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**November 17, 2019,
World Day of the Poor.
An invitation by
Pope Francis
in his apostolic letter
Mercy and peace
(Misericordia et misera).**

**The Society of
Saint Vincent de Paul
is in a perfect position
to promote the
World Day of the Poor.**

**Information
and material:
[www.ssvp.ca/world-day-
poor-tools-members](http://www.ssvp.ca/world-day-poor-tools-members)**

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PAST PRESIDENT

2013

Penny Craig passes on the presidential torch to Jean-Noel Cormier

Greetings, Vincentian Brothers and Sisters,
When I started my term as president, I received a call from Bob Martineau, former president of the National Council (1983/1995), congratulating me on my election and telling me that this new challenge would impact my life forever. And he added, "I know that you wonder what I am talking about, but I can assure you that your life will be changed forever." Of course, I was skeptical and I thought, we'll see.

Now that my term had ended, I can confirm that he was entirely right. Those six years as president of the Society's Council have changed me; they made me grow considerably and I know that it is not over.

2013

Michael Thio, International President, congratulates Jean-Noël.

I wish to thank Darquise, my spouse, for her unconditional support during those six years. I know that it was not always easy for her, but there was not a moment when I felt that her support faltered. I also wish to thank everyone who accepted to be part of the executive committee, the board of directors and the various National Council committees during my term. By participating in discussions and debates, in a spirit of respect for each other and of friendship, we were able to reach agreements that were sometimes surprising, but always accepted by the members as a whole. I do not want to forget our two administrative assistants and our executive director, who patiently listened to my dreams in technicolour and often made them become reality. A big thank you.

I also wish to thank all of you Vincentians from across the country, for giving me the opportunity of experiencing those six years. Your daily efforts in helping people in need and your sustained encouragements were for me a source of inspiration that I will never forget.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul of Canada is one of the major organizations helping people in need. With our 14,000 members and 800 conferences, we are everywhere and we help in all possible ways,

2013

Jean-Noël's installation in Ottawa.

without discrimination, with love, respect, justice and joy. Moreover, through our twinning program, we support 173 conferences in underprivileged countries. We have assistance projects in the Canadian North and with First Nations populations. We may be proud of our successes, but if we want to continue helping people in need, we will have to be much more visible in the general public and much more active in the field of social justice. Ozanam said that there is no charity without justice.

Of course, we must face some challenges, but that is exactly what we have been doing for the past 185 years. Let us remember who we are and where we come from. Our spirituality and the way we help by establishing a personal contact with people in need, are what set us apart from other help agencies, as well as how we put warmth in our contact with those people who need it so much. We must never forget that difference.

I do not say "Farewell", but rather, "I'll be seeing you", as we will certainly have the pleasure to work together soon enough.

See you shortly and may God bless you,

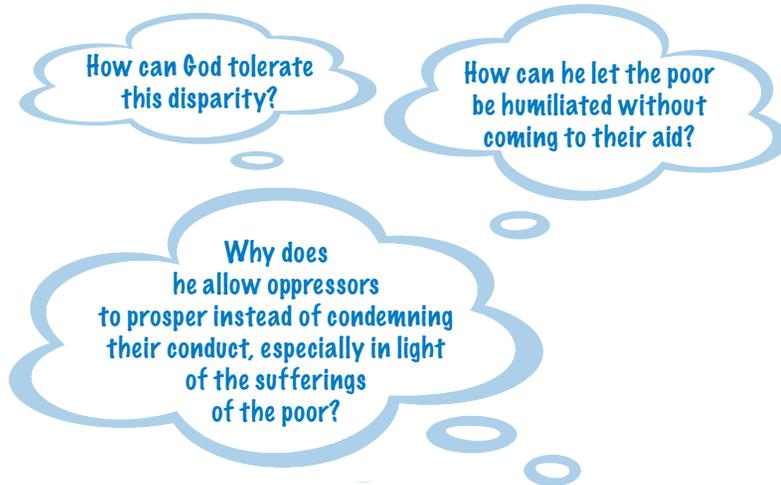
*Jean-Noël Cormier, Past-President
National Council*

2019

Jean-Noël thanks the members of his Executive Committee, in Windsor.

