

News in Brief

E-news December 2020 | Issue 26



MEMBRE DE LA SOCIETE
DE SAINT-VINCENT DE PAUL



Welcome to our last e-newsletter for 2020. Thank you for sharing your stories about human kindness during what has been a very tough year amidst a pandemic. We look forward to bringing you more stories in 2021.



SVdP stalwart celebrates 90 years

Well-known former National Secretary of the St Vincent de Paul Society in New Zealand, Pat O'Rourke, celebrated his 90th birthday with family and friends in Wellington last month.

Pat was a former National Secretary of the Society. He could roll out an Irish joke as quick as look at you and was much loved by the Vincentian family.

Pat recalls that there were 163 active conferences when he was National Secretary including one unattached conference in Whangarei as well as overseas conferences in Sri Lanka, Samoa and Tokelau. As time went on, the two conferences in Tokelau grew over the 3 atolls under the watchful eye of Monsignor Pat O'Connor. In those days, the Society operated 30 shops across New Zealand.

Youth conferences in New Zealand were flourishing at that time under the guidance of Central and District Councils, as they were then called. In 1990 Young Vinnies from the lower North Island gathered in Wellington to participate in *Project Servant* and were given the opportunity to work at the soup kitchen, night shelter or IHC work scheme. In 1999 the first national gathering of Young Vinnies was held at Silverstream in the Hutt Valley. *Directions 99* attracted 200 young people and the central focus was social justice. The Society's membership in 2001 reached a high point of 5000, including Young Vinnies.

At the Society's 2000 AGM there was much talk about the Society becoming a registered charity, which eventuated in 2008.



Kevin's a good sort

Retired farmer Kevin O'Brien was awarded the recently reactivated 'Wider Community Good Sort Award' at September's meeting of the Lions Club of Ashburton. Kevin was introduced and given the award by club spokesman Mike Hanham who described Kevin as being 'small in stature but big of heart'. Kevin has given outstanding service to people of all denominations, much of it under the St Vincent de Paul banner.



Mike Hanham and Kevin O'Brien

If you would like to support struggling families and communities through the St Vincent de Paul Covid-19 National Recovery Appeal, you can donate online at: donate.svdp.org.nz



SVDP NATIONAL RECOVERY APPEAL 2020
Give Kiwis struggling another choice.

donate.svdp.org.nz

St Vincent de Paul Taradale and Care of Creation Group Joint project.

Article by Kathy Egan, President

The third Sunday of the month at the 9am Mass at the Taradale community of the Catholic Parish of Napier we have commenced an exciting project, an action for our strategic plan, Care of our Common Home.

Tables are set up for parishioners to bring recycling which should not go into the landfill. Metal bottle tops, milk bottle tops, batteries, mobile phones, printer ink cartridges and toner, aluminium foil and trays, toothpaste tubes, clean glad wrap, ziplock bags, food storage containers and bread bag tags.

We also have a table for collection of small goods for the Vinnies shop and a food sharing table eg fruit and veggies.

It was a great success with parishioners very keen to bring along their recycling and look forward to our next time.

The recycling is taken to the Environment Centre a specialist centre in the Bay.

We see this project not only as a service but also educational, raising awareness of the need to protect our precious land.

Photo below with Fr John our spiritual advisor and great supporter.



CAN YOU HELP?

Desks and chairs needed for Tonga

We are looking for 200 secondary school desks and chairs for Tonga from within the Auckland region.

If you can assist please contact the NZ Twinning Coordinator, Arthur Schultze:

Email: judart@xtra.co.nz

Mobile: 021 523320

Carrier and storage facilities available in the Auckland metro region.



WHANGAREI

Successful Can Drive

St Francis Xavier primary had a can run on Friday 18th September. They collected 485 cans of food for us which were gratefully received - **Anna Williams**



Christmas is joy,
religious joy, an
inner joy of light
and peace.

Pope Francis



NEW PLYMOUTH

Caring in action - the furniture moving army of SVDP New Plymouth

It's a cold, grey damp day in New Plymouth and members of 'Dad's Army' (that's what they call themselves) are huddled over a 'battle plan' on top of a tea trolley in the shed down at St Joseph's School. The paper maps out a route for the pickup and delivery of furniture for those in need. One of their division has just returned a lovely old chair he's had for repairing. The chair now has a new lease of life in the service of a person in need.

Repairs and maintenance, van driving and furniture moving are regular exercises for these 'soldiers'. Requests for their services have grown since the first phase of lock down. In July the group reported fifty completed jobs -some of those involved 2-3 trips in the van.

