

The Vincentimes

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A Reflection on God's Providence and the Resilience of Youth

This story begins with a phone call from a former catechumen who wondered how to organize a "Sleep out for Poverty". We talked and agreed that it would be a real eye opener for his classmates as it had been for him. With a date for mid-November, I prayed that we not have a blizzard or a hail storm. Permissions were attained and we were allowed to use the outdoor rink/tennis court. The high school principal was very much on board.

I commandeered the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul van to pick up our boxes. We visited four stores and were met with profuse apologies but no boxes. As I could see my young friend becoming nervous, I reassured him that I believed in God's Providence. At the final store, we were met by two smiling workers that said they had "tons" of boxes and were more than happy to load them on the truck for us. My friend grinned as he sighed, "I guess you schooled me in providence".

The night of the sleep out arrived and we were amazed to see thirty nine teenagers waiting to begin. My wife, Michelle, and I shared our experiences and how we treat those who find themselves in poverty. When we spoke about seeing Christ's face in the poor, I could see some of their young faces registered empathy and understanding. A

social worker who worked for the city talked of the numbers of people in our city living on the streets and their circumstances. We set some ground rules and moved to set up our habitations. A boy grabbed goalie standards and fashioned a shelter out of cardboard and yards of duct tape. The rest of us placed our boxes



around the outdoor rink and taped plastic over them. Sleeping bags were inserted and I remember hearing a lot of giggling. Some teachers had wisely brought a tent and heaters. We all congregated at the fire that a friend set up and absorbed as much warmth as possible. After checking on our young campers, I

climbed into my sleeping bag, said a prayer and nodded off.

Driving rain and screaming winds woke me at three am. Rain was creeping up my sleeping bag as the rink became more and more inundated. I could hear the voices from the box beside mine. They were not impressed but stuck it out. No one gave up. Even the teachers slept in their cars after their tent blew away.

A bedraggled, soaking wet, weary looking group stared at the gym door willing it to open. Finally the custodian called us in. We dried off and had a wonderful breakfast provided by my friend and SSVP. As participants shared about rain and being cold, I could see the light dawning in their eyes. They had briefly lived the life of the homeless. I asked them who would be willing to do it again. Every hand went up!

Our founders were not much older than these young people who gave up their comforts to experience homelessness. Their example is a lesson that will not soon be forgotten by them or by me.

Deacon Gord Jenkinson
St. Justin Conference
Spirituality Committee ONRC

Vincentian Spirituality

In today's world, particularly in cultures like ours, where people have time and resources to search for that which is beyond ourselves, we hear others say, "I am a spiritual person, just not a religious one" or "I am spiritual but I don't go for organized religion." Perhaps that works for some people but that is not who we Vincentians are.

Members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul are what used to be called 'Good Catholics'. We celebrate Eucharist, we participate in the sacraments and we follow the leadership of Pope Francis. Even when we don't like some of what we hear or read about the hierarchy we defend the Faith because we are people of faith, people of prayer. Our Society is a lay Catholic organization and we are who we are.

We Vincentians are believers, but we are also a unique group within the faithful. We share and live our own Vincentian Spirituality that sets us apart from other lay people. It doesn't necessarily make us better, just Vincentian.

According to Wikipedia, the modern day source of quick and easy information, within the Catholic faith "...there are many different forms of spirituality and private prayer which have developed over the centuries.



Each of the major religious orders and other lay groupings have their own unique spirituality."

We are a lay Catholic organization with our own spirituality, our own way of approaching God and living out the Gospel. Our charism isn't teaching or health care or contemplative life. We serve Christ in His poor and we do it every day, in countries around the world. We see Christ in every person we serve, always in the footsteps of our founders. We learn from their examples and their writings to emulate their charity, humility, justice and acceptance.

But we don't do it alone! We come together as a family. Our meetings, celebrations and social events are

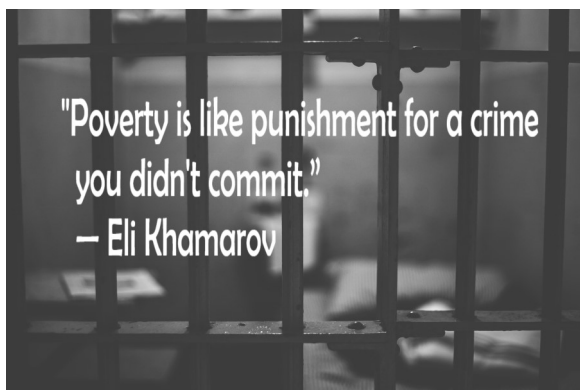
where we grow together. We do what all families do; we support each other in joy and in sorrow. We learn from each other and we share. No matter what happens, my Vincentian family is there for me.

