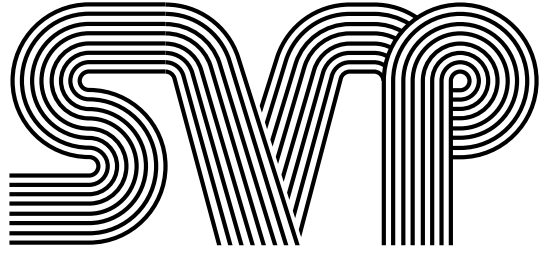


THE

SUMMER 2013



# BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

## PRESIDENT HIGGINS

*IN SOLIDARITY  
WITH THE POOR*

## TALKING MONEYLENDING

*SVP CALLS FOR  
CENTRAL BANK ACTION*

## POLITICIANS

*CAN WE BELIEVE THEM?*

PLUS

*RESOURCING INNER DUBLIN*

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THE VOICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN IRELAND

# THE SVP IN IRELAND



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Conferences operate locally all over Ireland and their contact details are posted in church doors, at community centres, medical clinics and other locations. Contact can also be made with the Society through our national website [www.svp.ie](http://www.svp.ie). If you need assistance, do not hesitate to contact the SVP.

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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

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# Hope - not Austerity is needed

The commemoration of the Bicentenary of the birth of the Founder of the Society of St.Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam, has initiated a debate about continued austerity, the tool of economists and financial advocates to control financial malaise, but which has also become a weapon of destruction destroying families and individuals.

Those who continue to drive policies of austerity do not suffer from their effects as do ordinary people. They are unlikely to be deprived of the basic needs for living as are those people who have shouldered too much of the burden, those whom the Society of St.Vincent de Paul deals with daily.

A nation is more than an economy, it is the people who are its most vital asset. There is now, as President Higgins said at the Bicentenary commemoration, the need for a new connection between economy, society and the person, based on ethics. As Minister Joan Burton said, electorates in advanced societies have a limit beyond which they are not prepared to accept policies of austerity. As SVP National President, Geoff Meagher, said "it cannot be all about austerity, hope is needed."

The rich and powerful caused the economic turmoil which has destroyed the futures of thousands of people who have seen little accountability by those responsible. The Government has given the banks and the financial sector all that they have asked for, but cutback on the basics for those in deprivation and in need, subjecting the people to more and more demands to pay for the disaster they caused.

It should listen to the voices of those who are suffering, unless it believes that austerity and suffering is only for the ordinary people.

In this edition of THE SVP BULLETIN, the voice of social justice in Ireland, we have a mixture of articles and reports about hope, coping with despair; asking whether politicians can be believed, calling for Central Bank action on moneylending which is an increasing problem, dealing with child poverty and the commitment of young people who are the future of the Society of St.Vincent de Paul, which was founded by a young man at the age of 21.

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The Next Quarterly Edition of The SVP Bulletin will be published in the Autumn



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# LEARNING TREE BEARS FRUIT AT CROÍ NA GAILLIMHE

A learning tree which symbolises the highs and lows of adult learning has been unveiled at Croí na Gaillimhe.

It was part of AONTAS Adult Learners' Festival during which two hundred nationwide events took place.

AONTAS estimates that approximately 300,000 adults take part in some form of adult learning (from basic education, community education, right through to third level) each year. In 2011, learners in community education centres around the country achieved 20,000 awards.

Community Education has demonstrated significant social outcomes along with the development of core skills for participants. These outcomes include: greater levels of volunteering, better health outcomes for participants, both physical and mental, improved parenting skills and stronger social networks.

Majella Mallon McGrath, a volunteer worker at Croí na Gaillimhe said: "Although I may be called a volunteer I don't really regard time spent in Croí na Gaillimh as volunteering. I see the process as a mutual educational exchange between individuals, where each of us benefits on many levels in coming together albeit under the heading of computer training. Individuals may leave classes with what are now fast becoming essential computer skills but I benefit from new information and insights on a very large range of topics. Over time, Croí na Gaillimhe has

‘Although I may be called a volunteer I don't really regard time spent in Croí na Gaillimh as volunteering’

shown me that there still exists a great and essential social medium for community development on many levels and there is always a heartfelt welcome".

We know that adult learners and Community Education Centres do vital work on a daily basis, and this is even more apparent during a time of economic recession' said Frank Fahy Deputy Mayor of the City of Galway who unveiled the tree . 'Centres such as Croí na Gaillimhe are providing opportunities for people to learn new skills,



but also they provide a valuable social role at a time like this. By social role I mean responding to the themes of social exclusion, educational disadvantage and isolation of people in society both city and rural.'

Several of our enthusiastic learners gave a brief account of their learning experiences at Croí na Gaillimhe. They all spoke of the joy and the fun they experienced in learning and most of all, they mentioned the friendships they had made - or in many cases, renewed. Music was provided by the very talented Bish Choir (St Joseph's Secondary School) and a comedy show delivered by the School.

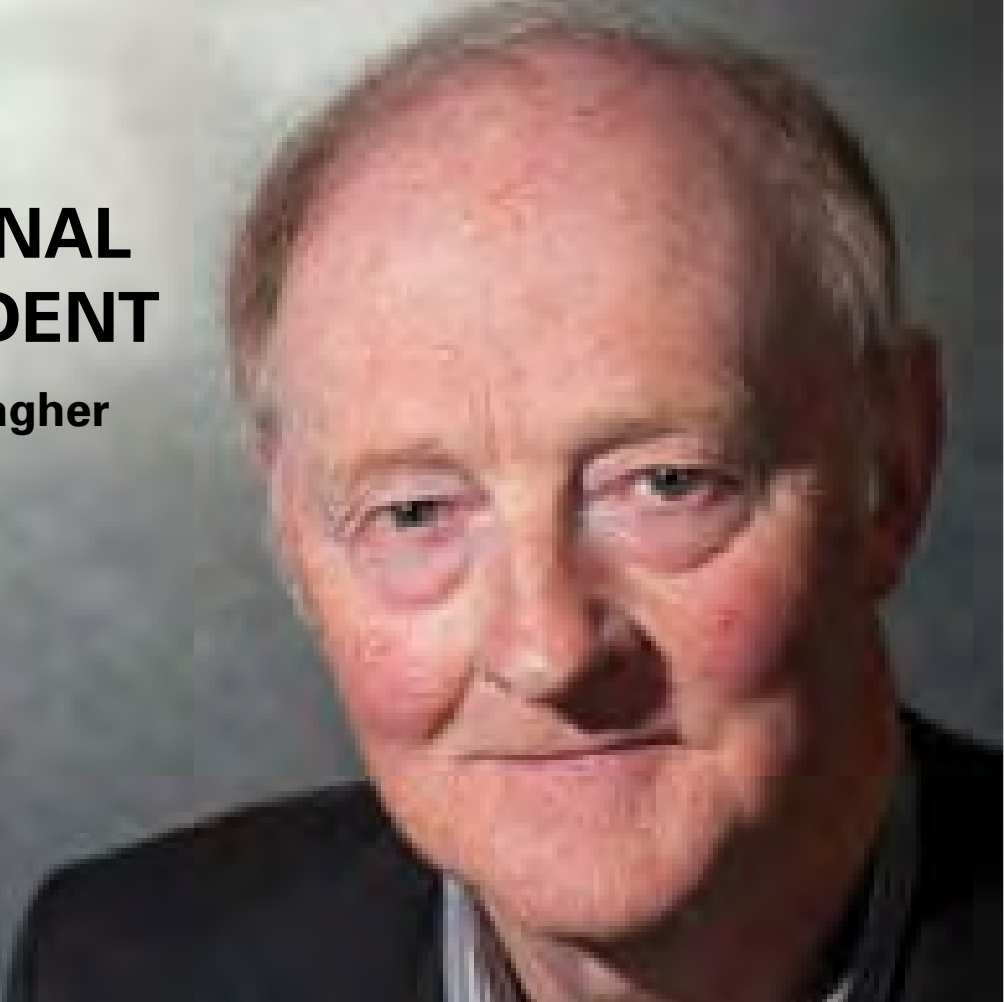
If you come into the Croí na Gaillimhe on any given day there will be older adults enjoying a dinner and social club, migrants taking part in English conversation classes, young parents engaging in group activities and workshops, school children working alongside older people on the intergenerational programme and various classes and clubs in progress.

The clubs and groups in Croí na Gaillimhe are: the Parents Network and workshops relating to parenting, Men's Group, Lunch and Social Club, Knitting Club, Tea Dances and Creative Writers' Group. There are classes in Movement and Relaxation, Drawing, Painting, More Money in your pocket including guides on healthy shopping, Beginner Computer Classes and Computer Workshops.

For more information phone 091 895203 or Email: [lorettaneedham@gmail.com](mailto:lorettaneedham@gmail.com)

# NATIONAL PRESIDENT

**Geoff Meagher**



The work of the Society of St.Vincent de Paul is much wider than just material help.

We look after people who have too many needs and not enough rights, who demand with reason a fuller share in public affairs, security in work and safeguards against poverty.

Our Founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, made that comment back in October 1842 and that work still goes on every day of the week through the work of the Society in visitation, in our hostels, shops, social housing, holiday homes and many other activities.

The possibilities for Vincentian action are almost limitless, because being poor is not just about being short of money and material things. It can also mean having a physical or mental disability, being sick, or old, lonely or illiterate.

And the poor also includes those who are made to feel alone and unwanted, for example, immigrants, asylum seekers, migrant workers who sometimes find themselves among others who are indifferent, even hostile. Being poor can also mean being a prisoner, an alcoholic or a drug addict.

For 170 years the Society of St.Vincent de Paul in Ireland has had three indispensable and intertwined strands –

- To offer Friendship and Support – both financial and emotional
- To help people achieve independence with dignity
- To identify the structural causes of poverty and need in Irish society and to advocate for their elimination

Sadly it is the daily experience of the members of the Society of St Vincent De Paul in Ireland that the three strands of the SVP Mission; offering friendship and support; helping people achieve independence with dignity and working for social justice are more than ever necessary in the economically depressed Ireland of 2013.

We continue to advocate on behalf of all of those impacted by austerity measures including those on low wage income who pay for all services and get nothing in return. We urge Government to provide funds to provide stimulus for the economy, thus providing hope for those in unemployment and our young people who continue to face the prospect of emigration. It cannot be all about austerity, we need hope, we need to be more creative in encouraging people to take risks. This includes our self-employed who are encouraged by the State to 'go it alone' and if they fail find it almost impossible to get support.

I refer also to our call to Government for a national debate as to the type of society we want in Ireland for the future and a roadmap for recovery which will give hope to those in unemployment and our young people, who continue to be forced to emigrate. During the Celtic tiger years we lost something of our identity and values. We hear the comment being made that we should aim to get back to where we were, we would contend that there was much we had in the Celtic tiger years that we could do without. It will be a missed opportunity if we fail to have the debate, now is the time to do it.

*J. Meagher*





# TELLING IT LIKE IT IS TO THE IMF BOSS

As done by SVP Social Justice and Policy  
Officer Audry Deane

When the Head of the International Monetary Fund visited Ireland in March she congratulated the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny and Finance Minister Michael Noonan on the Government's success in dealing with the IMF programme. Neither the Minister nor Ms. Lagarde seemed particularly happy when challenged by Audry Deane for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

My sense of achievement (I had got past three earnest but efficient gatekeepers who had all checked my name on their lists) changed slowly to amusement. I was surrounded by a sea of suits ('dress strictly business wear' the invite had told us) on International Women's Day hmmm...Governor of the Central Bank directly in front of me, CEO of Bank of Ireland - who always looks to me like he would prefer to be lining out for the All Blacks to the left of me...and lots of male senior civil servants all waiting excitedly to hear Christine LaGarde Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund speak. I couldn't help feeling that the volume of the applause which erupted when she finally arrived had more to do with the audience's sense of self-congratulation at being inside the tent at this high level grouping of fiscal celebrities rather than respect for the reputation of the IMF itself. It reminded me of the 'sure aren't we great' mentality of the boom years before the emptiness of the economic and fiscal policies we had been sold came home to roost.

Madame Lagarde is an impressive speaker and delivered the IMF's message with unerring aplomb and consummate skill. That was my problem...she made it all seem ok and reasonable and her message was clearly that all would be well if we kept taking the medicine.

The fact that she delivered this fallacy in such a reasonable and easy to listen to tone made what was happening more surreal. I grew angrier and angrier as she spoke. I was thinking of the families struggling to buy school books, to make the food budget stretch throughout the week, the strain of not being able to pay bills and the uncertainty felt by many.

SVP members and staff understand the misery experienced by those who simply do not have enough to live on. We know how corrosive the impact of hardship and stress can be on an individual or family.

Fuelled by this sense of outrage I decided to ensure that she would not leave that hallowed hall without getting a glimpse of the other Ireland!

I was the first person to speak. I began by welcoming her

to Ireland and explaining quickly what kind of organisation the SVP is. I reminded her that she had just praised Ireland in terms of what it had achieved in terms of cuts and consolidation (consolidation is currently a very popular euphemism for reductions and rationing) but that SVP members were witnessing an increase in despair and distress in those they are helping. I told her that the SVP was very worried at the potential for long-term damage being done to those people who have the least means. I also reminded her that Ireland was a country with huge health inequalities and a non-existent after-school infrastructure.

As I spoke her face grew graver and the look on the face of our Finance Minister, Michael Noonan, was not a happy one. I ended by asking her how did the IMF think Ireland could reconcile the obviously competing agendas of social investment (the newest buzz word in Europe) with the deep cuts and rationing which were hurting those with least.

Her reply, while courteous and delivered in careful tones of commiseration, did not inspire me with hope. In short she told us that we are two-thirds of the way through and need to keep going.

I stifled a rather indelicate urge to reply that she was not delivering a pep talk to a team of synchronised swimmers (yes - she was on the French national team) but was responding to the largest charity of social concern in Ireland and nodded demurely.

Something tells me that I may not be on her Christmas card list this year.



Christine LaGarde of the IMF and An Taoiseach Enda Kenny



Sixteen-year-old Donal Walsh from Tralee in County Kerry has become a national household name for his courageous battle against terminal cancer and his appeal to young people to value their lives amidst the increasing prevalence of suicide.

Journalist Anne Lucey tells his story.

Photo courtesy Kerry's Eye

DONAL WALSH AT HOME WITH HIS PARENTS FIONNBARR AND ELMA WALSH AND HIS LOCAL HERO AWARD FROM KERRY'S EYE NEWSPAPER AND RADIO KERRY

# THIS 16-YEAR-OLD MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO SO MANY LIVES

By Anne Lucey

At the time of writing, just three weeks after Tralee teenager Donal Walsh's battle with cancer saw him win local hero award in Co. Kerry, he became a household name. He has crossed all media, print, broadcast and television and just short of 9,000 people are following him on Twitter.

