

THE

SPRING 2019



BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

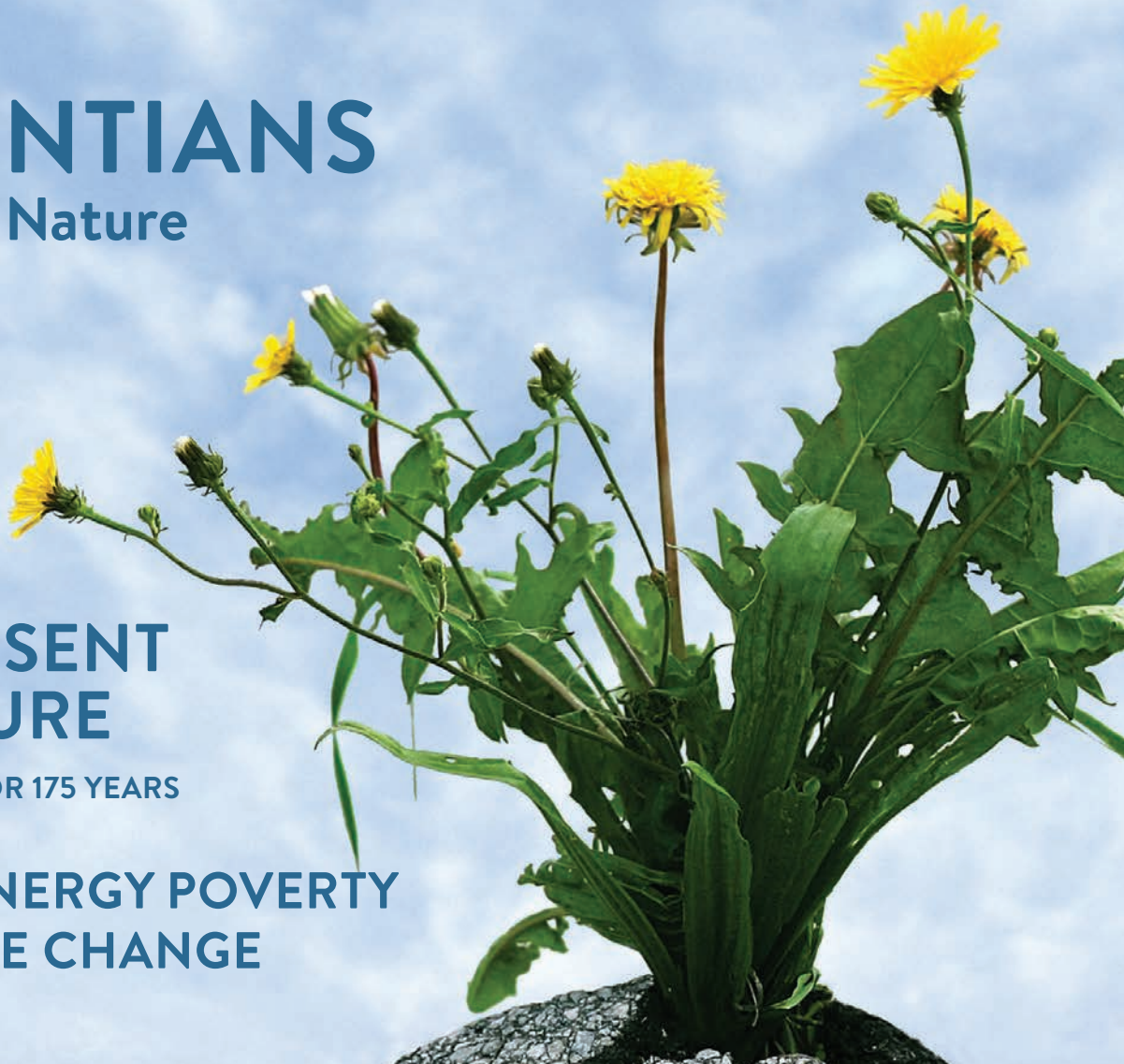
VINCENTIANS

Resilient by Nature

PAST, PRESENT
AND FUTURE

SERVING IN HOPE FOR 175 YEARS

TACKLING ENERGY POVERTY
AND CLIMATE CHANGE



THE VOICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN IRELAND



*“Life can only be understood backwards;
but it must be lived forwards.”*

- Soren Kierkegaard



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

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EDITOR:
LINDA O'CONNELL

ASSISTANT EDITOR
MARY MOYLAN

EDITORIAL ADVISOR:
JIM WALSH

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RELEVANT ARTICLES ARE
WELCOME. SEND TO THE EDITOR.

“We cannot change the past, and we cannot fully control our future. But we can live fully in the present”.

There are moments in our lives when we reflect on our life, our goals, our interactions with others, and take stock of what we have been given and wonder what is to come.

While we cannot change the past, we can use the lessons from the past to adjust the present.

Living in the present we often allow worry to consume us, our thoughts involving health, finances, and relationships can become like weights around us. “What if” scenarios creep in and cloud our mind. We allow others to define who we are and sometimes fear the future.

What if instead we start our day with gratitude, reflect on the beauty that surrounds us and accept that this moment is all we have, much of the rest is beyond our

control. Reflecting internally helps us to define who we are, and realise that the love of self and others is really what defines this life.

Embrace today, and think of one thing we could do for another human being, expecting nothing in return.

Our volunteers do just that on a daily basis, by caring for other humans without thinking of themselves, and they have been doing this for well over a century and a half, as the Society celebrates 175 years in Ireland helping people in poverty.

We might feel hopeless and think will there ever be an end to the suffering and struggles that people endure? But what if SVP was not there, that our 11,000 volunteers didn't care? What type of society would we be looking at today? We might not be able to solve all the problems of the world, but we can do our best to solve what we can.