Just as my faith has grown and matured, my Vincentian Spirituality has also. I have learned much from many people, those here and now and those long past. I pray to continue to grow in this Vincentian Spirituality of faith, service and humility. Saint Vincent de Paul's advice of 400 years ago still rings true. His advice:

Proceed quietly,
pray a great deal
and
act together.

May God bless us and all those we serve,

Denise Bondy
St. John the Baptist Conference,
Amherstburg
Chair – Spirituality Committee
ONRC



My Favorite Station of the Cross: The Sixth Station - Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

In a few weeks we begin the season of Lent. It is a time when we reflect on the passion and death of Jesus, on His act of redemption. Each year members of our Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Society lead a time of reflection on the Stations of the Cross. Meditating on the Stations of the Cross makes the story of Christ's passion and death come alive. We journey with Jesus to Calvary. Each event on the way causes us to reflect on our own lives and asks us if we are following the example that Jesus left for us.

Jesus said, "Whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me".

At the sixth station Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. She comes forward to give Jesus some comfort as He journeys to Calvary. The blood and sweat are wiped away at least for a moment. I often wonder if I was there with Jesus would I come forward to help? Would I be courageous enough to walk past the Ro-

man soldiers, kneel down before my Savior and wipe his bloody, disfigured Face with my own clothing? I would like to think that compassion would move me towards bravery.



Image: Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain

But this humble, simple act seems insignificant in the light of the pain Jesus was going through. She could not rescue Him from the cross. She could not even help Him with the weight of the cross. She could not stop the whips of the soldiers from breaking his skin. She helped in the only way she knew how.

Veronica came forward and wiped the Face of Jesus. Where did Veronica find her strength to act? Grace stirred Veronica to move fearlessly past big, burly, mean soldiers to help One in need, to perform a small act of kindness with great love.

Veronica teaches me to trust that God will take my humble efforts and make them effective. She teaches all of us that we must act to help those in need. Advocacy, food, clothing and encouragement through a visit are the way we act. She reveals that no act of love and compassion is too little.

Deacon John Girolami
St Francis Xavier Conference,
Stoney Creek
ONRC Spirituality Committee

ONRC Spring Meeting April 12-13, 2019

We hope to see you at the upcoming Ontario Regional Council spring meeting taking place in Peterborough April 12/13, 2019. Activities on Friday, April 12, will include a tour of Vinnies Feel Good Shopping Store and the Food Pantry, as well as an Executive Roundtable meeting where everyone is welcome to bring your questions to the ONRC Executive team.

Friday evening will consist of Vincentian family time and an opportunity to network with others attending from across the province.

The meeting on Saturday, April 13, will take place at St. Anne's Parish, 859 Barnardo Avenue, Peterborough, where a variety of workshops will be offered on spirituality, social justice, twinning, best practices plus more!

The hotel to book accommodations is Super 8 Peterborough, 1257 Lansdowne Street.

We look forward to seeing you there!

**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.

Upcoming Dates

February 20, 2019 — Annual Reports due from Particular Councils. Pass report up to Central Council or Regional.

March 10, 2019 — Annual Reports due from Central Councils. Pass report up to Regional.

April 12-13, 2019 — Ontario Regional Council Annual General Members Meeting (aka the Spring Meeting). Hosted by St. Anne's Conference and Peterborough Particular Council. For more information, please check your email and visit www.ssvp.on.ca

April 15, 2019 — 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)

June 2019—National Annual General Meeting to be held in Windsor, ON. Check www.ssvp.ca for more information.

Notice of Passings

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

November 2, 2018: Roger Hachey,
Elliot Lake SSVp Store

November 25, 2018: Dick Hudson,
St. Maurice, Ottawa

January 5, 2019: Joe Gibb, St. John
the Baptist, Amherstburg

January 9, 2019: James Richard
Strate, Ottawa

February 2, 2019: Herb McIntyre,
St. Mary's, London