He inspired Munster to victory over Harlequins in the Heineken Cup, but it is his Christ-like descent into the Hades that is the appalling suicide situation among the young that may just be the light to bring others out of the darkness.

‘I just see maybe I am meant to be a symbol for people to appreciate life’

First diagnosed with cancer of the right knee at the age of 12, the young man who lives in Blennerville, the old transatlantic port of Tralee and who wanted to play rugby for Munster and football for Kerry, and go bungee jumping in New Zealand, and who helps out at Tralee Rugby Club has battled and at times beaten the disease.

Appalled by the conditions of Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children in Dublin, where he has seen close friends die, he has also raised thousands of Euro for the Crumlin-



based hospital over the past four years. .

His 'no holds' barred account of the suffering of a cancer patient - burning bladders, and stinging catheters, is an invitation to feel the wounds of Christ, it is not an exaggeration to say. Because most movingly, Donal, in his own words has "climbed God's Mountains" and his is an awesome faith and a powerful expression.

He lives in a part of the world surrounded by mountains, and "I have climbed God's Mountains," he has written." He has had me fight cancer three times, face countless deaths and losses in my life, he's had my childhood dreams taken off me but at the end of the day he's made me a man," he says of God's plan for him.

But Donal Walsh has also "shouted from the mountains" - at the young who take their own lives. And like Christ descending into Hades his is the name being invoked to shine the way.

In the darkness of the Coroner's Court in Killarney amid an indescribable scene of palpable pain of loud sobs and choking of the bereaved, where five young men between the ages of 16 and 30 were found to have died by suicide, Coroner Terence Casey made an emotional appeal to the youth of Kerry to heed "the words of Donal Walsh".

The Coroner was referring to a piece in late March that was not meant to be published until after his death when Donal wrote of his final diagnosis last October:

**"There it was: I was given a timeline on the rest of my life. No choice, no say, no matter. It was given to me as easy as dinner. I couldn't believe it, that all I had was 16 years here and soon I began to pay attention to every detail that was going on in this town. I realised that I was fighting for my life for the third time in four years and this time I have no hope. Yet still I hear of young people committing suicide and I'm sorry but it makes me feel nothing but anger.**

**"I feel angry that these people choose to take their lives, to ruin their families and to leave behind a mess that no one can clean up.**

**"Yet I am here with no choice, trying as best I can to prepare my family and friends for what's about to come and leave as little a mess as possible.**

**"So please, as a 16-year-old who has no say in his death sentence, who has no choice in the pain he is about to cause and who would take any chance at even a few more months on this planet appreciate what you have, know that there are always other options and help is always there."**

Later on the Brendan O'Connor Show on RTE Donal expanded

"I just see maybe I am meant to be a symbol for people to appreciate life," [Faith] is a huge part of it. I wouldn't be where I am without it. I see God has given me this challenge. I may be used as a symbol for other people to appreciate life more. It might not be just suicide in particular but just to appreciate life in general then I'll be happy to die... if that is what I am dying for."

Donal's father Fionnbarr, said of his son : "He has a message to get out there and he is getting it out there. He is not going to go away quietly."



‘ He has a great perspective on life and would give me a big lift ’

**Paul O'Connell**

Munster Rugby star Paul O'Connell's tribute to him also speaks volumes and makes clear that whatever help he has given Donal, the young teenager has given him more "I really like talking to him," remarked Paul. "It's hard to relate to some young guys, but whatever journey he's been on, he's quite mature and very easy to relate to. Even when I was injured I used to enjoy shooting the breeze with him because he'd give me a massive lift. He has a great perspective on life and would give me a big lift."

If only half of what you hear on the streets of Kerry is true, Donal Walsh is already inspiring more than those he meets - there is no doubt about it. Countless people are saying that once they thought about his words, their perspective on life changed.

DONAL WALSH DIED AT HIS HOME IN TRALEE ON SUNDAY NIGHT, MAY 12,

# END CHILD POVERTY COALITION

## POSITION PAPER ON REFORMING CHILD INCOME SUPPORTS

April 2013

The End Child Poverty Coalition supports reform of child income supports which would tackle child poverty. However, it is deeply concerned about aspects of the reform proposed by the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare. Much greater attention needs to be given to how changes to child income supports would affect vulnerable families already struggling to make ends meet.

Child Benefit, basic weekly social welfare payments, including increases for children, and Family Income Supplement are vital lifelines without which many families could not survive. Far too many children live in low income households and are vulnerable to intergenerational poverty and social exclusion which leaves deep and lasting scars. The facts on child poverty speak for themselves:

**Almost 1 in 5 children are at-risk-of-poverty**



**A quarter of children live in jobless households**



**About half of families rely on social welfare or low paid work**



**1 in 3 children are deprived of basic necessities**



**1 in 10 children live in severe poverty**



Cuts to child income supports have already yielded very significant savings. Since Budget 2009, over €450 million has been cut from social welfare payments for children. Many of the families hardest hit by these cuts have also suffered other reductions in income, through cuts in adult rates of social welfare payments, as well as pay cuts, loss of working hours, and tax increases. The End Child Poverty Coalition believes that the primary aim of reform to child income supports must be that of ending child poverty. We oppose any further cuts in child income supports to generate savings to the exchequer in future budgets where low income households are not protected

### What's proposed?

The Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare I proposes the introduction of a 'second tier' of child income support. The first 'tier' is a reduced Child Benefit paid to all families with children; the second 'tier' is a means-tested top-up for families on very low incomes. The full level of the combined payment would be roughly equivalent to the current rate of Child Benefit plus the value of child increases paid to parents relying on social welfare. The new second tier would replace these child increases, as well as Family Income Supplement (FIS), a payment which helps to make work pay for low waged families.

### End Child Poverty Coalition Position

The Coalition welcomes the Advisory Group's commitment to

retain universal Child Benefit; we believe that it is important that all families get support to help with the cost of raising children. The Coalition has also advocated for many years for a more targeted approach to child income supports. However, the Advisory Group's proposed model would be devastating for many low income families. The Coalition has three key concerns with the proposals.

### 1. Abolishing Family Income Supplement means low paid working families suffer the greatest losses

Under the Advisory Group's proposals, by far the greatest losses would be faced by families currently in receipt of Family Income Supplement (FIS).

Employment is critically important in tackling child poverty. FIS is an in-work benefit support specifically designed to make even low-waged work pay. Although means tested, it provides greater income support for families who are working than those who are not. The Advisory Group's proposals do not provide this extra support for low paid working families. This means, for example, that a low paid married couple with two young children getting the full second-tier payment would lose over five and a half times more than a high earning family with no entitlement to the means tested top-up. For the End Child Poverty Coalition, this is unacceptable.

FIS is not without problems: not all families who need, or are eligible for FIS, receive support; indeed it has been estimated that it



is claimed by only 40% of those eligible. Addressing these problems could have a significant impact on child poverty. For example, ESRI2 research has found that full FIS take-up would reduce poverty by 3 percentage points, much more than the 0.2 point reduction resulting from the Advisory Group proposals. With many workers having suffered reductions in their working hours, the impact in 2013 could be even greater.

The End Child Poverty Coalition does not accept that a FIS 'saver clause'<sup>3</sup> for current recipients would be an adequate response to these problems, as this would still mean that the incentive to take up employment, even if low paid, would be significantly reduced in the future. This is an outcome that cannot be justified. FIS, or a better alternative, must be available to all low waged working families, both now and in the future.

The Coalition believes that in-work benefits need to be reformed, not abolished. As an interim measure, the Coalition recommends that FIS be retained alongside a two-tier child income support system, until a more effective in-work benefit, for example a working tax credit<sup>4</sup>, can be introduced.

## 2. The proposed income threshold for means-testing of the second tier payment is too low

The Advisory Group's analysis of the impact of their proposals shows that 45% of losses occur in the lower half of the income distribution. The End Child Poverty Coalition believes this is simply not good enough.

The Advisory Group proposes that the second tier of child income support should begin to be reduced when gross household income is €25,000 per annum. This threshold is even lower than the level at which a one child family is currently eligible for FIS.

Setting the threshold so low means that families earning below average incomes will face further losses in child income support. Many of these are already struggling. Their earnings mean they are eligible for no other state support, but these earnings are often not sufficient to cover basic expenses. Even in these households, there are children going without the essentials which many are fortunate enough to take for granted.

The End Child Poverty Coalition proposes that withdrawal of benefits should start at a higher income threshold. For example, the impact of raising the threshold to €35,000 – which is just below average earnings in 2011 – is illustrated above.

3. The need for clear proposals on redirecting resources to achieve better child welfare outcomes

We believe that hard pressed families need better child services, which will enhance child welfare. Ireland's child income supports are relatively high in a comparative perspective, and yet child poverty has remained persistently high. But simply implementing further cuts in those supports, particularly when this would inflict the most severe losses on low income families, will worsen Ireland's performance on child poverty even further.

To end child poverty we need to achieve the right balance between income supports and good quality public services: countries with low rates of child poverty invest in both well designed income supports and high quality services that help children to reach their potential, and help parents struggling to meet the cost of raising a family. Some indicative costs for the types of services which could make a real difference to children experiencing poverty and struggling families in Ireland include:

- €45 million

The cost of providing free school books for every child in Ireland.

- €175 million

The cost of funding a second year of free quality-assured preschool care. After-school care does not require the same high staffing ratios as needed for pre-school children, so free after-school care could be provided at a lower cost.

- €20 million

The resources to strengthen primary care services by recruiting public health nurses, registered general nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists.

The Advisory Group's Report makes no proposals about enhanced services that would provide meaningful help with the costs of raising children.

## End Child Poverty Coalition Recommendations

The End Child Poverty Coalition strongly believes that the primary aim of reform to child income supports must be ending child poverty. Cuts to child income supports implemented over the last five years have already yielded over €450 million in savings. Children have already paid too high a cost for the current economic crisis.

We propose the introduction of a modified two-tier child income support model, which will:

1. Maintain and enhance the critically important support to make work pay, as employment is a vital component of ending child poverty. To achieve this, FIS should be retained when a second tier structure is introduced, until it can be replaced by a more effective in-work benefit e.g. a working tax credit.
2. Reduce the extent of losses for families who are already struggling to manage on below average wages by raising the threshold at which support is reduced to the average wage level.
3. Provide enhanced services for children that will make a meaningful impact on the costs of raising children, and that will help to achieve better child welfare outcomes. This can be achieved by redirecting savings from reform of child income supports towards the cost of providing services for children.

The End Child Poverty Coalition is supportive of a more targeted approach to child income supports and have advocated for many years for the introduction of a two-tier model of support. We support the Advisory Group's commitment to universality; however we find that their proposals impose unacceptable losses on the lowest income families in Ireland. We stress that the following scenarios are wholly unacceptable:

- Introducing a two-tier model of child income support that does not provide specific additional support to low paid working families (either FIS or an alternative in-work benefit that provides at least the same level of support);
- Implementing further cuts to Child Benefit in the absence of compensating supports to protect low income households (through improvements in child increases on social welfare payments, FIS, or enhanced provision of child services).

The End Child Poverty Coalition welcomes any opportunity to work with policy and decision makers to develop a reform model that can make a real impact on achieving better outcomes for children from the resources available.

More information:

Email: [contact@endchildpoverty.ie](mailto:contact@endchildpoverty.ie)

Caroline Fahey | Society of St. Vincent de Paul

01-8299095 / 086-0487535

Maria Corbett | Children's Rights Alliance | 01-6629400

# Home Visitation

## - The core work of the SVP

By Kieran Stafford,  
SVP National  
Vice-President for Visitation

It is appropriate to be having a discussion and focusing on home visitation in this year the bi-centenary of our founder's birth. When Frederic Ozanam started our Society with a group of friends they went out to bring food to people who were starving. Instead of distributing food from a stall or office they visited people in their homes. He could see the need to value the dignity of the person in need, and respected it. He knew that the only way to understand the problems of the poor was to sit with them in their homes and experience their lives.

We are privileged to be asked into people's homes and also to be serving those in need. It is only by visiting people that we give them the dignity and confidentiality they deserve and also find out what their problems really are. We also often discover issues that the family wouldn't have realised that we could help with, e.g. :- housing, education, entitlement advice, home management etc. Also through home visitation we offer friendship, support, and an all-important listening ear. Sometimes people just want to talk. We may well be the only contact that person has had all week. The poverty of loneliness for some is much greater than material poverty. Mother Teresa said " Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat".

Today in Ireland our members are encountering people with a myriad of complex problems, large debts issues, mental and physical illness, marriage breakdown, loneliness, fuel poverty the list is by no means exhaustive. If we do not have the specific skills to deal with a problem then we must refer that person onto an organisation that can help. It's important that we help them through whatever processes they may have to go through. Bringing support & friendship to those we visit is vital if we are to assist people back to self-sufficiency, we so often see that the people we visit are withdrawn, lacking in confidence and feeling excluded. Our friendship and support can help change this, I have seen at first hand the outpouring of emotion from people we have helped, not because we have paid a bill or helped solve a

difficult situation for them, but because they no longer feel alone or unsupported. Quite often this can be worth so much more than the financial aid we give.

Some Conferences report that they are overwhelmed with calls and struggle to cope. If this is the case with your Conference then you must ask your Area President to help you recruit new members. In some areas members move from Conference to Conference as the need arises. If a Conference doesn't have enough members or a good mix of skills, ages, and gender then it will struggle to deliver quality visitation.

If we need inspiration in our work we only need look to our founder; his actions and words have inspired generations of Vincentians all over the world and I'm sure will also inspire many in the future.

Quotes from members on what home visitation mean to them...

"One of the most important things is to listen, listen, listen, no criticising just listen and build up a relationship and trust all coupled with time. A most spiritual combination designed to give help and love when needed."

**John Maxwell Clonmel.**

"Time is our unique gift that we bring and it costs nothing. It means everything to the lonely, the worried and those in need of hope. It takes time to get to know the people we visit and time for them to trust us and share their worries with us."

**Rose McGowan Dublin.**

A visit is never in vain the visitor can be a Godsend and the visitor is always rewarded.

**Aidan Crawford Ballymena.**

"Visitation affords us a wonderful opportunity to Listen, Learn, Befriend and give real assistance to individuals and families whom we are so fortunate to meet in their homes."

**Mary Sheridan Donegal.**





# SHOULD WE EVER BELIEVE A PROMISE FROM A POLITICIAN?

By Mary Smithwick, Political Editor, Cork Evening Echo

While still in opposition, now Taoiseach Enda Kenny once told us that taxing the family home would be wrong. Spring 2013 and families around the country were making their returns for the property tax on their homes.