In this edition, we reflect on the work of the Society over time to present day, from local Conference level to national level petitioning the government to make changes so that as a nation we can alleviate the suffering of so many. You will read articles on homelessness and members' experience, child poverty and energy poverty. Items illustrating the amazing support SVP received from the public during the Christmas Annual Appeal from schools, companies, the public and the media. The impact our retail outlets are having in many local areas, for example, holding fashion shows and showing the difference volunteering can have on a person. You will also read some of the work being carried out by other Vincentians in other parts of the world, demonstrating the reach of the Society.

So I would urge all our members, in the year that is in it, to commend yourselves for your dedication and hard work in helping others. And to learn about and appreciate that what the Society has done in the past, is doing today and will continue to do into the future does make a difference.

Linda O'Connell



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www.twitter.com/SVP_Ireland

175 SERVICE IN HOPE



sions, in fact, the first Conference St Michan's formed in Halston St Dublin is still active today. We are as committed to helping people in need today in our communities as the first members who set up the Society nearly two centuries ago.

We have not only proved ourselves true to our founder's ethos but also true to the ideals of St Vincent de Paul himself.

To mark this significant year for the Society, a day of thanksgiving, celebration, and reflection will be held on Saturday 13th April in the Convention Centre Dublin. Guest speakers will include President Michael D Higgins, Minister Regina Doherty and Kilkenny's legendary hurling manager Brian Cody.

I am asking members to join us on this special day for the Society in Ireland.

It is important that we mark our place in history as those before us have done. Indeed many great Irish leaders were once members of the St Vincent de Paul - Eamon De Valera, Sean T O Ceallaigh, Mary McAleese and Brendan O Regan. We hold a very esteemed place amongst our peers in Ireland because as with our founders, we are

people of action making a difference to so many lives every day.

Despite the constant commentary that 'the economy is booming' we know that the rising tide is not lifting all the boats, in fact, we see that many we visit are sunk and if it were not for our support would also be bereft of hope.