THE HOPE OF THE POOR SHALL NOT PERISH FOREVER

Pope Francis, in his message for the third World Day of the Poor, starts with **“The hope of the poor shall not perish forever.”** (Ps 9:19) His message is inviting us to restore hope in the face of injustice, sufferings and the uncertainties of life. He invokes God’s judgement to restore justice and overcome evil (cf. 10, 14-15). In his words, we hear an echo of age-old questions.



The Psalm was composed at a time of great economic development that, as often happens, also led to serious social imbalances. The inequitable distribution of wealth created a significant number of poor people, whose condition appeared all the more dramatic in comparison with the wealth attained by a privileged few. Interestingly, this social imbalance still exists today and presently, it is increasing.

In Caritas in Veritate, Pope Benedict XVI points to **“The sharing of goods and resources, from which authentic development proceeds, is not guaranteed by merely technical progress and relationships of utility, but by the potential of love that overcomes evil with good.”** (Rom 12:21) w

This is where our values are important, especially the value for the promotion of an integral and solidary humanism, that inspires a collective sense of responsibility. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul provides assistance based on the values of the Catholic Social Teachings of creating a relationship with persons

in need and the preferential option for the poor. When SSVP listens to those it serves, it offers them a human dignity. This dignity is the basis of moral development. Human dignity can be offered by listening to those in need and responding accordingly.

Currently in Canada, depending on the measure used, between 3.8 million and 4.8 million Canadians are living in poverty, a minimum of 10% of the population. This is perpetuated by an economic environment of precarious or part-time employment leading to unstable work and income. In an economy that perpetuates poverty, Canadians also face a social assistance system that can be difficult to access when faced with a situation of poverty. These dangers are especially prominent among vulnerable groups, such as women and Indigenous Peoples.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul does not see poverty as a purely economic deficiency. Persons in need can include those in need of emotional support, spiritual support, or social support with financial support. There are those trapped in the cycle of poverty, as well as those who need help to not fall into this cycle. SSVP’s initiatives offer economic aid, while simultaneously opening the gates of communication to provide social and spiritual support, a culture of encounter. SSVP’s assistance helps those we serve move beyond the economics of charity.

Assistance to persons who are in need can easily default to material help: food, clothing, accessories, or furniture; assistance can also include direct contact with persons in need: lending an ear, offering guidance, or keeping them company. Each of these methods, both material and immaterial, require that persons in need are treated with respect and dignity.

As well said by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, **“Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is justice’s role to prevent the attack”**.

In Caritas in Veritate, Pope Benedict points out:

Charity (love) is to give what is mine to others;

- Justice is to give to others what is theirs, what is due to them by reason of their being or acting;
- Charity demands justice;
- I cannot “give” what is mine to others without first giving them what pertains to them in justice.

Our initiatives and actions this November, and throughout the year, are to bring forward the belief that everyone has hope, especially persons in need. It is by our actions, our ministry, that we can assist people who are in need, with love, respect, justice, and joy.

*Richard Pommerville, Executive Director
National Council*

OUTREACH PROGRAMS WITH CREE COMMUNITIES IN ALBERTA

Atikameg, *Peter Ouellette, Divine Mercy*

The Divine Mercy SSVP Conference has led the St. Thomas More parishioners in Edmonton on an outreach program in support of this Cree Nation Community north of Slave Lake, Alberta. A year of meeting and talking has got us started with the supply of hockey equipment to support youth pond hockey at Atikameg.

The Community Youth team were also provided 20 sewing machines and fabric to enhance the youth development programs. It's a start. Much more to come.