A central plank of Labour's 2011 election campaign was the pledge not to cut child benefit. Spring 2013, families are managing on less each month than they did last year, because that child benefit payment has been cut.

Challenged about the difference between what Labour once promised and how Labour subsequently acted, Communications Minister Pat Rabbitte recently declared "Isn't that what you tend to do during an election?"

He was being honest to a fault when he made that comment, and he's been pilloried for it. So based even on those three random examples, do politicians mean what they say and promise?

Absolutely. 100%. Completely and utterly. But only at the very moment at which they say it.

So when Enda Kenny told us it would be wrong to tax people's homes, he meant it. When your local Labour candidate knocked on your door in 2011 and promised your children wouldn't pay extra fees for third level education, or that you wouldn't lose out on child benefit, then they meant it – at that time.

It's fashionable to denigrate politicians at the moment.

While I can and do question the decisions made by our current Government, I still have time and respect for politicians at all levels. Most of the people involved in politics are not motivated by their own financial gain.

I believe that the majority of our politicians want to make a difference, hope that they can leave the country a little better than they found it. To a man and woman, they work hard and they articulate and rationalise well. And there's the problem. Sometime they rationalise too well, to the extent that they can rationalise almost any poor decision to the point where they believe half-hearted justifications for the cruellest cuts. Just as they once believed the promises they made, they now believe that there is no

other alternative.

On that basis, can or should we trust politicians? Probably no more or no less than any random person you'd meet on the street. We are all capable of rationalising the most unfair and selfish of decisions.

Their good intentions are strangled by red tape, the constraints of a party whip, financial realities. It's an unusual person who can extricate themselves from those shackles and rise above them. An ability to stand firm in the face of a system seemingly determined to squash independent thought and action might be a big ask, but it's not an unreasonable one. These are difficult times and we need exceptional people to represent us.

We need visionaries, we need warriors who hold firm to the visions they paint for us at election time.

Those people are rare in any walk of life, but they do exist. So who do we turn to? We turn to ourselves.

We can and must hold our politicians to account. Tell them what we want, and mean it. Politicians care acutely about what people say to them and about them.

We can throw our hands in the air, roll our eyes and mutter our complaints. Or we can tell our politicians what we think.

Every time I see a commentator state that they'd like to see Michael O'Leary of Ryanair as Minister for Finance, I flinch. The last thing we need at the moment is a sole focus on the financial bottom-line. We do not live in an economy. An economy will not look after us when we can't find work, when we're ill, when life deals us a tough blow.

A fair society will.

We need to demand solidarity, and we also need to demonstrate it. And we can do that by asking more from our politicians, not for ourselves but for those who need more than we do.

Irish politicians, from councillor to Taoiseach, are uniquely accessible. Take every opportunity to tell them what you expect from them. Tell them you want to see more fairness in Government spending, to ignore the special pleadings. That you don't care what the background to cutting transport grants for the disabled is, because while you can explain such decisions you can never excuse them.

Help them to see past the bureaucracy and to hold firm to simple principles.

Like maintaining child benefit.

Like a decent, living income for all.

Like promises made in good faith.

# A Musical platform for intergration

4th Annual Combined Waterford Teenage Celebration





"One of the great aspects about this event is that it is a platform for integration and sharing of talent in a totally non-judgemental environment," is the description Joe Dalton of the SVP in Waterford uses to describe the annual gathering he organises of teenagers from local schools to display their musical talents.

Over 220 teenagers from thirteen schools in the South-East gathered in Mount Sion Chapel, Barrack Street, to take part in the event which is organised under the auspices of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Information and Support Unit, Edmund Rice International Heritage Centre, Mount Sion.

The diversity of talent on display was impressive and was

provided by pupils from Mount Sion CBS; Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School; New Ross C.B.S.; Stella Maris, Tramore; Waterpark College; Youth Reach; Newtown School; St. Declan's C.C., Kilmacthomas; Grennan College, Thomastown; De La Salle College; Mrs. Jackson's XLc; St. Mary's Secondary School, New Ross and the Abbey Community College, Ferrybank.

SVP National President Geoff Meagher attended the event with South-East Regional President, Rory McCauley and Regional Administrator, David O'Neill.

MC for the occasion was John O'Connor, News Editor of "The Munster Express."

• Photography: Dragana Stevanovic



From left: Joe Dalton, SVP, Producer; Rory McCauley, South East Regional President, SVP; David O'Neill, Administrator SVP SE Region; Trishauna Archer, Beat FM; Geoff Meagher, National President, SVP; Kevin Maschareanus, SVP.





# YOUNG VINCENTIAN MURDERED IN PHILIPPINES

The killing of a 26-year-old SVP community activist in the Philippines has been a major news story in the country, related to a land dispute on the island of Boracay where the Daughters of Charity and the Vincentian Fathers have been assisting the community.

A 26-year-old Vincentian volunteer has been killed in the Philippines, apparently while involved in a land dispute over property and support of Church development.

Vincentian President, Fr. Francisco M. Vargas, reported the death to the SVP International Office in Paris:

"It is with heavy heart that I write to inform you about the ruthless killing of a young fellow lay Vincentian who was gunned down with 8 bullet shots while on his way home from a meeting with the nuns of the Holy Rosary Parish Ati Mission in Boracay Island, Aklan. 26-year-old Dexter Condez was a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and as spokesman for the Ati Community in Boracay, Conde, opposed unbridled in the island, a large portion of which has been awarded to them by the national government. As a youth volunteer, he stood by his community in fighting harassment and eviction from other claimants to the property.

"Law enforcement authorities have initiated an Investigation but those responsible remain at large. Condes left behind not only his family but also, most importantly, the entire Ati community and its quest to regain possession of the land awarded to them which they need to settle down and which is one of the projects of the local Church of the Diocese of Kalibo, for which the Daughters of Charity had been working for the past 15 years. This project of the Daughters of Charity has been owned and supported by the different branches of and from the whole country."

The SVP Bulletin has learned that Condez was spokesperson for the Boracay Ati Tribal Organisation whose members have been fighting for land of their own on the 1,032-hectare Boracay Island which they consider their ancestral domain.

The land was covered by a certificate of ancestral domain title (CADT) granted by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to the tribe on January 21, 2011.

The NCIP and anthropological studies have supported claims that the Ati were the earliest settlers on the island but were displaced and driven away, especially starting in the 1970s when tourists and investors started to descend on the island. The tribe occupied the property last year but at least three claimants were opposing the CADT. There had been a confrontation last year between tribal leaders and security guards representing opponents of the tribe.

"Dexter had no personal enemies and we could not think of any reason why he would be killed other than his standing up for the right of the tribe to their land," said Sr. Hermi Sutaes of the Holy Rosary Parish Ati Mission (HRPAM). The HRPAM, put up by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in 2000, has been helping the Ati acquire a permanent place of their own on the island.

Senior Inspector Joeffer Cabural, Chief of Boracay Tourist Assistance Center, the island's police force, said it was not clear if the killing was related to the land dispute, but Church leaders in Boracay said it was most likely linked to the dispute.

SVP International Treasurer, Liam Fitzpatrick from Cork said that the incident "may give people in Ireland some insight into what can happen to Vincentians in other parts of the world!!"





# COME DANCING WHERE ST.PATRICK LANDED!

By Valerie Campbell,  
Administrator, Ozanam Holiday Centre, Mornington



Ozanam Holiday centre is set on four acres in Mornington, Co. Meath and is only a 10-minute walk from the beach and from the River Boyne where St Patrick is said to have landed.

Now there is an attractive location to enjoy yourself!

It is approximately 30 kilometres from Dublin, 6km from Drogheda and is within walking distance of the village of Bettystown. The Centre has 31 twin rooms, all en suite and the building is on ground-level, making it very accessible for those with mobility problems.

Weekly full board is offered, which includes an afternoon trip to local places of interest and evening entertainment. The Centre has a relaxing sun room with a library, an oratory and a TV lounge with widescreen TV. The bar is open for lunch and from 8.30pm to 11.30pm each evening.

The in-house entertainment includes five and six piece bands with nightly dancing and singing. Amenities include a landscaped patio garden with a relaxing water feature, an all-weather bowling green and all-weather golf-putting surface. Other activities include pool and croquet. A kitchenette with tea and coffee facilities is available 24-hours-a-day.

For further information or booking please contact Ozanam Holiday Centre Phone 041-9827808 Mon-Friday 9am - 1pm; or Mobile 086-3285736 or Email: [ozanamhome@eircom.net](mailto:ozanamhome@eircom.net)



# EMPOWERING AN INNER CITY COMMUNITY



Ozanam House is a community resource centre at Mountjoy Square in the North Inner City area of Dublin. It is located on the site of a previous clothing and furniture warehouse of the Society of St.Vincent de Paul.

The Centre was opened in 2002 and has developed a variety of programmes and projects which work to combat social exclusion and provide for the needs of the inner city community.

From the outside there is nothing that looks particularly special about the building at 53 Mountjoy Square in Dublin.

But open the door, walk inside and the building breathes with community life.

The success of what we do here is that the community is involved in driving the programmes, the projects, which are aimed to answer their needs," says Tony Rock, Manager of what is the SVP's Ozanam House Resource Centre. "This interaction between the Society of St.Vincent de Paul and the community is very special and the core of what we are trying to do, giving an inner city area pride in itself and empowering them to have what they want for their area."

The Centre has nearly 500 members who range in age from the youngest at two years old to the oldest at 94. There are 12 SVP staff, six full-time and the other six part-time, as well as 8 FÁS Community Employment workers and 75 active volunteers. An SVP management committee is involved in the overall direction of the Centre which provides 535 programme places each week, ranging from adult education classes to youth groups, childcare programmes, a homework and grinds club, a computer centre, cookery training, art and crafts, English language classes, an active retirement group and an older men's group.

"We feel that over the past ten years Ozanam House has provided the local community with a vital stepping stone to

learning and development, safety and encouragement in the future of their area, offering programmes that develop skills in a wide variety of ways," Tony says. The Centre gives people in the inner city the chance to gain confidence in themselves, in their community, to take pride in it and this creates a self-belief that there can be a better future for them and their families and that they can have a good future in the area."

The Society of St.Vincent de Paul has had a presence in this building for 90 years, using it for various purposes..

Tony Rock says that the main aim has been to develop programmes and projects aimed at addressing social exclusion in the inner city and responding to the specific needs which the community has identified to SVP volunteers in meetings and discussions.

The Childcare Centre provides good quality, affordable pre-school and after-school care. Youth programmes include the homework clubs and summer projects and the Centre also provides a suite of adult education programmes which include special attention to the needs of the older generation in the area. So, from the youngest age we are helping to build up a sense of community. We also help children as they develop skills and have given help and sponsorship to further education where and when that can help.

"What we are about here is giving support, helping a community which is built of and about families and, when they have self-belief in their area, that is when you have good communities."

**SVP OZANAM HOUSE RESOURCE CENTRE, 53 MOUNTJOY SQUARE WEST, DUBLIN 1. Phone (01) 8742804. Email: [admin@ozanamhouse.ie](mailto:admin@ozanamhouse.ie) [www.ozanamhouse.ie](http://www.ozanamhouse.ie)**







# Taking Moneylending out of the shadows

By Brendan Hennessy, SVP Social Justice and Policy Team

Members of the SVP are becoming alarmed at the prevalence of money lenders in the communities they serve

Calls for assistance to the SVP have increased dramatically in recent years, as has our direct assistance expenditure. The experience of the SVP is that of not only increased demand but greater complexity in the cases we are dealing with. In this context, members of the SVP are becoming alarmed at the prevalence of money lenders in the communities they serve.

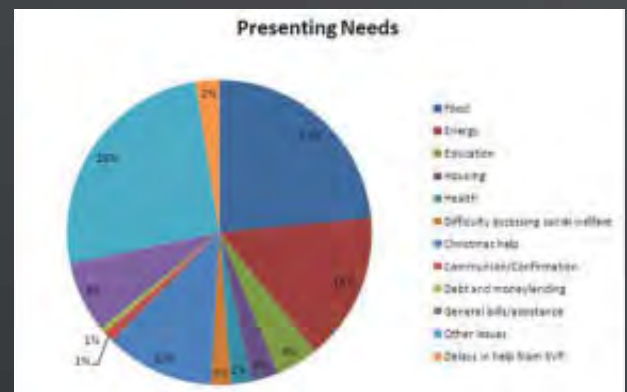
In recent years, the SVP has seen a significant increase in expenditure on direct assistance. As part of our research, the SVP sought to identify the main areas of need which were presented to the organisation in 2011.

Table 1: Financial assistance by SVP to households 2008 –2011

Type of Household Assistance	2008	2011
Cash Assistance	8.69 M	22.86 M (in 2011 cash and food spends were combined)
Food	6.12 M	
Energy	3.79 M	10.37 M
Education	3.81 M	4.63 M
Other	4.71 M	4.36 M
All Direct Assistance (Total)	27.12 M	42.22 M

Debt and money-lending represented only 4% of the requests made during these telephone calls. However, the experience of our members on the ground suggests that people are very ashamed of using money lenders and are slow to admit doing so, even in the context of a visitation, and thus would be very reluctant to refer to the issue in an initial telephone call to the Society.

Diagram 1: Presenting needs identified by households when contacting SVP in 2011\*:



\* Read Clockwise from Food value of 23%



## WHAT IS MONEY LENDING AND WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF BORROWING MONEY FROM A MONEY LENDER?

Money lending, also known as 'home' or 'doorstep credit', features:

- Loan agreements made away from the lender's place of business and usually at the borrower's home
- The borrower paying a high level interest over a short period
- Repayments made to a collection agent who calls to the borrowers' home, weekly or fortnightly.

Money lending within communities in Ireland at present mainly consists of door step cash credit. However, in recent times, SVP members are commenting on an increase in 'brochure or catalogue' type credit for the purchase of items such as furniture, electrical goods, clothes, and toys. All money lending companies, regardless of the type of credit they offer, charge high repayment interest rates. Typical amounts repaid are set out below, and illustrate the high cost of such credit:

Table 2. Sample Loans and Cost of Credit from Money Lenders

Loan of €200 over 26 weeks = €260 (cost of credit €60)
Loan of €500 over 26 weeks = €650 (cost of credit €150)
Loan of €500 over 52 weeks = €780 (cost of credit €280)
Loan of €1400 over 52 weeks = €2184 (cost of credit: €784)
Loan of €2000 over 52 weeks = €3120 (cost of credit: €1,120)

SVP experience suggests that borrowers are focussed on receiving the principal and do not always understand or pay due attention to the interest rates applied. In one Dublin SVP Conference, members noted that 'no one has ever either admitted or been able to tell us what the interest rate is'.