The first drop off today is to a young woman, who has recently removed herself from very unhappy circumstances and has rented a room in a house she shares with others. She has already been supplied with a bed and bedding, and now she has a chest of drawers to keep her clothes off the floor. She is effusive in her gratitude and uses her cell phone to confirm the best route to our next location which is a pick up - this time a bed, base and mattress and a pile of bedding which has been laundered, ironed and parcelled up for us.

We continue on our way over the next two hours picking up and dropping off furniture, all over the city - telling people about St Vincent de Paul, letting them know how else we might be able to help.

On our return we unload the van contents into the shed. The skies open up. The 'soldiers' retreat to their cars. It seems as if we have been lucky with the weather today.

The van, funded in 2019 by Our Lady Help Conference in Fitzroy (they run the shop) has transformed the furniture pickup and delivery service. The volume of furniture per trip is much larger and the service can be performed almost irrespective of weather conditions. Most of the

people receiving this 'no cost furniture' are referred to the Conference by Social Agencies and are immensely grateful for the service. The members of Dad's Army say they are past their prime. I think they are just 'hitting their stride'.

By Gabrielle Carman



Clockwise from top left: Paddy Keegan and Ray Gaffney discussing troop manoeuvres for the day. The clever hands of Phil Dyer repaired this old chair for service. Paddy Keegan and John Lawn deliberate over securing the load they have just picked up. Battle plan successfully completed! Paddy and John return to headquarters.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

National Youth Seminar held in Lower Hutt - June 1972

Prepared by Anne-Marie McCarten

This was the first of its kind organised on a National Basis and represented every area of the county where the Society had been established.

Twenty two delegates attended. These delegates were elected at regional youth seminars held in Auckland Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin during March and April 1972. There were also delegates from Hastings and Whanganui.

The Society in Australia considered the occasion important enough to send their Youth Officer Michael Whitely. Several

members of the National Council were also in attendance.

The basic aim of the Seminar was to look at the Society from a youthful perspective and to see how effective it is in dealing with contemporary problems and more especially how youth can be involved in helping solve these problems.

From the recommendations and discussions, it was clearly emphasised that the Society is an ACTION Society and discussions should lead to action.



DELEGATES AT NATIONAL YOUTH SEMINAR

Back: (Left to right)

Norman Gusscott (Wn), Michael Whiteley (Australia), John Armstrong (Ak), Paul Grant (Ak), Derek Parker (Hawkes Bay), Bruce Miller (Wn), Hanley Hoffman (Wn), Julian O'Brien (Wn), John Bourke (Dn), Gerard Burns (Ak).

Centre:
Michael Greaney (Hawkes Bay), John Trewsdale (Ch), Bernard Russell (Wn), John Boyens (Dn), John McCormack (Ch), Gary O'Loan (Ak), John Mooney (Hutt Valley), Gerard Mangan (Waikato), John Grogan (Wn), Bert Merritt (Wn).

Front:
Father Peter McCormack (Wn), Moyra Kelly (Dn), Colleen Fitzgerald (Ak), Susan Byrne (Wn), Susan Hoey (Wanganui), Judith Cameron (Hutt Valley), Carole Cotton (Wn), Mary-Clare Addington (Ak), Mrs. M. Cresswell (Wanganui), Stella Ding (Ak), Father John Moss (Ak).
Absent: Vince McBride (Wn), Allan Devlin (Wn), Margaret Hannefin (Ch).

NORTHLAND

On behalf of the Society of St Vincent de Paul a very big thank you to staff and families for the food they have donated to our food bank. This food will be used to help families who are struggling to buy groceries. Your generosity has made this possible and you are following Jesus' commandment to look after each other.

Again a big thank you and God bless you all.

Anna Williams - President, Northland area council



ASHBURTON

Warming hearts, hands and heads

Article from the Ashburton Courier - October 23, 2020
By Sue Newman

When the challenge went out to members of New Zealand Rural Women to knit woollen hats for charity, Mid Canterbury members got busy.

Over the winter months and the long weeks of lockdown they knitted, turning balls of yarn into hats and handwarmers and this week they've been distributing the finished products to Ashburton charities.

Project warmth saw 120 hats and a large number of handwarmers created.

The project was one that earned high praise from Mid Canterbury provincial president Margaret Verrall.

"It was a great thing to do and we really wanted the hats to go to people who needed them," she said.

Presbyterian Support and the Rural Support Trust received their share and this week a large bundle of woollies were handed over to the St Vincent de Paul.