"The question dividing people of our day is no longer a question of politics but a social question, of knowing which will win between the spirit of selfishness and the spirit of sacrifice; whether society will be no more than a great exploitation to the benefit of the strong or a consecration of everyone for the benefit of all and especially for the protection of the weak"

These words written by Louis Janmot in 1836 are as relevant today as they were 183 years ago.

Kieran Stafford
National President

One hundred seventy-five years ago the first St Vincent de Paul Conference formed in Halston Street, Dublin just at the onset of the famine. The first members who bravely followed in the footsteps of Blessed Frederic Ozanam set about helping those in dire need in their community, just as Blessed Frederic and his friends helped those in the Paris slums.

I am sure that none of them had any idea of the legacy they would leave and I'm sure they would be in awe to see today how the Society has grown here and in particular the diverse work we are involved in to combat poverty in all its forms.

Even though times have changed fundamentally since then, the core need still continues to be much the same. Members of SVP continue to go out every night throughout Ireland helping people with food, fuel, and shelter. On the one hand, it is something that we as members can be justly proud of but, as a nation ashamed that in 2019 there is still a growing need to help so many with these basics. The recent Irish Times story about a toddler stealing food to bring home is one that belongs more to Dickensian times than 2019, but sadly it's true. The horror stories of those in poverty seem to get worse.

The tenacity of SVP members is evident in the years we have spent fighting poverty in Ireland through the famine, a war of independence, a civil war, two world wars and countless recessions,

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Celebrating 175 Years in Ireland



1844 . 2019

13th of April 2019
10am - 5pm

The Convention Centre, Dublin



2019 is a special year for us as Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It marks a significant milestone - that we have been working to help those in need for 175 years.

To celebrate this great achievement, you are invited to a special event on Saturday, 13th April 2019 at the Convention Centre, Dublin.

The theme will be "Serving in Hope - Past, Present and Future". This day will be a celebration and reflection on the years spent supporting people in need in Ireland since 1844.

We are delighted that President Michael D. Higgins will open this event. The full programme will be available closer to the day.

It will be an interesting and enjoyable day with an opportunity to share experiences with hundreds of other Members from around the country.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your commitment to the work of the Society.

Without you, SVP would not still be operating after 175 years.