### ABILITY TO PAY

An issue of particular concern to the SVP is that vulnerable households are being offered money by doorstep credit firms without sufficient background information being requested or adequate questioning of information supplied. Members of the SVP observe that if someone applies for a loan from a bank they are asked: 'How much can you pay back?' but if a person applies for a loan from a moneylender they appear to be asked: 'How much do you want?'

### TAKING MONEY LENDING OUT OF THE SHADOWS

The reluctance of households to divulge to third parties their use of doorstep credit hinders the local understanding of money lending in the community. The absence of data on the number of households using regulated money lenders in Ireland significantly hampers any investigation or analysis on the extent and impact of door step credit in Irish society. SVP believes the Central Bank of Ireland should publish baseline data on the number of loans and the number of households with such loans in the Republic of Ireland and to update that information on a six-monthly basis.

### AVOIDING MONEY LENDING

Financial education at school and local level is crucial to people's understanding of the cost and impact of money lending. The Cork Region of the SVP, in conjunction with MABS and local credit unions, published a brochure in 2008 entitled, 'Doorstep

Credit – No Way!' Information such as this, outlining the costs of borrowing, should be funded centrally, somewhat in the same way as the memorable information on tracker mortgages was provided in the past.

### CONCLUSION

SVP believes there is a potential money lending crisis in Ireland. Our experience is that money lending is not something that people are openly admitting to and that the extent of the money lending industry is possibly being underestimated. SVP strongly believes that there is a contradiction in permitting high cost loans which are significantly targeted at the most financially vulnerable. Emphasis must be given to people's ability to pay where loans would only be authorised on proven information. SVP argues that practical measures must be put in place to curb the phenomenon of roll over and multiple loans.

SVP's recommendations below also contain suggestions on financial education to improve budgeting and the provision of low-cost loans as an alternative to money-lending.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1: SVP calls on the Central Bank of Ireland to publish baseline data on the number of loans and the number of households with such loans in the Republic of Ireland and to update that information on a six-monthly basis.

2: The total cost of credit should be emphasised in loan agreements.

3: Money lending companies should not be permitted to offer loans that are more than four times proven weekly income.

4: SVP calls for greater regulation regarding the amount that can be borrowed, and how often a loan may be obtained. The following might constitute part of tighter regulation:

- Only one loan per adult in a household should be permitted.
- There should be a minimum time delay between one loan and the next.
- Top-up loans should not be permitted.

5: Money lending companies should be made responsible for the lending and payment-collection activities of their agents. Protection needs to be afforded to customers who wish to make a complaint against a money lending company. This complaints process should be independent and preferably be vested in the office of the Financial Services Ombudsman. A full protocol in relation to complaint procedures should be made freely available and be given to each customer as part of every loan transaction.

6: A plain-English version of an official complaints procedure should be published, outlining the different stages of the process and the providing relevant contact details.

7: The Central Bank of Ireland should produce information brochures and financial education tools as a way of indicating to vulnerable consumers alternative services to money lending.

8: The Central Bank and the Irish League of Credit Unions should work together to explore alternative low-cost credit options for households on low incomes and/or with poor credit histories.

[This article is based on a Submission to the Central Bank of Ireland by the SVP Social Justice and Policy Team]

# TURNING AN SVP HOLIDAY HOME INTO A YOUTH CENTRE AND CAFE



By Catherine Ryan,  
Foróige Project Co-ordinator

Foróige is the leading and largest youth organisation in Ireland. The charity works with 64,000 young people and 5,500 adult volunteers annually, through a network of more than 600 youth clubs and cafés, 154 targeted projects and national programmes such as Citizenship, Entrepreneurship and Leadership.

This is the story about how we have developed a youth centre and café in a former holiday home which the Society of St. Vincent de Paul provided for us to use.

We began the work of developing SVP's Nagle House into a Youth Centre and Cafe in 2007, with the support of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul who offered to make it available to us rent-free.

Nagle House was constructed by the Presentation Sisters in the South Abbey area of Youghal where they arrived from Doneraile in North Cork on August 19, 1854 to set up a new convent and school. The site had been a Franciscan Friary in the 15th century. The house was dedicated to Cork woman Nano Nagle, (1718-1784), the Foundress of the Presentation Sisters. She had left a life of wealth and privilege to open schools for children who could not afford education and to support the poor and the sick. As the number of sisters grew and the school expanded the Sisters built a large new convent in 1872. When the convent opened, Nagle House became the school. In its earlier days it had three storeys.

In keeping with Nano's concern for the poor and to alleviate the high unemployment of the late nineteenth century, the Sisters established Youghal Lace School in Nagle House. By 1897 it was managed as a co-operative

‘Lace made here has been worn by royalty, the pope and people from all over Europe.’

and 7 of its leaders were women. Lace made here has been worn by royalty, the Pope and people from all over Europe.

In 1972 the building was leased at nominal rent to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for respite for people in need of a healthy holiday by the sea. This continued until 2002.

The following services are provided by Foróige at Nagle House:

- Garda Youth Diversion Project (G.Y.D.P.) established in 2008. This is one of a hundred in operation throughout the country, supporting young people in staying out of trouble. It empowers them to take responsibility, raise self-esteem, challenge inappropriate behaviour through group activities, discussion and one-to-one sessions. Programmes include; life skills, family support Health and wellbeing programmes, anger management, Junior and leaving support and many more.

- The Youghal Community Based Drugs Initiative (Y.C.B.D.I.)

Established in 2007 as a response to issues around Alcohol and Substance misuse. This Service provides:

- Personal one-to-one support for young people, Parents and Concerned Persons
- Education, Information, Advice
- Access to Treatment
- Referral path to other agencies
- Family Support (details available from the Community-based drugs worker)

- Hot Spot Youth Cafe

Opened on 2009, this facility enables young people to engage in a safe, youth friendly environment, supervised by parents and volunteers, aged between 12 and 17 years. On average 50 young people access the Cafe on a weekly basis. This is totally a volunteer led service.







- Teen Gym

This latest addition is open from 1.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. on Wednesdays, with a view to extending and costs €1 per session. This is a drop in gym and is supervised by a qualified instructor.

- Also available on Wednesdays is a 'grow your own plants' initiative, facilitated by volunteers, for young people from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Despite many changes of use over the decades, Nagle House has always been a place where the work of education and social justice came first, and so it is today. In keeping with the mission of the Presentation Sisters, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and Foróige, the Foróige Youth Centre aims to involve this generation of young people in their own development and in that of the community through methods appropriate to our time.

Further information on this project from:

- Catherine Ryan, Youth Worker, Youghal Garda Youth Diversion Project. Tel: 086 0481956
- Eddie McBride, Community Worker, Youghal Community based Drugs Initiative Tel: 086 3842183
- Martin Sheehan: HUB & satellite worker, who supports and recruits volunteers Tel: 086 7800171. of the local SVP's fundraising sub-committee.

Nagle House in the seaside town of Youghal in East County Cork was originally an SVP holiday home. When it was no longer required for that purpose the Society decided to make it available as a community resource in line with SVP policy to assist communities to empower themselves and provide their own facilities for community development. In addition to the developments outlined in this article, Youghal Community Radio is installing its new radio studios and broadcast centre in the building. Local history records that the first women's co-operative in Ireland, making lace, was probably based in this building which was originally transferred to the SVP by the Presentation Sisters.



# Abstracts

## Of Developments in Social Justice

### INSOLVENCY GUIDELINES

The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice says that "ensuring an adequate minimum standard of living for individuals and households entering insolvency arrangements is crucial to the long-term sustainability of those provisions."

The guidelines have been welcomed, according to Sr. Bernadette of the Partnership, because they are modelled on the 'Minimum Essential Budget Standard' research conducted by the VPSJ, but there are qualifications. "This research uses the Consensual Budget Standards methodology to establish a social consensus on what is needed to ensure a socially acceptable minimum standard of living for a broad range of household types."

However, the Partnership has also pointed out that the "ISI model is an adapted version of the Minimum Essential Budget Standards data and is "constructed to align with the requirements of the legislation and what the ISA regards as appropriate to the context of personal insolvency. Consequently, this excludes "certain items of expenditure which are included as part of the minimum needs." So there are differences between the VPSJ's research reports and the ISI guidelines on reasonable living expenses.

- The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice consists of The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, The Vincentian Congregation, The Daughters of Charity and The Sisters of the Holy Faith. The Partnership was established in 1996 to work for social and economic change tackling poverty and exclusion.

### MAIN GOVERNMENT SPENDING CUTS ARE IN SOCIAL WELFARE

Analysis of Exchequer returns published by the Department of Finance has shown that the main declines were in social spending and education. Social Protection expenditure showed an underlying year-on-year decrease of 3.1 per cent (€324 million) compared to the first quarter of 2012. Current spending on education and skills (excluding capital spending on building schools) decreased by 4.7 per cent (€105 million) year-on-year.

### FRACTURING IRELAND

Government policies are creating a fractured society in Ireland, a weak economy and persistently high unemployment, according to Social Justice Ireland in its annual socio-economic review. It alleged that Ireland has seen the "single biggest transfer of resources in its history" from low and middle-income people to the rich and powerful.

### HUNGRY IRISH CHILDREN

At the annual conference of the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland a teacher spoke of it being the worst year she had seen in the problems families and their children faced. "Their parents have lost jobs and in some cases the girls have had no breakfast when they come to school. They are hungry," she said.

### HOLDING THE COUNTRY TOGETHER

"The SVP is, in large measure, holding this country together. The figures show that a massive, huge, overwhelming portion of the money they divvy out each week goes to getting gas reconnected.... Thank God the Society is there."

- Extract from Evening Herald article by Terry Prone

### WELFARE FRAUD PROBE

Social Welfare Inspectors stopped almost €650,000 in bogus claims by 'welfare tourists' last year following the introduction of checkpoints at Dublin, Cork and Shannon Airports, according to the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton. Most of the action taken was against foreign nationals but some Irish emigrants had also continued to collect welfare payments are leaving the country.

### 20,000 OVER 70 LOSING MEDICAL CARDS

About 20,000 people over the age of 70 are losing their medical card under legislation changing the criteria to qualify for it. The Minister of State for Health, Alex White, has said they will instead be eligible for a GP-visit card. The changes are part of the Health (Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) Bill that reduces the income threshold for a person to retain the medical card from €700 a week to €600 or from €1,400 to €1,200 for couples.

### PRESIDENT FOR MEN'S SHEDS

President Michael D. Higgins has become the Patron of the Irish Men's Sheds Association.

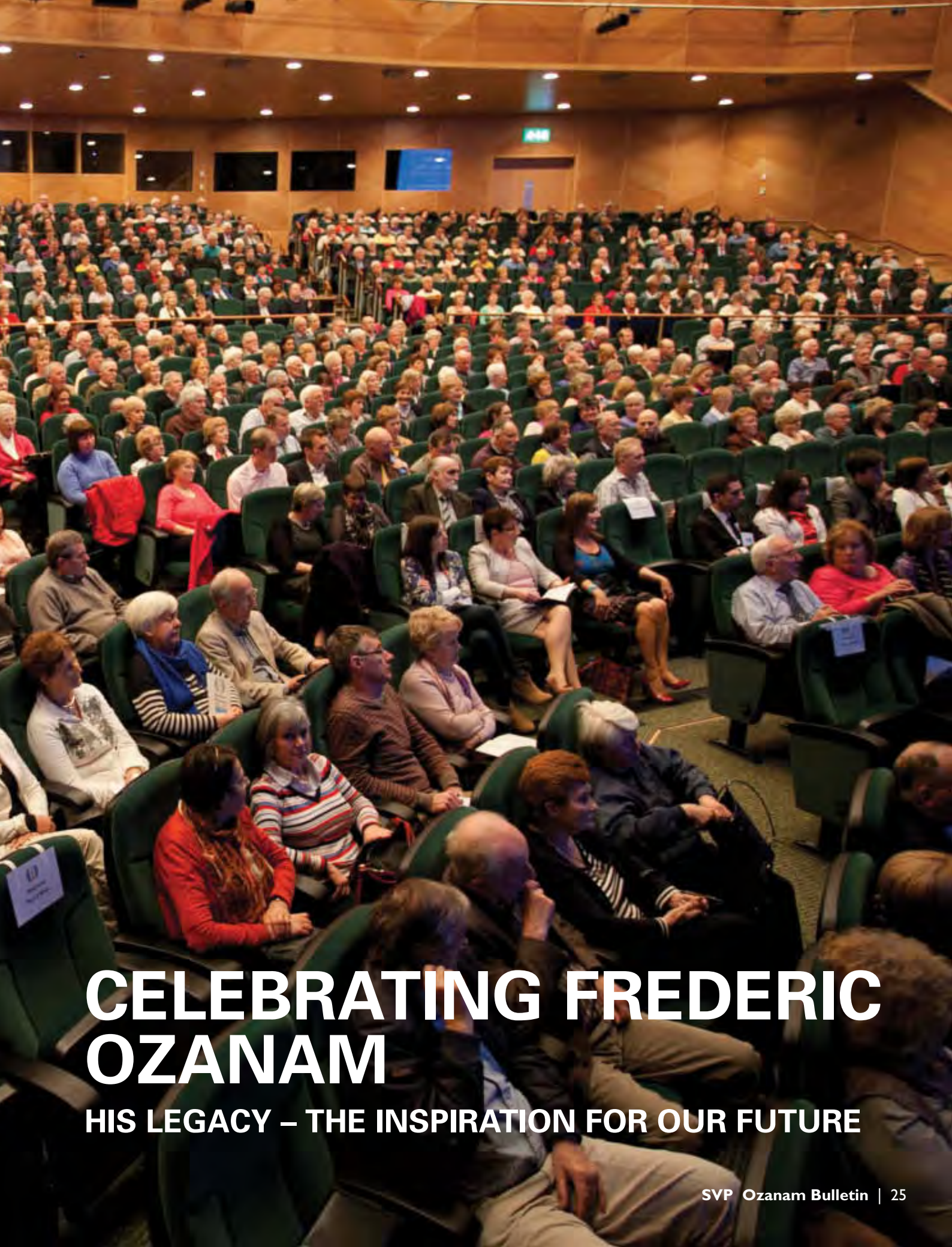
"We are delighted that the President sees the value in the work that we do and we look forward to his patronage over the coming years," the Association said. Its work is supported by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul which was a driving force of the founding of the worldwide organisation in Australia.

### SOCIALISTS ALL!

"Goodness shines through" because the majority of people are "instinctive socialists - the kind of people involved in the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Amnesty and the local football team." - Poet Theo Dorgan, in an interview with The Sunday Times.







