tuktoyuktuk, Northwest Territories and one in Gjoa Haven, Nunavut. Both of these conferences sit on the shores of the Arctic Ocean.

The land is desolate yet breathtaking, the climate cold and harsh and the people warm and loving. Life is very simple but very challenging. When I visited Gjoa Haven, I experienced a people of deep faith, eager to take on helping one another through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. I am sure Lynn L'Heureux's experience in Tuktoyuktuk was similar.

The children are what really got to my heart. They are so inquisitive of where I came from, who was in my family, what their names were and would I ever come back. We coloured together, prayed together and I even got to tell them the story of St. Juan Diego and our Lady of Guadalupe. One day while we were there, Gjoa Haven was hit with a blizzard and the school was closed. In Gjoa Haven school isn't just a place of learning, it is where many of the children get their only meal of the day; a healthy breakfast.



Sister Dorica with native children

Not that day. We were preparing to have a quiet day at the mission when two little boys came to the door. They had walked from the school to the church hoping for something to eat. We fed them and brought out the crayons and paper. Soon more children came, then more.

It is a similar story in Tuktoyuktuk, maybe even sadder. Gjoa Haven is a dry community while Tuktoyuktuk is not.

There is very little possibility that either of these conferences will be able to become self-sufficient in a monetary sense. The people of the communities are willing to share their time and talents to serve the poor though they would need the support of funds.

We are presently trying to help our brothers and sisters in Tuktoyuktuk to obtain and outfit a much needed thrift store. This is best done in the

depths of winter when the ice roads are open to bring the supplies. They need to purchase lumber and other building supplies, a heater, rent a truck to bring it to Tuktoyuktuk and pay for the fuel. We also have a large amount of donated clothing and supplies to transport with the building supplies to equip the new store. It is estimated that they will need about \$30,000.00 to realize this dream for the people of Tuktoyuktuk. At present, we have raised \$8,000.00.

There is also the need for ongoing assistance to these conferences. The conference in Gjoa Haven has just begun a Saturday Lunch Program for school aged children to ensure that the most needy are able to eat at least one meal per day. Monday to Friday the school provides a healthy breakfast and there is a potluck dinner after Mass on Sunday. This program also provides a small income for 3 women who prepare the lunch.

Vincentians at work in the Vineyard

10 Kg. of flour was over \$30 in Gjoa Haven, as was sugar. Milk was about \$6 for a litre. It is our hope to be able to send up food and money on a fairly regular basis. Sister Fay and Sister Dorica have been devoted to helping the Vincentians help those who are falling through the cracks. Somehow, with the help of God, they get it done.

I write this article to beg for the poor of the Far North. If your council or conference is able to help us to help the poor of the north it would be greatly appreciated. This is such a blessed and exciting time to be sharing the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul in the Arctic. If I could pass on a hug from one of those children, I would but send you a picture instead.

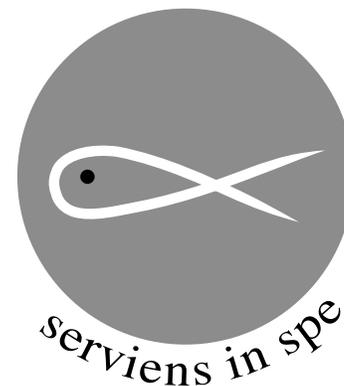


The kids were very proud of the drawing they did for their Saint Vincent de Paul new friends

Thank you for taking the time to prayerfully consider this request. I remain your sister in Christ

Pat Bennetto
President
Western Regional Council

To help the Western Regional Council help the poor of the Far North, please send your cheque to the National Council's office in Ottawa, with the mention "expansion".



**YOU WISH
TO CONTACT US?**

**SOCIETY OF SAINT
VINCENT DE PAUL
National Council of Canada
1247 Kilborn Place
Ottawa ON K1H 6K9
Tel: 613 738-1118
Fax: 613 738-4789
E-mail: national@ssvp.ca**

All correspondence with the National Council should be sent to this address.

Be it to reach a member of the National Council, to send an article for the Vincenpaul-Canada magazine, to order an object from the Society, to pay for a Vincenpaul-Canada subscription, to send a contribution for twinning and for any other topic that is under the National Council jurisdiction.

THANK YOU!

AGA 2008 - Program

**Theme: I will show you my faith by my works (James 2.18)
Let us go to the poor...**

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

Noon – 9 p.m.

Arrival and registration at Val-des-Neiges Hotel, in Beaupré

5 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Dinner on your own

Thursday, June 19, 2008

7 a.m.

Mass and rosary

7 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Breakfast

8:30 a.m.

Word of welcome by the President of the Quebec Central Council: Mr. Pierre Morissette

9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

National Council Board meeting

9 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Registration

9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Workshops

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Lunch

12:30 p.m.

Bus departure for the city of Québec

1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Free visit in the Vieux-Québec (Basilique Notre-Dame de Québec and Monseigneur Laval Center where the archives for the 1st conference in Canada are kept)

5:30 p.m.

Bus departure to Mont Ste-Anne

6 p.m. – 10 p.m.

Opening and dinner at the summit of Mont Ste-Anne

Friday, June 20, 2008

7 a.m.

Mass and rosary

7 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Breakfast

9 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Registration

9 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Official opening by the National President: Mrs. Penny Craig

9:30 a.m.– 10:15 a.m.

Guest speaker presentation: International President, Mr. José Ramon Diaz-Torremocha

10:15 a.m.– 10:30 a.m.

Coffee break

10:30 a.m. – Noon

Workshops

10:30 a.m.– Noon

Meeting between the President and voting members

Noon – 1 p.m.

Lunch

Noon – 1 p.m.

Spiritual Advisors luncheon

1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Workshops

13:30 p.m.– 3 p.m.

Meeting of the various National Council committees

3 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Coffee break

3:30 p.m.– 5 p.m.

Meeting of the Regional Councils

5:30 p.m.

Bus departure for the Érablière l'Entailleur, Île d'Orléans

6 p.m.

Dinner and animation at the Érablière

Saturday, June 21, 2008

7 a.m.

Mass and rosary

7 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Breakfast

9 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Registration

9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Regional Councils and National Committees reports

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Coffee break

10:45 a.m. – Noon

National Council Statutory meeting

Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch

1:30 p.m.– 2:30 p.m.

National Council Statutory meeting

Presentation of the 2009

AGA Committee

2:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Closing address by the National President

3:45 p.m.

Bus departure for the Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré Basilica

5 p.m.

Mass in the Immaculée-Conception chapel under the Basilica

6:30 p.m.

Closing banquet at the Val-des-Neiges Hotel

Sunday, June 22, 2008

7 a.m.

Mass and rosary

7 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Breakfast

9 a.m. – Noon

Free time