Kieran Stafford
National President

TRANSPORT

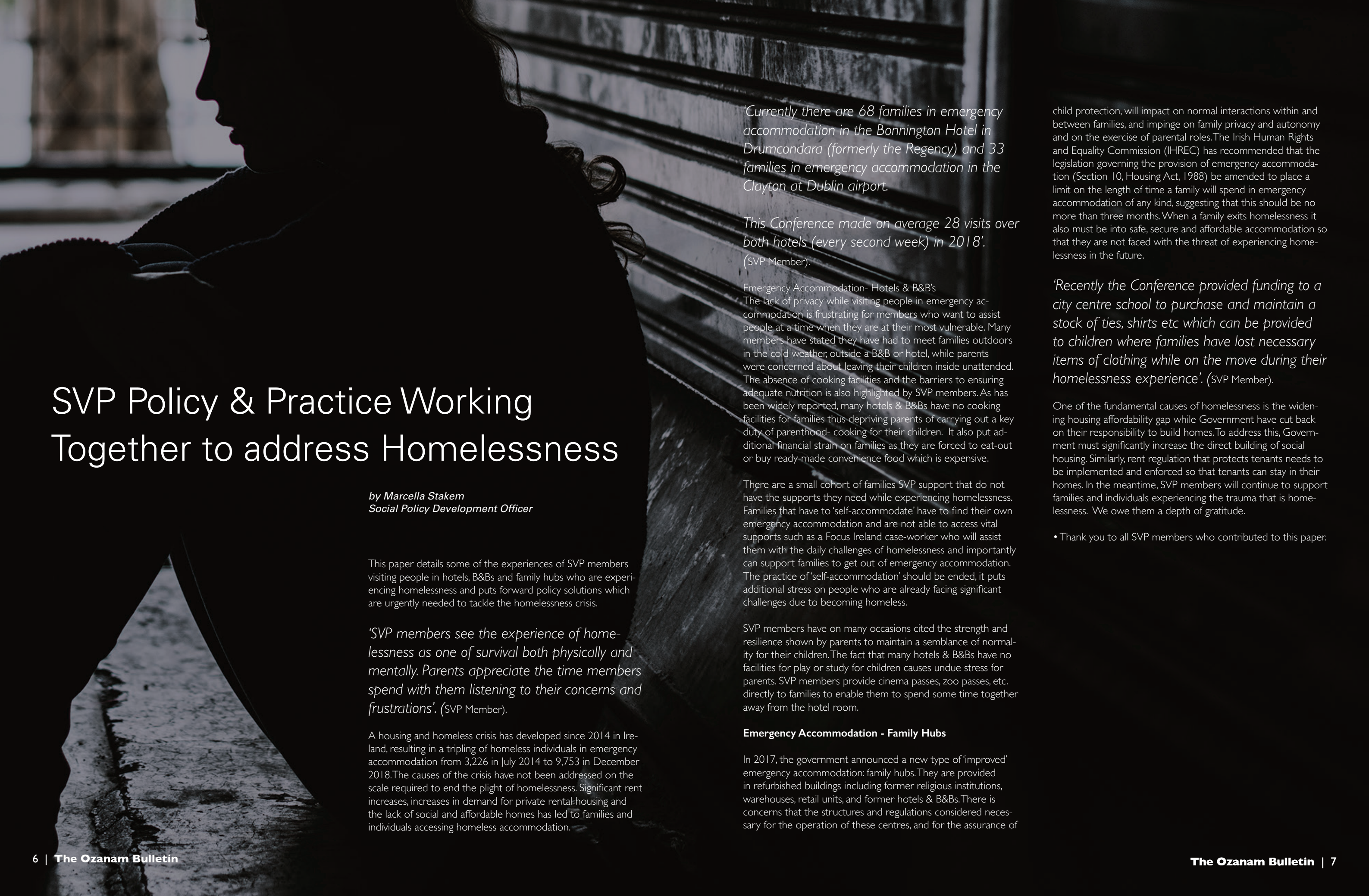
The Convention Centre, Dublin is situated at the heart of Dublin's transport hub with excellent public transport links available.

For details of how to travel by Train, Bus, Luas, Dart and Car visit:
www.theccd.ie/how-to-get-here

You can book online at:
<https://svp175years.eventbrite.ie>

Many Regions will also be organising buses to bring Members to the event. For these details, contact your Regional office.

If you have any queries please contact:
Emma or Karen
National Office, SVP House
91-92 Sean Mac Dermott Street
Dublin 1
Email: info@svp.ie
Phone: 01- 884 8200
Closing date for Registration: 1st April 2019



SVP Policy & Practice Working Together to address Homelessness

by Marcella Stakem
Social Policy Development Officer

This paper details some of the experiences of SVP members visiting people in hotels, B&Bs and family hubs who are experiencing homelessness and puts forward policy solutions which are urgently needed to tackle the homelessness crisis.

'SVP members see the experience of homelessness as one of survival both physically and mentally. Parents appreciate the time members spend with them listening to their concerns and frustrations'. (SVP Member).

A housing and homeless crisis has developed since 2014 in Ireland, resulting in a tripling of homeless individuals in emergency accommodation from 3,226 in July 2014 to 9,753 in December 2018. The causes of the crisis have not been addressed on the scale required to end the plight of homelessness. Significant rent increases, increases in demand for private rental housing and the lack of social and affordable homes has led to families and individuals accessing homeless accommodation.

'Currently there are 68 families in emergency accommodation in the Bonnington Hotel in Drumcondara (formerly the Regency) and 33 families in emergency accommodation in the Clayton at Dublin airport.