# **CELEBRATING FREDERIC OZANAM**

**HIS LEGACY – THE INSPIRATION FOR OUR FUTURE**





**Frederic  
Ozanam**  
1813 - 2013

**HIS LEGACY**  
THE INSPIRATION  
FOR OUR FUTURE

The Convention Centre, Dublin  
Saturday 20th April 2013





More than 1,000 members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul attended the largest-ever gathering of the SVP in Ireland to celebrate the Bicentenary of the birth of the Society's Founder, Frederic Ozanam, at the National Convention Centre in Dublin on Saturday, April 20.

Major speeches included those from President Michael D. Higgins and the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton. President Higgins said that, because of the difficulties which Ireland had experienced, created when policies were centred, not on what was good or necessary for the citizenry, but allowed economic decision-making to be focussed on the advancement of private interests, Ireland needed a new connection between economy, society and the person – one based on ethics. The expertise of the SVP would be of immeasurable assistance and very much needed in Ireland in the future, as it had been in the past.

## ‘Major speeches included those from President Michael D. Higgins and the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton’

The Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton, said she believed that Ireland had reached the limits of austerity.

In advanced nations there was a limit beyond which they were not prepared to accept austerity and Ireland had reached that. Her speech had a big political impact and was debated in and outside of Government and indicated that there were differences amongst Government leaders about the effects of economic policies on people.

The Minister said that there appeared to be an “inexplicable preference” for “loading” the costs of the banking crisis on the shoulders of ordinary people and small business. “The truth is that ordinary people everywhere have shouldered too much of the burden,” she said.

The National President of the Society of St Vincent de Paul Geoff Meagher again called for a national debate on the type of society we want in Ireland for the future and a roadmap for recovery which will give hope to those in unemployment and our young people, who continue to be forced to emigrate.

“During the Celtic tiger years we lost something of our identity and values. We hear the comment being made that we should aim to get back to where we were, we would contend that there was much we had in the Celtic tiger years that we could do without. It will be a missed opportunity if we fail to have the debate, now is the time to do it.”

Frederic Ozanam was just 20 when he founded the SVP in Paris in 1833 with a small group of friends. His legacy has been the inspiration for the members of the SVP in Ireland. Society membership numbers over 10,000.

Other speakers at the commemoration conference included broadcaster Olivia O’Leary who spoke on “Barriers to Equality in Irish Society”; Sr. Claire Sweeney of the Daughters of Charity who outlined the life career of Frederic Ozanam; National Vice-President Kieran Stafford who stressed the importance of the core work of the Society in visitation to families and individuals in their homes; Cathal Oakes, an SVP Area President in Clare for six years who described personal experiences in and the challenges of visitation.

A presentation of the challenges laid down for SVP members by Frederic Ozanam was introduced by National Vice-President, John Monaghan, with the words of Ozanam spoken by Mid-West Regional President, Michael Murphy and responded to by volunteer and staff members – Hazel O’Byrne; Patricia Darling; Margot Hartnett; Attracta McNeice; Shane Rice and Conor Gannon.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin was the Chief Celebrant at Concelebrated Mass with the Choirs of the Irish Federation of Pueri Cantores; Organist Dr. Paul McKeever.

Archbishop Martin spoke of the work of the SVP in deprived areas of Dublin over many years, combating the exploitation of people and said that civil society and the Church owe a great debt of gratitude to the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul “not just for what they do, but for who they are and for the witness of disinterested self-giving love they show day after day, week after week, as they follow the teaching of Jesus Christ and as they emulate the person of Jesus in their lives. They show what the Church is and how communion with each other must be the mark of those who gather around the altar of communion. Those who are nourished through sharing in the self-giving sacrifice of Jesus must be marked by a personal life of self-giving.”

MCs were Kieran Murphy, SVP National Director and Tom MacSweeney, National Vice-President.

The Organising Committee of the event was chaired by Rose McGowan.

Last year the SVP received over 100,000 calls for assistance. It is now helping more than double the number of people assisted in 2009.

## PRESIDENT HIGGINS

President Higgins described the SVP as an “organisation that not only assists but stands in solidarity with the poor and insecure.”

He described Frederic Ozanam as “fiercely opposed to rationalism as the unique path of knowledge” and had created a Society, the philosophy and ethos of which has “consistently underpinned with its work and approach which has extended “well beyond mere philanthropy and has always aimed to address and challenge the root causes of poverty and social injustice.”

‘We do now need a new connection between economy, society and the person – one based on ethics.’

“The St.Vincent de Paul does not see its role as the simple offering of assistance – important though that assistance is – to people who are facing barriers in entering employment, supporting their family, completing their education, putting a safe and secure roof over their heads, or in so many other ways denied the opportunity to fully participate in their community and in wider society. Today in Ireland there are serious obstacles to a genuinely inclusive citizenship; life-draining impediments which can erect so many barriers between an individual and the society they wish to engage in.

“In recent years we Irish failed to ensure that policies were centred on what was good or necessary or the citizenry as a whole and allowed much of the economic decision-making to focus instead on the advancement of private interests which often undermined the very basis of our society. As a nation we have now, hopefully, learnt that people’s over-reliance for policy on a single hegemonic model, such as a new-liberal model of economies, one that is over-reliant on unregulated markets, brings now well-known consequences and simply cannot

produce either a social economy or a space of citizenship, a truly public space. Instead that public space of citizenship will become subsumed to the private demands of consumption.

“At public level so much trust has been sacrificed as well in recent decades; trust in institutions and including worst of all those whose task was regulation of the banking system.

“The Society of St.Vincent de Paul’s National Vice President, John Monaghan, has stated that we must learn, not simply recriminate, but build an alternative future.

“He is right. We do now need a new connection between economy, society and the person – one based on ethics.

“The full emergency of these values will require on-going debate about the relationship between society and the economy and a definition of the social and cultural spaces as being wider than the economic space. As we work to rebuild our damaged economy it is crucial that we reconstitute and build on the social bond in order to give real meaning to an inclusive citizenship – a citizenship that is ethical, fair and all-encompassing.

“This however will not automatically emerge. Getting from extreme individualism to a social version of citizenship requires a journey that will bring a new discourse into being. The work is beyond a simple conversation, even if impelled and empowered by it. It also requires intellectual work and above all, moral courage.

Across the years the Society of St.Vincent de Paul has repeatedly lobbied and advocated for just such a society, developing and expanding on Frederic Ozanam’s radical and forward-thinking vision and becoming an important voice for the poor and vulnerable. The Society’s expertise on the ground, careful and considered research programme and its policy briefings have been and will continue to be, of immeasurable assistance. There can be no doubt about the enormous contribution of the Society of St.Vincent de Paul in Ireland.”

• Extracts from speech to Ozanam Commemoration.







## MINISTER FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION, JOAN BURTON



"The work of the Society has never been more important. The world has changed an awful lot since Ozanam's time. But in some ways, it has not changed at all. Two hundred years since his birth, the world is still a struggle between the haves and the have-nots – a struggle much more pronounced by the global recession.

"St. Vincent de Paul and organisations like it, are a bulwark in the struggle against poverty

"However the strongest protection against poverty is decent, secure and fairly paid work. This has been my abiding political conviction since I first entered politics and it has informed me throughout my career.

"Sadly we live in a world where the availability of decent, secure and fairly paid work has contracted massively since the financial crisis. all our policy responses will be set at naught unless we can move to a position where the target of close to full employment becomes the overarching objective of economic policy, there still appears to be an inexplicable preference for loading the costs of banking crises squarely on the shoulders of ordinary people and small business.

"Ordinary people everywhere have shouldered too much of the burden. A shift to international tax justice is overdue. The evidence is now overwhelming on the extent to which wealthy individuals and major corporations systematically evade even the historically low levels of tax contributions they are asked to make. We all knew for decades how widespread organised tax evasion is here and elsewhere. The notorious Ansbacher accounts revealed at various Tribunals showed how common it was in Ireland. Now we have compelling evidence that the international scale of this practice amounts not to billions of euros but to trillions.

"Electors in advanced societies have a limit beyond which they are not prepared to accept policies of austerity. I believe that we have reached the limits of austerity now. Another crucial bulwark against poverty is the welfare state. The welfare state redistributes wealth from the fortunate to the less fortunate. It encourages solidarity between generations and groups of people facing different life challenges. There are those who would argue that, at this time of scarcity, we cannot afford welfare -- at least not the type of welfare we have become used to. There are others who go further and say that welfare itself acts as an impediment to recovery, that it imposes an unnecessarily high floor on labour costs, that it distorts decision making and that it reduces the incentive to work.

"What this argument misses however is that welfare was borne out of austerity, a recognition, even by conservative governments, that citizens and society itself need protection from the vagaries of the boom and bust economic cycle which we all know only too well is a systemic feature of free market capitalism.

"At the moment, social welfare offers people too many benefits that are marginal in good times and can be insufficient in bad.

"The welfare state is under attack in many countries. It's under attack here too. It is abundantly clear from any factual analysis of the Live Register that the great majority of people on it have a very significant financial incentive to work. Welfare must be a safety net and a springboard. Continuing to passively pay benefits to such households is not the solution. The State can and must do more – but in a positive way that encourages and helps people to return to work. However the obligations of the state must also be balanced by the responsibilities of citizens. Behind the startling numbers on jobless households lies a terrible tragedy of wasted potential, lost hope and the diminution of life opportunities.

"Ozanam once said: 'It is truth which will always rise up to judge political systems.'

"This Government will be judged on our response to the crisis. It is my firm intention that we will not be found wanting."

- Extracts from speech to Ozanam Commemoration.







## ARCHBISHOP DIARMUID MARTIN

"The area of Dublin in which we are gathered is an area which, to use the language of our day, has been developed or re-developed. What has been achieved in this area is remarkable. "Today everything looks different. But I would always be hesitant to speak of development without qualification. In the midst of poverty there was also here a great sense of solidarity and good neighbourliness. People were looked after. The elderly and those on their own felt that they were known. There was a sense of no-nonsense solidarity. If you were in need you would get something of the little that was available. If you were seen going off track, you would soon be told so. There were brave and wise and astute women, perhaps with little in terms of formal education, but who gave advice and admonition, and care and correction. This was a place of poverty but also a place with a humanity all its own. Living conditions were squalid. Life conditions were marked by precariousness. There was no security in work. People were exploited. Bailiffs and debt collectors and money lenders were everyday visitors.

"But there was also another regular visitor who played a vital role in this community at the height of its poverty: "the Vincent de Paul man". The Vincent de Paul man was a life line. He was known, but he was discreet. He did not look for publicity or reward, but everyone knew where to find him when he was needed. He bought financial help, but never humiliation. He was prudent and careful in dispensing what he brought, but he had the flexibility to know when just that little bit extra would make a world of difference. The Vincent de Paul man was not from the area. He came from a different world but he respected the world of the poor. He had his meetings, but he was not primarily a strategist or lobbyist. He was hands on. He helped the children and he rejoiced when they got on well. He was beside the lonely and elderly and he cried at their funerals.

"The great charism of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul which goes back to Frederic Ozanam - whose memory has been celebrated here today in the presence of the President of Ireland and of public figures - was always that of being in there in person-to-person encounter with poverty and with the people living in poverty. The first task was ensuring survival and survival even in the most rudimentary dimension

"It is important that the Saint Vincent de Paul Society and the broad Vincentian family society - with the wealth of its experience

going back here in Ireland to 1844 - be today a strong lobbyist for the rights of those living in poverty and to expose the risks of the vulnerable falling back into poverty well below the subsistence level. But it is important always to remember that the prestige which the Saint Vincent de Paul Society enjoys in Ireland does not come from the sharpness of your social analysis no matter how important and competent that may be. Your credibility comes because people trust you. They trust you not to have vested interest or interest in personal gain either financial or in reputational. They trust the society because its members are known to be out there week after week close to people, with the people. It comes from that sense of gratuitousness that has been the mark of SVP: of giving without asking anything in return.

"Who would have thought just five years ago that we would have situation where precariousness and vulnerability touch so many sectors of the population here in Ireland; a situation in which men and women who generously gave to the society last year would today have to turn to the society for help. Social reform is necessary. The charism of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is to be out there among people not just with material help but with respect and love and even admiration for those whom they help.

"Society and the Church owe a great debt of gratitude to the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul not just for what they do, but for who they are and for the witness of disinterested self-giving love they show day after day, week after week, as they follow the teaching of Jesus Christ and as they emulate the person of Jesus in their lives. They show what the Church is and how communion with each other must be the mark of those who gather around the altar of communion. Those who are nourished through sharing in the self-giving sacrifice of Jesus must be marked by a personal life of self-giving.

The scenario in which today's "Vincent de Paul man and woman" works may be different and more complex than that experienced in other times. But the society has got the ability to identify the sign of the times of today and to respond always remembering that the poor deserve the best and what we do for them in Jesus' name aims to give them voice and hope on their own for the years to come."

- Extracts from speech to Ozanam Commemoration.



## SVP NATIONAL PRESIDENT GEOFF MEAGHER

The work of the Society is much wider than just dealing with material matters and looks after those who have many needs and not enough rights, "who demand with reason a fuller share in public affairs and safeguards against poverty."

Mr. Meagher said the Society in Ireland had been active for 170 years in providing friendship and support, financial and emotional assistance, helping people to achieve independence with dignity and would continue its work in identifying the structural causes of poverty and to advocate for their elimination.

The SVP would never be found wanting in assisting those in need, those who were deprived; those who suffered from Government policies which pursued austerity in an economically-depressed Ireland.

He urged members to ensure the quality of visitation, as the core of the Society's work, was always their highest target. It was this work which was the most personal example of the human commitment of the Society.

Mr. Meagher said the Government must listen to the SVP's call for engagement to discuss what kind of Ireland should be aspired towards.

"It cannot be all about austerity, people also need hope."

•Extracts from speech to Ozanam Commemoration

### Other speakers included



Olivia O'Leary



Kieran Stafford



John Monaghan



Cathal Oakes



Sr. Claire Sweeney







# BICENTENARY EVENT IN ARMAGH



Cormac Wilson presents a Framed Certificate to Sr Elise Gorman, President of Lurgan Conference to mark the 150th Anniversary of the SVP in Lurgan



Some of the members from St Patricks Conference Portadown who attended the event in Armagh to mark the bicentenary of the birth of Frederic Ozanam.

Vincentians from all 9 Conferences in the Armagh & Craigavon Area Council came together in Armagh to mark the bicentenary of the birth of Frederic Ozanam. The main focus of the event was a special Mass at 7.30pm in St Malachy's Chapel celebrated by Fr Rory Coyle, the Spiritual Director of the Armagh Conference (St Patricks).

Students from St Patrick's Grammar and St Catherine's College (both of which have SVP Youth Conferences) and St Brigid's High School participated in the Mass with Readings, Prayers of the Faithful, and the Offertory Procession. Mass was enhanced by the Aghagallon Youth Group who performed a selection of hymns.

