

Greetings Fellow Vincentians,

Some months ago the Vincentians in Corowa celebrated 90 years of working in their town. They tell the story of raising money as a community purchasing a site and starting the shop. As a Conference they collected clothes and other items and started to trade as a St Vincent de Paul shop. From this beginning they started nine decades of caring and nurturing for the needy. All of this during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The surprising thing is that this is not an isolated story as it describes most of the stores across the Wagga Wagga Diocese. Most of them started with a group of dedicated people banding together, raising money and building a future of love and compassion for their community. So is there a message for us many decades later? I suggest to you all that there is something here for us all.

The history of the St Vincent de Paul Society is one not just of giving support to the needy in our community, but one also of raising money and gathering goods to support their mission of caring for the more needy amongst us. Any reading of the history of our four leading holy figures – St Vincent de Paul, St Louise de Marillac, Blessed Frederic Ozanam and Blessed Rosalie Rendu – demonstrates the amount of time and passion these people put into gathering the resources they needed to carry out their mission.

The founders of the Society saw the need in the streets of Paris to establish a Catholic charity and Social Justice society that would stand the test of time. (More about the Social Justice side later). They did this on the basis of gathering as well as distributing the means needed to support the poor and destitute. As members of the society, as Vincentians we can not allow ourselves to be focused on only one side of this social equation.

Did I hear someone ask “But what can I do?” Well a great starting point would be the Virtual Community Sleepout at the end of next month. An opportunity for ALL of us to participate in raising the funds necessary to continue our essential mission. If each of us were to raise say \$40 from people outside the Society – friends, relatives and associates – we would not only increase what we as a Society can achieve, but we also broaden the base of contributions.

So how can we get involved? 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.

I am going to express some disappointment in my fellow members. I appreciate that we are “One Society” but when there is in Wagga only one member registered for the sleepout and two staff, we are perhaps failing in our purpose.

Social Justice:

In today's reading St Paul teaches us:

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourself."

The following article, by Tom Gersbach of Wollongong Diocese appeared in their newsletter. With his permission I have repeated part of it here.

“Social Justice Advocacy: You're Invited!

The Social Justice Advisory Committee is eager to extend and expand its advocacy across NSW and is well supported by the Social Justice Team of Rhiannon Cook, Mark Ludbrooke and Sarah Boyle, based in the State Support Office, Lewisham.

Conference Members would be aware of some recent Social Justice advocacy including the Build Homes: Build Hope campaign for more social housing in NSW and Raise the Rate campaign to keep the improved Jobseeker payment. There have been more than 120 engagements with MPs and over 8,000 people signed our petition.”

So why Social Justice? The founders of the St Vincent de Paul Society recognised that for them to achieve their goal of caring for the needy in their community they also had to be prepared to challenge the living conditions that the poor existed in. They lobbied the Government and worked through the courts to enable change to take place. They helped to build a better and more equal society for the poor to survive in.

Today we as Vincentians continue that struggle. Our main focus is on encouraging the government to raise Newstart above the poverty line and continuing the campaign for more social housing. There are other great social issues that affect us these days such as climate change and the plight of refugees across the world.

In the Wagga Diocese I feel we have lost this and it is time to rebuild it. I am always pleased to say that what we do, we do well. But the time has come to broaden our focus so that we can assist the needy in many more ways. So, I would like all conferences to select a Social Justice delegate. When we do this we will start to develop Regional and Central Council Social Justice Committees.

We need also to be better informed about where our Society stands on these important issues. I have included five attachments that will be forwarded to you. Of special interest is the annual Rosalie Rhendu Forum. This year it is being held online so you all can attend. It is on October 15 and is hosted by a great friend of the St Vincent de Paul Society, Geraldine Doogue.

Link to Registration page:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/rosalie-rendu-2020-tickets-117725605455>

Link to post on MAVS:

<https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/registrations-open-rosalie-rendu-forum-15-10-2020/>

Please feel free to share this information widely. For more information contact me or email Social.Justice@vinnies.org.au

We thank Peter Gormly for this week's Spiritual reflection:

The reading for this week is the parable of the wicked son. A man had two sons, and asked his first son to go off to the vineyards. The first son's immediate reaction was to say no, he then reflected on how he reacted to his father at the time. In reflection he decided to go to the vineyards as his father had asked of him. Jesus emphasised that we are all able to turn our lives around. He said that "the tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God before you" and yet they were considered to be at the bottom of the social and religious status at the time. (Curtis, Mitch).

On the other hand, the second son said yes when he was asked to go to the Vineyards without hesitation but he never went to the vineyards as he had promised his father. Unlike the first son he did not stop and think about how he responded to his father, or reflect on his intentions. The second son is likely to have said yes to please his father, I am sure this would have caused a great deal of discomfort for the son, and to his father.

How many times may someone ask us to do something and we say yes, and somehow we just never get round to start or complete the task. I am sure I am not the only one, that does not get around to do things, that I have being asked to do.

We can easily justify the reason why we do not do something. Maybe we can look more into how the wicked sons responded to their father, both sons responded differently.

We can easily justify why we are not following the fathers will. For a son to say NO to his father was very much about stepping aside from cultural expectations at the time. What was most powerful was the willingness to reflect and critique his response and his behaviour. We are in a society to say no does take strength and courage, this was also relevant in Jesus time. When he reflected on his response he decided he wanted to go to the vineyard not out of obligation but because he wanted to go.

The St Vincent De Paul Society's Rule articulates this very well. "Vincentians are called to journey together towards holiness, because true holiness is a perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which is central to their vocation and the source of fruitfulness".

How in our lives do we find courage and strength to listen to the call of God and then act on his call. This may take us into uncharted territory, maybe fear holds us back maybe it is simply we do not know where this will all lead or leave us. We can all find ways to follow in the footsteps of Jesus in living the perfection of love, as easy as it is to say this is a challenge for all people.

My Prayerful Wishes and Kindest Regards

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