Athabasca Tribal Council, *Mary Dunnigan, Western Region*

Following the devastating fires in 2017 in the Fort McMurray region, money was collected in Alberta and across Canada to provide assistance. Vincentians from Edmonton visited and helped in many ways, with material goods, cash and other assistance. This past year found the ATC contacting Edmonton Central Council to report they wished to spend the last of the funds in a particular manner. Four Vincentians from Edmonton drove to Fort McMurray and met with Ms Buffalo. Their present project was focussed on staff development. We considered this but asked for changes to reflect a closer tie with SSVP values. After deliberation, a second plan was presented, which was accepted. This improved plan included details of a conference for youth, focussing on values that support indigenous beliefs and practices to help youth cope with the continued aftermath of the fire as they grow into adults. It took into account the use of tribal elders to guide the project. It is hoped this is another small step towards Truth and Reconciliation.

Saddle Lake, *Mary Pat Skene, OLPH*

The people of Saddle Lake are anxious to move forward with us. They identified the need for clothing for men, women, children and babies. The number of families in need would be approximately 20, with the average of three children each. We felt we could move forward immediately with the clothing.

September 26, 2019 was our first delivery date.

They talked about a "layette" concept so that a new mom could receive one when needed.

I guess you could say they need as much as we can give them. The clothing was distributed to those most in need and was greatly appreciated. The frequency of delivery still needs to be determined.

With regard to food, we need more input and planning. This will happen over the next month.

Cadotte Lake, *Maria Lupul, St. Theresa*

Because of the floods, fires and other weather-related events that plagued this summer, there was not much communication with our friends in Cadotte Lake. Now that calm has been restored, we are talking about driving up on the last weekend of October with clothing, food and toiletries.

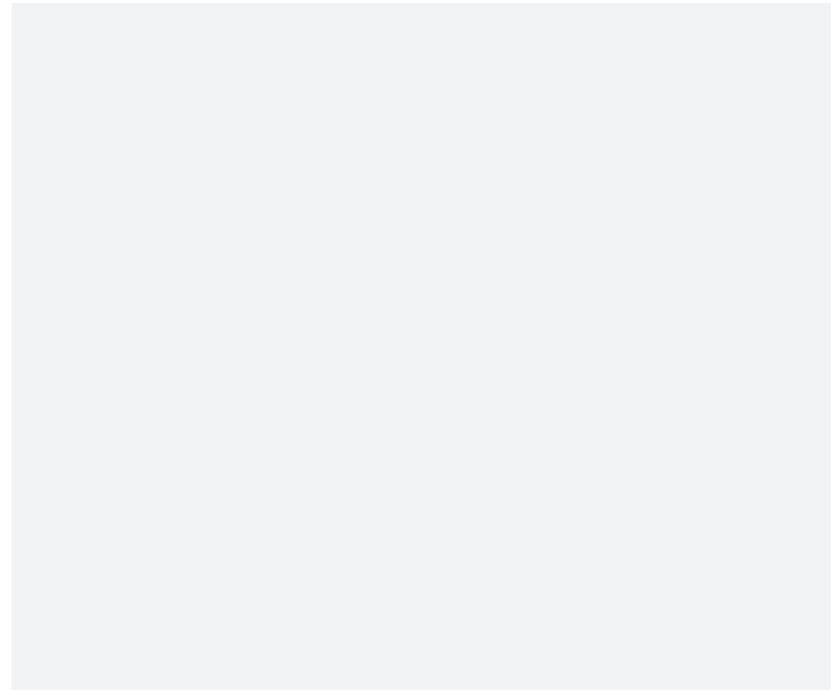
We are also discussing the installation of a furnace in the Clothing/Food Bank.

Meander River, *Maria Lupul, St. Theresa*

Communication had started with the Pastor in Meander River. Then the weather turned ugly and the fires took over a good part of the region. People were busy with evacuations and just trying to survive.

I have now been in touch with the Executive Assistant to Archbishop Pettipas to restart the negotiations to establish a project similar to the one in Cadotte Lake.

*Maria Lupul, Vice-President
Edmonton Central Council, Alberta*



SSVP WESTERN REGION HELPING IN THE ARCTIC

Our Vincentian Western Region North of 60 Program continues to grow with the addition of Fort Good Hope to the eight communities in NWT that receive our support. You can find a full story by Grandin Media at Sending essentials to the North, one Sea-Can at a time: grandinmedia.ca/sending-essentials-to-the-north-one-sea-can-at-a-time.