Following the Mass around 80 Vincentian members, volunteers and employees from the Area gathered in the Armagh City Hotel for a social evening. They were welcomed by Kathy Donnelly, President of the Armagh Conference who spoke about the significance of the youth involvement given that Frederic was only a 20-year-old student when he started the Society.

Area President, Malachy McKernan, said that an appropriate way to mark the Bicentenary would be to resolve that, for the future, Conferences should increase efforts to take advantage of the energy, enthusiasm and talents of young people.

Cormac Wilson (Senior Regional Vice President) also referred to the need to reduce the average age of membership and announced that Regional President, Aidan Crawford, had secured approval from the National Council for the appointment of a Youth Co-ordinator for the Region.

A specially-designed framed certificate was presented to the Lurgan Conference to mark the 150th anniversary of its establishment. The presentation was made by Cormac Wilson and accepted on behalf of the Conference by the Conference President, Elise Gorman.

The Aghagallon Youth Group with Fr Rory Coyle from l. to r; Eimhear Bunting, Meabh McGrady, Orla Lavery, Orladh Shanks, Caoimhe Bunting, Ciara Mooney and Patrick Moore



# NEWS



WORLDLY  
VISIONS

## SVP PHOTO WINS WORLD AWARD

This photograph taken in an SVP centre in the USA has won a top prize in the WORLD PRESS PHOTO AWARDS.

It was taken by JACOB EHRBAHN , DENMARK, DAILY LIFE, and won 3rd prize. The photograph is captioned as:

"John Maclean, 65, gives thanks for a free meal at the St. Vincent de Paul Society Dining Hall in Youngstown, Ohio, regarded as one of America's poorest cities."

## THE STORY OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL IN IRELAND The People, The Places, The History

In September NEW ISLAND BOOKS will publish a new book, edited by two SVP volunteers, Bill Lawlor from the North/East Region and Joe Dalton from the South/East, both men with long experience of media work. Over several months they have been gathering material for the book from around the country.

With an introduction from well-known journalist Fiona Looney, a historical perspective by SVP historian and former International Vice-President Gerry Martin and a summary analysis by National Vice-President, John Monaghan, this will be the first book about the SVP in Ireland and well worth reading.

It is intended to be in hardback, costing €19.99 and there will be a contribution to SVP funds from the publication.



THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL  
IN IRELAND  
*People, Places, History*  
edited by Joe Dalton & Bill Lawlor





# NEW KERRY OFFICE TO COPE WITH GROWING POVERTY

“We are helping people who cannot afford to feed themselves and their families anymore”

More people in Listowel and north Kerry are struggling to provide food for their families as the recession continues to wreak havoc.

“Frightening” was the description applied by Listowel SVP President Marie McAuliffe in an interview with The Kerryman newspaper: “Demand has risen by up to 40 per cent in Listowel.”

A new office is being opened to deal with requests for help. It will be at the SVP Day Care Centre in the Plaza, Listowel.

“The level of debt is such a major thing in this recession that many people simply don’t have enough left when the main bills are paid. It is not easy meeting the rising demand but we have fantastic volunteers and the worse it gets the more people who can help do help,” Marie McAuliffe said.

‘Demand has risen by up to 40 per cent in Listowel.’

A meals-on-wheels service which provided 7,000 meals last year is operated from the Day Care Centre and the SVP also has a shop at Upper William Street in the town.

The number of people in Tralee seeking help from the Society reached 700 families, individuals and households in the town the annual meeting of the Kerry Region of the SVP was told. Families who had been able to cope were finding that they could no longer do so because of the higher costs of living, increasing government taxes to meet the bank failures and the problems caused by financial speculators.

“It just keeps getting worse. We are helping people from every area of the town and from all walks of life, some of whom cannot afford to feed themselves and their families anymore. We are being contacted by people who never came to the SVP before but now they have mortgages and borrowings which they cannot afford to meet because their wages have been cut or they have lost their jobs and been driven into poverty,” said Christy O’Sullivan of the SVP in Tralee to The Kerryman newspaper.



Speakers at the Kerry Region annual meeting:

Seated: Donal F Kelly (Kerry Regional President), Geoff Meagher (SVP National President) and Grainne Ni Gearailt (Kerry Vice President)

Back L-r: Jim Cronin (Regional Treasurer), Claire Tobin, Tom Mac Sweeney (National Vice-President)) and Fr. Liam Lovell (Spiritual Director).



Three members of the Society were presented with medals for long service at the annual meeting in Tralee, pictured here: L-r: Paddy Ryan (63 years service); Breda Broderick (40 years) and Jim Cronin (58 years).



# OZANAM COMMUNITY KITCHEN, MUMBAI

Report: Joe Dalton

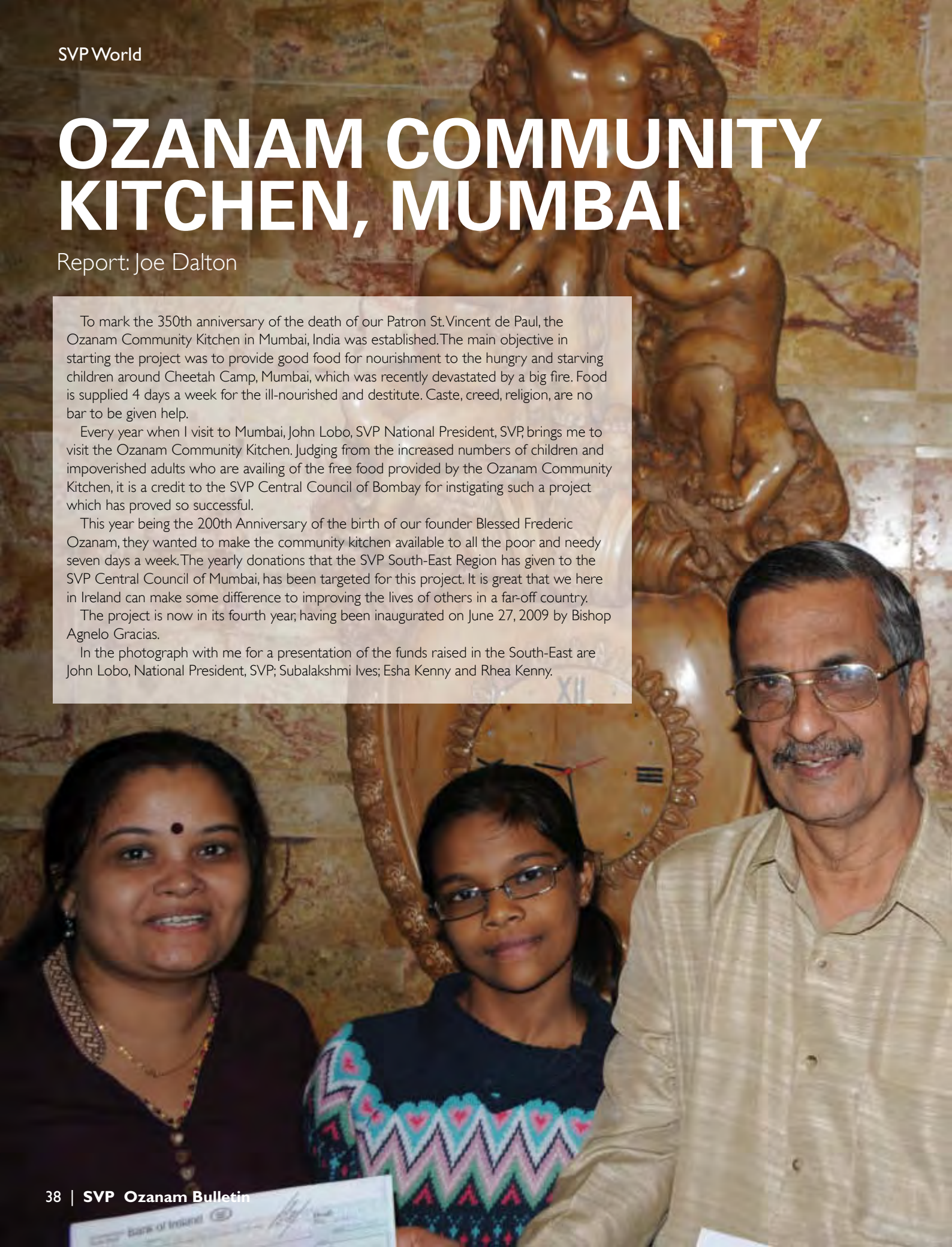
To mark the 350th anniversary of the death of our Patron St. Vincent de Paul, the Ozanam Community Kitchen in Mumbai, India was established. The main objective in starting the project was to provide good food for nourishment to the hungry and starving children around Cheetah Camp, Mumbai, which was recently devastated by a big fire. Food is supplied 4 days a week for the ill-nourished and destitute. Caste, creed, religion, are no bar to be given help.

Every year when I visit to Mumbai, John Lobo, SVP National President, SVP, brings me to visit the Ozanam Community Kitchen. Judging from the increased numbers of children and impoverished adults who are availing of the free food provided by the Ozanam Community Kitchen, it is a credit to the SVP Central Council of Bombay for instigating such a project which has proved so successful.

This year being the 200th Anniversary of the birth of our founder Blessed Frederic Ozanam, they wanted to make the community kitchen available to all the poor and needy seven days a week. The yearly donations that the SVP South-East Region has given to the SVP Central Council of Mumbai, has been targeted for this project. It is great that we here in Ireland can make some difference to improving the lives of others in a far-off country.

The project is now in its fourth year, having been inaugurated on June 27, 2009 by Bishop Agnelo Gracias.

In the photograph with me for a presentation of the funds raised in the South-East are John Lobo, National President, SVP; Subalakshmi Ives; Esha Kenny and Rhea Kenny.









# BLACK '47 – A CITY IN DISTRESS

## SVP in action at the Famine

What was the Great Famine of 1847 really like? While it is a major part of Irish history, accounts of it tend to be general rather than specific. Cork writer and historian Ronnie Herlihy has compiled actual reports of the time from the pages of the newspapers which reported it. They indicate that it was the poor who suffered most and that, from the surrounding rural areas they headed into Cork City, adding to the problems of overcrowded and unsanitary areas where those in poverty were already suffering as they tried to stay alive. These accounts provide a fascinating insight into the personal stories behind the generalities of history and they show that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was active in this horrendous period.

The year 1847 was one of the most harrowing scenes to be witnessed in the City of Cork, 'Black 47,' which was not just one year, but the culmination of two years of famine among the poorer classes who relied almost totally on the potato of the 'lumper' variety for sustenance.

When the crop was lost to blight the vast majority of the Irish population were suddenly left to rely for survival on a Government who were totally unprepared and in many ways apathetic to their needs. There were many of the better-off classes at the time who did not have complete sympathy for the poor and the Cork Constitution newspaper carried letters to the editor which indicated a belief that the working classes had been over-reliant on the potato which had left them "un-industrious and somewhat dull" and which described the potato failure as "The interposition of a merciful Providence."

On February 3, 1847 "The Cork Examiner" reported "numerous deaths from starvation which have given so awful a notoriety to the south and west of the County of Cork, from the want of the merest necessities of life."

The paper, publishing in a city where business and commercial life appeared to be continuing in a somewhat normal fashion as the main effects of the Famine were being visited upon the poorer people in the community, reported that "the rural poor in the outlying areas around Cork are suffering immense distress and re-locating in droves to a city that already has enough problems in trying to deal with those city-dwellers living in the overcrowded and un-sanitary lanes.... The ever-increasing numbers of newcomers put great pressure on the city's infrastructure and the deaths of poorer people and scenes of distress on the streets become ever more frequent."

On February 5 the paper reported: "Last evening a poor man was passing down Gerald Griffin Street, not far from the city centre, with two children on his back and from their colour and appearance it seemed they were in a dying condition. Sergeant

Geale of the Constabulary was alerted and found the children in a house in the neighbourhood, lying on a heap of shavings. A little girl of three appeared to be just dead and the boy of six years old was conveyed to the infirmary where a doctor said it was almost useless to receive him as he was reduced to the last extremity, both from the result of starvation. Their bodies presented a most emaciated appearance, nothing but skin and bone. The father stated he was from the county town of Bandon about twenty miles from Cork and had been unable to procure any employment to buy food.

When the case came before the Coroner, it was stated that there were "hundreds of similar cases."

On February 6 the police at Tuckey Street, the area where the existing SVP Cork Regional Office is located, were called to deal with a riot at the Cork Union Warehouse where "a large mob" was reported to be attacking the building seeking entry and food. But it moved off to break into shops in several streets – Douglas Street, George's Quay, Daunt's Square, North Main Street and Patrick Street in the heart of the city centre, taking bread and

'It was the worst riot and the most determined mob encountered in Cork,

other foodstuffs.

"A small party of police charged them with fixed bayonets," reported The Cork Examiner". "It was the worst riot and the most determined mob encountered in Cork."

The police claimed that some of the leaders were not as destitute as they pretended and called for special constables to





be sworn in to help protect property. Arising from the incident a number of men were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour; "having been convicted of breaking windows."

Ronnie Herlihy's research work records that this type of incident would become very common over the ensuing year; "with people preferring the inside of a prison cell and guaranteed food to life on the streets and possible starvation."

Bread riots were followed by a deputation from the Master Bakers of Cork City calling on magistrates to give them protection, otherwise they would have to cease business. From February 8 a combined force of military and police patrolled the streets from 11 a.m. until dark each day to prevent more rioting.

A month later the city's newspapers were reporting ever more harrowing scenes, but again it seems concentrated amongst the working classes and the "poorer classes." It seemed that, if people had money they could survive the Famine.

On April 14 five bodies were found in Barrack Street, but no relations claimed them and the emaciated body of a teenage girl was discovered outside the police barracks in Tuckey Street. The horror of the Famine was becoming more evident daily and even two instances of unexplained, abandoned coffins containing corpses were found on South Gate Bridge and had to be removed by police.

May 12, 1847 from 'The Cork Examiner': "About four o'clock last evening, a countryman was observed passing over Parliament Bridge towards the cemetery, with two small coffins on his back. On being questioned he stated that the coffins contained the corpses of two of his children, one of who had died two days before and the other in a short time after that."

The 'Cork Examiner' on June 9 reported that members of the public had complained to the Mayor and the Relief committee that it was "highly improper" that the bodies of paupers "struck down by the present pestilence" were being conveyed through the streets for internment in open vehicles containing coffins of the "thinnest and most fragile material" exposed to the gaze of every passer-by. In one instance there were six coffins in one vehicle being taken to a cemetery and when the one man in charge was questioned by police after the complaints, he said that he was going to the Curraghkippane burial ground and that he went there every evening on a similar mission on behalf of the Relief Committee which did not provide any covering for the coffins.

