

THE



SPRING 2018

BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

**A NEW YEAR:
RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT
TO SERVE**

KINDRED SPIRITS

**WOMEN IN
VOLUNTEERING**



THE VOICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN IRELAND



*“Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible,
and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”*

– Francis of Assisi



This magazine is named in honour of the principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam

THE IRISH SVP OZANAM BULLETIN

SPRING 2018
Published Quarterly

BULLETIN EDITORIAL ADDRESS

SVP National Office, SVP House,
91-92 Sean MacDermott St, Dublin 1
Phone: 01 8848200
Editor's Email: editorsvpbulletin@gmail.com

Contents

4	KIERAN STAFFORD REFLECTION
5	MAKING A DIFFERENCE
6	RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT TO SERVE
8	OUR VINCENTIAN FAMILY
10	JOHN MONAGHAN
12	KINDRED SPIRITS
14	POVERTY STRATEGY
16	INCREASE YOUR DONATION
18	NEW BEGINNINGS
20	EDUCATION – A SOUND INVESTMENT
22	YOUNG SVP
24	THE SPIRIT OF THE SOUTHEAST
25	CATHOLIC GUIDES IRELAND
26	THE GUILD ST PHILIP PRISON CONFERENCE
27	WOMEN IN VOLUNTEERING
28	CORMAC WILSON
30	MINIMUM WAGE
32	CHARITY SHOPPING
34	TRAGEDY IN ZAMBIA
36	WE LUCKY VINCENTIANS
37	WEST AREA GATHERING
38	MENS COOKERY CLASSES
40	BAILEBOROUGH SHOP CONFERENCE
41	OZANAM COME DANCING
42	A NEW SPRINGTIME
43	CARNE HOLIDAY CENTRE
44	NATIONWIDE
50	IN TRIBUTE

EDITOR:
LINDA O'CONNELL

ASSISTANT EDITOR
MARY MOYLAN

EDITORIAL ADVISOR:
JIM WALSH

DESIGN: PICA DESIGN, CORK
PRINTED BY: W&G BAIRD LTD
GREYSTONE PRESS, ANTRIM

CIRCULATION: 6,500

ADVERTISING RATES ON
REQUEST TO THE EDITOR

RELEVANT ARTICLES ARE
WELCOME. SEND TO THE EDITOR.



www.facebook.com/SVPireland



www.twitter.com/SVP_Ireland

Editorial

Every New Year seems to bring with it a new wave of possibilities, planning and great expectations. We usually face a barrage of advertising and campaigns encouraging us to loose weight, stop smoking, stop drinking and start the year afresh by setting new goals which should help us better ourselves.

Don't misunderstand me here: there is nothing wrong with these goals, but sometimes these outside influences can result in disappointment and people feel deflated. So how do we decide on what goals or aspirations to set without it resulting in us beating ourselves up afterwards because we didn't accomplish them or achieve what others wanted from us?

Most of us go through life viewing our experiences as isolated, unrelated events. We catalogue these occurrences as such but don't use them as opportunities

for learning. One of our greatest possibilities for growth and change is in reflecting on the lessons of not only the past year but, also, previous ones. The ability to reflect and learn is a key factor in building inner strength and finding success. By using experiences as learning opportunities, this helps us to build a strong mind-set.

However, we have a choice in how we reflect on our past and we can choose to be positive because, when we reflect on the past with a positive attitude, we grow, learn, and gain energy for the future. "Failures" are simply experiments with endings we did not expect.

In this edition themed "A New Year – Renewing our Commitment to Serve" are many articles and experiences from members who give their time to serve those less fortunate. And yes, I am sure that many will also have had bad experiences but this is when we need to reflect and renew our commitment. It is important for us to remember the faces of those who have smiled back at us, or stretched out their hand looking for friendship, and acknowledge that we played a part in making that person's life a little bit better. We also need to know that these experiences are a two-way exchange because you can feel your heart well up when you are part of this type of interaction with another human being. I am sure, as you read through the spring edition, it will help each of us to reflect on our positive achievements, assess where we need to grow, and renew our commitment to serve others.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge two students who have been assisting the editorial team in putting this edition together: Sean Sexton and Stephen Scannell – take a bow lads!

Linda O'Connell

“Why are the Government not doing more to ensure that everyone has a home?”



I was recently asked to give a talk to 4th class girls at a local Primary school on Ireland's homeless crisis. The current situation is of such a concern that even 10- and 11-year-old school children want to know why it is happening. One bright young child asked me, “Why are the Government not doing more to ensure that everyone has a home?” That question has been asked by so many but I would guess not by a child of such young age, and that question strikes straight to the heart of the homeless crisis.

At numerous Pre-Budget submissions we have called for more social housing to be built, instead we get targets, plans and more reliance on the private sector to accommodate those in need of permanent secure social housing. Over reliance on the private sector to provide housing is not working. In fact it is the main cause of the crisis we find ourselves in. Repeating the same mistakes and expecting a different outcome is the definition of stupidity.

At this stage those seeking social housing do not want to go to private landlords because they know that it could well be only short term and they'll be back to square one again should the landlord wish to sell or renovate the property. They want a secure, safe, social house, they want a home.

We in SVP know from our visits to people that it's not possible for anyone to have a chance in life unless they first have a secure, safe home. State investment in social housing always pays back a dividend in citizens that can work or study and bring up their children in a secure environment. So to repeat that young girl's question: Why are the Government not doing more to ensure that everyone has a home? Why are we not seeing more social housing being built?

We in SVP are playing our part to support and help those experiencing homelessness, our members are helping families to avoid losing their homes and also visiting families in hotels and B&Bs while many members are on the ground providing relief to those sleeping rough and the many who have to avail of night hostels.

We are witness to many shocking and disgraceful situations that would make anyone weep. Every week a new and shocking story from someone who is homeless is told and yet there is a strong dialogue out there that – ‘the situation is improving’, ‘many are gaming the system’ ‘I wouldn't be homeless, I'd get a job’, and that ‘homelessness is normal’. Homelessness is not normal, and should never be allowed to become so.

This dialogue is an affront to those suffering and to us that assist them. It is also concerning as it distracts, and impacts on how the crisis is approached and addressed. It affects progressing and introducing the initiatives and policies that are needed, and also from focusing the resources where they're most needed. These include a more ambitious target for the building of social and also affordable housing, as well as ensuring enhanced protection that can enable families to remain in their home. Last year did see numbers of families exiting homelessness, but the sad reality is that more families just took their place.

The situation is not improving. As I write this, there are currently 5,508 adults, 3,079 children and 1,408 families homeless. We have not seen anyone gaming the system just people that want a home. Many people we meet, and indeed in hostels, are working but cannot get or afford private rents.

We will be counting the cost of this crisis for many years to come as a generation of children have been robbed of their childhood. I will finish with a story that is shocking beyond belief. A pregnant lady who had to avail of a night hostel with our fellow Vincentian's in Depaul went into labour in the hostel. The staff cared and looked after her until the ambulance arrived to take her to hospital. Usually a pregnant lady who is past seven months is number one priority for accommodation but nowhere could be found for her, she had her child and sadly was back in the night hostel five days later.

Even the broken system is broken.

Kieran Stafford
National President

making a difference the ripple effect

By Labhras Loughran

If you throw a heavy stone into a still pond it makes a nice big splash and sinks. You see the ripples on the water spread out and out, until they eventually starting bouncing against the banks of the pond. But very quickly they die and the pond is just as it was. The bit of energy you have used has been dissipated and is no longer detectable. You made a brief splash but now there is no difference. In science we understand this effect – it's called the third law of thermodynamics.

But does this inexorable law of thermodynamics operate in the human domain? You do something to help someone. It has a small effect for a time but does it's ripples disappear and result in no practical effect?

I have been in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul for about 15 years. A core group of clients, who were there when I first joined, are still there today - 15 years later.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul does not appear to be doing them much good. The SVP has not been able to help them to change or move on or get a better grip on their financial position. They are stuck. Nothing seems to have changed in 15 years except that they and us have gotten older.

But let me tell you about John. John has mental health problems and can't work. He is on a lot of medication but is still very tense and edgy. He is a sensitive soul. He is not articulate but he expresses himself with painting. He is also very lonely. He has absolutely no one to share Christmas with. So he literally tries to shut out Christmas and its feelings of love, kindness and

fellowship, by locking the front door on Christmas Eve and not venturing out until St. Stephens's day.

One evening about 3 years ago, I visited John and he was in very bad form for some reason. That evening I had a bit more time than usual so I went into his flat, sat down on the bed and listened to him for about half an hour. That's all I did. I just sat there for half an hour and listened. When I got up to go John thanked me sincerely. I could see he was in much better form, more relaxed, more optimistic. I had not changed his life. However, I did make a difference to John for an evening.

In a thousand years no one will know that John nor I existed never mind the fact that I helped him for that evening. The little ripples that John and I have made will have totally decayed into chaos. But the third law of thermodynamics does not apply to God. He knows and always will know that I made a difference to John's life even if only for one night. He will always know the affect that you or I have on other people. It is a marvellous power. We should all use it.



Renewing Our Commitment to Serve

*By Sr. Genevieve Kilbane
St. Brigid's Conference, Kilcock*

*"I was hungry and you fed me
A stranger and you welcomed me
Naked and you clothed me
Sick and you visited me
Whenever you did this to one of my dear brethren,
you did it to me"*

(Matt. 25- 35 ,45)

These words of Jesus underpin the vocation of each member of the Society of Vincent de Paul. They call us to follow his way of life, *"through Service to those in need and through Person-to-Person Contact"* (R.1.2)

These same words inspired St. Vincent de Paul to give *"Priority to the Poorest of the Poor"* (R 1.6) in his ministry to others. The turning point in his life was when he recognised his own poverty, weakness and sinfulness – when he saw how really poor he was himself. He states that we can no longer speak of the poor out there but to realise we too are his poor ones serving the poor. Their pain is our pain and so we approach them with reverence, gentleness and a listening ear above all.

In our Conference in St. Brigid's Kilcock, no work of charity is foreign to us. We constantly adapt to the specific needs of those we visit hence our visitation has many strands.

One group in Kilcock are those who are emotionally, psychologically and spiritually poor. Some may be suffering from loss, isolation and ill-health. Hence they live private lives, are housebound and rarely socialise. They appreciate our visits as then they are enabled to tell their stories and express their hopes and fears. Though not materially poor, they are emotionally starving and in need of company.

Another Group in our ministry of visitation resides in a local Nursing Home. Our weekly visits bring us in touch with many vulnerable people who are away from their homes and their families. We are put in touch with the most needy and those who rarely have a visitor. Here again a Listening Compassionate approach is needed as well as *"An understanding beyond words and appearances"* (R. 1.11). These visits are appreciated by staff, families and indeed all those we visit.

A major part of our visitation is concentrated on those who are materially poor. We find that new needs arise frequently calling for new ways of approaching visitation. We experience from time to time that *"Injustice, Poverty, Inequality, Exclusion. . . keep some families bowed down and oppressed"* (R .7.6). We endeavour to help these families to help themselves, to face the reality of their situation and to strive to become free and independent. It is a joy to see the progress in families who struggle over a period of time being visited, listened to, helped to cope. A day dawns when they become independent and free and no longer need our financial or material help. We gradually terminate our visits and are happy that a new life has opened up before them.

We also visit a Senior Citizen Group in the Parish. Here again we meet the active retired men and women of the Parish who are outgoing and enjoy meeting others, having a game of bowls, bingo and a hot meal. Above all this group is a Resource Group for us. They inform us of persons who are ill, alone and in need of a visit. We appreciate their valuable contribution to our visitation.

In reflecting on our different aspects of visitation it is obvious that renewing our commitment to serve is an ongoing process. Prayer - individual and communal, is a fundamental need when the Conference and individual undertake any action (R.1.7). Even a moment of inner recollection is helpful before a visit - to ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of wisdom to understand a situation and for the grace of compassion and respect for all. St. Vincent said *"give me a man (or woman) of prayer and he (or she) will be capable of Everything"* (R.2.3).

After a visit, when we have space - it is good to reflect on the visit - the quality of listening, the spoken and unspoken needs and above all are we meeting wants rather than the real needs. And so we renew our commitment to serve for:

*"No one is a stranger to me
I see my own face reflected in You
What I wish for myself, is my wish for you,
And I'll find myself,
When I walk in your shoes."*

(From Celebration song for 400th Anniversary of St. Vincent de Paul)



Our Vincentian Family

Re-affirming our commitment will enhance the work we do

By Padraic Cassidy

Each year on the 25th of March our sister organisation within the Vincentian Family, the Daughters of Charity renew their vows, they do this to re-affirm their commitment to their life and the Vincentian spirituality they espouse and live. This renewal of vows has an historical basis as they are religious Sisters and not as they and others are referred to as Nuns. The difference being Nuns are cloistered and religious sisters are, historically this would have hampered the work they did when they were founded and to get around the constrictions imposed

by the Church, they took annual vows on the Feast of the Annunciation. This practice still exists today within the Daughters, with the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and service to the poor being renewed or taken on that day. This allows them to have space and time between the expiration of one and the renewal of the other, where they can reflect on their 'vowed' life and make the commitment to live out the charism of Vincent de Paul and Louise De Marillac.



