

The Vincentimes

Volume 7, Issue 4

May 2019

A Refugee Claimant's Story

Ruth is a refugee claimant who came with her four children to Ottawa from Nigeria where there are cultural practices she couldn't accept. Her husband didn't support her, so she fled. She didn't have time to go through regular immigration channels and her journey to Ottawa was difficult.

school, a cell phone which costs \$59 and she pays electricity which is about \$70. That leaves about \$677 per month for everything else.

How does Ruth manage? She goes to the food bank once a month. She calls SSVP once every two months and they give her \$50. Ruth has a friend at church where she does volunteer work and that friend gives her bags of food sometimes and clothes. The family's diet is boring and deficient in fruits and vegetables but she does the best that she can.

She does the laundry by hand in her apartment.

Her children go to a school where there are many refugees and the school mobilizes community resources to make clothing available for needy children. Once, Ruth couldn't find boots for her daughter in the thrift store so she spent \$90 for boots so that the girl could go to school.

Ruth must ensure that there is cash available for transportation such as taking a child for a needed vaccination this week.

When Ruth becomes a permanent resident, she will receive the full Canada Child Benefit which will

add \$1033 to her monthly income. This could take years. For now, she struggles to survive.

Do you think SSVP should advocate for refugee claimants to get the full CCB immediately upon arrival?



"Caravan of Love walk in support of immigrants and refugees" by [Fibonacci Blue](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

When she arrived, she received the same supports as other refugee claimants who are treated differently from sponsored refugees or other classes of immigrants. She receives Ontario Works benefits which for her family is \$2214 per month which includes \$920 in child benefits. This is much less than Canadians and other immigrants receive. Her rent is \$1350, so there is \$864 left for other needs. She has a low-income bus pass for \$58 to attend



Corry Wink
ONRC Vice-President, Social Justice & Advocacy

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND PRISON MINISTRY

As one of the issues we place under our Social Justice Committee, there is certainly more we can do in both Prison Ministry and Restorative Justice. I would like to thank those Vincentians who are involved in this important part of what we do for their years of dedication. I am certain if you asked any of our members currently involved in some aspect of Prison Ministry or Restorative Justice, they would tell you how much it has and continues to mean for their own spiritual growth and satisfaction in knowing they are helping members of society who are often forgotten and looked down upon.

Let's remember the experience of St. Dismas, the criminal who died on the cross beside Jesus Christ. Prison Ministry gives us the opportunity to overcome the walls and barriers between society and prison inmates. The personal contact and

relationship we can establish with prisoners may result in breaking down the barriers that can be emotional and perhaps even spiritual in nature. The prison cell is a very cold environment for anyone to live in but our visits and interactions with the inmates can really help them. Are we not simply doing what we do best by visiting the prisoner? If these visits can offer some hope for the inmate that someone does care about them, the results, while not always evident, can be life changing.

We can also provide support and friendship for the inmate upon their release as they become what we like to call Returning Citizens. The non-judgmental welcome we provide can be of great comfort and hope. There is also a real need for us to research the criminal justice system and look at ways we may advocate for changes that improve various components

of the current system.

I encourage your Council/Conference to consider ways you may get involved in this important and challenging part of the Society. While we are aware of most current activities related to these topics, we would appreciate hearing about any actions you may be taking in your community by emailing jim@ssvp.on.ca.

Jim Paddon
Prison Ministry – Restorative Justice Chair

Bringing Change to Those We Serve

Systemic Change is about engaging those we serve, understanding their needs and the barriers that keep them in poverty, and then working with them to help remove the barriers. We engage our Neighbours-in-Need by home visits, food bank visits, and we should work with them to understand their issues and barriers.

Barriers are commonly found under topics such as education, health, financial, family issues, jobs and employment, housing, sports and recreation, legal and counseling, and incarceration and rehabilitation. These are all good topics to discuss at your Conference meeting under the Social Justice section of your meeting.

