

The Vincentimes

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 5

AUGUST 2020

The Blessings of Covid 19

He (Jesus) often retired to deserted places and prayed.

Luke 5:16

The apostles returned to Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and what they had taught. He said to them, "Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little."

Mark 6:30,31

It's been a very long spring. The isolation and fear of Covid 19 has interrupted our lives and forced all of us to change and adapt. The trauma of illness has shaken many. Travel was curtailed. Everyone learned to pay attention to sanitizing and social distancing.

One of the most difficult adjustments for many of us was the restriction on what had been our normal activities. From being able to walk out the door and go pretty much anywhere, we became home bound. Only recently have some restrictions been modified. Ontario is beginning to open up, and with it our parish churches are opening with changes to common practices.

We all missed our Eucharistic celebrations during the time of Covid 19. Some people expressed their devastation when our bishops closed churches and banned all parish activities. But, truth be known, after the first few days, I adapted to masses online and spiritual communion. There was something so peaceful about having more time to pray and to meditate. I could be patient. My day planner had empty spaces.

What did I think about? ...pray about?



Not having access to my parish and the sacraments caused me to reflect on the areas where there are so few priests that the people of God cannot receive the sacraments for very long periods of time. What would it be like to have no priest, no parish and for this to be normal with no end in sight? It also reminded me of those who came before us who were prohibited from practising their faith, not by illness, but by persecution and political upheaval, and for those areas of today's world where this is still happening.

Suspension of our Conference and Council in-person meetings gave me time so that I have prayed for and celebrated the Vincentians who found creative ways to serve our neighbours during this time of trial. Our church buildings have been empty but the Church goes on!

The old saying, 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder' will apply as we return to the Eucharist. Come into our hearts as, once again we receive your body given up for all.

*Denise Bondy, Spiritual Advisor
Ontario Regional Council*

Priest with the Vincentian Heart

As a student at Cathedral High School in the late 1980s, Peter Ciallella was a Vincentian. In 2017, as Father Peter, he was sent to serve at Blessed Sacrament parish in Burford (and St. Anthony Daniel, Scotland).

Two activities that he undertook immediately have come together in this time of pandemic. Father Peter's Vincentian heart lead him to embrace his role as Spiritual Advisor to Blessed Sacrament conference. His experience of service in Latin America lead him to begin a ministry to the migrant workers who come each year to work in this agricultural area. "... on one Sunday a month from about April to October, Blessed Sacrament offers the workers English lessons and access to WiFi sometimes not available at the farms. Fluent in Spanish, Ciallella delivers a service in the workers' native language, followed by a meal prepared by church volunteers. As many as 100 workers show up." (Brantford Expositor June 10, 2020)

Faced with a Covid-19 outbreak at a large farm operation in a neighbouring county, Father

Peter publicly addressed community reaction to workers being quarantined in Brant hotels: "I know their intention was not to assign blame on the migrant farm workers, but rather to point out the bureaucratic flaws in poor planning and communication," Ciallella said in a letter to The Expositor. "Unfortunately, this can escalate the tension and fears and lead to a certain amount of backlash and xenophobia, which has been evident." (Brantford Expositor June 10, 2020)

Instead Father was approached by President Mary Risi and past-President Doreen Fader of Blessed Sacrament conference seeking a positive response to the situation. With the support of parishioners and conference members from across the Brant deanery, more than 200 gift bags were provided to workers as they finished their quarantine.

Sadly, Mexican worker, Juan Lopez Chaparro, succumbed to the virus in June. With the local health officer, Father Peter visited the bunkhouses of Juan's colleagues to personally deliver the tragic news. "We addressed their concerns and offered prayers for

their companion," said Ciallella. "It took us over two hours. It was quite an emotional and moving experience." (Simcoe Reformer, June 21, 2020)

During a memorial Mass, Father shared words from Juan's wife. "Remember my husband, the man that he was — a good man, a kind-hearted man, a man of peace." (Catholic Register July 4, 2020) Because many coworkers were unable to attend due to pandemic restrictions, Facebook livestream was arranged with an eventual upload to YouTube.