In the Society we do not take vows, nor do we live a life solely dedicated to the work we do, although for some volunteers they are as busy with the work of the Society as they may have been whilst working. We are regarded as a Lay Association of the Faithful, with Canonical approval (as defined in Canon Law, i.e. the laws of the Institutional Church: Cann 298-329: for some light reading!)

We are part of the International Confederation of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. We do not live a vowed life, or live in community, and are ostensibly a volunteer organisation, led and managed. This does not mean that we cannot engage in a process of renewal like those who live a shared vowed life. How do we make this renewal and what shape does it take? A starting point maybe be how and what

motivated one to become a member of the Society, if this has been sometime ago then one may have to take time to think and indeed reflect as to how and why one became a member:

There are a multitude of reasons why people volunteer; their motivation differs from one person to the other: active retirement, active experience at University or being socially aware of the needs of the other. Whatever the motivation, which is positive for the Society, as the membership is made up of varying and different talents and outlooks- but each sharing the Vincentian values. It is within this Vincentian framework that we should examine our motivation and with that in mind, renew the commitment we have made.

We make a commitment, expressed through this Vincentian community of the faithful, firstly to those we reach out to and

encounter. Secondly, we make this commitment to each other that we will be supportive in the work we do and of each other. Thirdly we make a commitment to the organisation both nationally and internationally, an example of our international commitment is how each region engages in twinning with other groups throughout the world.

In January we are familiar with people who make New Year resolutions, from quitting smoking to joining a gym and becoming healthier. Making resolutions is not just confined to the New Year; it is something which we should do on an ongoing basis. In some way each member does that, they attend meetings each week and this is the active living out of not only the commitment but also of how they want to make a change in the lives of people, for the betterment of the person and society. There are times when this attending a weekly meeting and carrying out the work of the Society can become routine, and somewhat plateaued. This is when we must renew the commitment and apply the resolution. It may involve having to take time away from one's attendance and to return with a sense of renewal of what is the motivation for engaging with the Society; this is the resolution.

So, like our Sisters, the members of the Daughters of Charity each Conference should take time out on an annual basis to have a time of reflection. This time will allow members to reflect and renew the commitment. The majority of members have very busy lives and can at times be 'time-poor' given all the other demands in life that are placed upon them. They also may not have the luxury of being able to attend a place of quiet and reflect on their lives. This is perhaps something within the Society we should consider; because someone must listen to the listener.

An idea for Conferences is to have a time of reflection, far from the madding crowd, to retreat to a place of quiet contemplation to not only reflect on one's own life but the work being done in the Society. This will aid the renewal of the person, the Conference and the Society. It is no longer a case that we can carry on, with the demands of our work and not have a sense of renewal. This will enhance the work we do and it may in fact enhance further the members.



John Monaghan

Encapsulated the Vincentian Spirit and always put others first

By Kieran Stafford, National President

On a crisp clear January morning family friends and colleagues sadly said their goodbyes to our Vincentian Brother, John Monaghan.

John was an extraordinary member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul by anyone's standard. His service spanned 33 years where he operated in a variety of different roles but never forgetting his roots and local conference involvement.

It was in 1985 that John's SVP work started when he was invited to help out at a Christmas party for older people. Following that he soon joined his local Conference in Leixlip where he worked tirelessly for those in need in his community.

John's National work started in 1998 when Noel Clear asked him to establish and chair a National Social Policy group, which he chaired until 2007 establishing the Social Justice team in National Office. Brian O'Reilly appointed him National Vice President in 2002, a position he held with distinction until 2014. He soon after became a trainer for the East Region where so many new members learned from his knowledge and ethos.

John served with consistent hard work and determination under four National Presidents - Noel Clear, Brian O'Reilly, Mairéad Bushnell, & Geoff Meagher and had agreed to return as Chair of our

National Social Justice Committee when fate cruelly intervened.

John was best known for the 12 years that he was the 'face and voice' of SVP appearing on numerous radio and TV shows, during this time he was a household name but it's as a Social Justice champion that we will remember him most. He fought always for those in need; he fought with successive Ministers and public servants, leaving no stone unturned in his quest for a fairer and more just Society.

The Social Justice team of John-Mark McCafferty, Audrey Deane, Caroline Fahey and Brendan Hennessy achieved much under John's leadership but in my view their greatest 'win' was the huge increase they managed to get in the children's allowance. This made and continues to make an enormous difference to so many families struggling to make ends meet in Ireland today.

Those of us, who were fortunate enough to serve with John, knew just how much of a compassionate, non-judgmental, caring and humble person he was.

Even when he received his well-deserved Papal medal he claimed that we hoodwinked the pope into giving it to him.

He encapsulated the Vincentian Spirit and always put others first. We will always miss John's calm common sense approach to the many challenges we faced over the years, when he spoke we all listened, he generally had the last word!

Our founder Frederic Ozanam said:

"In my life I want to become better and do a little good. It's fair to say that John did much more than a little good. For the many of us that were inspired by John We will always miss and think of him".



John Monaghan R.I.P

By Geoff Meagher
National President 2012/2017

I had the great privilege of working with John Monaghan at National Management Council level for over ten years. We were colleagues during a period of significant change within the Society. I am deeply saddened by John's untimely death and we have lost a person of the highest integrity, a person who gave superb leadership and who never shirked a challenge.

For me there are three stand out memories of John. The first and probably most important is the way in which John handled his illness which was difficult, prolonged and at times it was obvious he was suffering a lot. Yet through all of this he remained optimistic, calm and totally focussed on the various activities he was still involved in. He spoke about his illness in a light hearted manner and referred to 'those bugs that we need to shoot but we need to shoot the right ones!' I have no doubt that John's approach to his illness was driven by a strong faith which saw him through some very difficult days. In speaking to him over the past couple of years he would always give a prognosis on his illness that was brief and to the point, he then wanted to talk about what I was doing and how the Society was doing. It was never about him or any form of self pity.

The second memory relates to the commitment of John to the Society and the work of National Management Council. His output of work was simply colossal. When I became National President, our National Management Council agreed significant and far reaching changes across the Society. John played a key role in getting the various changes approved. He had this unique ability of being able to see what might work and when to change the approach to achieve the maximum possible. During a very difficult period John was a rock of common sense and support. On many occasions I received emails from him urging me to push on with the changes, other times it was emails with solid advice as to the approach to take on different issues ... many of these coming from Trinity at six a.m.! I have no doubt that without the work of John we would not have got all of our changes through, John's standing nationally carried huge weight with our Membership across the country.

The third area which is well documented is John's involvement on behalf of the Society in Social Justice. He was the public face of the Society and was respected for his views at all levels, whether it be Members, politicians and the various agencies that he dealt with. Even after retiring from his National role due to illness he still retained his deep interest in all aspects of social justice. During last year John was working with me on a draft of a possible statement on Social Justice that could be published at International level. It would be a fitting tribute to John if the Social Justice agenda is kept strong going forward, both Nationally and Internationally.

John Monaghan lived a full life. He will be sadly missed by the Society. I have lost a great colleague and friend. Our loss however cannot be measured compared to the loss to his family, to Catherine and his children, Ciara, Conor and Cathriona we extend our deepest sympathies and our thoughts and prayers are with them at this most difficult time.

Kindred Spirits

By Gerry Jeffers

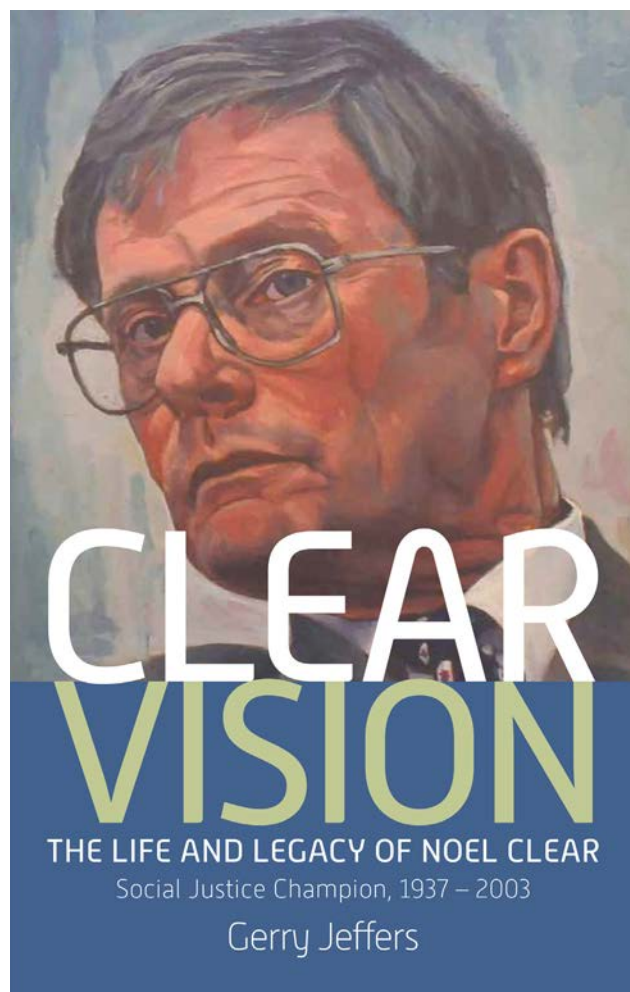
At the funeral Mass for John Monaghan in Leixlip this January, Kieran Stafford, SVP National President, spoke movingly about John's contribution to Irish society through SVP. Kieran noted that it was Noel Clear, when National President, who had first invited John to become involved in social policy work.

20 years ago, I had met John through that social policy group so he was high on my list of people to interview for the book I was researching about Noel. In April 2014, as we consumed numerous cups of coffees in a Maynooth café, John spoke expansively about Noel and social justice. Then, and again at the funeral, I was struck by the similarities between these two great SVP champions.

Born eight years apart, Noel and John had grown up in neighbouring Dublin suburbs, Inchicore and Drimnagh. Both were family men, married to strong women, Anne Braine and Catherine McEvoy, with bright and articulate offspring. Both held down busy jobs – Noel in the Probation and Welfare Service, John in Trinity College – but still found time for extensive voluntary work with SVP. Both were self-effacing, committed to the SVP vision. As another interviewee remarked about Noel: 'He did the work. He didn't want any recognition. He was never about how it was going to benefit him.'

John and Noel shared a strong commitment to social justice. In both cases this was rooted in their Catholicism. John spoke about this at the 2012 Eucharistic Congress. He talked about how Catholic Social Teaching emphasises the dignity of all people, how everyone should be respected, how society needs to be organised to enable all people to participate and to flourish. As Noel often did, John drew attention to the need to protect the poor and vulnerable, those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, homeless, in prison, those affected by poverty and lack of power, those with no voice. In that talk in the RDS, John also impressed on his audience that 'my neighbour' has global dimensions; Christian solidarity with others challenges us to work for more just structures internationally and to protect our planet and to use natural resources wisely. John and Noel's shared commitment to the common good was a major driving force in their lives.

John told me how he and Noel agreed on the importance of an SVP presence in the media. They were very aware that a great strength of the SVP is the on-the-ground experience of members. "We need to get volunteer voices out there in the media," John recalled Noel saying to him in the late 1990s. For many years John became that voice, weaving stories that captured the impact of poverty and inequality on people.



As we talked that day in Maynooth, about Noel, social justice, the SVP, the media, Catholic Social Teaching and more, John skilfully deflected attention away from himself. It was obvious that, like many others, he admired Noel. He liked the way Noel's idealism was tempered by realism. "I'd say Noel was a very wise man, very circumspect. He drew on all his experiences of interacting with people. He used to say that every time he met someone he learned something. Noel was a good listener; he would enter in a conversation when meeting someone for the first time without too many prejudices or expectations. That's a great quality in a leader," he said.

As I was completing 'Clear Vision', Pope Francis on his Twitter account stated: the Church needs everyday saints, those of ordinary life carried out with coherence. It's a fitting description of John Monaghan and Noel Clear, two gentle, honest, hard-working, empathic and committed SVP volunteers.

'Clear Vision, the Life and Legacy of Noel Clear 1937-2003, Social Justice Champion' by Gerry Jeffers is published by Veritas.



Aoife O Riordan with Tsion Fekadu and Fikerte Andarge, 5th graders from Atse Primary School, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Volunteer in Africa with VLM

Do you enjoy travelling, learning about different cultures and would like to do this while also making a contribution to the lives of others?

Do you have experience in teaching, coaching, youth work, art, drama or music?

