



Greetings Fellow Vincentians,

As the days get shorter and colder we are reminded that winter is not far away. In our normal world it is time to start to think in terms of a winter appeal. However our world is assaulted by the Coronavirus and all our normality has been trashed.

This has caused great hardship to a large number of people in our community and a severe restriction to how we can operate. As we are aware all our Vinnies shops have closed and the major fund raiser, the CEO's sleepout has been cancelled. All local sleepouts have also been cancelled. This has left a significant shortfall in our ability to raise money at a state level as well as at the local level.

For us locally we are called to support the "Vinnies COVID-19 Winter Appeal". Every dollar we raise will help the people we support, put petrol in their car or keep them warm during the cold winter months – more important than ever during the current health crisis. For a lot of us this is a new challenge. We do a fantastic job of looking after those in most need in our community but we are rarely asked to consider how to raise the money that we spend.

But with no Masses, and therefore no congregation to seek support from we are challenged to find new ways of raising money. We have to go back to previous generations to understand how important it is to raise money to support our charitable works. Not long ago we were discussing how to impose budgets on each of our conferences but now conferences are struggling to keep together and we are called to assist to raise the money we spend.

We need to look at the example of our founders to understand this. Blessed Frederic Ozanam wrote often about the need to raise money to help the poor and Blessed Rosalie Rendu was a terror when it came to raising money to support those who reminded her of the suffering Christ.

Renee Cooper, along with people in State Office and the Central Council are trying to address this in very practical ways. However this is not something we can leave to "others". We all need to be active in this. We are all called by the Holy Spirit to engage in this blessed chore.

What can we do?

- Talk to the local Parish Priest about a notice in the local parish bulletin
- Flyers to be handed out in your Local Community
- Most parishes are live streaming Masses – so tape a message to be inserted into the Parish Mass
- Anything else you can think of

EAPA:

The rules have changed in regards to who can actually assess clients for EAPA support. Because of the current pandemic the system has been centralised. That means that if you are an assessor here in Wagga you are part of a statewide team and can be asked to assess people from across the State.

## COVID-19

I have been asked on a number of occasions if or when can we return to our “normal” mode of operation. In an email from Kathleen Thickett, Vice President for Membership on State Council she wrote at the end of last week “With the ever-changing COVID-19 situation in community, we as a Society have a responsibility to prevent the spread of the virus by following the advice of the government, Chief Medical Officer and health authorities and the new legal requirements announced by the Premier that came into effect at midnight”.

Quite clearly, and quite appropriately we will continue to function along these lines well into the foreseeable future. Take care, take no risks and *stay safe*.

Finally, an apology: Last week I informed you of the passing of a long term member of the Narrandera conference. I named her as Jane O’Mahoney. In this I made a mistake, her name is Joan O’Mahoney. I sincerely apologise for any harm or distress this may have caused.

### Spiritual Reflection:

During a decade of driving from Wagga to Cootamundra for work and then returning home again in the evening I developed the habit of listening to books rather than reading them. It is a practice I continue today.

At present I am listening to “*Wounded Shepherd: Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church*.” It was written by Austen Ivereigh, a UK based Roman Catholic journalist, author, commentator and biographer of Pope Francis.

I have included a few quotes from Chapter 10, entitled “Mercy and its Discontents”. These passages call out to me the faith of ordinary people living their lives as best they can, drawing on the grace of God to guide them through their every day struggle.

Ivereigh says that “The Pope wanted to salute the holiness of the ordinary folk, the souls no history book ever mentions but on who, world history in reality turned.” This in my this salute includes All Vincentians as we go through our ordinary lives trying to assist those in greater need than ourselves.

### My favourite quote:

“The Christian Spiritual life is not a race of celebrity athletes but the patient plodding of unknown people, living lives and love, quietly bearing witness and above all hoping in God to help. Holiness, as Francis powerfully put it “was an encounter between your weakness and the power of God’s grace”. He asks us to follow Christ in humility and mercy, to make ordinary sacrifices and gestures that showed God’s power at work”.

Francis, according to Ivereigh is also aware of the immense contribution of women in the Church. Again Ivereigh states “No Pope had ever put women so firmly in the foreground of a teaching document. Francis salutes the unknown mothers and grandmothers, who daily transformed their communities as well as the genius of great women and saints”.

Along with this book Austen Ivereigh wrote *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope*, a biography of Francis, tracing his life from his early life as Jorge Mario Bergoglio to his current pontificate.

May the Good Lord bless you and keep you and your loved ones safe through these difficult times.

Peter Burgess