And they were a welcome addition to the store's clothing stocks, shop manager Donna Collins said.

It's been a tough year for all charities with client numbers booksted by Covid-19, Collins said.

Food stocks in particular were holding, but demand was increasing with a pinch point approaching, she said.

"I'm hoping we can hold out until Toot for Tucker next month."

Over an average month St Vincent de Paul delivered about 40 food parcels, each valued at around \$100-\$120.

Filling those parcels relied heavily on donations from the community, as well as large gifts such as the recent donation of a paddock of potatoes and the ongoing support of the Meat the Need farmer group, Collins said.

Items that were always in short supply in the charity's grocery store were feminine hygiene products, soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes.



L to R: Donna Collins, Margaret Verrall, Elsa Hydes

PICTON

"Why are you being so kind to us?"

It started out as another ordinary Sunday when Marianne left the Picton Vinnies Shop she managed and headed for the supermarket. Out in the car park she spotted a van load of Vanuatian vineyard workers. She had often thought of inviting them into the shop if she saw them. As it happened the Picton Conference had previously provided them with warm clothing on their arrival into Marlborough from Southland, when they became trapped in the country because of COVID -19. After Marianne quickly made a phone call to Marcia, a number one volunteer who had been helping earlier, to come back to the shop to help out, she organised the men who happily followed her back to the Vinnies shop. To the surprise of both ladies another van and then another arrived!

Knowing they were all in the same "bubble", they were showed into the shop and pointed to various items which might have been of interest. One man was getting married when he arrived home so he was very excited to find a suit for this special occasion. Two suits were taken along with various items for all members of their families. Marianne and Marcia thoroughly enjoyed helping them find clothing, right down to jewellery and lingerie for their wives!

It came as a surprise as out of the frenzy one of the men asked, "Why are you being so kind?"

This was an example of the Society's Core Values being actioned and was done without a second thought by the two ladies. Automatically done but not overlooked by these men who were miles from home and adrift not knowing when they would see their loved ones again.



Top photo - One of the Vanuatian men in the shop with Marianne and Marcia. Bottom photo - men back in Vanuatu in isolation

NEW PLYMOUTH

Vincentians recognised as community heroes

Two Vincentians are among those recognised for outstanding community service in the 2020 New Plymouth District Council's Citizens Awards.

Mavis Bridgeman is a member of the St Joseph's Conference in New Plymouth and Kaddy Smale is a long-time supporter of the Society's weekly community meals.

Mavis has been one of the most active members of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

"She is a regular visitor of those suffering from poverty," says Gabrielle Carman, President of the St Joseph's SVdP Conference. "She provides practical support and advice, and is also a regular helper at the weekly community meals that we run."

Mavis grew up in foster homes and has cared for more than 250 foster children. She still has one boy spending a week with her each month.

"Mavis knows intimately about challenges that people in poverty face on a daily basis," says Gabrielle. "Through years of interfacing with helping agencies, she has become a fount of knowledge about welfare agencies and benefit entitlements. She knows how to get things done."

Mavis also supports Faith and Light, a faith-based group supporting those with intellectual disabilities, the Taranaki Disabilities Information Trust, the Open Home Foundation Taranaki, and the New Plymouth Pakeke Lions Club.

Kaddy Smale has been a community "good sort" for more than 45 years. She helps out at the local Catholic Parish, has 30 years' service to libraries in the district, supports migrant women, volunteers for the New Plymouth Guided Walk,

supports the Rotary Assistance Reading Programme and is a long-time supporter of the St Vincent de Paul's weekly community meals.

"For more than five years Kaddy has been a wonderful supporter of our community meals," says Gabrielle.

"These meals are held every Tuesday evening and attract 40 -50 diners, with additional meals taken out into the community for people in need who can't make it to the supper room.

"Kaddy has been part of the cooking team, right from the start. The food she makes is always special and a favourite with the diners, and she usually stays on to help serve the meal and clean up. After 40-50 people have eaten, that's a big job. She is an absolute star in our eyes."



Mavis Bridgeman and mayor Neil Holdom.

WESTPORT

Shop renovations

Just a little of what has been happening in Westport over the past couple of months.

We recently had some of the senior students from St. Canice's School, visit and do a video of both the inside and outside of our "Vinnies Shop", here in Westport.

You will see that the shop is looking very "sharp", and we are all very proud of it.

We started extensive renovations to our shop 18 months ago, beginning with replacing the roof over the shop itself. Next was the completion of the earthquake strengthening to the shop. This comprised installing steel frames around the inside of all the big windows of the shop. When this was completed we

then had the interior of the shop repainted and then new carpet laid.