VLM are looking for volunteers to join our summer programme teams for four weeks (early July to early August) this summer. You could be part of a team delivering a creative and enjoyable English language summer school for children and teens in Ethiopia or Ghana.

Vincentian Lay Missionaries (VLM) is a not-for-profit volunteer sending organisation. We work in partnership with the Vincentian Fathers and the Daughters of Charity to support their work with disadvantaged people in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and Burkina Faso. Since 2002 our volunteers have been making valuable contributions in education and community projects.

We also recruit volunteers with other skills for other placements all year around. There are opportunities for people with TEFL, sign language, special needs experience, project management, office and administration skills.

Placements are flexible and tailor made. Volunteers can travel for 4-12 weeks at a time that suits them, working in a project, or a number of projects, matching their skills. VLM are a Comhlámh Code of Good Practice signatory, meaning that we are fully committed to supporting our volunteers - all volunteers receive pre-departure training, support while overseas and a debriefing on return. We also uphold high standards when serving disadvantaged and vulnerable people, embracing the principles of best practice in global development.

For more information on VLM, our programmes, volunteering opportunities or to make a donation to our work, please visit www.vlm.ie or contact Mary Anne Stokes, Projects Coordinator, on info@vlm.ie, 01-8102570 or 087-1397069.



How can we ensure the fight against poverty is imbedded in government policy?

By *Tricia Keilthy*
Acting Head of Social Justice

Eighteen years ago, Ireland signed up to the European Social Charter. By doing so our country agreed to uphold human rights with respect to everyday essential needs related to employment and working conditions, housing, education, health and social protection. The Charter also places specific emphasis on the protection of vulnerable groups such as older people, children, people with disabilities and migrants. As an organisation committed to social justice, SVP's vision and mission aligns closely with these goals.

Members supporting individuals and families across the country, will not be surprised to hear that a monitoring report published in late January 2018 said Ireland is failing to live up to 13 legal obligations to citizens under the Charter. It detailed how certain restrictions introduced during the economic crisis had not been reversed or lifted, despite having better than expected economic growth. The report also said that levels of social welfare assistance for single people without resources are "inadequate", particularly for those under the age of 26. Poor access to health and social services was also highlighted as problematic.

These inadequacies are reflected in the latest data from the CSO as poverty rates remain stubbornly high and compared to 2008, 70,000 more children were living in poverty in 2016.

These issues stem from – as the Council from Europe put it – "the lack of a co-ordinated approach to fighting poverty and social exclusion". This statement is now more pertinent as we currently have no national plan to tackle poverty. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPSI) came to an end in 2017 and the consultation for the new plan has been significantly delayed.

You might ask why do we need another plan? Would it be just another document sitting on a shelf gathering dust?

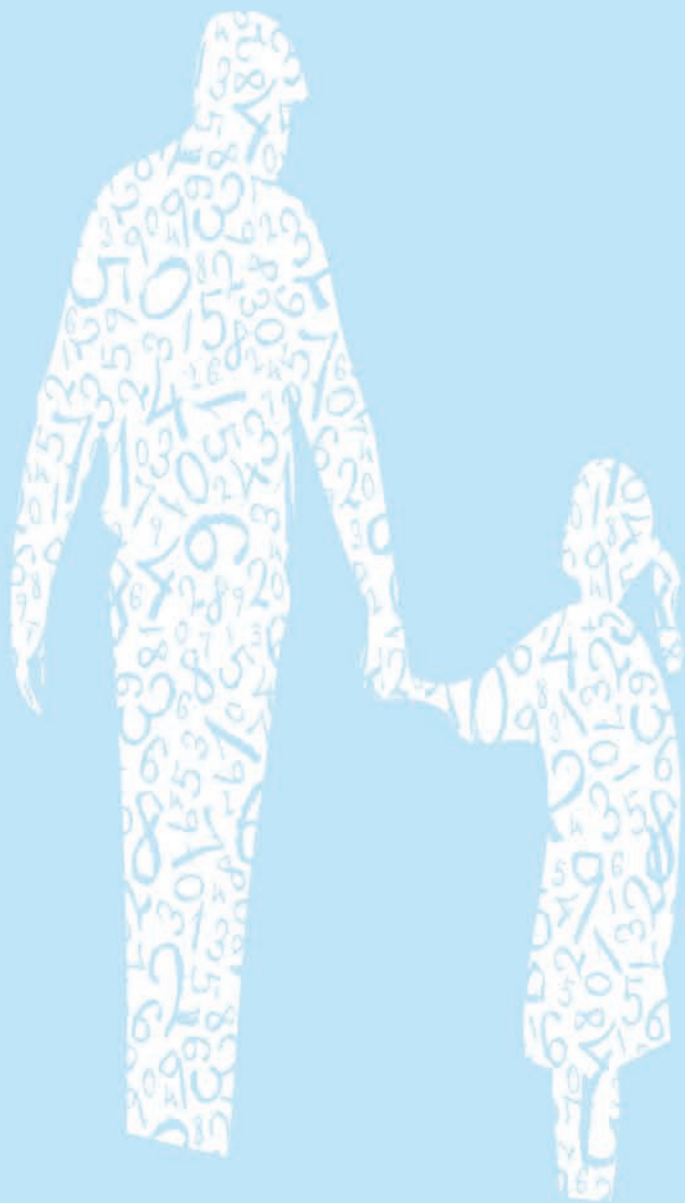
Poverty is unacceptable, especially in a wealthy country like Ireland. Poverty not only hurts the individual affected; it hurts communities, it hurts the economy and it hurts society. Anti-poverty strategies such as NAPSI are important as they set targets for government to reduce the number of people living in poverty. An ambitious target can send a strong message about the kind of society we want – where everyone is afforded the ability to live with dignity and free from poverty. The target also holds the Government to account on their commitment to prioritise the protection of vulnerable people from the experience of poverty and exclusion. In order for government to meet these targets, plans need to have specific objectives and they need to be properly resourced – something that hasn't happened in the past.

We know that poverty can't be addressed overnight as the causes and consequences of poverty are interconnected and complex; low wages and insecure work; high cost of living; unemployment; low educational attainment; the way the social welfare system works; discrimination and stigmatisation; social isolation and exclusion; stress and illness; and economic stagnation and recession. So, while having an adequate income is critical, tackling poverty is not just a matter for the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Every government department has a responsibility in addressing poverty and greater cross-governmental work is required to enhance our social infrastructure which allows everyone to access an adequate income and quality, affordable services.

As the largest organisation of social concern in Ireland, supporting thousands of struggling households across the country, it is SVP's duty to continue to highlight the reality of poverty in Ireland through a variety of platforms at national and local levels including public facing campaigns and our annual Pre-Budget Submission. In 2018, the new National Social Justice Committee will continue to work to make sure that the fight against poverty is imbedded in all government policy and budgetary decisions.



Tricia Keilthy



A €250
DONATION
COULD BE WORTH

An extra **113**
EURO
PER YEAR

FIND
OUT
ABOUT **CHY3**

www.svp.ie/CHY3

Increase donations for SVP today at NO EXTRA cost to your supporters

Did you know?

ALL receipted donations over €250 received could be worth up to an extra €113 to the Society. Through the CHY Tax Effective Giving Scheme, Revenue allows charities to claim tax relief on all eligible* receipted donations over €250 made within one calendar year. Both PAYE and Self Assessed donors are included. All tax refunds received on foot of eligible CHY3 donations go back to your Conference.

How to claim?

To claim the tax relief on eligible receipted donations and increase the value of donations, whether you are a donor or an SVP Conference, just follow these easy steps:

1. Conference Treasurer

Record details of each donation received (monthly, annual or other) by donor name in the Treasurer Ledger/Agresso. Records of each donation must be maintained as Revenue may ask to see them. Send all donors whose donation(s) amount to €250 or more in one year a CHY3 cert and return envelope with their thank you letter/receipt.

2. Donors

If you are a donor to SVP and you receive a CHY3 cert, please know that you only need to sign the form once and return to National Office in the freepost envelope provided. As this is an enduring cert, it covers any future donations received for 5 years. At the end of the 5 years SVP will contact you to complete a new cert.

3. National Office

National Office then process the claim directly with Revenue and will return eligible funds directly to the local Conference.

Not claimed previously?

Conferences can claim the tax on any receipted donations for 4 previous years including 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014. However these forms must be sent to Deborah Costello, National Office by Friday the 28th of September 2018 to be included in this year's claim. Any forms received after that date will be included in the following year's claim.

Where can I get CHY forms and information packs?

1. Donors

Your Conference or Regional Office will send you the CHY3 form.

2. SVP Conferences

To request more CHY3 certs, freepost envelopes, letter templates or queries simply call Deborah Costello on 01-8848229 or email deborah@svp.ie

*Donations from Ltd Companies are not included in CHY3 Tax Effective Giving Scheme



New Beginnings?

What about the cost of education?



*By Marcella Stakem
Social Policy Development Officer*

What happens during our youth has a major influence on how we live the rest of our lives. For some, this time may mean access to an education and all the exciting opportunities that arise from this, without the worry of the costs involved. One way to stop the persistent cycle of poverty is to educate all our citizens in a fair and just manner. However, not everyone benefits equally from our education system. Recent statistics demonstrate this class divide. More than 90% of students are reported to progress to higher education in affluent areas, compared to as few as 16% in poor districts. When SVP members visit individuals and families all over the country they hear of the persistent barriers put in their way preventing them to break the cycle of poverty. The cost of education continues to rise, preventing many from enjoying its benefits.

Ireland's education system is described as free, but a literal interpretation would mean sending a child to school with no uniform, no books, no food and no stationery. The latest report on voluntary contributions published in the Irish Times shows that 55% of schools are requesting 'voluntary contributions' from parents. That is over half our schools. SVP members regularly report the stress parents feel when a letter comes home requesting money.

Transition years costs have become a major source of stress for parents in recent years according to SVP members. Costs vary from school to school with the average during this year being €300. A study of the transition year programme in 2013 shows almost 25 years on from its introduction, better off students are up to twice as likely to have the opportunity to do the post junior cert programme. This study raises questions about equity in education because transition year students do better in the Leaving Cert, while it is also seen as important for social and personal development. SVP recommends that the cost of Transition Year be made clear to all students and parents at the begin-

ning of the academic year. Students should also have a choice in which trips/excursions they avail of which would go some way in reducing the overall cost.

Despite the increase in the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance in June 2017 and the circular from the Department of Education and Skills on reducing school costs 'voluntary' contributions continue to be a reality for parents. The Department need to address this issue as a matter of urgency. Adequate funding needs to be put in to primary and secondary education so that 'free' education really does mean free without any extra costs. This begins by restoring the capitation grant rates to 2010 levels.

At third level a recent report found that about 36% of the total population say they are experiencing 'severe financial problems' with the problem at its most severe among older students. The increase in the student contribution to €3,000 and cuts to the maintenance grant have put additional financial hardship on students and also hindered those on low incomes accessing third level education. Many students' SVP support are disadvantaged students who have additional financial commitments such as housing and childcare. Little has been done for this cohort of students in successive budgets. For example, the Cassels report recommended that SUSI be extended to those wishing to study part time. This would be of immense benefit to second chance learners both on a financial and flexibility basis.

A new beginning for SVP members and the families they assist would be a society where everyone can benefit from an education that is accessible, fair, transformative and enjoyable. One method to ensure this is a reality for the families SVP members visit is to reduce the cost in receiving an education at all levels of Irish society.



3rd level education is a sound SVP investment for the future

*by John Hurley,
Chairman Limerick St. Vincent de Paul
3rd Level Grant Committee*

About this time of year the Leaving Cert 'hype' begins again. The so called 'league tables' with their questionable selection criteria have been published. Last year's high achievers have been celebrated and we await we baited breath the 'How I got maximum points articles' in the newspapers. Last year's post Leaving Cert foreign holidays are but a hazy memory while this year's crop prepare for the Mocks.

We already have the reminders to put in the CAO forms by January, the ads for the grind schools, the revision courses at Easter, the 'how not to get stressed' advice for both parents and pupils, the 'if you are not stressed at this late stage - you should be' admonition to pupils who have left it late, the 'what food to eat' advice, the detailed analysis of past papers, the daily forensic

detailed analysis of the exam papers at exam time and on and on. Ireland is the only country in Europe, if not in the world, that has such a hype surrounding exams and there is significant research data to back that up.

What's it all for? Is all this publicity responding to a genuine need or has it created an artificial need? I strongly suspect the latter and that it has more to do with selling newspapers and producing TV and Radio programmes than anything else.

Isn't it about time we reduced the pressure on our young students rather than increase it? I have long felt that the pupils, parents and teachers are more than adequately equipped to cope with the Leaving Cert pressures. Could we not try, for one

year, to allow them, just to get on with it themselves.

