



NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL GENERAL COUNCIL

January - February 2016

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This newsletter is published every 2 months, in 3 languages (French, English, Spanish) by the International General Council of the Society of Saint Vincent-de-Paul.

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The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organisation of women and men, volunteers, committed to offer person-to-person help to all those in need. It is funded mainly from donations. The SSVP was founded in 1833, by a group of young laymen.

The General Council is the link between member countries of the International Confederation of the SSVP. Its mission is to support the work of Conferences around the world.

Lebanon : SSVP sends aid to refugees

Thanks to funding from the International General Council, the Lebanese Society has been able to distribute items of basic need to Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

With the arrival of more than two million Syrian and Iraqi refugees, Lebanon, with a population of only four million of inhabitants, has been seriously affected by the conflicts in the Middle East. After a three-year war in Syria, refugees continue to arrive and Lebanon, with a surface area of no more than 10,452 Km², continues to receive them. Forty per cent of Syrians who have fled their own country have found a haven in Lebanon. At the same time international aid is flooding in, the needs continue on to rise.

Thanks to the \$250,000 funding received from the International General Confederation (IGC) of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, SSVP Lebanon has been able to increase support to Syrian and Iraqi refugees. During the week 8-12 February 2016, batches containing tokens for fuel, blankets, food alongside hygiene kits were distributed to around

750 families in the region of Bekaa (Zahleh, Kaa...) as well as in the north-west outskirts of Beirut (Nabaa, Bourj-Hammoud, Dora, Jdeideh and Bauchrieh).

The distribution of these batches was carried out by the SSVP Lebanon Board Members as well as by volunteers, alongside the National Council President, Ms Ella Bitar. The International General Council was represented by Mr Brian O'Reilly, SSVP International Vice-President, and by Mr Bruno Fabre, project coordinator of the International Commission for Aid and Development (ICAD). This trip has allowed for a greater understanding regarding the situation on the ground and has also permitted the possibility to gather crucial information concerning the coordination of the refugee aid projects.

This action allowed the group to meet with families, be it in camps, or in their homes. The visitors could see first-hand the misery in which the refugees survive, alongside the help that the SSVP is providing through the donations it receives from benefactors and friends.

During these visits, Ms Bitar stressed the huge need of the Lebanese who also find themselves in great difficulties and to whom SSVP Lebanon strives, through various means, to support.

Read also a call of Ella Bita, in "council news sections on "

www.ssvpglobal.org



Jubilee Year: a spiritual retreat day, at the request of Pope Francis

Among the events marking the Jubilee Year of Mercy, the Holy Father has asked the Pontifical Council Cor Unum to propose a spiritual retreat day during Lent 2016.

The Jubilee Year of Mercy officially began on 8 December 2015, with the opening of the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. This door will be closed on 20 November 2016, the solemnity of Christ the King, marking the end of the Jubilee Year. Between these two dates, a series of events is planned in Rome and in the dioceses.

Among these events, Pope Francis specifically asked Cor Unum to propose a spiritual day of retreat for all those engaged in charitable work within the Church, whether professionals or volunteers.

« *Caritas Christi urget nos* »

Cor Unum has invited SSVP to promote this day

In a letter addressed to the International President General, the Pontifical Council Cor Unum called on the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul to promote this day on the topic "Caritas Christi urget nos" (Charity compels us). In the letter, Mgr. Giampietro Dal Toso – Secretary, states: "Faithful to the Holy Father's wishes, we are encouraged to develop further in our daily lives that special dimension of compassion by exploring the deep roots of our charitable action."

After the Christmas feast days, the Pontifical Council published an update and a

document offering tools and resources to help organise this retreat day, which will take place in Lent 2016, on a date chosen to suit those taking part.

Summary of content:

- Introduction
- Leader's resources
- Prayer to ask for charity
- Prayer of Pope Francis The works of mercy

Document available to download on the CGI's website, in the « news section » > www.ssvpglobal.org

Vincentian Family Collaboration Commission meets in Zagreb (Croatia)

Between 14 and 16 January, at the headquarters country of the Daughters of Charity (DC) in Zagreb (Croatia), it was held the meeting of the Vincentian Family Collaboration Commission (VFCC) under the direction of Father Joe Agostino (United States of America), member of the Congregation of the Mission (CM).

The International General Council (CGI) of SSVP was present through Brother Renato Lima, ITVP America 3. The meeting had two objectives:

- to evaluate the activities carried out during 2015
- to begin preparations for the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Congregation of the Mission and Vincentian charism. This event will be celebrated in 2017.