At the end of Covid we had the exterior of the shop painted and of course the new signage along the outside of the verandahs.

When we went to open after Covid to our horror we found a leak in the Food bank room. This repair involved removing the ceiling to left the rafters dry out. plus taking all the supplies out of the food bank. Because all the trades people were so busy catching up after lockdown, a job which should have been completed within a week dragged on for four weeks. However, the ceiling was replaced, the food bank was repainted and new carpet laid. We are now back to normal with the "Food Bank" now looking clean and bright

Our shop now looks great, and we are hoping that we don't need to do any more R & M for a long tome.

World News - PALERMO, ITALY

While in many other parts of the world is Halloween, in Sicily, a region of Italy where the feeling towards the deceased is very strong, the “Feast of the Deceased” is celebrated.

According to an ancient popular legend, on the night of All Saints’ Day, November 1st, the deceased visit the homes of their loved ones and, as a sign of affection, leave small gifts for the children.

But the day November 2nd is the real recurrence, that is celebrated every year on the streets of Sicilian cities. It is a very heartfelt and participatory event that involves every Sicilian family: everyone visits the tombs of their deceased to leave a flower, a candle, or simply an object in their memory. It is a bit as if, in those two days, the link with the afterlife had strengthened.

On this occasion, the Sicilian Conferences of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul organize meeting points near the cemeteries and collect free offers of money, proposing what is called: “The flower that is always alive”. It is an elegant card in the shape of a flower, on which are transcribed: the name of the deceased and the name of the family that pays the offer. Generally half of the donation is destined to the local church for a Mass in suffrage for the deceased, while the other half will be used to finance the activities of the Conferences.

This is a really nice way to do good to others while respecting tradition and nature, because no real flowers are damaged. And it’s also a nice way to let people know and tell them who we are and what we do.

In the photo, the Confreres of the Central Council Conferences of Termini Imerese (Palermo) collect offerings near the cemetery.

Alessandro Ginotta

Press Office - Italian Federation
Society of Saint Vincent De Paul



TAURANGA

Loaves and Fishes fundraiser

Welcome Bay School are so grateful to St Vincent de Paul (Loaves and Fishes) for their generosity to our kura. Every week we receive lunches to help our tamariki get through the day. Without this support a lot of them would not be at school or could not function during the day.

We have held a mufti day / dress up day where all staff and students got involved. We are a small school of 347 and have raised a little over \$445, for us, this is an amazing amount and we are extremely happy to pass it onto Loaves and Fishes. We are now wondering how we go about getting the money to the organisation. It is school holidays next week, so we could easily deposit it into a bank account if that is what is needed.

By Cherie Stirling



WELLINGTON

Conference expansion, Holy Trinity Eastern Suburbs, Wellington.

After 12 months of consultation and recruitment, our Conference activity now covers all the Eastern suburbs in Wellington, recently adding the Kilbirnie/Rongotai/Lyall Bay/Hataitai area to our existing Seatoun/Strathmore/Miramar mission.

This step continues the St Vincent de Paul Society's strengthening of its mission across the Wellington area, supported by our parish, Cardinal John Dew and archdiocesan officers. The expanded coverage doubles the client population previously assisted by the Seatoun & Miramar Conference, which is now known as **Holy Trinity Eastern Suburbs Conference**.

With the strong support of the parish pastoral council and parish priest of Holy Trinity Parish, eleven new active members have been recruited plus an extra eight associate members to strengthen the capacity of the Conference to deliver the St Vincent de Paul Society mission to poor, sick, lonely and marginalised people in the wider area.

The overwhelming consensus was for an enlarged Conference with stable structure and resources, rather than trying to sustain two smaller Conferences in the same parish and suburban area.

During the latter part of 2019, our Conference completed a simple social assessment to identify deprivation and needs

in the parish and social housing area, consulted parish and community leaders for their support, and began recruitment through personal contact and presentations to parishioners at all Masses. Although disrupted by COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020, prospective new members participated in information sessions, attended monthly meetings of the Conference, successfully completed membership application and Police vetting procedures, and are now starting to get involved in visiting and assisting clients in need, accompanying experienced members.

A commissioning liturgy was led by Fr Ephrem Tigga, our parish priest of Holy Trinity Parish, at Mass on 11 October 2020 in St Patrick's Church, Kilbirnie, to prayerfully welcome the new members into active membership of the St Vincent de Paul Society in the service of those in need in our communities. We have been blessed.