And while all this is happening, many of those young people whom we meet through the Society, wonder what all this is all about. Research has shown that the vast majority of 3rd level entrants come from the better off sections of society. There are many reasons for this – poverty, tradition, isolation, struggle to survive, lack of opportunity etc. And while I remain convinced that the Leaving Cert exam itself is fair, transparent and the same for all, we all know that the better off can afford the best exam preparation for their sons and daughters be that in the shape of positive home support, materials, extra tuition if necessary, finance, equipment etc. This support continues into 3rd level. All of this costs money and that is the commodity that is in short supply in the homes of those students we engage with through SVP.

We in SVP Limerick are committed to supporting those who come to us who want to go on to third level and are short of resources and lack the necessary financial or material resources. We have long felt that a third level qualification is a priceless passport to those who want to better themselves in life. While many may argue that it shouldn't be the sole requirement, the reality is that in modern society with the decline in apprenticeships, the demands of employers etc. such is the case. As to whether you need a 3rd level qualification for everything – that is a worthwhile discussion for another day!

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul 3rd level Grant Committee in Limerick currently support over 75 students in 3rd level colleges all over the country. In most cases they are referred to us by a local conference through a completion of a detailed application form and conference endorsement. The application form will include personal details in support of the request for assistance, proof of course registration, any other grants already applied for, income if any, what SVP assistance will be used for etc. A team of interviewees with educational backgrounds have interviewed all applicants who are requested to come to the interview with student card, proof of course registration, employment details, if any, and SUSI correspondence, if any. We insist on this level of detail because we want to ensure that the support goes to the neediest and to make the process as accountable and transparent as possible.

The maximum grant available is determined by the finances available and the particular needs of the applicant. A Conference can award €500 but if they feel the candidate needs to be interviewed with the possibility of a higher grant, he/she is referred to us. In order to ensure that the money is used for what it was applied for, we have arrangements with local suppliers to supply goods through a voucher system. We also have a supportive direct line assistance with SUSI who are always available to assist us when we need to contact them having satisfied the strict SUSI FOI regulations.

Only in very exceptional circumstance do we assist with payment of fees. This, in practically all eligible cases, is done by SUSI.

Our SVP support is always given on the basis of 'a leg up rather than a hand out'. We would hope that as the applicant progresses through college and the economy improves, she/he will begin to stand on her/his own two feet and may not need the same level of ongoing assistance. We request copies of results on an ongoing basis from applicants.

The above is just a brief summary of what we do to try in a small way to alleviate the inequality in the 3rd level system. No doubt it is imperfect in places and we would be happy to learn from other regions who similarly assist 3rd level students. Similarly we are also available to assist SVP members who wish to learn from our experiences.

Like many of you, through my involvement in SVP I have experienced a gamut of emotions - satisfaction, frustration, anger, helplessness, etc. On the other hand to experience the appreciation of those you assist in their progression to 3rd level is personally reassuring. To see the self confidence blossoming in young people from difficult environments as they progress through 3rd level is very satisfying. To see their sense of achievement and affirmation in acquiring a qualification equal to everyone else, which no one can devalue, is memorable.

To conclude, from two letters of appreciation we got recently I have chosen two short sentences: *"Thank you for assisting my sons. We are the forgotten 'squeezed middle' and all your help is much appreciated"* and *"A big thank you and I truly appreciate what you have done for me. You have brought me a lot closer to my goal than I ever anticipated or could imagine"*.

Was it Mandela who said *"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world!"*



Young SVP what makes it so important?



*By Becca Gallagher,
National Youth Development Coordinator*

I have had the pleasure of working as National Youth Development Coordinator since July 2013. Over the past four and a half years I have seen an incredible amount of passion and enthusiasm from Young SVP members across the country as they all plan and deliver projects and activities that strive to make the world a better place for people living in it. Whether their activities provide support for small groups in their local / school communities, involve raising awareness of issues that many don't know much about or they organise big events that include different people across society there is one common and significant thread – they are making a difference. Understanding the impact of the work that they do, and the difference that they make, is really important and I hope that all involved realise the significance of what they do.

Every young person who gets involved in Young SVP does so voluntarily. This is different from many school / college activities because with Young SVP there is always a choice. Young SVP

groups, projects and activities exist not because students 'have to' do them – but because they want to. For me this is what makes Young SVP so important; it is about young people and their views, their voice and their actions.

Young SVP is an opportunity to do so much, including; to explore what social justice, poverty, inclusion and equality mean in real terms – and importantly what it means to people when these things do not exist, to identify issues in student's own areas, and to act on issues that they decide need to be changed!

With every opportunity there also, of course, comes responsibility. It is each individual's responsibility to make sure they are putting their best into their Young SVP, to make sure that they really explore the issues they are dealing with so that they can design activities in a way that they will be as effective and purposeful as possible. It is important to find out about past and existing responses to issues, find out what works and what

needs to change, work in collaboration with others to find solutions and always ensure that the response is useful, required and purposeful – most importantly young people should be confident that what they do will have a positive impact for everyone. The responsibility is to the outcomes they hope to achieve through the activities – these should be kept in mind always.

The world is changing and while many things stay the same our approach to issues of social justice need not. Let's not keep doing the same thing over and over again – let's find new, informed and positive ways to make changes for those in society who need change so that we can all live in an more inclusive, accepting and fairer place. It is my hope that young people take what they learn from their Young SVP experience and carry it through everything they do.

Upcoming Young SVP Events

Region and Youth Development Officer	Date and Location
Mid West Ivana Kolic	14th March Limerick
East Clare Mander	12th April Dublin
West Helen Ralph	18th April Castlebar
South West	24th April Cork
South East Debbie O'Halloran	26th April Waterford

Please contact your Regional Youth Development Officer for more details, www.svp.ie/youngsvp.



Young SVP The Spirit of the South East



By Debbie O'Halloran
Youth Development Officer, South East Region

Nurturing a spirit of helping others, especially at Christmas time, is one of my favourite parts of the Young SVP programme. This year the students from schools across the South-East region did not disappoint!

From random acts of Christmas Kindness, to food and toy drives, from carol singing in hospitals, to 'sleep-outs', Young SVP students in schools across Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny and Laois embraced the true spirit of Christmas and organised events to help those in need in their local communities.

The Starfish Story always comes to my mind at this time of year. We are all frantically doing whatever we possibly can to do our bit to help others. In the Starfish Story, a young man is trying to save starfish by throwing them into the ocean as the tide

is going out. There are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile. The young man was challenged by a passer-by who said "You can't possibly make a difference!". The young man bends down, picks up another starfish and throws it into the ocean and said "It made a difference for that one".

Young SVP students went above and beyond my expectations this year. Well done to the schools and teachers involved who supported our Young SVP students, to their families at home, to all who donated and most importantly to the all the students who gave their time to SVP this year. You should all be so proud of yourselves.

Thank you all so much, from all in SVP in the South East.



Presentation Secondary School Kilkenny spread some Christmas cheer by bringing some Christmas goodies to the very busy nurses in St Lukes hospital Kilkenny



Presentation College Carlow went carol singing in Carlow town in aid of SVP



Bunclody VEC are pictured with John McCabe Bunclody Conference president and Maureen Byrne donating hampers from their food drive.



Ardscoil na Mara are pictured with Michael Power, Tramore Conference President. They are donating money they raised from selling candy canes in the school.



Mountrath Community School had a Christmas jumper day in aid of SVP



De la Salle College donated the money they raised from a bake sale to St Joseph's Childcare Centre in Waterford



Suzanne Breen, Becca Gallagher, Grainne Lee and Emily McCann at the award ceremony.

Catholic Guides of Ireland Chief Commissioner Awards

The Catholic guides of Ireland (CGI) were delighted to welcome Becca Gallagher, SVP National Youth Development Coordinator and Grainne Lee, Chairperson of the SVP National Youth Committee to the Chief Commissioner Awards in September 2017. The awards were held in All Hallows College, Dublin and were attended by the recipients of the 2017 award, their guiders, parents and friends. Prior to the ceremony Becca and Grainne reviewed projects from the 2017 awards and they were very impressed by the scope and standard of the work.

The CGI Chief Commissioner Awards are an award scheme for the guide section aged 12-to-16 years. The Chief Commissioner's Challenge for the 2018 award is to challenge the girls to think about people who's circumstances are different to their own. They are encouraged, as part of the award, to look at those who are homeless and how they could help them, and also to contact a member of local St. Vincent De Paul. They must

interview with someone who is part of an SVP Conference, a shop worker or someone who works in a hostel or works on the streets with people. They need to list their questions and the response they get from the interviewee. We are looking forward to the new projects that will be coming to us this year to see how the girls worked with the SVP.

Becca and Grainne spoke to the girls at the award ceremony about the benefits of volunteering and about the difference they could make in the world by volunteering. They took them through their own experiences of volunteering and working with SVP and the rewards you get from same. Emily McCann, Chief Commissioner CGI and Suzanne Breen, Chief Commissioner Award Coordinator are both members of the SVP and were delighted to have the opportunity for CGI and SVP to work together. We hope this is the first of many collaborations.



Guild of St Philip Prison Conference

This retrospective is from one of the Guild of St Philip members, Myriam who visits prisons. It was written by a prisoner and translated from their native language for the benefit of some people mentioned in it.

The Guild of St. Philip is in Portlaoise and has 25 members who visit both prisons in the town. Myriam visits three prisoners.

Retrospective 2017

'One Year of News from an Unfortunate Inmate'

1. My mother stayed in Ireland for two and a half months and visited me regularly which was wonderful.
2. Met Myriam and since then I've been receiving her support. She hosted my Mum.
3. I continue to have a good relationship with Sr. Breda and Billy (Chaplains).
4. Columba and Volney continue to be faithful friends.
5. Erika and Flavia welcomed my Mum and brought her to see Dublin.
6. I received lots of letters and photos from Brazil from friends and family, they all support me.
7. Dallane and her Mum continue being faithful by giving support to my Mum and the people in my home.
8. I started to work in the garden.
9. I met the angel called Peter and since then I have visits every Wednesday. My week flies.
10. I've achieved 'enhanced' status, accessing more privileges such as a second phone call and receiving visitors in the large room.

11. I changed jobs and feel better than in the previous garden.
12. I'm studying a lot: English (FETAC 3), Fitness and Horticulture.
13. I've reached a reasonable level of fluency in English.
14. I go to the gym 5 times a week, I exercise and run 5 km without stopping in 21 minutes.
15. I've read more than 10 books in Portuguese and English.
16. I read the Bible and the daily devotional 'The Word for Today' every evening.
17. I made my first individual confession in English.
18. I've gone to Mass every Saturday and Holy days and I've gone to confession.
19. I've seen snow and I've made a little snowman.
20. I've been surprised at Christmas when I've received a pair of boots and support from other inmates.
21. I maintain contact and receive sympathy from my lawyer, Philip, and his team.
22. I keep quiet and away from trouble and/or punishment.
23. Thanks be to God all my family are healthy and well and no deaths.
24. I pray a lot and talk to God at every moment. I have welcomed him into my life and today I have him as my Father and best friend knowing that by faith 2018 will be better!

*All the underlined words would never have happened if I wasn't living where I'm living today. And in a certain way, I'm happy!

Women in Volunteering

By Ann O'Brien

Rather than get into the many anomalies of this "Oh so male dominated society," I have decided to present to you a facet of our world in which we can rejoice as we look at Women in Volunteering.

Perhaps we could assume that in Ireland the Meitheals or self help co-op movements of the 17th and 18th centuries marked the birth of the Voluntary Movement as we know it to day. In simple terms it is the colonising of ones free time in a productive manner, prioritising those in need.

In 1997 the United Nations proclaimed 2001 as The Year of the Volunteer and in answer Ireland set up The National Committee of Volunteers. They duly produced a booklet entitled 'Tipping the Balance'.

The following chart demonstrates the gender imbalance;

- Female 40%
- Male 28%

This report also states that 33% of our population are engaged in the voluntary sector:

The many organisations that come under this banner include Schools, Hospitals, Sports and a numerous amount of organisations who work in the fight against Poverty. The reasons why we volunteer are perhaps a belief in a cause or maybe for self satisfaction or simply to meet people.

My own experience began at school in Cork where we were encouraged to join The Legion of Mary. Visiting the less fortunate than ourselves and reporting on our work weekly left me with a sense of doing for others at an early age and this mantra was to crop up in later life when I found time on my hands. Fifteen years of involvement in the Hospice movement (one half day per week) where I met some wonderful people and learned many lessons-not least that life is so very fragile. During this period I monitored the Gender Balance among my fellow workers and found very very few fellows! In fact it was 99% female.

In a report by Freda O'Donoghue- 'A Feminist Space2001' the author states some reasons for the unbalance of gender in volunteering;

1. Women are less likely to seek material gain.
2. We possess more skills for dealing with people.
3. Our desire to be neighbourly.