"This mode of conveyance is a disgusting one," reported the paper, warning that it "will only serve to increase the present disease and should be promptly looked after."

For those who were not so fortunate the better-off who were in a position to be "charitable" were encouraged to "place funds within the reach of those who visit the abodes of poverty and are best qualified to administer relief – namely the Sisters of Charity and Mercy and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a most admirable and in every sense efficient body."

The newspaper reports compiled by Roger (Ronnie) Herlihy, a member of the Cork South Parish Historical Society who has lived and worked in this historic area of the city for many years of his life, provide a fascinating and different perspective on the Famine. They are published in his book 'Tales from Victorian Cork 1837-1859.'



# “PUT MORE MONEY IN YOUR POCKET”

The Croí na Gaillimhe Resource Centre of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has completed another successful programme, called “More Money in your Pocket,” a programme covering a range of topics including: attitudes to money, developing a spending diary, control of money, budgeting and budgeting tools, budgeting strategies and management techniques, paying and prioritising bills, record keeping, savings – the why and the how and shopping healthily on a budget.

It was delivered one morning a week over six weeks. Over 12 participants received certificates. The course was funded by the Maureen O’Connell Fund of the St. Vincent de Paul. The course largely works towards the ‘Eurowatchers’ - A Home Budgeting Programme which was produced in 2009 as a joint initiative between VEC and MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Service). This programme was developed in co-operation with experts in the fields of adult and community education and its goal is to empower people with the skills to manage their day to day finances. The course has been adapted in order to meet the needs of the local community and has included a supermarket tour which was kindly facilitated by the Health Promotion Service of the HSE.

Ciara Coy, Tutor with the VEC said: “It was wonderful to see the group grow in knowledge and confidence, gain practical skills and develop connections and warm friendships from participating in the More Money in your Pocket Course”.

A collective assessment from those who took part in the course was : “An informative, eye opening, empowering and fun course.”

Loretta Needham, Manager of Croí na Gaillimhe Resource Centre explained that “if you are trying to make your weekly incomes go that bit further then this is the course for you. The course looks at effective ways to manage your money and plan your budget, shopping tips, on a tight budget and lots more. No formal educational qualifications were needed. It’s useful for anyone who wants to make their weekly income stretch that bit further”.

Croí na Gaillimhe provides an intergenerational and intercultural place of welcome, especially for disadvantaged groups, offering a range of holistic social and learning supports complementing and linked to the work of relevant agencies in Galway.

Group which successfully put more money in their pockets!







SVP North-East Regional President Michael O'Keeffe at the opening of Navan SVP's Furniture and Curiosity Shop at Balmoral Industrial Estate, Kells Road, watched by Catherine O'Connor of Navan SVP and Anne Coogan of the local SVP's fundraising sub-committee.

## NAVAN SVP'S NEW "VINCENT'S" CLOCKS UP €20,000 IN SALES

Report: Bill Lawlor

Navan St.Vincent de Paul Society's (SVP) Furniture and Curiosity Shop has recorded sales of approximately €20,000 since it started business at the Balmoral Industrial Estate on the Kells Road in October of 2012.

The "Vincent's" outlet has proved a 'Mecca' for bargain hunters in search of brand new and used good quality goods. Most are agreeably surprised at the quality and variety of low-priced items on offer, particularly as the current recession continues to bite. The new venture accepts donations of good condition furniture for sale or which can be provided for re-use. Purchases in the shop also boost the charity's funds. The local SVP's other "Vincent's" at Brews Hill continues to sell clothing, books, bric-a-brac and toys, as well as take items for re-cycling.

Navan SVP last year spent close on €7,000 a week in helping the less well-off in the town and surrounding districts.

The existing Kells Road premises staff of two TUS scheme workers recruited by the Society via Meath Partnership to help in running the business, have been augmented by the engagement of a further TUS worker, highlighting the contribution of the SVP to the strategy which helps people who have been unemployed for 12 months to re-establish themselves in the working environment. Volunteers from the local SVP's fundraising committee also assist in the shop, which is open from Wednesday to Friday (10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturdays (10 a.m. – 4 p.m.).

Donations of large and small pieces of furniture are required, as well as bric-a-brac, tableware, ceramics, antiques, lamps, hi-fi equipment, radios, flat screen TVs, curtains, LPs, CDs, musical instruments and sports equipment.

All donations may be brought to the store. Re-using is preferable to re-cycling and a donated piece of furniture or other goods could still have a long and useful life in another person's home.

•For the collection of large items donors are asked to phone 086-4497557 or email [navanfurniture@svpnortheast.ie](mailto:navanfurniture@svpnortheast.ie).

## ANOTHER NEW CONFERENCE IN CONNEMARA

After years when Connemara had no SVP Conference, it now has four, all having been established within a three-year period.

The newest is at Moycullen called Comhdháil Mhuire gan Smál in recognition of its setting in the Gaeltacht and was established with the enthusiastic help of Parish Priest, Fr. Michael McLoughlin, who was enthusiastic from the first contact made with him, after which he arranged for three SVP volunteer members from Galway to speak at all Masses in one week, explaining the work of the Society and issuing challenge to the people of Moycullen to volunteer. Eleven people came forward and were later joined by two more to make a total complement of thirteen after training.

The Conference meets on Tuesday evenings at 7.30 p.m. in the Parish Facility which is called Aiséirigh and made available by Fr.McLoughlin, who is also the Conference's Spiritual Director. The Secretary is Anne Newell.



Seated l/r - Frances Callaghan, Tom Glynn, Treasurer; Brian Stewart, President, Brid McDonnell, Vice President, and Kathleen Ellis. Standing - l/r - Martin McEvilly, Billy Molloy, Helen Kerrigan; Fr. Michael McLoughlin, Spiritual Director; Tom Newell, Owen Quinn, President of St. Anthony's Conference, Galway; in whose remit Connemara lies.

## 2U IN GRANARD

Following the establishment of a branch in Granard, the town now has a St Vincent de Paul Charity Shop at Market Street.

"It caters for the needs of Granard, Abbeylara and Mullinalaghta areas," said Marett Smith, SVP Conference President, "and it is called 'New 2 U' which was suggested by the pupils of Sacred Heart National School."

"We would greatly appreciate clothing bric-a-brac, etc. for the shop. Items can be handed in to Sacred Heart NS any day before 3pm. Alternatively if people call us on 085-1503985 we will arrange to have the shop open in the evening for deliveries of clothing."



School pupils chose the name for Granard Shop.



### BAKING FOR OTHERS Report: Philomena Osborne

The Primary School of St. Kilian's at Mullagh in County Cavan has always been tremendously supportive of our local SVP Conference. Some of our Conference members have children or grandchildren attending this lovely school.

For the last few years, 6th class pupils have chosen the Society of St.Vincent de Paul as their focus during their fundraising, culminating in a wonderful Coffee Morning where every child baked and made their favourite recipes which they served to us, as well as to the school-teachers, the Parish Priest and the pupils of the school.

We greatly admire the commitment of 6th class teacher Louise Traynor; the Headmaster Ronan McNamara and all the school staff.

The vision that these children take with them to their Second-level schools is paramount in the development of real care in the community.

### CARING FOR PILGRIMS

Students from St. Joseph's College, Coalisland, Co.Tyrone, are working alongside the Coalisland SVP Conference to help out with caring for Assisted Pilgrims travelling to Lourdes on the Armagh Diocesan Pilgrimage in May. The students will be accompanied by their College's Vice-Principal. They have also helped the Society of St.Vincent de Paul in other ways and presented homemade cakes and pastries to the President of the Holy Family SVP Conference, Michael O'Neill, for distribution by the Conference members.

### BALLINASLOE HOUSING

The Ballinasloe branch of the SVP has been granted permission to build a housing development in the town. The plan is to construct 17 single-storey terraced houses and a communal building for the elderly.

### ENNISCORTHY RESOURCE

Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Area Council is planning to develop a Resource Centre, a shop, community meeting rooms as well as establish a Youth Conference based at Market Square in the town.

### SWINFORD STUDENTS HELP SVP

Report: Padraic Gavin

Transition Year students from Scoil Muire and Padraig in Swinford, County Mayo, have helped the local Society of St.Vincent de Paul Conference for many years with their annual collection of festive supplies. The commitment of the students was praised by the local SVP Conference, members of which are pictured with the students.

"There is a great generosity of spirit shown in the work they have done and we consider them shining examples of community support," the Conference members told the pupils. "You have shown consciousness of the needs that exist in your community and, hopefully, you will continue with this approach throughout your lives. We also thank the teachers who have backed this work, led by Principal Mary Quinn."



### MAKING MUSIC IN CORK

A different approach to providing funding for education has enabled the development of one of the most modern music teaching rooms in Cork. The SVP Cork Regional Board provided assistance to the Cork Academy of Music, a voluntary body on the northside of the city which is working to provide social inclusion through music. The funding helped to buy computer-controlled music-teaching systems with electronic piano keyboards.

"Through the SVP we are able to help more students than ever before and have guided several onto university degree courses, people who would not have had a chance in life, who would have been deprived of opportunities," said Bob Seward, Director of the voluntary organisation. "There is an increased interest in accessing further education and we are widening our work, providing other educational assistance, all developing from an interest in music as a tool of social inclusion, which encourages people young and older. What is happening in this different approach to providing education, which the SVP has joined with us and supported, is very encouraging."







## KILTIMAGH SHOP OPENING

Led by Conference President Tom Moriarty, the members of Kiltimagh's Pius X conference in County Mayo worked tirelessly to get Siopa Ozanam open and in operation earlier this year. Now it is going from strength-to- strength due to the hard work and commitment of the volunteers involved and has been welcomed by the people of Kiltimagh. Breffni Regional Council has commended the Conference for its achievement.

## NORTH-EAST STUDENTS DISPLAY SOCIAL CONCERN

Report: Padraic Gavin

600 students participated in the North-East Regional Council's fourth annual Youth For Justice Exhibition in the Nuremore Hotel Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan. The 25 Transition Year groups represented 14 second level schools from Louth, Cavan, Monaghan and Meath. The programme inspires young people to understand and take action on social justice issues and provides them with the opportunity to help others in a practical way.

This year the student enterprises, linked to the work of the SVP, included befriending the elderly, fundraising projects, social research, homework clubs and education and literacy projects with first year second level students and primary school pupils.

Programme Development Officer Attracta McNeice emphasised that the participating young people are the St.Vincent de Paul Society's volunteers of the future and says the exhibition is a celebration of their work for the society over the past year.

Guest speaker was Nigel O'Callaghan of the Reach-Out organisation, which provides on-line support services for young people.

The attendance also included North-East Regional Council President Michael O'Keeffe, as well as SVP members from throughout the region.

## BELMULLET SHOP

The new SVP shop at Belmullet in County Mayo has been named 'Siopa Deirbhle'. A plaque has been erected at the shop which serves the Erris community in memory of the late founder member of the SVP Conference, Maureen Connolly, who initiated the provision of the shop.

## MARTHA LEAVES, DIES, RETURNS AND RETIRES IN GALWAY!

Report: Larry Hynes

After our monthly Area Council Meeting we had a Sad /Happy occasion here in Galway, as we had a "do" to mark the retirement of Martha from the Area Office. Martha's was the face you saw when you entered the Area office in Ozanam House and even though she had been there for a long time most people just knew her as "Martha."

Martha Shaughnessy had worked in that office for over 18 years and last year she suffered a pretty severe stroke and if that were not enough as she struggled to survive she was hit with nasty complications and as she so proudly told us all ---she died. It appears that Martha left us for some time and came back!! The writer is not clear on how long she was away but just to hear Martha tell about it you meet real JOY.

Hence the Sad/Happy occasion -- we are all very sad to see Martha go but we are also extremely happy that she has survived and is so delighted to be alive. There was a great turn-out and a big cake appeared & finger food, and it is said there was some wine and lots of lemonade .The speeches were short, pithy and sincere and the traditional bouquet was presented to Martha.

God bless Martha -- you were appreciated -- you will be missed, and we all wish you the very best of Health and Happiness in your retirement (and we'll try not to let the place fall apart!



## CORK COLLEGE STARS

The University College, Cork, Conference won several awards at the annual UCC STARS AWARDS and a national award:

- Best Collaboration, Best Civic Contribution
- Runner up – Best Charitable/Religious Society
- Nominated in Best Promotion, Best Week Long Event, Best Small Society.
- At a national level: Won the Community Awareness Award at Union of Students in Ireland (USI) Achievement Awards.





Pictured (L to R) Mollie King, Una Healy; Dave Kirwan, Managing Director, Bord Gais Energy; Geoff Meagher, SVP National President; Vanessa White, Frankie Sandford and Kieran Murphy, SVP National Director.

### GIRLS GET €150,000 FOR SVP

Girl Band, 'The Saturdays,' performed a special show in aid of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul at the Bord Gais Energy Theatre in Dublin. BGE organised the event and donated €150,000 to the Society which was generated through the ticket sales for the show and a matching contribution from the organisation. The Saturdays, although UK-based, have one Irish member, Una Healy who is from Tipperary and the band were Number 1 in the UK charts at the time of the gig. The show attracted a full house. Una Healy said: "It's fantastic that Bord Gáis Energy is supporting the Society of the St Vincent de Paul which does really great work in communities throughout Ireland. I always love performing at home and to know that this concert is for such a good cause made the night extra special."

### CANS THAT APPEAL



Ballinderry National School pupils from 3rd and 4th Classes celebrated their 100th day of school by collecting 100 cans of food for the St.Vincent de Paul Society in Tuam. Edel Pierce, Regional Administrator and Mary Jesop, Tuam Area President visited the school and were presented with the donation. Many congratulations to all the school children and class teacher and co-ordinator Ms. Lorraine Henry for their great effort. They actually surpassed their target and collected almost 150 cans. The children are pictured with their teacher and the SVP representatives.

### SVP PADDY RUN - ATHLONE



OVER 500 PEOPLE TOO PART IN THE RUN

### ON YOUR BIKE!

South-East Regional President, Rory McCauley and Area Presidents will take part in a "Dragon Sportive" Cycling event that has taken on SVP South East as the charity which the event will support. It will be held on June 30, starting at the same spot as the Tour de France started its first stage in 1998.

Active and fit, without a doubt (!), the Regional President is also intending to walk 300km of the Camino walk to raise funds for his Region. He has set up a web site blog ([www.roryp.com](http://www.roryp.com)) that has been updated daily with his training and preparation. "I have done the training and hope that I can raise some funds also for SVP SE Region. This is on May 18 and I will be reporting how it goes on the blog."