I am also pleased to advise on behalf of all our members that Andrew Bridgman, an experienced member of our Conference, has been unanimously elected as President of Holy Trinity Eastern Suburbs Conference to succeed me after my nine faith-filled and fruitful years serving in this role.

Brendan Quirk

Holy Trinity Eastern Suburbs Conference, Wellington.



Commissioning of new members of Holy Trinity Eastern Suburbs Conference, St Vincent de Paul Society, at Mass, St Patrick's Church, Kilbirnie, Wellington, on Sunday 11 October 2020.



No limits to items during Free Week



A South Dunedin op-shop has ditched its price tags and is giving items away for free.

A queue formed at the door of the St Vincent de Paul shop in King Edward Street yesterday for the beginning of Free Week, which will continue until Friday.

After what was an “awful” year for many people due to the impacts of Covid-19, the timing for the event was right, St Vincent de Paul centre and pastoral co-ordinator Sarah Strang said.

There was no limit to the amount of clothing, bric-a-brac, children’s books and toys each person could take – most of which were good quality items.

A call was made to Catholic primary schools in Dunedin to have a clean-out over the school holidays and those items were collected for the shop last week, Ms Strang said.

“Some of the things people have donated have been amazing – brand new things.”

Area President Lynlea Forbes said shoppers were also being encouraged to take free juice and food for themselves or their children’s lunchboxes. Free cat food was also available.

Free Week was a way for the shop to give back to a community that has given so generously to it, she said.

“The shop was overwhelmed with generosity over lockdown,” she said.

Some happy shoppers left with a bag of free items, and others stopped by just for a chat with the volunteer staff.

Ms Forbes said everything in the shop was usually \$1 or under, which did not allow the shop to make a profit, and the sale of donated items covered only rent and power costs.

Shop volunteers often gave goods away for free to people who could not afford them.



Bianca Keane, of Dunedin, picks up some essentials for free at the St Vincent de Paul shop in South Dunedin.
Original article from www.odt.co.nz, 20 October 2020, written by Molly Houseman. Photo credit: Gregor Richardson.

A Simple Way to Pray Always

By Venerable Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận

Cardinal Nguyễn Văn Thuận (+2002) was imprisoned by the Vietnamese government for thirteen years.



After my liberation, many people said to me: “Father in prison you must have had a lot of time to pray”. It was not as simple as one might think. The Lord permitted me to experience all my weakness, my physical and mental fragility.

Time passes slowly in prison, particularly in solitary confinement. Imagine a week, a month, two months of silence... There were days when I was so worn out by exhaustion and illness that I could not manage to say a single prayer! This reminds me of a story.

There was an older man named Jim who would go to church every day at noon for just a few minutes and then he would leave. The sacristan was very curious about Jim’s daily routine, and one day he stopped him to ask, “Why do you come here every day?” “I come to pray”, Jim answered.

“That’s impossible! What prayer can you say in two minutes?” “I am an old, ignorant man. I pray to God in my own way.” “But what do you say?”

“I say, ‘Jesus, here I am, it’s Jim’. And then I leave”.

After some years, Jim became ill and had to go to hospital, where he was admitted to a ward for the poor. When it seemed that Jim was dying, a priest and a nurse, a religious sister, stood near his bed.

The priest asked, “Jim, tell us how it is that from the day you came into this ward everything changed for the better? How is it that the patients have become happier, more content, and friendlier?”

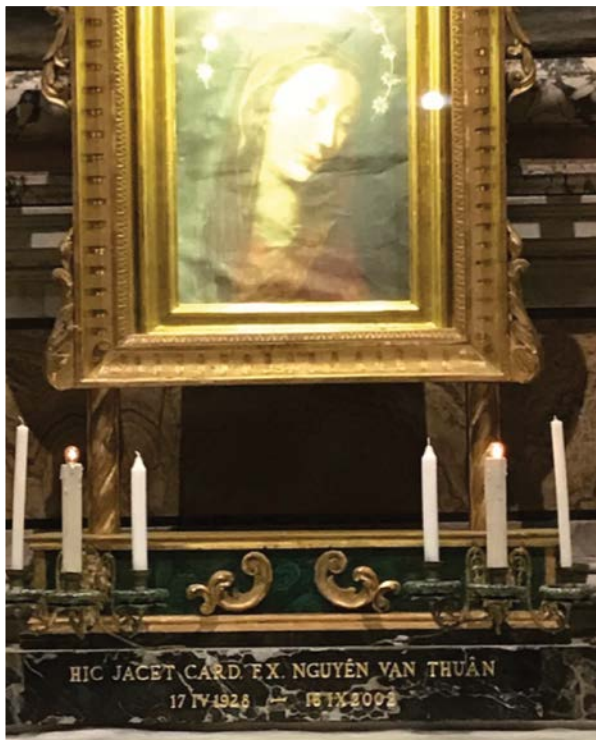
“I don’t know. When I could walk around I would try to visit everyone. I greeted them, talked a bit with them. When I couldn’t get out of bed I called everyone over to me to make me laugh, to make them happy. With Jim they are always happy!”