Now in the winter of my life I am so fulfilled with the companionship and regularity of helping the great organisation of Saint Vincent de Paul. I am fortunate enough to be involved in a busy

conference (Our Lady of Perpetual Help) which serves a city area and rural surrounds in Co. Limerick. It is a privileged to be given this opportunity and to be trusted and welcomed as we go about our work. My wish is that the Fir will some day equal the Mna in each Conference and continue for many years the work of SVP.

Voluntary Lights

An inviting light spills from the Community Centre
as I pass: a literacy class is spelling out it's tasks
or an Active Retirement concert is in full swing.

An anglepoise lamp marks the spot
where a counsellor waits at the end of the line
each telephone ring a distress-signal.

Overseen by a peach ripe sun,
a youth group grooms and combs a beach
that was stranded under cans and plastic.

Seeking fair play for needy children, e-mail appeals
-emergency flares-are launched from a computer screen.
A Tidy Towns committee comes clean

About its bright hopes for this years competition.
As long as Lights like these stay beaming
the world will seem less dark.

- by Denis O'Driscoll

Cormac Wilson R.I.P.



Everyone at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was so very sad to hear of the passing of revered volunteer, Cormac Wilson, who was a member of SVP for more than 33 years.

Regional Senior Vice President, Cormac, was a driving force within the Society and a powerful engaging presence; respected wherever he went and by all he met and we are poorer without him.

In 2017 Derry man, Cormac, was recognised for his outstanding service to the charity and was awarded an international St. Vincent de Paul medal at a special ceremony led by Father Eddie McGee. The honour was presented by former Regional President, Aidan Crawford, who organised the event to thank Cormac for his on-going support.

Cormac provided wonderful guidance to all around him and he helped many people over his years with the charity. As a former Regional President of SVP, Cormac, offered invaluable advice and loyalty to the team. He had a passion for our charity and those whom we serve, often volunteering around 50-60 hours a week. During his health battle in his later years, he continued to play an important role at a regional and local level.

Cormac, who hailed from Bishop Street in the City, had seven children with his wife Rosaleen, as well as nine grandchildren and he spent more of his lifetime as part of the Society than out of it. Joining SVP back in 1984 when he was in his early thirties,

he started as a member of St Columba's (Long Tower) Conference. Recognising the level of need within the City, he decided to devote all his spare time to assisting those who needed help.

He began his journey with SVP by carrying out visits to local families in need right across the community, assessing their situation and doing all he could to support them through difficult times by providing very practical items such as coal, food and clothing, or indeed helping them through family issues or debt. His view was that 'a problem shared is a problem halved'.

In 1993, Cormac was elected as Conference President of St Columba's and he continued his volunteering alongside his role as a successful driving instructor. Due to ill health and following a triple bypass, Cormac then retired from his driving duties in 1999 and instead of sitting back and taking it easy, he decided to volunteer full-time with SVP.

Once he was aware of how hard some other people have it, he couldn't just sit back. He devoted all the time he could to help those facing poverty or social exclusion. He was elected President of the entire Derry City area in 2002 and also joined the Magilligan Prison visitation Conference. In addition, he became a trainer within the Society and also worked very closely with the Salvation Army to help co-ordinate the joint Family Appeal. This important initiative ensured that no child in Northern Ireland had to go without a gift at Christmas.

In 2007, he was elected Regional President of SVP, meaning he had overarching responsibility for the charity right across Northern Ireland, a post he held for five years. During this time he worked closely with SVP in the south, also becoming a member of the National Board of Ireland and the National Management Committee.

He has been involved in every aspect of the Society over the years and this was made possible for him through the support and inspiration from other members. Cormac recognised that as our work is fully funded by donations, it can only be carried out thanks to the kindness of the people right across Northern Ireland.

Cormac was humbled but very honoured to be recognised with his St Vincent de Paul medal. At the time he commented: *"When I heard about the ceremony I was very surprised as there are so many dedicated people involved with St Vincent de Paul and while I have been a member for 33 years, believe it or not, there are so many other volunteers that have been with the charity for much longer than that!"*

Our thoughts are with Rosaleen, Cormac's children, grandchildren and the wider family circle at this time.

SVP Social Justice

Making Ireland a fairer and better place for everyone to live in.



Has your Conference experienced a change in the number of requests for assistance in recent years?

Has the type and nature of requests changed?

What is the nature of support your Conference provides?

We are looking for members to complete a questionnaire in order to capture the types of presenting issues and level of support provided by Conferences.

We are keen to ascertain any changes in the nature of requests and support provided over recent years.

Information you provide can greatly contribute to highlighting the challenges that many vulnerable, low income households continue to face, which can then be raised in our social justice efforts.

If you are interested in completing a brief survey and/or case study, please contact Jennifer at jennifer.thompson@svp.ie





A welcome increase in the minimum hourly wage but will this lead to increases in standards of living?



*by Jennifer Thompson
Social Policy Development Officer*

Like many, the Christmas break and New Year are already fading into a distant memory. As I welcomed in the New Year, my focus was on catching up with old friends and enjoying special times together. However, as I got back to the regular routine, I was reminded that 1st January was also significant for other reasons. The New Year saw some important measures come into effect.

A number of initiatives announced during the budget came into effect as of 1st January. Significantly, the national minimum wage was increased from €9.25 per hour to €9.55 per hour.

While the increase in the minimum hourly wage is welcome, it left me wondering would the €0.30 increase have much of an impact? Would it help address the risk of poverty or rates of deprivation that many households on lower incomes continue to experience?

Just before Christmas, the CSO released its annual Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) report. It starkly highlighted how not everyone is feeling the benefit of the recovery, and certainly not equally. One million people in Ireland continue to experience deprivation – that is experiencing at least two of the 11 types of deprivation which range from going without heating in the last year, being unable to afford a warm coat, to being unable to afford shoes or to replace worn out furniture.

What particularly struck me was that 105,000 people living in poverty are in employment. While access to decent quality employment significantly reduces the risk of poverty, this high number of “working poor” demonstrated to me the reality that being at work does not always guarantee a decent standard of living and is indicative of the growth in precarious, low pay employment.

Just a few weeks before Christmas, a number of energy suppliers increased their prices. Travel costs also increased as Dublin Bus and Luas raised their fares. And of course, there remains the continuing increase of rents across the country with the rate of rent inflation remaining above 10% in 2017. These are all having a considerable cumulative effect on the overall cost of living and result in low income households being unable to afford essentials like food, adequate housing and heating.

So what might be an appropriate minimum wage be? Well, the answer to this question has already been considered. Back in

July 2017, the Living Wage Technical Group raised the rate of the living wage from €11.50 to €11.70. This is based on what it considers necessary to realise a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL), a standard of living below which no one should be expected to live below. The MESL is decided by members of the public, agreeing on what is needed to live at an acceptable dignified standard and participate in society. However even with the increase to the minimum wage, there remains a 20 per cent gap between it, and the living wage.

Through the home visits and support that SVP provide on weekly basis, members are seeing how people’s opportunities can either be created or constrained by the economic and social context that they are in. Not everyone is in a position to benefit from the recent economic growth, SVP believes that everyone has the right to be able to live their life with dignity. Living in poverty can never be accepted as normal. The experience of many that approach SVP for assistance highlight the number of structural barriers that people must overcome to access employment, including low educational attainment, ageism, discrimination, lack of affordable child care among others.

Policies and initiatives introduced by Government have a clear and critical role in alleviating the effects of poverty. So what will have a meaningful impact on poverty – a fundamental component will be a greater investment in service provision. Ensuring access to education, housing, health and child care and other services can not only impact on reducing the cost of living for households, but can also help to lower the barriers that prevent some people from taking up work.

As we settle into 2018, a great New Year’s resolution for the government would be to align the minimum wage to the living wage, and benchmarked against the Minimum Essential Standard of Living. This should be followed up by ensuring that policies and budgetary decisions are assessed in terms of their potential impact on the most vulnerable within our society. By doing so, we can move towards realising a society where individuals, families and communities can participate fully in work, education and society, and where an adequately resourced state and strong economy support the type of inclusive and equal society that we wish to live in.

The Next Generation of charity shopping



It will surprise many Bulletin readers to discover that Vincent's / SVP Charity shops, with over 220 locations, are the 3rd biggest network of shops in Ireland. Local members across Ireland have done a great job at opening and maintaining some fantastic clothing and furniture shops in every county in Ireland, except Roscommon, but National Retail Development Manager, Dermot McGilloway, believes that there are further opportunities for growth both at the heart of our local communities and online.

McGilloway believes that SVP charity shops are quite unique in that they promote friendship, social justice, self-sufficiency, Vincentian ethos and a great value and stimulating shopping experience for the whole community which can be found as easily in our smallest villages as well as in our regional towns and cities. McGilloway, a Derry native, states *"The importance of a great community charity shop cannot be underestimated in our rural communities but equally we must ensure that our bigger cities like Dublin, Belfast, Limerick, Derry, Galway and Waterford are properly served. Loneliness and isolation, exacerbated by poverty, does not discriminate between people who live in rural communities like Gweedore in North West Donegal or urban locations like Galliagh in Derry, we must cater for both types of communities through our national network of shops"*.

As an extension of this approach, the national retail team has now identified a number of very attractive retail units, with good parking and vehicle access, at the heart of residential areas in our bigger towns and cities.

McGilloway adds *"Our shops offer an exciting range of products and services including great labels, unbeatable value, vintage and collectables, promotions, customer appreciation events and family days to ensure that members of the public, regardless of their circumstances or background, can find a Vincent's charity shop on their doorstep. We have recently opened new shops in Roxboro Shopping Centre, Southhill, Limerick, Dairy Farm Shopping Centre, Stewartstown Road, Belfast and Castletown Road in Dundalk"*. McGilloway adds that other retail teams like Carrigtwohill in Cork are relocating into much bigger and better premises to ensure

that our customers can extract even greater pleasure and value from their shopping experience.



Satisfied customers in Limerick

Regional Retail Manager for North Region, Anne Crossan states *"The local Community in West Belfast have welcomed our new shop with open arms and affectionately refer to Vincent's as "our wee shop". Anne adds "Whether it's outstanding value or a treasure hunt that you are after, our shop, located beside the Doctor's surgery, the library, the Credit Union and the Post Office in Dairy Farm Shopping Centre is becoming a firm favourite with the locals who already frequent the existing shop in Turf Lodge."*

Peter Johnson, Regional Retail Manager for North East and Midlands echoes these sentiments and confirms that their new shop at 125a Castletown Road in Dundalk is reaching a whole new customer base. Peter adds *"We already have a fantastically committed team including over 20 volunteers and Community employment staff delivering great service to this part of Dundalk. We intend to run customer appreciation events in store on a regular basis, provide a great range of products, a monthly raffle, refreshments, entertainment and a bit of craic and the shop has just launched a Coffee morning on the first Tuesday of every month"*. This new shop has been so well received that the Region will

open another new community shop very soon serving Blackcastle in Navan.

National Retail Development Manager, Dermot McGilloway, returns to the topic of exclusion in Irish society and feels that the Vincent's charity shops, firmly rooted in Vincentian ethos and values, with their fantastic programme of events, bright and cheerful décor and cheerful rainbow logo and close proximity to so many local communities make great ambassadors for SVP in Ireland today.

Whilst welcoming this necessary expansion of Vincent's charity shops into our housing estates and residential areas, McGilloway predicts that the next generation of consumer is also demanding access to our products and services through social media and online. McGilloway estimates that €98 million was spent online in Ireland during the Black Friday shopping weekend in November 2017 and feels that Vincents must cater for people who like to shop from their mobile device.

McGilloway states "Our new generation of charity shops are already enriching the local community in places like West Belfast and Limerick but we must also cater for customers, donors and volunteers who identify with and participate in Ireland's online community. Our team in East Region has launched our first dedicated Vincent's eBay page and it is hoped that we will have a national presence before too much longer"

The link for the page is <http://stores.ebay.ie/vincents>.



McGilloway adds "The Society of St Vincent De Paul has been loyally serving the people of Ireland since 1844; our retail team is committed to developing a range of products and services that both our local and online community can identify with and support. We want our customers, donors, volunteers and members to identify Vincent's as the first choice in charity retail for this generation and the next".

NEW

SVP

VINCENT'S

CHARITY SHOP

NOW OPEN

VISIT OUR NEW CHARITY SHOP AT
**UNIT W3,
 DAIRY FARM
 SHOPPING CENTRE,
 STEWARTSTOWN RD,
 DUNMURRY**

Monday to Saturday
10am to 5pm

Volunteers urgently required for afternoon work and late night Thursday

Check out our fantastic range of clothing, fashion accessories, books, toys, household items and collectables

Now with 220 shops across Ireland including Vincent's, Mountainview Centre, Norglen Gardens, Belfast.

SVP

VINCENT'S

Visit www.svp-ni.co.uk

Volunteer application forms are available in store. Call Anne on **07921 876237** or email anne.crossan@svpni.co.uk for more details.