The education needs are often met with many barriers. This can range anywhere from preschool issues, educational resources at home and school, help to go on school trips or receiving tutoring. A common need is for financial help with post-secondary education and for people returning to school or needing training to get a decent job to support their family.

A suggestion for your Conference Social Justice agenda discussions is to either bring an article for discussion on one of these topics or to focus your discussion on how you can help those you serve by dealing with the barriers in their lives. There are often many resources right in your community that can help

Our Systemic Change Committee is focused on ways we can promote change with those we serve. One of our main projects is our Ozanam Education Fund which helps with funding for those getting an education. If you are interested in learning more about our Committee and helping to bring about change with either our Systemic Change Committee or the Ozanam Education Fund, please contact me at the email address below. We are always interested in new ideas.

Thanks for helping to bring about change for those we serve.

Jere Hartnett, Chair
ONRC Systemic Change Committee
systemicchange.ssvp@ssvp.on.ca

Vincentine Advocacy

Educate → Communicate → Participate

Saint Vincent de Paul urged us to “love the poor”. As we do with our own families, when our beloved friends in need falter or face challenges, we do not abandon them. We defend them and champion their cause.

This is the essence of Vincentine advocacy; supporting and acting on behalf of our neighbours in need, with love.

EDUCATE

An important first step in this mission of advocacy is to educate ourselves as to the problems faced by people living in poverty through caring and friendly engagement. This may sound obvious, but how often do we provide a food or clothing voucher without really trying to learn more about them and why they are in need?

Once we have a greater appreciation of how things like a lack of affordable housing, inadequate social assistance benefits, low wages and the scarcity of affordable childcare all play a role in keeping people in poverty, we need to educate ourselves as to possible solutions. [Materials available on the Ontario Regional website](#) can help us to understand these issues and uncover possible remedies.

Finally, due to our engagement with people living in poverty, we have a responsibility to educate our fellow parishioners and community about these issues. We cannot remain silent while our beloved

friends face so many injustices and challenges.

COMMUNICATE

In order to educate the broader community, we must engage in some form of communication.

This can be as simple as speaking out on behalf of our neighbours in need and defending them when people make derogatory comments or ill-informed assumptions about them.

ing on opportunities to educate our community on the key principle of Catholic social teaching, the preferential option for the poor.

PARTICIPATE

Once we educate ourselves and the community, it is then time to participate. We need to take an active role in trying to make positive change.

This is done through writing letters to or meeting with our elected representatives, signing and organizing

petitions and attending community and local council meetings.

Often, other like-minded organizations have things like petitions and template letters available online. We can simply fill

in a few blanks in order to register our support of a particular policy option that might improve the quality of life for our friends in need.

Make advocacy part of your Vincentine vocation – educate, communicate and participate!

Danny Bourne
Voice of the Poor Chair



Advocacy by [Nick Youngson, CC BY-SA 3.0, Alpha Stock Images](#)

In addition to our personal witness, we can distribute the materials contained in the [Voice of the Poor Advocacy section of the Ontario Regional website](#). Many backgrounders, discussion papers and pamphlets are archived under the Resources section.

These resources could help initiate a social justice discussion at a Conference, Particular Council, CWL or K of C meeting. They could also be used to initiate youth and new Catholics to the principles of Christian social justice during a preparation for Confirmation or in an RCIA program.

We need to be creative in capitaliz-

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



Visit us on the web

www.ssvp.on.ca

Email: secretary.ssvp@ssvp.on.ca

Email: administrativeasst.ssvp@ssvp.on.ca

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

June 19-22, 2019—National Annual General Meeting to be held in Windsor, ON. Check www.ssvp.ca for more information.

July 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)

September 20-21, 2019 — Ontario Regional Council General Members Meeting (aka the Fall Meeting). Hosted by Brant Particular Council. For more information, please check your email and visit www.ssvp.on.ca closer to the date

Notice of Passings

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

March 28, 2019: Father Joe Quinn,
Windsor-Essex Central Council

April 1, 2019: Joe McCabe, Mary
Immaculate, London