This Conference made on average 28 visits over both hotels (every second week) in 2018'. (SVP Member).

Emergency Accommodation- Hotels & B&B's
The lack of privacy while visiting people in emergency accommodation is frustrating for members who want to assist people at a time when they are at their most vulnerable. Many members have stated they have had to meet families outdoors in the cold weather, outside a B&B or hotel, while parents were concerned about leaving their children inside unattended. The absence of cooking facilities and the barriers to ensuring adequate nutrition is also highlighted by SVP members. As has been widely reported, many hotels & B&Bs have no cooking facilities for families thus depriving parents of carrying out a key duty of parenthood- cooking for their children. It also put additional financial strain on families as they are forced to eat-out or buy ready-made convenience food which is expensive.

There are a small cohort of families SVP support that do not have the supports they need while experiencing homelessness. Families that have to 'self-accommodate' have to find their own emergency accommodation and are not able to access vital supports such as a Focus Ireland case-worker who will assist them with the daily challenges of homelessness and importantly can support families to get out of emergency accommodation. The practice of 'self-accommodation' should be ended, it puts additional stress on people who are already facing significant challenges due to becoming homeless.

SVP members have on many occasions cited the strength and resilience shown by parents to maintain a semblance of normality for their children. The fact that many hotels & B&Bs have no facilities for play or study for children causes undue stress for parents. SVP members provide cinema passes, zoo passes, etc. directly to families to enable them to spend some time together away from the hotel room.

Emergency Accommodation - Family Hubs

In 2017, the government announced a new type of 'improved' emergency accommodation: family hubs. They are provided in refurbished buildings including former religious institutions, warehouses, retail units, and former hotels & B&Bs. There is concerns that the structures and regulations considered necessary for the operation of these centres, and for the assurance of

child protection, will impact on normal interactions within and between families, and impinge on family privacy and autonomy and on the exercise of parental roles. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) has recommended that the legislation governing the provision of emergency accommodation (Section 10, Housing Act, 1988) be amended to place a limit on the length of time a family will spend in emergency accommodation of any kind, suggesting that this should be no more than three months. When a family exits homelessness it also must be into safe, secure and affordable accommodation so that they are not faced with the threat of experiencing homelessness in the future.

'Recently the Conference provided funding to a city centre school to purchase and maintain a stock of ties, shirts etc which can be provided to children where families have lost necessary items of clothing while on the move during their homelessness experience'. (SVP Member).

One of the fundamental causes of homelessness is the widening housing affordability gap while Government have cut back on their responsibility to build homes. To address this, Government must significantly increase the direct building of social housing. Similarly, rent regulation that protects tenants needs to be implemented and enforced so that tenants can stay in their homes. In the meantime, SVP members will continue to support families and individuals experiencing the trauma that is homelessness. We owe them a depth of gratitude.

- Thank you to all SVP members who contributed to this paper.



Society of St Vincent de Paul

NATIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING CONFERENCE 2019

Vincentians Working Together in the Provision of Social Housing

Saturday 23rd March 2019
Day Event 10.30am to 4pm
Red Cow Moran Hotel, Dublin



Society of St Vincent de Paul

NATIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING CONFERENCE 2019

This year marks the third SVP Social Housing Conference with the event focused on recognising and celebrating the achievements of the Society and highlighting the important role of Vincentians in the provision of social housing. The Conference will highlight the benefits of Vincentians working together and driving forward as a collective Approved Housing Body, focusing on the work required in the implementation of the objectives of the Social Housing Strategic Plan with the overall aim to protect the Society's social housing assets and safeguard the interests of current and future tenants. The event will highlight the work associated with strengthening and enhancing the Society's Social Housing Governance, Financial Viability and Performance as we operate in a much changed regulatory and legislative environment.