A Tragedy in Zambia

By Liam Casey and Larry Tuomey



It was very early on the morning of Saturday, 30 September 2017 when it happened. Members and their families from Mambwe Particular Council were travelling in an open truck to attend a Retreat Day organised by Mbala Central Council to mark the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul. A driveshaft problem developed, the truck went into an embankment and overturned. 21 of those on the truck died and 57 suffered injuries. Two local priests were among the first on the scene ferrying the injured to a hospital in Mbala and offering the Last Rites to those who had died.

A mass burial was ordered by the Zambian Government and this took place on 3 October 2017 in Mambwe parish church attended by 24 priests, Government ministers and officials and members of the Society. Because of the necessary speed of the burial many who wished to do so could not pay their respects on that day. It was decided to have a Memorial Mass later.

This was celebrated on Saturday 18 November in Mambwe and attended by the families of the deceased, 47 of the injured discharged from hospital, (10 remain in nursing care) members of the Society and parishioners. Joseph Makwinja (Deputy President General) represented the President General. Kenny Kachali, President of the National Council of Zambia and his Board, Christopher Chanda, Regional Co-ordinator; members from the Central Councils of Kasama and Mbala attended. Liam Casey (Regional President) and Larry Tuomey represented the East Region (twinning partner of Zambia). Mass was celebrated by Fr Mutapa PP. The Vicar General of Kasama Archdiocese attended.

Before Mass we paid our respects at the graves of the 17 of the deceased who were buried behind the church placing in the Zambian tradition a single flower on each grave.

The Mass - which lasted 3 hours - was very moving. Little girls dressed in white led the procession. The local choir and marimba band provided the music and the congregational singing was memorable.

At the end of Mass, those representing the Society from overseas were invited to address the congregation which we did stressing that in the spirit of solidarity that exists between all Society members we brought the condolences and deep sympathy of the worldwide Vincentian family to those bereaved and suffering in Mambwe.

We outlined the measures being taken in East Region (special secret bag at all meetings during November) to raise funds to provide practical support. Under the guidance of the parish priest; the local Conference and President of Mbala Central

Council a first distribution of aid sent from East Region took place at the end of Mass to all families affected.

Meeting members of the families who had lost loved ones and those who were injured was a moving experience. Profoundly sad stories emerged. A husband and wife had died in the accident leaving four young children; four members of the Simwinga family died; a 28 year old woman, 8 months pregnant died and her baby was lost too (the small grave behind the church was especially poignant); a two year old girl lost her parents (she is being fostered by a local member). Among the injured, some had lost limbs and will never work again. Many had broken bones and bad bruises.

Most of those involved in the accident were engaged in subsistence farming in the Mambwe area. The extended family system in Zambia while not as strong as in the past will be a support but it was very clear that all those affected will need continuing support. There are a total of 52 children under the age of 16 in the families of those who died and their educational needs was identified as a priority for future support.

A whole community has been devastated by this tragedy. The lives of the families of the deceased and of those injured have been changed for ever. The Society in Zambia and in particular the Central Council of Mbala and the Particular Council of Mambwe has suffered a grievous blow. The solidarity shown by the International Society has been an encouragement in these dark times.

We were privileged to be able to convey directly the condolences of the East Region. The rigours of the long journey to Mambwe (1400kms from Lusaka - a journey which involved taking a two engined aircraft to Ndola, a single engined Cessna to Kassama and a drive of 200kms, some on dirt tracks) were more than offset by the appreciation of our presence by those suffering and by fellow Zambian members. Our trip will hopefully have strengthened the bonds of friendship and mutual support that the link between Zambia and Dublin started over 50 years ago.

The need for continuing support for the victims of the tragedy is very evident.

Members wishing to contribute may do so by sending cheques in envelopes marked "Zambia Relief" (payable to SVP) to the East Regional Office, 91/92 Sean McDermott St, Dublin 1.

We lucky Vincentians

by *Cathal O'Rourke*
St. Michael's Conference,
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

“I'm a greater believer in luck,
and I find the harder I work
the more I have of it”

- Thomas Jefferson

As members of our respective Conferences, we are lucky on a number of counts.

We are lucky to have inherited a thriving organisation with impeccable credentials. Thanks to the sterling work, since 1844, of generations of our predecessors in Ireland it is one that is in good standing in our local communities. Locally, we each carry on that tradition of service. We, in turn, will hand on the baton to the next generation of volunteers – with luck, enhanced by our current endeavours.

Over time, many charities come and go reacting to society's ever-changing circumstances. But we are there for the long haul – in action throughout the entire year, every year. Luckily, that extended vision allows us to plan long-term projects.

As members of St. Vincent De Paul Society, we see at first hand the reality of inequality and the so-called poverty trap. We are lucky therefore, through the marvellous generosity of our respective communities, to find ourselves empowered to help the 17 per cent of the nation's population at risk of poverty who are on low incomes relative to the norm. Fortunately, we are in a position to target among them the most vulnerable groups such as lone parents, unemployed people, those unable to

work because of illness or disability, the under 65's living alone, and those in social housing paying rent.

Where we believe money can solve problems, we can help those in financial difficulties with the skill sets to budget their way out to solvency. The money to facilitate this comes from the local community that supports us. The continuing level of such community support is humbling. It is a powerful example of generosity in a world where citizens' obligations to society are gradually being eroded and overtaken by individualism. Lucky again.

We are lucky to have colleagues who are willing to undertake demanding conference leadership roles as President, Treasurer, etc. Often they are combining those roles with equally busy lives in the workforce, in family commitments and suchlike. Their phones ring ceaselessly, meetings abound, and their attics creak with legacy SVP documentation. In office, they must forget the concept of 'leisure time'. We are very much in their debt. As volunteers, we are especially lucky to work with colleagues whose sole motivation is to help others. The selfishness and competitiveness of the commercial world hold no sway around the Conference table or on visitation.

Having been gifted the means, we are greatly privileged to be able to reach out to help repair broken lives. Working together, we can continue to make each of our communities sensitive to the needs of others.

When the campaigner for the homeless, Fr. Peter McVerry, was asked where he found God, he replied that he found God in the pain of the people he helps. Few of us, on our visitations, doubt that He is with us as our guide and support as we carry out our work in His name.

How much luckier can you get?

A reflection at the South-East Galway/Tuam Gathering in Mountbellew

by *Michael Nolan*

Frederic Ozanam, is he forgotten? Well, sometimes, yet he's the reason we're here tonight on this very special occasion in Mountbellew.

As the poet, Robert Frost would say that Frederic 'took the path less travelled' and that made all the difference. His Christian faith was his inspiration as he strove for a Gospel-based social justice for a fair and just society.

This idea of faith went against the culture of the day and that isolated him from the so-called, thinking, reasoning people of the day. Frederic had a vision. The fact that he was very bright and got a formal education isolated him further and this time from his own class.

Frederic was ready to break the mould. He recognized that the poor were poor and didn't belong, and the sick were outcasts as well. Frederic used language that was foreign to the time. He used the words such as helping, caring and embracing. He talked about compassion and understanding. This was hard for many to take. Was he out of his mind?

But when he said that compassion and understanding must be followed by action the clouds burst but Frederic wasn't ruffled. There was no lámh láidir, no iron fist but a nudging and a gradual reasoning and St. Vincent de Paul Society is where it is today, in a good position. Maybe it could be better but it's still very good.

Much of Frederic's characteristics and aspirations have already been mentioned here tonight like respect, dignity, non-judgmental, non-discriminatory and being a voice for the voiceless. And the perennial question arises: 'If I was in great need and in his/her shoes, how would I like to be treated?' We can't afford a stray error no matter how busy or fatigued we are. We try to use a gentle tone of voice and never let a rash or uncourteous word enter our dialogue with a needy person or people, who may be in a very vulnerable position, whether on visitation or elsewhere. And if an unintentional note of disharmony creeps in, Frederic says that we should be the ones to turn the other cheek first.

To conclude with another of Frederic's aspirations, 'Let us love and serve one another now and forever, far and near, in our own conference, from one conference to another, from town to town and from country to country.' This is what inspired the Society to embark on the Twinning Projects with other countries some decades ago. Frederic Ozanam is not forgotten.



Men 'Just Look and Cook'

Cookery Course St. John's Conference, Sligo

Following on from our first 'Just Look and Cook' course in early Spring 2017, St John's Conference, Sligo decided to ask some men if they would like to take part in a six-week cookery course last September.

There was a good response and a group of interested men came on the first day. Some were already cooking for themselves, as part of a couple or with children. We had some changing faces during the course due to illness, job interviews and new business enterprise. Some shared that it was a challenge to cook dishes that everyone would eat on a budget and keep it interesting.

The group did not know each other to start and over the course of a few weeks, great banter and friendship developed between the men. It was a lovely place to be every Tuesday between 10am and noon, with an up-beat atmosphere in the kitchen, lovely smells and great results.

Each week the group made a starter and main course or a main course and dessert, some of which they ate for lunch yet there was always enough to bring home to share. Sometimes it was possible to make additional items or spend longer sharing food together.

Every participant received a folder to store the weekly recipes. On the last day, we had a celebration and the cookery students received a Certificate, chef hat, Just Look & Cook Cookery

Book, MABS 101 Recipe Book and a dish to replicate recipes.

Boosted by the success of these two courses, we are continuing our partnership with Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Educational Training Board (MSLETB) and plan to hold two further courses in Spring and Autumn 2018.

What makes this course different?

What makes this course different is firstly, Eileen and Joan, who take a real and genuine interest in helping participants fully engage in the cooking programme and with each other.

All the recipes included pictures outlining the steps so you don't need to be a fluent reader or have English as your first language. Recipes are simple and economical and use easy measurements like 1 teaspoon, 2 carrots, 3 mugs etc., and no special equipment is needed. All participants were provided with a dish to make for example apple crumble and they got to bring this dish home so they could recreate it.

The one-to-one support is invaluable where participants can chat face-to-face about opportunities and possibilities from MSLETB courses, to the TUS visitor who chatted with each person about community short-term work with TUS.

The men have told us that this course has made a real difference to them, that they have made new friends, have a new



John Burke



Willie McDermott



Paul Divers



Kevin Leyden

confidence in the kitchen and as a result are cooking some of these dishes for themselves, their partners and children. We believe this boost has already made a difference with some of the participants getting interviews for jobs. Others are taking part in more cookery classes and have applied for the Special Cookery Course in 2018.

This course had a positive impact on a wonderful group of men, friendships were formed, new skills developed, personal confidence increased and this boost will we believe have a long-term effect.

We are very thankful to Cathy Powell and all at MSLETB for their support of this programme. Northside Community Centre is undergoing a kitchen renovation thanks to some grant funding, so there will be improved facilities for the next participants.

We would again like to thank Eileen Kirrane, Cook Tutor and Joan Moffitt, Family Learning Coordinator for making every participant feel special and giving individual attention, including on the first day of the course, procuring cake tins and ingredients and to make a splendid birthday cake.

For anyone interested in getting the 'Just Look and Cook' Cookery Book is published by Riverhouse Books and is available in Eastons (ISBN 978-0-9575789-0-6) or contact Eileen directly at justlookandcook.ie or on her Facebook page 'Just Look and Cook', 087-2708627.



Pictured is Eileen cutting the Cake at Celebration Party at end of course

Bailieborough Shop Conference Liaising with Schools

*Eilish McKenna,
President of St. Anthony's Shop Conference Bailieborough.*

For the St. Vincent de Paul Society the pre Christmas period is usually marked by a heightened awareness of the Society's work and a generosity of spirit on the part of the public. With this in mind our shop Manager Stephen and I decided to promote the work of the Shop Conference and engage with young people in our catchment area. The response from the local principals of schools was welcoming and heart warming.

Going out into the local schools has been a wonderful experience for the Bailieborough Shop Conference and indirectly for our Visitation Conference. The positivity which we have encountered towards our shop has blown us away. The Shop Manager and I were invited to speak to the CSPE class in the Community School, who have taken on the SVP shop as their Junior Cert CSPE Project. On arrival we were received by an enthusiastic class, keen to find out about the work of the shop and how the Society helps people at various life stages and in different circumstances. The courtesy shown on our arrival was really impressive and what overwhelmed us was the number of hampers which this class presented to us on our departure. And the generosity of the Community School students did not end there. At the Christmas Carol Service in the church to which Stephen and I were invited, we were presented with many more hampers from the general school body, which provided much needed supplies for the many families who still need assistance even in these times of economic recovery.

The pupils of St Anne's N.S in Bailieborough encouraged by their teacher, Mr Tiernan decided that half of their Christmas fund raising efforts would be donated to the local Shop Conference. A cheque for €500 was presented to the Conference recently by the 6th class students. The generosity of the students, parents and teachers in the school is very encouraging for all the volunteers and staff who work in the shop.

We have since received money donations, clothes, toys and unwanted gifts from other schools in the area.