CYCLIST RORY MCAULEY ON LEFT AND SUPPORTERS





# IN TRIBUTE

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



**MARY TOOLE**  
Navan

The Society of St.Vincent de Paul has lost one of its most dedicated stalwarts with the death of Mary Toole, Navan, Co. Meath. A native of Ratoath in the south of the county, she was a member of the Society in Navan since 1973 when she became its first lady member. She subsequently filled top SVP posts at conference, regional and national level. Over the years, her sympathetic and knowledgeable approach to assisting the needy proved an invaluable asset to the organisation which she so efficiently and willingly served. She was president of Navan SVP's St. Oliver's Conference from 1975 to 1980 and president of Navan SVP's Area Council from 1980 to 1986. She again filled the latter post from 1993 to 2002. Mary's service to the society's North-East Regional Council (Meath, Louth, Cavan and Monaghan) was also immense. As well as representing her local area council on that administrative body for a number of years, she was also secretary of it from 1990 to September 2011. Prior to 1990, she guided the council's affairs as president for six years. However, it is probably through her impressive contribution to the St.Vincent de Paul Society's role in overseas assistance that she was better known to members throughout the country. As a former SVP National Twinning Officer she was responsible for ensuring the Irish society's sharing of friendship and material resources with SVP conferences in deprived parts of the world with which SVP regions here are "twinned" for aid purposes.

She continued to fill that role at regional council level up to the time of her death. While her efforts and expertise hugely benefited the effective operation of the society at many levels over the years, her true legacy is the positive difference she made to the lives of so many needy to whom she reached out with friendship and assistance. In March of last year Mary, who was in her late seventies, was presented at a Mass in Navan with a medal to mark 50 years of service to the society. A former employee of An Teagasc in Navan, she is survived by her brother, Dan; sisters, Breda Owens and Eileen Fagan; sister-in-law Imelda; brothers-in-law, Cliff and John; nieces and nephews.

- Bill Lawlor

### **PADDY CULLIGAN** Dublin

The Little Flower, South West Dublin Conference deeply regrets the death of our member Paddy Culligan after 55 years' service to the Society of St.Vincent de Paul. He was a very gentle and humane man who served over the years as President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Conference. Paddy had been ill for two years before he died. He will be greatly missed by all he worked with and all he worked for as well as a wide circle of relatives and friends.

- Conor Crowley



# A Fixed Star



## Hearing the Voice of Need

In 2012 over 2500 people contacted the Society of St. Vincent de Paul through our website [www.svp.ie](http://www.svp.ie). Many of these e-mails were in support of our work, people offering donations, seeking to volunteer with the Society. The vast majority, however, were from people seeking assistance. This short article looks at giving these voices meaning, what can we take from peoples first e-mail to SVP? This is an exercise that doesn't lend itself to scientific study, but the overawing impact is of some 2000 voices calling for help. Those people can't be helped if their voices are not heard.

## What is it like to contact the SVP looking for help?

Embarrassment, shame, sadness crop up again and again. While one could argue that people should be proud of their big decision to seek assistance – we all need some assistance sometime – the reality is people are nervous, low, troubled and in crisis when they cry out to us.

"I am desperately in need of help and don't know where to go. I have never asked for anything before... I feel so ashamed for getting into the mess that I am in."

People regularly seek and receive financial assistance from SVP, but that will never address the shame the person experiences if we don't let them speak in a way they are listened, if we can't reassure them that they are not alone. People not only feel alone in the sense of no one, maybe not even their partner, is there for them, but significantly in Ireland today, people are very isolated in their own circumstances without realising there are many, many, people in the same or similar situations to them.

## Food on the table

"I can't put food on the table" - a recurring phrase from people contacting SVP. To think of a table set but without food, children hungry and unfed, but this is what people are telling us of their reality. In one case-study a mother told us how she moved food from cupboard to fridge so her children would not realise there

was so little food in the home. So often, people appear to be paying other bills and leaving food till last, or doing without food themselves so their children can eat. Sometimes for parents the need is for food but the hopes are more telling:

"If there was any way you could try and help me to allow my kids this year to say that mammy brought us on summer holidays. It would make my year to see the smile on their faces".

## Hope

What hope is mentioned is generally the hope that SVP can help. Perhaps the future seems so bleak people can't think of a positive future. People do hope for a job, hope to improve their family's future and hope to repay SVP:

"This is just a desperate last resort, bills are due and we just can't meet them this time and for the first time ever I need help. I hope desperately for a positive reply, I can only promise that when things turn around for us I can offer that help back to you."

## How then do we give hope when so many voices are calling or help?

Access to the lived experience of poverty, such as peoples own words are one of the great strengths of advocating for social justice through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Policymakers accept SVP's 'on the ground' experience. With this significant strength comes a responsibility to ensure that the voice that speaks is representative, accurate and applicable. Policy makers increasingly, and appropriately, ask us to provide evidence based research, a step away from the anecdote. This is also the responsibility put on us by Frederic Ozanam. You must not be content with tiding the poor over the poverty crisis: you must study their condition and the injustices which brought about such poverty, with the aim of a long term improvement."

Below are some examples of the practical advocacy work of the Social Justice and Policy team of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.



### **Advocating for Pre-payment options for people in need**

Feedback from SVP members on the Society's policy on Pay-As-You-Go (PAYGO) metering has been very positive. Our work continues with the Commission for Energy Regulation and utilities.

PAYGO metering is available free of charge to eligible gas and electricity customers in financial difficulties. It is a pre-payment option which can also be used to manage arrears as well as on-going supply. PAYGO will not suit every household and therefore a significant number of payment plans are still being made on a regular basis. SVP is concerned that such payment plans can lead to people over extending their finances and lead to greater financial difficulty. SVP is working with the Commission for Energy Regulation and energy suppliers on this matter presently.

### **SVP calls for Child Income Supports for Struggling Families to be protected**

The perennial debate about child income supports continues with much focus on the recent Mangan report. SVP is supportive of a payment for all families with children, combined with targeted payments for those on low incomes, either from low paid work or from social welfare. SVP opposes further cuts to child benefit with no compensation for families who are struggling.

The situation of struggling families must not be worsened by any reform to child income support payments. As such, SVP is opposed to the introduction of a second tier child income support payment as proposed in the report of the Advisory Group on Tax and Welfare which would see the abolition of Family Income Supplement and the withdrawal of the second tier payment at very low earnings of €25,000 per annum.

However the SVP would be supportive of the introduction of a modified version of the second tier child income support proposals as follows:

1. Any and all savings made from any reform to Child Income Supports must be redirected towards universal services for families and children, including, Early Childhood Care and Education, childcare, afterschool care, primary health care and education, in recognition of the fact that significant savings have already been made from the Child Benefit budget.
2. The Family Income Supplement must be retained until an alternative in work income support which rewards and supports families in low paid employment is in place.
3. The full universal and targeted CIS payment must be retained for a family with one child on earnings up to €40,000 before beginning to be withdrawn.
4. The child income support payment should not be subject to the Habitual Residence Condition and should be payable to the children of people seeking asylum who are living in direct provision.

### **Advocating for Workers' Conditions through Joint Labour Committee's**

In our recent submission to the Review of Joint Labour Committees (JLCs) SVP states that JLCs are an essential mechanism to help ensure decent minimum terms and conditions for lower and middle-income workers, thereby helping to tackle income poverty. Abolishing any of the JLCs will serve only to expose already vulnerable, low-paid workers to further exploitation and thereby further add to the decline in consumer demand which is holding back our economic recovery.

Research conducted by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice in 2011 on minimum essential budgets for different household types found that it was not possible for a single adult working full-time on the National Minimum Wage to reach the minimum acceptable standard of living. Abolishing the JLC system would leave workers with only the safety net of the National Minimum Wage and result in increased numbers of households unable to afford the basic essentials necessary for an acceptable standard of living.

SVP therefore considers that the individual JLCs should be maintained. The original rationale of JLCs was that they would provide a 'living wage' for vulnerable workers and protection for 'good employers' by setting a legal minimum standard. They ensure that in highly competitive sectors, competition is not at the expense of workers or labour standards. The JLCs are a versatile and important form of social dialogue where employers and workers from within designated sectors meet to discuss and agree ways of dealing with the challenges and opportunities that arise in their respective sectors.

### **SVP's submissions to Government can be read on the Social Justice pages of [www.svp.ie](http://www.svp.ie)**



# Blessed support and approval

As the Society marked the Bicentenary of its Founder Frederic Ozanam, SVP Historian Gerry Martin says Archbishop Daniel Murray of Dublin should not be forgotten. "His first official recognition of the SVP was a mere six weeks after its foundation in Ireland."

These are the Words of Archbishop Daniel Murray of Dublin on the occasion of his first recognition of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul on 1st February 1845. The Society had its first meeting on Monday, 16th December 1844. His Grace, always a friend, saw the organisation as a 'new and efficient agency.' He refers, in the course of his discourse, that 'a new and delicious source of consolation springs up' within him. The good and kindly man was prelate during the years of the Great Famine.

"Beloved Brethren. - Blessed be that gracious God, from whom is every 'best and every perfect gift'; the 'faith once delivered to the Saints - that life-giving faith which worketh by charity' is still preserved in all its vigour among us, and is now about to introduce into this diocese a new and efficient agency, to extend more widely the reign of Christ over the hearts of his children, and animate them to the assiduous practice of that favourite virtue of which he said 'this is my commandment that you love one another'.

"The name of St. Vincent de Paul, whom you have selected as your patron, is dear to charity - dear to us. Already have his spiritual daughters, those angels of mercy, the religious Sisters of Charity, spread innumerable blessings amongst our poor. And, in every one of these country parishes which his missionaries have hitherto blessed with their presence, many a once hardened and impenitent sinner has been softened, by their moving instructions, into sentiments of deepest compunction; arrested in his headlong course towards the precipice of perdition; brought back to the saving path which leads to heaven; and left in the conscious enjoyment of the rich and consoling hope, that a contrite and humble heart God will not despise. And now, beloved brethren, a new and delicious source of consolation springs up within me, when I that according to one of those beneficent plans which that great servant of God, your glorious patron, St. Vincent de Paul, pointed out for the alleviation of human misery, you have been moved by divine grace to form yourselves into a Society, the object of which is, that all the poor of Christ, the relief of whose spiritual or corporal wants shall come within the reach of your united efforts, shall receive through your charity, such aids and such comforts, both spiritual and corporal, as it will be in your power to afford. I approve most warmly of your holy project.

"I have read with much satisfaction the rules by which you propose that your Society shall be governed. They are the fruit of deep reflection, and of enlightened piety. They point out distinctly, the means best suited to render the combined exercise of your benevolence extensively useful to your suffering fellow creatures; and they are, besides, admirably calculated to quicken still more within your own bosoms, that holy fervour which has united you together in the service of your heavenly Master. I give them my cordial approbation, and I say with St. Paul, whomever shall observe this rule, peace on them and mercy.



St. Vincent de Paul



## “Not Listening to Us”

I was eking out my cup morning coffee when I heard Pat Kenny say it ... why can't the Irish live frugally, six or seven to a house and save their money and have cash to buy a home. ... The discussion on his radio programme had been about why young people from Eastern Europe were taking up jobs in Ireland that the Irish would not take and a sociologist had likened that to Irish people doing the same in other countries in other years to earn money and send some back home, but that in Ireland the Irish did not live six or seven to a shared house between them, living frugally. Pat Kenny wanted to know why the Irish couldn't live frugally. My cup of coffee is an example of being frugal. I am in my mid 20s and living at home with my parents and trying to do so on a hundred Euros I get in social welfare and contributing what I can, because I don't want to be living off my parents. I have tried and tried and tried again to get a job, any job, but whatever about other Europeans finding work here, I can't find it and it is not for lack of going out, asking, as well as writing, sending off CVs and I do have some qualifications. What annoyed me was the attitude of one of RTE's several well-paid presenters who wouldn't have to eke out a cup of coffee. I don't want to be imposing on my parents who are trying to help a sister and her family with their mortgage and to whom we also try by minding their children when they are at work. What is so hurtful is the lack of people who are in a position of influence to listen and this is the way on these radio programmes with those who have so much dictating to those of us who have so little how we should behave. What do the well-off understand about living frugally, damn little I think. I am cross, but I'm entitled to be. Those who are well-off are not listening to us who are not so fortunate.

**John Hamilton, County Tipperary.**

## “I'd Like to See Someone Pay”

I bought your magazine in an Eason's store here in Galway where I know of the work of the SVP in projects such as Croina Gaillimhe, so I was interested to read the articles and see that some organisation is interested in the social problems of Ireland today. What I wonder about the Irish is why, from a nation that was rebellious and fought for its independence, we have become so pliant about the more vital issues while we seem prepared to complain about other less important matters. The people of Cyprus got up and complained when they were treated badly by the EU but it seems we Irish can't get off our backsides even when there is the likelihood that the banks who caused all our problems will be able to tell families how much they should be able to live on and maybe even the amount and kind of food they should eat. Where is there a nation that would accept that kind of treatment, while still seeing massive salaries paid to bankers, developers and speculators getting salaries from the State through NAMA about which people who have no jobs and can't pay for their homes and fear being thrown on the roads of Ireland without a roof over their heads?

Many of your articles were interesting and there seems a lot of work going on by the Vincent de Paul but these are issues you should tackle in your magazine and why those who caused all our problems seem not to have suffered like most of the Irish people to whom they caused those problems.

**Mary Collins, Galway.**

# THE LAST WORD

## Letters to the Editor



**Society of  
Saint Vincent de Paul**

The Towers Friendship & Respite Centre, Sandhill Road, Ballybunion, Co. Kerry

We have begun a new initiative in Towers Holiday Home and it may be of interest to readers.

For the past three years we have facilitated a week's holiday at Towers Holiday Home for Irish emigrants who have been existing in difficult and lonely circumstances in the United Kingdom. These men and women emigrated to the UK in the 1950s and 60s to find employment, but have found themselves alone and forgotten and cut off from their own native land.

We are proud that we have been able, in a small way to ease their loneliness and alienation through a programme of week long visit to the Towers.

The experience has been entirely positive and has motivated this conference to continue the service annually if at all possible.

Visiting the Towers Holiday Home helps return to the lives of Irish emigrants in the UK, a connection with home which many of them thought to be long severed.

A group called The Kerry Emigrants Committee who are volunteers in both Kerry and London bring them to Towers by boat and coach. We turn on the fáilte for the week, assist them to meet relatives if they wish or their old home or parent's grave and have a few party nights for all of them. They return home very happy, realising that not every one has forgotten them. It works extremely well. Maybe some other SVP conferences in Ireland might give it a try.

Yours sincerely,  
Bridget O'Shea.



Contact can be made with the SVP through our website [www.svp.ie](http://www.svp.ie) or our offices listed on page 2 of this magazine

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