Find out more about:

Working Together

highlighting what members can achieve by coming together at local and regional level, utilising tools and resources playing individual parts, being clear on roles and responsibilities and working as one in meeting our collective obligations.

Highlighting Achievements

showcasing good practices across our Housing Conferences in the areas of housing and tenant management.

Understanding Obligations

highlighting what is now required from the Society as a Landlord and as an Approved Housing Body.

Ensuring Quality Standards

highlighting what we need to do to achieve and maintain high quality housing standards and long-term viability.



SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

by Sr. Genieve, Kilcock

The spirituality of the members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul is based on and shaped by the Spirituality of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels. The early founders, including Blessed Frederick Ozanam and St Vincent de Paul, were inspired by Jesus' way of life...his openness to the Spirit in Prayer and Reflection and his unconditional love for the poor. To help him in his ministry, Jesus gathered a group around him for the twofold purpose of BEING WITH HIM TO BE SENT. In this reflection we will explore the implications of these two movements for Jesus and his disciples as well as for us as Conference Members.

Jesus' Personal Prayer life (with the Father)

What sustained Jesus in his life and ministry was his life of Prayer both PERSONAL and with his GROUP. He firmly believed "we cannot give what we have not got". His forty days in the desert was a long period of fasting and prayer seeking guidance from the Spirit of God regarding his future. This was not an easy time for him as he was tempted by the devil. Jesus overcame the temptation to give up and clarity came to him. He gathered a group of twelve men and some women followers to assist him in his new venture. Now he knew his mission was to the poor, the outcast the downtrodden of society (Luke 4). Jesus' personal prayer life sustained him in his work. This is shown in the gospels.

"In the morning, while it was still dark, he got up and went to a deserted place and there he prayed" - Mark :1.35

"He would always go off to a lonely place where he could be alone and pray"

"He went to the hillside to pray and spent the whole night in prayer to god" - Luke 6.12

The Gospels are full of such examples of Jesus moving away from the busyness of the crowds for a time of quiet reflection.

How Did Jesus Pray?

His prayer was simple, yet profound. At times, the gospels state, he spoke to his father about his ministry, the direction he was taking, the people he met and their needs, the decisions he had to make, the disciples he had chosen, the joys and the sorrows of the day. Other times he prayed "aloud and in silent tears" to the One who would save him... "father let this pass" Luke 22:42"; "my soul is sorrowful and even unto death" Matt; 26-38. In his suffering life, Jesus prayed especially when he was betrayed, misunderstood, criticised and deserted. Sometimes he asked his disciples to stay with him in his prayer: "Stay here and keep watch with me...watch and pray" there were times when Jesus was happy and surefooted about what he was doing...loved and followed by the crowds. For these times he gave thanks and

praise...for the wisdom he received, the insights into people and events, the power he had to heal and console and bring to life. "Father I thank you..."

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES REFLECT AND PRAY TOGETHER

From time to time Jesus took his disciples away from the crowds to a quiet place where they could be with him and rest, reflect and pray. Moved by the examples of Jesus praying, the disciples asked Jesus "Lord teach us how to pray" Luke 11:1-5. His response was to teach them the Lord's Prayer... Our Father. He also, by means of parable, illustrated the qualities of true and effective prayer; e.g. the parables of the importunate friend, the woman in the crowd, the centurion whose daughter was dying, the lost coin. He stressed that when we pray, we must go into our room, close the door and pray in secret. Not many words are needed as our father already knows what is in our hearts. As well as teaching his disciples how to pray during these times apart, there was an opportunity to assess the Ministry of the twelve, to teach and instruct them again and again about their attitudes towards the people they must meet. He guided them in their difficulties with the Scribes and Pharisees, stressing at all times the need for unity, forgiveness and humble service.