All in all, our engagement with young people through the local schools has been rewarding and reassuring.



Left to right Mr. Paul Corcoran Principal St. Anne's N.S with 6th class pupils Caitlin Halpin, Emily Byrne, Kenzie Clarke and Tiernan Flanagan presenting a cheque to Eilish McKenna, President Shop Conference and Stephen McGuire, Shop Manager.

OZANAM COME DANCING

by Lynn Bynre
Area Manager East Region

When I left the corporate world after 20 years to use my skill set in the charity sector; I hadn't envisaged that would include wearing a belly top in Liberty Hall and dancing Bollywood! But that's exactly what I'm doing on the 9th of March as part of an annual fundraiser for the amazing Ozanam House called Ozanam Come Dancing. I am an Area Manager for the Vincent's shop network in East Region and will be partnered by one of our lovely Relief Managers, Joe Tynan. We have been inspired to get involved and drive fundraising after spending time in Ozanam House and seeing the amazing work carried out by Tony Rock & his team. This resource center is an essential part of the local inner city community and provides much need services and support to enable the members build confidence, knowledge and new skills so they might give their families a better life. Not to mention friendship and a real sense of community spirit.

We are going that extra mile to try boost the sponsorship funds driving friends & colleagues mad with regular emails and social media updates! We would like to thank them for their support and generosity so far. The fantastic Managers & teams in East Shops are getting behind us promoting the event locally and taking sponsors. We also arranged The Great SVP Bake Off



in SVP House on Friday the 23rd. Staff & Volunteers entered a bake to be judged by our Celeb Judge Catherine Leyden, Baker on Ireland AM who agreed to come in and support the event. All cakes sold by the slice with a coffee afterwards to raise money.

So now it's plenty of practice and costume sourcing before we take to the stage with 11 other couples from various companies, who have also given up their time to learn how to dance and fundraise for Ozanam House.

Best of luck to everyone! You can still sponsor us at www.svp.ie/OCD18LynnandJoe

Keeeeeeeep Dancing!!!!

Please Vote for
LYNN & JOE

Ozanam Come Dancing

A fundraising event in aid of
ozanam HOUSE SVP

Liberty Hall Theatre
Eden Quay, Dublin 1.
Friday 9th March 2018
Doors 6:30pm - Show Starts 7:30pm

Tickets
€20 each
Available at
www.ozanamhouse.ie

Midwest Region - Plan a New Springtime

By John Lupton,
Midwest Regional President

At our first Regional Council meeting of 2018, we, in the Midwest, focused on where we are at, and where we are going and then collectively asked ourselves is where we're going where we want to go? There was a consensus that it wasn't. Then we explored the question as to why we are going to where we do not want to go and not going to where we want? The answer we realised appeared to be in what we do and how we do what we do. It was accepted that to arrive at a different result, we must do things differently and to think differently, for now, our time, is a different time with different challenges.

Where We're At

We pondered on where we're at, in order to map the route of where we want to go. We find it difficult to ensure succession and difficult to find members willing to serve as Area Presidents, on Regional and Area Councils or on related sub committees. We find it difficult to get members from the Region to train as trainers or serve on National Committees. We find it difficult to have an adequate flow of new members. We could also do better in assessing the needs of those we serve and on focusing our assistance, in giving a hand up rather than giving a hand out.

Where We're Going

Thus, at its first meeting of the New Year our Regional Council resolved to take steps to create a new Springtime for the Society in the Midwest with two initiatives. Firstly, it set up a Regional

Visitation Team comprising of Area Presidents and others, who committed to visit each visitation Conference in the Region, focusing on adequately assessing the need of those we serve and thus promoting self-sufficiency, membership development and a conference structure which ensures an ongoing sustainable response to the needs of those whom it is our privilege to serve. Secondly, we agreed a programme of Regional Public Information and Outreach Events across the region. Thereat we would expect to highlight the ever-growing diversity of SVP activity and thus the diversity of skills and talents required to make up our membership of the future. In doing so we are open to viewing "conference" in a new light, based on a deeper analysis of need and a more effective response in the context of self sufficiency and required organisational support.

In Unity with Those Whom we Serve

However, if not a Springtime for those whom we serve, then there can be no Springtime for the Society. If we do not also delve into the deeper needs, i.e. those of which are very often psychological and sociological, we will never follow the direction of Rule 1.10 of the Rule of Our International Society, which instructs us to 'endeavour to help people experiencing poverty and disadvantage to help themselves whenever possible, and to be aware that they can forge and change their own destinies and that of their community'. The commentary to this rule reminds us that the 'ultimate empowerment is for those who are experiencing poverty and disadvantage to gain the confidence and the skills to be able to forge and change the destiny of their local communities'. It is only within such realisation of that 'ultimate empowerment' that we can be assured that we, in union with those whom we serve, will have reached the realisation of an ever new and sustainable Springtime.



Carne Holiday Centre

As 2017 drew to a close, St Martha's Conference were reviewing the bookings of the Carne Holiday Centre the past year and were delighted to see we had family's in our cottages from various parts of Ireland. We were thrilled with the feedback we had received over the summer and are extremely happy that we were in the position to provide seaside holidays to so many families.

Our cottages are set in the most beautiful location right on the beach in Carne, Co. Wexford, in the sunny southeast corner of Ireland. So with all that positivity on our side we are now open for bookings for the 2018 season. Sea Breeze 2 has been painted and is lovely and fresh waiting for our guests. In Sea Breeze 1, we are in the process of doing a make over on the bathroom in

this cottage so painting will then follow. Tusker is ready in waiting and looking out at the sea and on Tusker Lighthouse.

Carne Holiday Centre is available for bookings all throughout the year not just in the summer months. If you fancy an Easter, Spring or Autumn break, be sure to contact us at: carneholidaycentre@yahoo.ie or contact Emily at: 087 2222 418 (after 17:00pm please).

The main house is already filling up for this year but still has availability for large groups.

Looking forward to seeing you in Carne in 2018!

Members presented with the long term service medals (25 years)



Caroline Steward and Anne Farrelly both joined SVP in the mid 1980s - they are great friends. Both are Members of Our Lady of Loreto, Tallaght and Caroline has also been Conference President. They have both done great work for SVP and continue to do so.

Both were presented with Long Term Service medals at the annual conference dinner in late January by the Area President John Brady in recognition of their contribution.

Bag Packing in the East

On Saturday 2nd December 2017 our Conference, St Pius's Conference, Crumlin conducted a bag packing day in our local SuperValu in Orwell SC, Templeogue.

This is our 4th year to do this so that our Conference can be self financing in order to cover our extra outlay over the Christmas period.

We very much appreciate the cooperation of Daragh Horkan, the manager in the SuperValu store, for allowing us the privilege of helping out in the store in order to collect funds for our conference.

We are also very fortunate to have a Bank of Ireland volunteer, Linda on our team. She uses her day allowed by the bank for charity work to assist us consequently, the BOI generously top up our collection by their maximum amount of €1,250.

This gave us a total of €2,850 for our day.

I would like to say a special thanks to our volunteers, Joe Quirke, Margaret Derham, Hannah Conway, and Bernie Conlon.



Christmas Carol Service

Photographed following the Christmas Carol Service at Cistercian College Roscrea (CCR) in December 2017 are, left to right: Superior Br. Malachy; students presenting a cheque for €1,650 to St. Cronin's Conference, Roscrea; Conty Cunningham, President; Pat O'Sullivan, (CCR); and Tony Brennan, Treasurer, St. Cronin's Conference, Roscrea.

Our Lady of Perpetual Cake Sale

Photos of members from our Conference, Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Limerick, where a local branch of EBS held a cake sale to raise funds for our local SVP Conference.

Their hard work raised an amazing amount of €683 for St.Vincent de Paul.



Christmas Carol Service



Rosemarie Casserley of Limerick, hosted a coffee morning in December 2017 and donated a huge sum of €2,430 to the conference of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Raheen.

Christmas Food Appeal St Nicholas Conference SVP Carrick-on-Suir Tipperary

By Michael Lonergan



The conference in conjunction with the local Secondary and Primary Schools in Carrick-on-Suir held a very successful Christmas Food appeal when we distributed more than 75 Hampers to the households in need in our town before Christmas.

Our Members collected the baskets and boxes of non-perishable food from the various schools on 18th December and filled out and divided each hamper for families and the elderly and those living alone.

We in the Conference, felt that all the Students would greatly benefit from the experience of donating to this project and see the great charitable benefits they are involved in at local level.



We would like to thank the students, teachers and staff and parents in all our schools in supporting this worthwhile project and the recently formed Men's Shed who were a great help to us in providing the transport and helping to deliver also to the staff at the Nano Nagle Centre for use of rooms for storage.

This project was first initiated by our Secretary John Connolly and has been running successfully for the past 3 years.



Students of CBS School Carrick-on-Suir with Conference (President) Michael Lonergan, Marian Grace (Treasurer) and Tom O'Keeffe, SVP Member



Collection in conjunction with St Molaise

St. Molaise Conference in Irvinestown, Co. Fermanagh, would like to offer sincere thanks to St. Molaise GFC, Irvinestown, for organising and facilitating the 'Give One More Gift This Christmas' campaign in December 2017.

Our Conference was overwhelmed by the wonderful response with fuel, food, toys and other gifts.

We are very grateful for the support they have given to the community, and a big thank-you to all those who donated.

Frank Mc Cann (SVP), Justine Magee (SVP), Michael McQuaid (St. Molaise GFC) and Maeve Mc Girr (St. Molaise GFC).

Christmas Family Appeal -

Holy Rosary Conference, Belfast

As part of the Christmas Family Appeal pupils at Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School, Belfast gathered together non-perishable hampers and raised funds to buy Family Appeal presents for children within the Holy Rosary Parish. In total 42 hampers and gifts and toys were gathered for 48 children – an amazing achievement.

Many thanks are due to Mrs. McCrossan's Fund Raising team who organised the appeal and to the staff and parents who gave the appeal their generous support.

L-R James Surginor (SVP Volunteer), Kevin McVeigh (SVP Volunteer), Joan McAfee (SVP Volunteer), Karen Salmon, Kate Lyons, Fr. Colin Grant, Maeve Grant, Kathleen Murphy (SVP Volunteer) and Mary Connolly.



SVP RESOURCE CENTRE BALLINA “FOOD BANK”

St. Anne's Family Support Conference, which operates a Resource Centre in Ballina Co. Mayo, immediately signed up for the Food Cloud project in late 2014. We could see the potential of the various schemes and set about adapting our premises to accommodate freezers, fridges and a large storage area.

By 2017 we had signed up to Tesco and Lidl Food Cloud, FEAD programme, and Food Cloud Hub Galway. We distributed 2,710 food hampers from our Food Bank to 406 families consisting of 1,417 members – an increase of 1,000 hampers from 2016. This is operated on a very discreet basis as people can come in one entrance and exit a rear door. We estimate the value of each hamper at €100. This is saving the equivalent in purchasing food vouchers and reduces the workload on the visitation conferences.

As we run several home management classes for women, men and special needs service users) on a weekly basis our tutors select ingredients from the Food Bank to demonstrate how to utilise them to their best advantage, by making soups, stews and health options for their families. Participants are invited to take the same ingredients home and produce similar meals for their families.

Overall the operation of our Food Bank has been a very positive experience – firstly from our clients' perspective and also in preventing food waste. Clients have said that they could never afford to buy the quality of food they receive here i.e. legs of lamb, full chickens, health food products, unusual vegetables and fruit. We also ensure those receiving education grants from us go back to college with a good supply of non-perishables.

It has increased the workload of our volunteers and staff but we find that, once the operation is well set up, it is straightforward to run. Members, volunteers and our very active local Lions Club assist in a rota for our 12 weekly pick-ups. While members often bring hampers on visitation, clients mostly collect food from our centre. Members feel this has resulted in better quality visitation with families. It also ensures that no family goes hungry and each child has a good breakfast before going out to school. We would encourage all SVP Conferences to get involved in similar food distribution schemes – it's a very worthwhile operation for all involved.

Sincere thanks for Julian's years of dedication to St. Vincent de Paul



The Conference of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Foxrock would like to pay tribute to our esteemed colleague, Julian Fitzgerald on his retirement from our Conference.

Julian joined Foxrock Conference in 1970 and has been an active member for forty seven years. He served both as President and Treasurer. His contribution has been simply immense. His gentle approach won him many friends both within the Conference and with those he visited. His quiet, unassuming, non-judgmental way was an example both to our members and our clients. His care and compassion shown to the poor and marginalised was immeasurable. Julian is a man of great dignity and this dignity was afforded to all he encountered. He is also a man of great wit, and has a wonderful 'turn of phrase'!

When recently asked what his thoughts were on his time with the Society, he said " it was an opportunity to meet likeminded people and to share our common interest, namely working for the poor and underprivileged. I enjoyed working with the various families through their difficulties and their stories have remained with me all these years. It was a great time in my life, a time of mutual contribution".