“But why are you happy?” “Well, aren’t you happy when you receive a visitor?” asked Jim. “Of course, but we have never seen anyone come to visit you”.

“When I came here I asked you for two chairs. One was for you, Father, and one was reserved for my guest”. “But what guest?” the priest asked.

“I used to go church to visit Jesus every day at noon. But when I couldn’t do that anymore, Jesus came here”. “Jesus comes to visit you? What does he say?”

“He says, ‘Jim, here I am, it’s Jesus!’” Before dying, Jim smiled and gestured with his hand toward the chair next to his bed, as if inviting someone to sit down. He smiled for the last time and closed his eyes. When my strength failed and I could not even pray, I repeated, “Jesus, here I am, it’s Francis.” Joy and consolation would come to me, and I experienced Jesus responding, “Francis, here I am, it’s Jesus”.



Pictured at right: Cardinal Nguyễn Văn Thuận’s tomb in Santa Maria della Scala church, Rome

100th Anniversary

The SSVP Marks the 100th Anniversary of Being Officially Recognised as an Autonomous Body of the Church



The proceedings which dispelled any controversy on this matter took place in Corrientes (Argentina), in 1920.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) was founded in 1833, but its first Rule was developed in 1835, a document embodying the practices of the young organisation, independent in its administration and organisation. The Society began to grow, and by 1845 it was already present through France, and had reached other countries in Europe, as well as the United States.

In that year, 1845, Pope Gregory XVI approved the goals and methods of the SSVP, and granted its active members and volunteers a set of plenary indulgences: “As we recognise that this Society, established under the patronage and in the name of Saint Vincent de Paul, dedicated to practical works of charity, makes a powerful contribution to the good of religion, and is beneficial for the faithful; so that it is daily growing and flourishing” said the Pope.

However, this independence was not devoid of tension. During the presidency of Adolphe Baudon (1848-1886), the 3rd President General, bishops and priests in several European countries wanted to use the name of the SSVP with a different structure. In other places too, priests were Conference presidents, and bishops led Councils.

Thus in 1851, Pope Pius IX appointed a cardinal protector of the SSVP. He also granted indulgences for the families assisted, and for the members’ parents. The pope of “Rerum Novarum”, Leo XIII, in 1888, granted indulgences to the wives of conference members, and, in 1913, Pope St Pius X granted them to active members attending Assemblies.

In 1917, the Code of Canon Law was approved, in which associations were defined as bodies created, controlled and in some way also governed by the Church hierarchy. Lay people had to abide by the rules and obey only their pastors.

The “Corrientensis” Resolution dated November 13th, 1920

The Bishop of the Diocese of Corrientes (Argentina), Msgr. Luis María Niella (photo), submitted a query to the Holy See, concerning the relationship of the Ordinary with SSVP Conferences, and the appropriateness for them to be independent from its authority, since he found no basis for this in the new Code, and because there was a debate about the administration of SSVP assets in Corrientes.

The Council’s Sacred Congregation issued a decree recognising the autonomy of the SSVP’s decisions and the rights of association. This resolution, called “Corrientensis”,

dated November 13th, 1920, is now 100 years old.

The text goes as follows: **“Insofar as an association does not owe its existence to the Church, nor is recognised for legal purposes by the Church, neither can it be governed or led by the ecclesiastical authority, but only by the laity appointed in its own statutes. Among these associations, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (or Vincentian Conferences) stands out in recent times for its renown and its example”.**

With the 100th anniversary of this recognition by the Holy See regarding our autonomy in government and administration, it must be acknowledged that there is a close and healthy relationship between the Conferences and the Church. The SSVP liaises with and is part of the Church, through its identity, charism and organisation, as stated in Art. 5.2 of the Rule. **“The Society is legally autonomous as to its existence, constitution, organisation, rules, activities and internal government. Members freely choose their own officers and manage the Society’s activities and assets with full autonomy, in accordance with their own Statutes and the legislation in effect in each country.”**

Today, with great pleasure, the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, represented by its Council General International, is very close to the Church life. The SSVP is a member of two official bodies at the Vatican, with a seat and a vote on each: “Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life”, and “Dicastery for Service of Integral Human Development”. We are also in permanent touch with the “Dicastery for Communications” and the “Congregation for the Causes of the Saints” for our fellow members, whose exemplary lives are being examined for canonisation, including our beloved Blessed Frédéric Ozanam.