Many have asked “How do you do it?” How do we find and ship food, clothing and products that the communities need, and do it with such little money?

Corporations in the trucking manitoulintransport.com and shipping www.inf.gov.nt.ca/en/MTS industries, as well as airlines canadiannorth.com/about/our-mission/ are a major part of our support; however, a lot comes from collaboration with other like-minded charity groups from across Canada.

Many organizations have always wanted to help those in need in Arctic Canada but did not know how to reach them. Organizations like Kids Against Hunger, kahcanada.org EC Foundation, www.ecfoundation.org Canadian Food For Children www.canadianfoodforchildren.net and Stephen Lewis Foundation edmgrandmothers.org have all given their support to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul as we continue with our North of 60 Program. SSVP has shown the way.

Our support to the Arctic will continue to grow.

*Peter Ouellette, North of 60
Western Regional Council*

FIRE IN YELLOWKNIFE

Fire! Fire! Fire! The words echoed from doorway to doorway! People looking all around and smoke filling the hallways. Children woke, grabbed boots and coats, moving quickly to the exits. Bells ringing, people shouting, "Get out while you can." Sirens screaming, tires screeching, men shouting and running about. Where is the fire? Upstairs, downstairs, inside or out, glass breaking, water pouring, sky still dark now lit by fire's morning light. People saved: 85, suites lost: 33. O God! Now what?

O God, the church of Saint Pat's called in Morning prayer, a Day in Yellowknife so dear. Church burnt, store lost. too. Doors closed, services in the school. SSVP met and plan was formed; workers started the plan. Ontario called back, east visited, vision spoken "Vinnies'" dream comes alive.

New place for the store. Well-lit and space galore. Office space, lunch room and much more place to store. Bags dropped, and items taken. Prices raised and stock moved every month. Nearest parishes get turns to take the stock.

So, we are ready. As Jesus said, "Bless the poor and be well fed." It's cold here in arctic days, so warm cloths are a must. Hey, we are Canadian on this very day!

So, let's how connect the dots, from fire taken our lot with our church. A store we lost, the church rebuilt serves with parish hall for all. People have a really good job sorting and selling clothes at Vinnie's now. The selection's great and people really come in a lot.

The story goes when all was lost, a fire frenzy it begot. The MLA's first grand thought, we call the SSVP. So, on that day we did not talk, we just rose up and did our lot. We met at centre of emergency hall and started giving for them all, vouchers of clothes were Vinnie's lot and the CO-OP groceries which helped a lot.

So as the Christian church I must write, let's not just sit and stare. We say a prayer and act real nice. Get off the couch, your easy chair. Call a meeting of even just two or three. Plan to start a Society of Saint Vincent de Paul store. Used clothing is a business, see, the expenses will be covered with ease. A mission call will come with time, a resource you are in his hand. We move the hand of God you see, we start with nearly cupboards bare. Our trucks and trailers started bare and looked like the widow's mite. Weekly, we share God and fill with care the needs of others you can share. We keep a list of people's needs and this we lift on Wednesday pray. By Sunday worship, I can share the weekend haul, is all we bear. Young men have strength, so we invite, have you tithed your time tonight? If God gives you 24 to spend, how much do you spend for his share?

I tried so hard to tithe, you see, and pocket change was just the start. When I gave with pockets green, my heart still ached, you see. I wrote out cheques till days were done and tried to outgive his son. I switched my goal of tithe, you see, to include the weeks and years of past scenes. I give 10% of time to Vinnie's now. Then I saw I was just a clog in God's timepiece. Here today and forever gone.

When one day in my bible I did read the story of the sheep and goats. So please go read it again (Matthew 25). It was the Christians surprised in the end. For with our hand and time, you see, it was Jesus we served in the end. Now helping God has an end, so to see you all again, in heaven's gates and streets of gold, thanks for being my SSVP friend!

*John Westergreen, Treasurer
St. Patrick's Conference, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories*



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

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