Our Conference wants to wish Julian and his wife Maureen the best in his retirement and to thank him for his selfless contribution to the Society of St.Vincent de Paul spanning almost fifty years.

Tribute to Retired President Sheila Bonner

St. Joseph's Conference, Crossroads, Killygordon, Co. Donegal

Sheila Bonner, founder member and long serving President retired after more than 35 years of service to our Conference.

Sheila was one of the first people to start the SVP at the Crossroads. In the earlier years, Sheila was President, Treasurer and Secretary all in one to ensure that SVP was able to function.

Her work as a Public Health Nurse, enriched her with a caring personality and great sense of humour and commitment to the local communities.

Although she is retired, Sheila continues to be a valuable source of support to us in the Conference. We miss her wisdom and great sense of humour at our meetings.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to Sheila for all the service down through the years and wish her and her family Good Health and Happiness in the future.

From Everyone on the Conference Committee.



Sheila Bonner, Right being presented with a Long Serving Medal by Rosa Glackin, Regional President on the occasion of her retirement from the Conference.

In Tribute

To Deceased Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Harry McEvoy **Immaculate Heart of Mary Conference, Drumbo and Carryduff**

The Immaculate Heart of Mary Conference, Drumbo and Carryduff (South and East Belfast Area) were saddened by the death of one of its founder members, Harry McEvoy.

Harry was a true Vincentian and held the post of Conference President many times. Harry always answered the call when asked by St. Vincent de Paul and was a regular visitor to Knockbracken Healthcare Centre (Purdysburn Hospital) where he made many friends.

Harry was born in Drumaness, Co Down in 1930 and was educated at St Colman's College, Newry and St Columban's College, Dalgan Park, Navan. He continued his education at St. Joseph's Teacher Training College, after which he returned to his native Drumaness.

He was appointed principal of the primary school and remained there until his retirement in 1990.

Harry was also a founder member of St Vincent de Paul in Drumaness, where he was the first President. After moving to Carryduff, he played a key role in setting up the working group, which established St Joseph's Primary School in the area.

Harry had a great love of Irish culture and language and was a founder member of Carryduff GAA club.

He was also chairman of Down GAA County Board, chairman of the East Down GAA Board, and represented Down at Ulster Council. One of Harry's greatest loves was Scór to which he devoted much time and energy.

We extend our sincere sympathy to his wife Gretta, his sons and daughters and his extended family.

May his gentle soul rest in peace.

Bridie O'Shea **St. Thérèse Conference Letterkenny**

As we, the members of the SVP in Letterkenny, left the Church of the Irish Martyrs on the sad morning of the 3rd of June this year and formed a guard of honour, we soon realized that everyone who had attended the funeral mass of the late Bridie O'Shea was there with us.

This was indeed a special funeral for a very special person.

Fr. Brian Quinn, who knew Bridie so well, thanked her so touchingly for her wonderful work and how she had touched the community for over fifty years.

Bridie had become a living saint in her own lifetime.

During those years, Bridie was available to anyone who needed her, day or night. She offered all the long arm of her healing care, always there for the sick or lonely, the vulnerable, the sick child or worried parent.

She, being a great nurse, gave freely and with a loving smile, her great gifts.

Sometimes at our meetings she prompted us in her own sweet way 'could we be a little bit more generous'.

Bridie, we miss you so much and we are proud to have had you in our conference of St. Thérèse.

And to you Bill, who often had to be called on to do a bit of driving when her wee car couldn't make it – we thank you. To her daughters Anne and Maria for sharing her with us – you too, we know, miss her terribly.

May you rest in peace Bridie.

Christy Mulcahy **St. John the Baptist Conference, Marino, Dublin 4**

Christy Mulcahy who was a vital member of St. John the Baptist Conference in Marino passed away on the 13th of September 2017. Christy served the Conference for an amazing 60 years. During that time he was President and Treasurer. Being an ex-civil servant, his bookkeeping was meticulous. He organized the Sunday collections and the counting of it, which until a few years ago was every week.

Christy was a family man and was only able to do all of this work because he had the support of his lovely wife, Maureen. Maureen said that before he had a car Christy would cycle from Raheny or get the bus in all weathers to attend the meeting.

It was a real privilege to have served in the same Conference as Christy. He was a thorough gentleman. He was very compassionate, fair and had a great sense of humor. He had us rolling around laughing at times with tales of incidents that happened while out he was out visiting. You could call Christy at any time to either come out and visit outside our normal visiting night or for information and be guaranteed to be pointed in the right direction. You could not put a price on the knowledge he had amassed over those years.

He will be sadly missed by all of us in SVP Marino and by the countless people whose lives he touched during those 60 years.

We offer our deepest sympathy to Christy's wife Maureen his children and grandchildren.

May he Rest in Peace.

Gerry (Kevin) Conroy **St. Vincent de Paul Mouthrath**

To say our brother and dear friend Gerry was exceptional would be inadequate, unique might go in some way to describe him. His life was built on the pillars of family, friends, faith and service of



God and humanity. He died on the longest day of the year and was laid to rest on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, a feast close to his own heart.

It was a joy to be in his company and a privilege to have known him. Gerry was a man people confided in. They would come away from his presence, enabled and blessed with a clear mind, a surer step and a happier heart. His life was lived out of a Eucharistic spirit of thanksgiving and gratitude. Gerry stood for everything that was good, truly noble, virtuous and worthy of praise. He was a good man, faithful to his God, his family, work and parish community.

Gerry had that magnetic personality of drawing people to him and his greatest moments were working for many decades with Vincent de Paul in Mountrath, all done with great love. He lived the words of the prophet Isaiah 'happy are the feet of the one who brings good news'. Gerry was good news and brought material support to so many people in his work with the St. Vincent de Paul Conference. He had a great empathy and compassion for people, his heart was in the right place, blessed with deep faith knowing he met the body of Christ in others.

'Well done good and faithful servant, come now and take your place in my Kingdom, prepared for you since the foundation of the world'.

Rev. Fr. Robert Devine
St. Joseph's Conference, Crossroads, Killygordon,
Co. Donegal

The Conference has lost its long serving Spiritual Director, Fr. Devine who died on 6th November 2017.

Fr. Devine was hugely influential and supportive to us all in the Conference. During his earlier days of ill health, he would always have attended meetings on a regular basis.

His deep faith and teachings of the Gospels was an inspiration to us all.

He will be hugely missed by us all on the committee and were privileged to have been associated with him.

Ar dheis De go raibh a anam dilis.

Mr. Josie O'Hanlon
Irvinestown, Co. Fermanagh.

St. Molaise Conference and the wider SVP community mourn the loss of our dear friend and colleague and highly regarded member, Josie O'Hanlon.

Josie was a devoted member of our Conference for over 68 years. Throughout his life he showed dedication to the poor and disadvantaged in our community. He consistently offered friendship, charity and loyalty to those in need.

Josie celebrated his 98th birthday on 19th June last year. As one of Ireland's longest serving draper, he joined his father Joseph, in the well-known O'Hanlon's Drapery Shop in the mid 1930's and spent 83 wonderful years in the business. He was very talented and

skilled, sitting down at his famous 'Singer' sewing machine to carry out repairs, his family said. He was very obliging and would have opened the shop at any time of night if people wanted it. He had a very vivid memory and was very outgoing and loved telling stories and jokes. He never retired and continued working until shortly before his unexpected illness.

Josie was a very active member of Devenish Parish and Sacred Heart Chapel and loved quoting from Latin verses from his youth, rehearsed as an altar boy. He was truly a servant of the Lord, blessed with wonderful faith throughout his life. As an active Vincentian for nearly seven decades, he was presented with a bronze and silver medal for devoted service for 40 and 50 years respectively. Earlier this year, he received a beautiful certificate honouring his unwavering 68 years working for the Society.

Josie's requiem mass was widely attended, which exemplified the huge respect in which he was held. It was concelebrated by Canon Michael Mc Gourty P.P., and by Fr. Niall Green and also by Fr. Artie McCann, friends of the family. In his homily, Canon Mc Gourty referred to Josie as 'The Patriarch of our community'.

He is survived by his wife Mary, and their four children Catherine, Dermot (Mary), Joe (Michelle) and Barry (Laura) and six grandchildren and wider family circle. Josie is a wonderful example of a life well lived. He will be dearly missed.

Let perpetual light shine upon him, Rest in peace Josie.

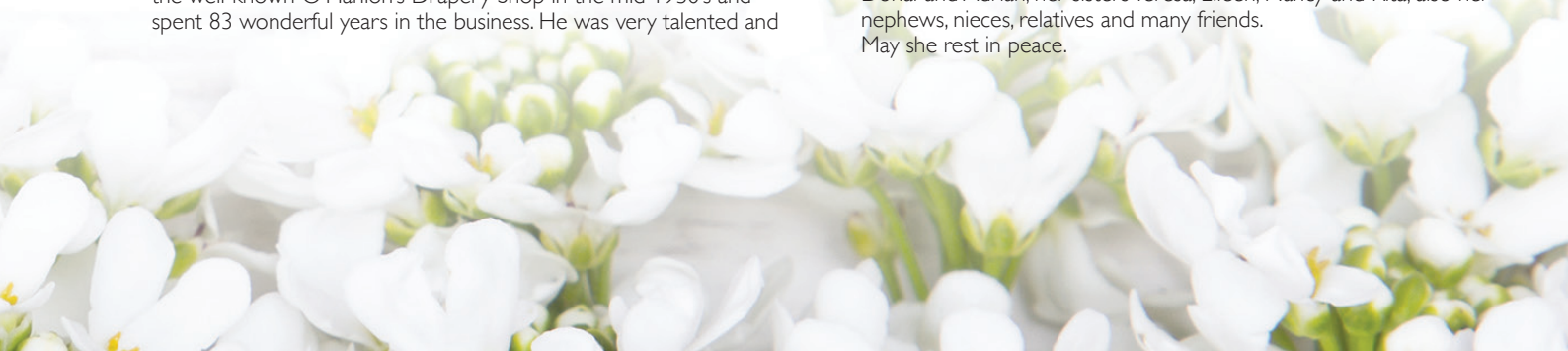
May McManus
- St. Patrick's Conference in Carrigallen

St. Patrick's Conference in Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim lost a very committed member and a loyal friend with the unexpected death of May (Mary) McManus on the 19th October 2017. May was a founding member of our Conference and the first treasurer. She was a very popular and respected member of our community in Carrigallen and throughout the surrounding parishes for her work in the Margaret of New Orleans Committee. May joined our Conference when it was founded in the year 2012 and was the dedicated volunteer that the other members could copy.

She worked tirelessly to promote Margaret Haughey's name nationally and internationally as Margaret was born in the townland where the McManus family bought their first home after returning to Ireland. It was with great pride that May and the Margaret Committee opened a replica cottage on the site where Margaret (nee Gaffney) was born. This cottage is open on Sundays and Holydays from Easter to September for Irish Cultural Days in memory of the Irish heroine who got a state funeral in New Orleans and May worked voluntarily on open days to keep the cottage running.

May always had a friendly smile and gave of her time generously to the Conference and to those in need. She is sadly missed by family and friends, her colleagues in St. Vincent de Paul and Margaret of New Orleans Committee. May was like Margaret, a true Christian, and practised it in everyday life.

We wish to express our heartfelt sympathy to her husband Loughlin and daughter Frances, her son-in-law Philip and her grandsons Donal and Adrian, her sisters Teresa, Eileen, Nancy and Rita, also her nephews, nieces, relatives and many friends. May she rest in peace.



REGIONAL OFFICES

National Office

SVP House, 91-92, Sean MacDermott Street Lower, Dublin, D01 WV38
Phone: 01 8848200, Email: info@svp.ie

East Region

SVP House, 91-92, Sean MacDermott Street, Dublin, Dublin 1
Phone: 01-8550022, Email: info.east@svp.ie

South West Region

Ozanam House, 2 Tuckey Street, Cork
Phone: 021-4270444, Email: info@svpcork.ie

Mid West Region

Ozanam House, Hartstonge Street, Limerick
Phone: 061-317327, Email: info.midwest@svp.ie

North East & Midlands Region

53-54 Trinity Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth
Phone: 041-9873331 Freephone number 1800 677 777,
Email: info.northeast@svp.ie

West Region

Ozanam House, Augustine Street, Galway
Phone: 091-563233, Email: info.west@svp.ie

South East Region

Unit 3, Six Cross Roads Business Park, Waterford
Phone: 051-350725, Email: info.southeast@svp.ie

North Region

196-200 Antrim Road, Belfast,
Northern Ireland, BT15 2AJ,
Phone: (028) 90351561, Email: info@svpni.co.uk

North West Region

The Diamond, Raphoe, Donegal
Phone: 074-9173933, Email: eddie.shiels@svp.co.uk