Our President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira, states that “the autonomy recognised by the Church should be regarded as an asset when it comes to electing officials, to preserving our heritage and to observing the procedures, rules or regulations of our institution. As for doctrinal, spiritual and liturgical matters, we shall blithely abide by the decisions taken by the Church and the Holy Father. In view of all this, our autonomy entails responsibility, balance and cooperation.

The Council General requests that this text should be widely disseminated in each country for reading and reflection by each Conference of the Society.

Twinning Report

We have received reports from our Twins as to how their lives have been affected by Covid-19. These are included in this report.

TONGA

The container ex Napier arrived in Tonga during October. With the assistance of the NZ High Commissioner we were not charged any costs associated with the landing of the container in Tonga. As reported in the High Commission newsletter:

“The New Zealand High Commission assisted the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVDP) New Zealand to clear a container of donated goods and materials to the Tongan chapter of SVDP. The first of two 20 foot containers organized and funded by SVDP NZ was unloaded at the St Joseph hall in Ma’ufanga on Monday with some hospital beds, wheelchairs, school chairs and tables distributed within the first two days. Sakopo Lolohea, President of the National Council of SVDP Tonga said the assistance and equipment will go to kindergartens, SVDP conferences, aged care and disabled persons support or underprivileged families in all of Tonga’s island groups. Funds raised from selling of the donated clothing also goes towards assisting the prisons, Alonga Center, families who lost their homes due to fire, the elderly, and poor families. Sakopo also confirmed plans for SVDP to begin a charity drive next month to further address needs.”

A container of school furniture is being collated at present and will be shipped late December or early January.



Left: Nat Pres Sakapo delivering a bed. Right: NZ High Commissioner assisting Tongan Vincentians.

SAMOA

The container sent from Christchurch, as reported in the last e-news has arrived in Apia, we await a report on this.

At present 2 x 20’ containers are being loaded at Paraparaumu for shipment to Samoa. These will be shipped late November.

Members in Stokes Valley have purchased a 20’ container to be loaded with various goods which will be sent to the island of Savaii. A local Samoan Society member in the community is assisting with this. Transportation on arrival in Apia has already been organised through family here in NZ. This will be dispatched early 2021.

I have been in contact with both High Commissions in Tonga and Samoa requesting funding for the shipment of material aid. They have both responded that they will consider when they formulate budgets for the 2021 which have to be approved here in NZ. They both recognise our contribution to the assisting of and working with the needy.

SRI LANKA

I have received some reports which were forwarded to the Twins here in NZ.

“Flood relief for the diocese of Mannar, I would like to appreciate and thank the St. Vineent De Paul Society National Council for donating (200.000/-) two hundred thousand for the flood victims. Thank you for your kind help for the poor people who have been affected by floods in December 2019. We have helped 145 families with dry ration and they have been given Rice, Dhal. Sugar. Flour and Milk food. The package is worth of 1.180/- Rupees a family.”



The SSVP in Sri Lanka is active in all 12 Dioceses with 340 adult Conferences (with over 3500 members) 12 youth Conferences and 25 school Conferences.

All Conferences meet regularly in their respective Parishes and monthly meetings are held in the Deaneries / Dioceses.

National council meetings are held once a month with the main office bearers of all Dioceses in attendance with the guidance of our National Chaplain Rev. Fr. Roy Clarence. Members of the National Council visit all Dioceses.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Spiritual programs such as prayer services, retreats, Lenten programs

Leadership programs for students and youth

Medical camps held - medicine, spectacles provided

Financial assistance for surgery, transport to hospitals, purchase of wheel chairs

Financial and material assistance for construction, renovation and repairs of houses

Financial and material assistance - children's, elder's homes

Disaster relief funds - drought, floods, fire, tsunami

Educational assistance for students - school bags, books, shoes, uniforms, tuition fees

Distribution of dry rations at Christmas - hampers, cooked food, dry rations, gifts to children

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

350 school bags were distributed to children affected by floods (Jaffna Diocese April 2019)

Gift vouchers for the purchase of shoes to 95 students (Badulla Diocese)

Twining fund from New Zealand distributed among all Dioceses

Scholarship fund from Australia distributed among 1051 students (2020)

Funds received for bomb victims from New Zealand were distributed among families who lost their loved ones and who were injured

Funds were distributed by the National Council of Sri Lanka with an additional fund received from New Zealand as Covid 19 relief to all Dioceses.