In addition, members of the Commission analyzed how was the application of the Vincentian Family Collaborative Action Program (VFCAP) issues held last year in

nearly 20 editions by several countries, like Brazil, Ethiopia, Philippines, Ecuador, Venezuela, Mexico, India, Cameroon and Bolivia. In 2016, it has been planned other VFCAP sessions, for example: Portugal, Madagascar, Spain, Lebanon, USA and Canada.

On the last day of work, it was held the meeting of the Vincentian Family of Cro-



atia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, attended by more than 50 Vincentians from various Vincentian branches, as

SSVP, CM, DC, Vincentian Marian Youth and AIC, among others. The focus of this event was the exchange of experiences in terms of effective action among the branches in these three countries.

"We need to develop collaborative projects in partnership with the branches of the Vincentian Family, so we can better serve the poor. The Vincentian Family should follow this joint work effort, because then we will be stronger and more effective. The application of VFCAP will precisely this line, and strengthens the bonds within the family", considered brother Renato Lima.

Further information about the Commission's work and about the VFCAP: www.famvin.org or visit the page "Vincentian Collaboration" on Facebook.

The next meeting of VFCC will be in September 2016 in Philadelphia (United States).

Australia: The Vincentian commitment to migrants.

With a long history of welcoming foreigners, SSVP Australia has developed numerous services dedicated to refugees.

While Europe struggles to organise the influx of refugees fleeing from the deadly conflicts in the Middle East, other countries, such as Australia, have a long experience of welcoming migrants as the country has a history marked of waves of immigration. SSVP is very active regarding the refugee situation offering assistance and specialised services. SSVP has also become a spokesperson pleading the case of the refugee, this at a time when the Australian Government is hardening its policies towards welcoming foreigners. This article from the Australian National Council sets out how the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul structures its action concerning the refugee situation.

“Many countries in the world do not enjoy the peace and democracy of Australia. This can often lead to terrible conflict and warfare, and persecution of minority groups in much of the world. People may be forced from their homes and jobs, kidnapped and subjected to torture, or ostracised because of their race or religion. They may fear for their own and their children's lives. This forces many millions of people around the world to migrate out of their home countries. A small number of these people use their human right under the Refugee Convention to come to Australia and seek asylum here. We are fortunate enough to be a wealthy country, with the ability to welcome many of the people who seek safety here, and in turn we benefit enormously from their skills, perspectives and experiences.

What Vincentians do

The St Vincent de Paul Society has a long history of helping migrants and refugees. We do this both by providing services to asylum seekers and refugees in Australia, and by advocating to government on their behalf. Our services include providing financial and information support to migrants and refugees, for

example through home visitation, food and financial help, visits to detention centres, and homework centres. There are also dedicated Vinnies* migrant and refugee centres and committees in some states, which coordinate these activities and also offer information services.

Our advocacy is led by the National Office, and the Vincentian Refugee Network. Advocacy includes spreading the true stories of migrants and refugees, writing submissions to various bodies, media work, and some events. Our main areas of concern are the negative outcomes of detention centres, which we absolutely oppose, and inadequate financial support for refugees and asylum seekers living in the community.

It starts with a spark

Since 2006 a program fondly referred to as ‘SPARK’, has facilitated the settlement of children and families of refugee

tem; address settlement issues; and learn skills to negotiate living in a new country. The Family Group program is now implemented in eight schools and counts with the enthusiastic participation of 75 parents or carers and 22 volunteers.

The Society continues to oppose mandatory detention and offshore processing of asylum seekers and calls for the timely processing of applications and immediate removal of children, women and men from detention centres.

Advocacy is led by the National Office, the National Social Justice Committee and the Vincentian Refugee Network. Advocacy includes spreading the true stories of migrants and refugees, writing submissions to various bodies, and organising events. «

The Australian Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was founded in 1854 with the



backgrounds through a range of holistic educational, social and cultural programs.

In the Family Group program, new families and volunteers come together to establish networks and friendships within the school community. Volunteers assist parents to improve their English; understand the Australian school sys-

creation of its first conference in Melbourne by Father Gerald Ward. At present it maintains 1,600 conferences and more than 50,000 members.

**Vinnies = the nickname given to the volunteers of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Australia.*

Canada : greetings from North of 60°

«North of 60°» is a Vincentian solidarity project that SSVP Western Canada has implemented to help the poor people of Arctic communities.

Extracts from the 2015 report by Peter Ouellette - President of Western Regional Council (Canada)

The Beginning of the Project

Sister Fay Trombley of Tuktoyaktuk, Eileen Orysiuk of Calgary and other members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul had no idea that the work they started several years ago would build to what it is today.