Father Peter also established a GoFundMe campaign for Juan's family. He continues his advocacy for the workers: "Workers have been afraid to speak up for fear of losing their jobs or being sent back to Mexico," said Ciallella. "This could be a turning point." (Brantford Expositor, June 25, 2020)

Then word came about a second farm operation with a small group of workers. Because of their isolation they have been unable to shop. Through contact with local Vincentian Wies Stys, Father Peter arranged for work clothing to be provided to these men from the SSVP Brant Thrift Store. Also, at the Store is a quantity of non-perishable food awaiting resumption of full SSVP food bank service to those in need locally. Store volunteers have prepared and dispatched boxes of items deemed suitable for the workers' diet.

This priest with the Vincentian heart truly exemplifies the Vincentian value to "help in all possible ways".

*Pat Lenz, President
Brant Particular Council*



Our Saint Vincent de Paul Stores

It is January 2020, everyone is coming and going as they please and then fast forward to March 2020; restrictions were placed on where we could go and travel became taboo. Who would have ever thought that we would be wearing masks and hearing new lingo like “keep safe, self-quarantine and be sure to social distance”. It is a strange world!

For the safety of our loved ones, our coworkers and our communities, we stayed home and we closed our stores. We flattened the curve of this invisible enemy...Covid-19, and soon it became time to reopen our stores. This threw us into a brand-new world. There were arrows, sanitizer and limits of how many customers we could have in our SSVP stores. However, being the team that we are, we depended upon each other and with the help of Zoom; store managers navigated this new system of operating our stores safely.

We soon learned that our clientele missed us and business was booming. Focusing on everyone's safety while we serve the public became the focus for the team. It was imperative to implement strict policies by following the Health Units guidelines while serving the needs of the community. With the support of Store Committees, Managers, and Particular Councils and of course, all our fabulous Volunteers and Associates we have been able to meet such high standards. We are very proud of what we offer to the community. With the commitment of such an amazing team, we have been able to navigate this uncharted water with skill and safety.

While we are not “back to normal” but we are now operating under a “new normal” and heading into stage 3 for many cities, we will continue to support and cheer each other on to fulfill our Mission “To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy. We are in it TOGETHER!

*Judy Mepsted, Store Manager
Saint Vincent de Paul Store, London*



Thank
You!

THANK YOU to our many members across Ontario for your flexibility and creativity in adapting to new ways of helping persons in need during the pandemic. Members have done an **AMAZING** job in ensuring the safety and well being of our members, staff and those who we serve. I am hearing that calls for help have decreased; however, be prepared for when calls increase again as we know it will happen. Continue with your good work of fulfilling our mission of serving persons in need with love, respect, justice and joy!

*Linda Dollard, President
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
Ontario Regional Council*

**SOCIETY OF
SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
ONTARIO REGIONAL
COUNCIL**



Visit us on the web
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The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

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.

Notice of Passings

*We would like to recognize and remember the following Vincentians who have passed.
They blessed so many with their lives.*

February 3, 2020 - Eugene Mailloux, Good Shepherd Conference, Tecumseh

April 4, 2020 - Robert Trudell, St. Vincent de Paul Conference, Windsor

April 5, 2020 - Lambert (Bert) VanBerlo, St. Simon and St. Jude Conference, Belle River

April 6, 2020 - Gerald (Gerry) Chartrand, Precious Blood Conference, Windsor

May 9, 2020 - Richard Kropf, Holy Family Conference London & Past SSVS Store Manager

July 11, 2020 - Bonnie South, St. Michael Conference, Dunnville

Upcoming Dates

September 26, 2020 – Virtual ONRC meeting

October 15, 2020 – deadline for newsletter submissions (please note: we cannot guarantee all submissions will make the next issue, but will do our best to include in upcoming issues)