

“Now the strongest bond of true friendship is charity, and the exercise of good charity is the practice of good works” Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Greetings Fellow Vincentians,

Last weekend the State Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW met via the internet. It was a meeting that went for more than 3 hours and covered a range of topics and policies that affect us all. But first who makes up the State Council? The State Council consists of the ten Central Council Presidents from the ten dioceses in NSW. Canberra Goulburn diocese is separate from St Vincent de Paul NSW.

The State President is Peter McNamara, who although only in his 50's and with teenage children has been an active Vincentian for more than 30 years. There are seven Vice-Presidents covering Social Justice, Youth, Membership, Special Works, Centres and Governance. Like all St Vincent de Paul committees, the President is elected and that person appoints all other office bearers.

I will touch on the range of issues over the next few weeks, but the State Council considered and adopted four new policies.

Diversity and Inclusion Policy: The Society of St Vincent de Paul (NSW) and the company titled St Vincent de Paul NSW are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment for all Society Personnel (members, volunteers and employees), the people we assist, visitors and members of the public. This policy will actively and promote diversity and inclusion across the Society and promote an environment that is free from all forms of discrimination.

Respectful Workplace Policy: This policy applies to all Society Personnel (members, volunteers and employees). It informs all parties of their rights and responsibilities in relation to disrespectful behaviour, workplace bullying and harassment.

Store Card Policy: The distribution of store cards (vouchers) is an important method of providing support to the people we assist. Also store cards are effectively similar to cash and so there are needs for stringent controls on their use. This policy sets out clearly the method of control and distribution of the cards. It does not stipulate the level of support – that as always rests the judgement of members.

Police Check and Working with Children Check Policy: This policy applies to all Society Personnel (members, volunteers and employees), and sets out the requirements of us all in this regard.

All these policies are available on the St Vincent de Paul website.

Two important websites for all members: There are two website that all members and volunteers need to be aware of. The first is the Members and Volunteers site (MAVS). It contains a wide range of information and news.

Look for it at: <https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/> or if you would like to be a bit more local you can see the Wagga page of MAVS at <https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/conferences/wagga-wagga-central-council/> This site can become a valuable reference point for all our members as it touches on all that we as an organization do.

Another important site is the twice yearly Vision magazine. Although this is often around in a hard copy in conferences and parishes this copy can always be with you. You can find it at:

<https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/Publications/NSW/Vision/>

The most recent Winter Edition of Vision even has a feature on a local girl, and a leader in our youth conference.

The challenge:

A fortnight ago I wrote about the NSW Vinnies sleepout. It has all been quiet since then When I say I am challenging ALL of you to get involved and to raise a little bit each then yes I am speaking to YOU. The days of drawing up budgets on how much money we should spend, without taking into consideration where it comes from are gone. Instead we need to be prepared to have some involvement in raising money, especially in these difficult days of Covid.

So what can you do? Go to <https://fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au/joinnow> and join us on the journey to support those who are in most need by becoming involved or supporting the Vinnies Community Sleepout.

Every week I am grateful to Peter Gormly from Wollongong or Eileen Edwards from Leeton and the Spiritual advisor to the Central Council for a spiritual reflection. However this week I want to draw your attention to the Season of Creation. Rather than use my humble words to explain this world-wide event I have left it to a couple of experts.

The first is from our beloved Pontiff, Pope Francis. His support for this runs parallel with his Encyclical “Laudato Si’, On Care of our Common Home”.



Key messages

The full text of the pontiff's message is here in Italian with an unofficial translation, go to seasonofcreation.org To get a full idea of where our church stands on this vital issue. . Key messages from Pope Francis include the following:

- **We are called to protect creation—and we are missing the mark.** “Something good in the eyes of God has become something exploitable in human hands.”
- **The Season of Creation is a time for prayer in nature.** “This is the time to re-acquaint ourselves with praying immersed in nature, where our gratitude to the creator God arises spontaneously.”
- **The Season of Creation is a time to grow in sustainability.** “This is the time to reflect on our lifestyles . . . Let's change and adopt simpler and more respectful lifestyles!”
- **The Season of Creation is a time to urge governments to enact better climate policies.** “This is the time to take prophetic actions” and governments have the task of “demonstrating political will to drastically hasten their measures to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible . . . in line with the Paris Agreement goals.”

The second piece of plagiarism I have chosen comes from a US publication “Earthbeat”, which is part of a larger US publication “National Catholic Reporter”. Hopefully it puts this event into a broader context.

What is the Season of Creation?

The Season of Creation is a monthlong prayerful observance that calls the planet's 2.2 billion Christians to pray and care for God's creation. It's a time to reflect on our relationship with the environment — not just "distant" nature, but, crucially, the place where we live — and the ways in which our lifestyles and decisions as a society can endanger both the natural world and those inhabiting it, both humans and other creatures.

The ecumenical steering committee that plans and promotes the season each year put it this way:

The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. During the Season of Creation, we join our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family in prayer and action for our common home.

It's a time of prayer, contemplation and, increasingly, calls to action. (More on that later.)

The Season of Creation is supported by a number of leading Christian organizations, including the World Council of Churches, Christian Aid, the Lutheran World Federation, the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, the Global Catholic Climate Movement and the Vatican's Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development. Each sits on the Season of Creation steering committee.

May the Good Lord bless you and keep you as always,
Don't forget the Vinnies Community Sleepout

Peter Burgess

O Mary, you shine continuously on our
Journey as a sign of salvation and hope.
At the foot of the Cross you participated in
Jesus' pain,
With steadfast faith.
You, Salvation of the Roman People, know
What we need.
We are certain that you will provide, so that,
As you did at Cana of Galilee,
Joy and feasting might return after this
Moment of trial.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
To conform ourselves to the Father's will
And do what Jesus tells us:
He who took our sufferings upon Himself'
And bore our sorrows to bring us
Through the Cross, to the joy of the
Resurrection. Amen.
We seek refuge under your protection, O
Holy Mother of God.
Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to
The test – and deliver us from every danger, O
Glorious and blessed Virgin.

“We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Land on which we stand. We acknowledge the Wiradjuri people and pay our respects to Elders past and present.”