SPECIAL PROJECTS FUNDED BY NEW ZEALAND

We thank Bro. Arthur for coming to Sri Lanka and visiting the Bishop of Batticaloa, Ozanam Home for children of special needs in Batticaloa and the remote village in Chilaw with low

income families and granting part of the fund for the purchase of a bus for the home in Batticaloa as requested and funds for the construction of toilets for the village in Chilaw.

As more funds have to be collected for the bus the cash has been deposited in the bank.

12 Toilets have been constructed for the 22 families in Chilaw.

We thank Bro. Pandian, Bro. Johnson and Bro. Francis for coming to Sri Lanka and visiting the Bishop of Jaffna and members of the Jaffna Diocese and granting funds through the CGI for an educational project in Jaffna for the benefit of children who are victims of the civil war in Sri Lanka.

On behalf of the National Council of Sri Lanka I wish to thank the CGI, National Councils of New Zealand and Australia all our Donors for all the assistance granted to us in the past and pray for Gods blessings to continue the charitable journey for the greater glory of God.

Thank you once again. God bless you.

SRI LANKA

Weekly Tea Service Provided by the Conference



St. Mary's Conference of St. Mary's Church, Maharagama, Sri Lanka, organises the provisions and material to distribute a cup of milk tea every Monday to each and every Outdoor Patient in the Out Patient Department (OPD) of the Apeksha Hospital which is the Country's premier cancer hospital.

Tea is also served to indoor patients who are warded.

A few biscuits are also offered along with the cup of tea which is eagerly looked forward to by the patients who come from far and near for consultation and tests.

The cost of tea leaves, milk, sugar, biscuits and also disposable paper/plastic cups and gloves, as well as, a nominal fee to the lady who makes the tea on a regular basis, amounts to approximately Rs.17,000/= per week."

When they report on the Sri Lankan rupee the equivalent with the NZ\$ is:

- RS 1,180 = NZ\$9.33
- Rs 17,000 = NZ\$134.40



Obituaries



Henry,
 Deep Peace of the Quiet Earth be to you.
 Deep Peace of the Shining Stars be to You'
 Deep Peace of the Flowing Air be to you
 Deep Peace of the Son of Peace be to you.
 Henry,
 May the rain fall soft upon your fields,
 May the Angels lead you into Paradise, and
 until we all meet again,
 May God hold you in the hollow of his Hand.

United in prayer, John Craddock sm

The Van Den Bogaart Henry,
 A Man of Talents Many,
 Husband, Father, Farmer,
 Vincentian, Friend, Brother,
 Gone to God; Left us Sadly.



Margaret Boyle – a dedicated and committed Treasurer of St Mary’s conference in Wanganui for over 20 years. May she Rest in Peace.

Covid-19 National Recovery Appeal

This appeal is about raising sufficient money, food and other resources to enable Vinnies’ centres throughout New Zealand to continue providing the social, emotional, and financial help thousands of individuals and families are asking of us as we navigate through these uncertain and challenging times.

Throughout COVID-19 the St Vincent de Paul Society (Vinnies) have been helping the most vulnerable in our communities by providing essential items like food, clothing, and heating. But now we need YOUR help. Vinnies have seen a 400% increase in welfare requests since March, and a 70% decrease in donations.

COVID-19 NATIONAL RECOVERY APPEAL

“Covid-19 is creating new layers of poverty and need in our community.”
 Cardinal John Dew

We urgently need your help.

In the months ahead the once-in-a-lifetime pandemic will bring severe hardship for individuals, families and communities. **Our goal is to raise \$4 million** so we can be there to help the vulnerable.

Can you help us?
 Donate directly to our Appeal Account:
BNZ 02 0528 0208598 027
 Or via our website: donate.svdp.org.nz
St Vincent de Paul is a registered charity – all donations over \$5 are tax deductible.



NEWS IN BRIEF

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We’d love to read your stories:

If you have any news items that you would like us to put in our next ‘News in Brief’ e-newsletter, please send us a short article and a photo (if you have one) to:

Anne-Marie McCarten
 Email: national@svdp.org.nz