Each Vincentian Conference is a small community of faith mirroring the first Christian Community. That small group was called for a twofold purpose TO BE WITH HIM (in prayer and reflection) and TO BE SENT (on a mission to the poor). So too we are called to live out this twofold mandate by giving space and time to personal and group prayer so that our ministry to the poor and marginalised will be effective. Thus we will bear witness to the gospel values of unity, love and forgiveness. This does not mean members of a conference are "perfect". We too are broken and bruised and in need of forgiveness and reconciliation from time to time. But we must remember we are called in our weaknesses to befriend those who are weak, powerless and in need of our presence. So let us take heart and not be afraid to pray to the lovely words of the hymn:

*Will you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too...
I will hold the Christ light for you in the night time of your fear
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the Peace you long to hear.*

(Richard Gillard)

Adapted from John 13:



World day of Social Justice

by Caroline Fahey,
Head of Social Justice

The first meeting of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) in Ireland took place in December 1844 when 19 men, the founders of the Society in Ireland, met in a room near the Four Courts in Dublin and began to make plans to relieve the severe poverty, hunger and destitution they witnessed in the city 175 years ago.

SVP in Ireland today is involved in a wide range of activities with the aim of alleviating the effects of poverty and helping people who are struggling to get back on their feet. While Irish society has changed beyond recognition since the first meeting of the SVP in 1844, many of the same issues persist for individuals and families who are struggling. In 2017 SVP received almost 140,000 calls for help and spent over €500,000 every week helping individuals and families in need with the costs of food, fuel, housing and education.

In addition to providing this practical support and friendship, a key part of the mission of the SVP is to work for social justice. Frederic Ozanam, the founder of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, instructed the first members of the Society: "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". Approximately 325,000 people are living in consistent poverty in Ireland, including 132,000 children. Consistent poverty means living on a low income and going without essentials like adequate heating, clothing, furniture and not being able to afford to take part in social activities like meeting friends. SVP's 11,000 members across Ireland visit households living in poverty, often in poor quality, cold, over-crowded, expensive and insecure housing. Our members meet children and young people who are unable to benefit fully from access to education; we see parents struggling with unemployment and lack of access to decent jobs; we visit people seeking asylum living in direct provision centres for years on end and our members call into hotels, B&B and other emergency accommodation due to the scandal of homelessness. An emerging issue with the economy now almost at "full employment", is in-work poverty – with more than 100,000 people living below the poverty line in spite of having a job.

Many of the people SVP assists cannot afford a Minimum Essential Standard of Living, which is a standard which meets physical, psychological and social needs at a minimum, but socially acceptable, level. This means that they are dealing with a shortfall every week, a gap between the income they have and the income they need. Recent research carried out by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice on behalf of SVP, found that families with an inadequate income work very hard to make ends meet and use a myriad of coping strategies, going without adequate healthy food at times, juggling bills, borrowing money and cutting back on expenditure on clothing, personal

care, health, education, transport, household energy and social inclusion. Over time, resilience is eroded, debts begin to mount, health problems and other challenges are exacerbated. Living on a low income is very stressful. Parents try to protect their children from the effects of poverty but are not always able to: as one parent explained:

"My eight-year-old daughter said 'mummy I want a birthday party' and I had to say 'you're a big girl now, you don't need a birthday party.' It was very difficult to see the disappointment on her face. I had to explain that we didn't have the money."

In 2012 the Irish Government agreed a target to reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less by 2020 and to lift 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by that date. However, in spite of this ambition, poverty rates are not falling to the extent needed to meet the targets. Too many people are being left behind. The Global Goals for Sustainable Development aim to eradicate poverty in all its forms by 2030. If we are to meet our ambition of ending poverty, significant investment is needed in good quality, affordable and accessible public services, as well as improved income, supports for people both in and out of work. St Augustine said that "Charity is no substitute for justice withheld". Working for social justice is at the heart of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, and we will continue to challenge poverty and inequality and advocate for investment in policies which will make a difference in the lives of people who are struggling and will result in a fairer society for all of us.

