



**The Catholic Women's League of Canada
Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council
Community Life Chair**



DATE: May 6, 2020

FROM: Theresa Hickey, Provincial Chairperson of Community Life
TO: ABMK Provincial Executive
TO: Diocesan Presidents
TO: National Community Life Chair
RE: Communique #4 – St. Vincent de Paul

Sharing, Love, Kindness, Compassion and Knowledge
all are fundamentals of St Vincent de Paul

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP) is a lay Catholic Organization whose Mission is to live the Gospel message by serving Christ through the poor with Love, Respect, Justice and Joy.

Some of us may ask, “Who is St Vincent de Paul?” St Vincent de Paul was a French Catholic Priest who dedicated himself to serving the poor. He is venerated as a saint in the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. He was renowned for his compassion, humility and generosity and was the founder of the Congregation of the Mission. He was born April 24, 1581 and died September 27, 1660.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) was created in Paris in 1833 by a small group of six Catholic Students led by Frederic Ozanam. For such a small Charity, the society spread fulfilling the wish of its Founder Frederic Ozanam. Frederic, only twenty years old was inspired by Saint Vincent de Paul’s legacy decided to name the Society after the famous French saint of the poor. A small group visited the poor in their homes, in the streets, hospitals and asylums. The Society arose from humble beginnings to become an international organization operating in 153 countries with over 800,000 members.

Today, St Vincent de Paul is very active in Alberta; Calgary alone has 22 organizations, Edmonton has 21. Southern Alberta makes up about 60 conferences in total. Yellowknife, NT is very active in the community despite the COVID-19 Crisis. Sister Faye Trombley known as the sister of charity started an SSVP with another Vincentian named Eileen Orysiuk and through their efforts, SSVP Conference was born. The Tuk project brought awareness to the needs of that community.

The North of 60 Project of SSVP reaches out and establishes contacts to remote communities, identifying their needs, gathering non- perishables and day to day household supplies and other articles required, arranging sea containers to deliver the gathered products. As part of SSVP there is the enablement of the creation of food banks and used clothing distribution centers. This allows to build skills and knowledge in the community, effect self-determination, cultivates community leaders and brings social change. This initiative assists with food safety and supports social integration. These people-drawn projects develop and supports communities for the benefit of children and youth, especially providing students with proper nutrition, plus students will focus and have the ability to complete classroom tasks more efficiently.

Many changes have come into place with the COVID -19 outbreak. Many families are receiving food and needed supplies differently these days. Volunteering and donations are down due to the scare of the Pandemic Crisis. Less than five months ago two members would go and interview a family in need; today this is not possible. SSVF has an on-call number for clients, needing assistance. A voucher is dropped off at the Diocese and the family member will come to the diocese for pickup. Sometimes this is hard on families, especially with small children who cannot be left alone in order to leave to go for the pickup. In other places, food hampers are left on a doorstep. These are very stressful and uncertain times with so many people in need. With the increase in calls and less volunteers and donations down, many families are going hungry, especially youth and young children. In January 2020 until March 20th, 274 people were served, out of them were 134 children, 140 adults, 94 Co-op vouchers, 51 garage boys (ex: furniture) and 87 fish were given out in Yellowknife alone. I could not even imagine the poverty in larger cities like Calgary and Edmonton. This sure pulls at our heartstrings to think how many in our communities go to bed hungry every night. With the churches closed and no collections on Sundays, the World Day of the Poor collection will not take place.

In closing, let us, the Catholic Women's League (CWL) continue to pray and share our good fortune with others. If you would like to become a SSVF Member, check it out with your parish priest. It is a very rewarding organization, when you see the face of a child light up with joy when he sees you coming to visit his family the child knows he will get food for tomorrow. It will bring joy to our hearts as well.

“Go to the poor; you will find God”

Theresa