Thanks to the generous support from Corporations and members of the Catholic Community in Edmonton, the SSVP North of 60 Project supplied food, household products and other items of necessity to those who have less living in Canadian Arctic Communities. This year, eight sea cans were shipped, supporting nine communities.

The program has grown in momentum and improved with more control in sorting and distribution of donated items. We are getting better.

« food security is the primary focus on this project »

Over the last few years we have developed the principle of shipping only what the Community asks for. Our contact in the Arctic Community is introduced to a contact in the Edmonton area and a rapport is established such that communication is honest and open. Food security is the primary focus of this project. Food pricing is high and selection is limited. A food product list has been developed. Volumes are sized based on the specific Northern Community population and the sea containers are loaded with this volume. Most of the food is donated in smaller lots from churches and com-



munity groups in Edmonton area. These donations are sorted in a warehouse, repackaged and allocated to sea containers. Whole powder milk is purchased directly from the processor in bulk.

Suppliers of other bulk food product are being developed. Clothing, bedding, household items and other necessities are also shipped, as well as items specifically requested by the Arctic Community contact. These could include special project building materials, prefabricated sheds, handyman tools, hockey and other sports equipment, and many other products. Many private donors, SSVP Conferences, CWL, and others provide cash donations for this program. This cash is used to make bulk purchases from the likes of Bulk Barn, Costco, Medallion Milk, etc., and these products are brought to our warehouse and distributed to round out the food donations for each of the Communities.

Project expanding

The program has also expanded north east as members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in the Eastern Canadian

Regions initiate similar programs to support

Arctic Communities across the Canadian North. As we begin the planning for next year, we have increased the support from both Catholic and non-Catholic Parishes, as well as Corporations providing the needed transportation logistics that are necessary to continue. The target for 2016 for this SSVP Western Region program will grow to nine sea cans supporting 10 Communities

Thanks to all who made this happen.
Peter Ouellette

The Society of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Western Regional Council (Canada) serves the following areas :

- Alberta
- Saskatchewan
- Manitoba
- North West Territories
- Nunavut

Website : <http://ssvpwrc.ca/>

All about ... The Election of the International President

In June 2016, the Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent of Paul will elect, for a 6-year term their next International General President, to succeed Dr Micheal Thio. In order for you to be able to best follow this important moment in the history of the Society, set out below is a short summary of the electoral process.

The Candidates

That is it! We now know which of the candidates put forward is eligible for the post of International General President. In early February 2016, the IGC officially revealed the identity of the competing candidates. The programmes and CVs have been sent by mail and by post to all those responsible for the SSVP International Confederation. The electoral material (procedures, forms, envelopes) will also be sent short through the same means.

Who are they?

The nationality of the winner is in no doubt (the two remaining candidates are both Brazilian), it remains unclear, however, whether Presidency will be occupied by a man or a woman! The two candidates are both well known throughout the Vincentian community due to their active engagement within the Society at both national and international levels.



Ada Ferreira, 45-years old, has been a member of the Society since 1990, specifically working in the Youth Committee before entering the Brazilian National Office in the roles of Vice-President and National President.

Since 2013, she has been a Regional Coordinator (America 3 – Zone 2) and has been very involved in IGC training through programming as well as through being a trainer.



Renato Lima, also 45-years old, has been a member since 1986. He has held various posts within the Society, including posts on the Youth Committee, as well as constantly undertaking activities in his Conference.

Since 2008 he has been the Territorial Vice-President (South America) and during the last 3 years has represented the International General Council for dealings with the Vincentian Family. Journalist by profession, he is also the author of a number of publications, including the "Vincentian Chronicles".

So now ?

The vote will take place during the General Assembly in Rome from 5th June, for this reason it is particularly important that Member Countries confirm as soon as possible their presence (or not) responding to the invitation that they have already received. For more details on the elections and the candidates, go to the IGC website which has a specific page for this event.

www.ssvpglobal.org/edito

Fresh news from the International General Council : agregations

The form to be used when a Conference has requested agregation has been completely redesigned. The new version has recently been sent by mail to all National Councils to be used for new Conference agregation requests.

This new form was designed to better take into account the reality on the ground and to respond to the new needs of the General Council especially regarding the centralisation of Society data throughout the world.

"The old form contained questions that are no longer relevant" explained Christelle Lamy (Coordinator of Membership/General Council Statutes) "it was necessary to bring it up to date in order to gather more precise information concerning the location of the Conference, the break down of activities etc. It has also been an opportunity to focus the conference on the spiritual dimension of our Organisation as well as on the requirements of the International Rule."

Note that from now on all membership requests must be carried out through the use of this new form.

Need more details? mail us cgi.information@ssvpglobal.org