Introducing the National Youth Committee



by Becca Gallagher,
National Youth Development Coordinator

"No work of charity is foreign to the society". The Young SVP Programme embodies Saint Vincent de Paul's mission statement through the extensive and diverse activities the programme immerses itself in. The National Youth Committee is made up of regional representatives in order to support and further the Young SVP programme. The Young SVP programme provides students with fantastic opportunities to make a positive change in their own communities.

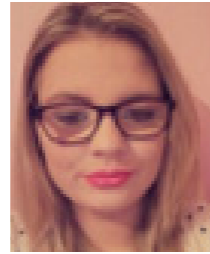
The National Youth Committee is made up of representatives from different regions and individuals with a particular interest in youth development within the Society. Regional representatives are responsible for ensuring that everyone in their region knows about the ongoing that work these students are doing. There are currently eight members in the National Youth Committee. We are all extremely proud of the work being carried out by the youth of Saint Vincent de Paul in all regions. We are excited for the future of Young SVP and we look forward to see it grow, involve and inspire more of the youth of today.

Here is a little bit about who we are and why we got involved;



Áine Stafford, Chair National Youth Committee

I got involved in Saint Vincent de Paul in 2012 while in Transition Year. I continued my involvement in SVP during my time in Mary Immaculate College. Growing up I had a strong awareness of Saint Vincent de Paul and the amazing work they do. My Dad joined Saint Vincent de Paul when I was just five years old this led to me developing that strong awareness of the organisation and understanding of the importance of the work they do. This was the main reason I was so eager to begin volunteering for SVP when I got the opportunity.



Sarah Flynn, Regional Youth rep, South East

My name is Sarah Flynn, I am 20 years old. I am from Waterford, Ireland. I am currently studying advanced social care level 6 down in Waterford College of Further Education. I joined Saint Vincent DePaul in late January early February of 2015 when I joined the Young SVP programme in school. I was elected the president of our school Conference. I joined Saint Vincent DePaul because of the enjoyment and the fulfilment in knowing that I can make a good impact and difference to someone's life that joining SVP has done for me. It has given me my voice.



Nessian Vaughan, Regional Youth Rep, East Region

I joined SVP in 2007 as I wanted to give practical expression to my concern for social justice and to provide support to people who were experiencing poverty and exclusion.

I am interested in reading (politics, theology and public affairs); sport (soccer, GAA, horse racing) and in keeping reasonably fit through daily walks.



Ruairi Fry, Regional Youth Rep, South West Region

I first became involved with SVP in 2002 to help out with the Christmas appeal to distribute presents and hampers. I continued with the Society through school helping in the Vincent's shop alongside with fundraising/collections.

In 2014 I joined the IT Tralee College Conference. In my first year I became P.R.O and in the following year I was elected as President. In June 2018 I represented SVP Ireland in Salamanca Spain at the international youth meeting. This is one of best and proudest moments being a Vincentian.

I got involved in the Society to help and support my local community. Being involved has motivated me to work in the community and to study social care. Volunteering has been a huge passion of mine with the Society being at the core of my personal and professional development.

Grainne Lee, (Chair 2015 – 2018)

Grainne has stayed involved with the committee since stepping down from her position last year, her inputs and vision remain an important part of the overall committee make up.



Aislinn Barry, Regional Youth Rep, West Region

My name is Aislinn. I am born and bred Galway. I have been involved with St Vincent De Paul since I was 16, starting off in the Curiosity Shop, and have been a member of The Society since 2013. I have had a love for helping people since a young age. I am an avid movie and music lover.



Hugh Fitzgibbon, Vice Chair of National Youth Committee and Colleges Representative

Hi! My name is Hugh. I am 21 years old and have been volunteering with SVP for 4 years now. I got involved with the Society through my college Conference in Trinity and mainly volunteer with children from underrepresented backgrounds. When I'm not volunteering with SVP, I like to go to the gym, listen to music and debate. I'm very excited to join the National Youth Committee this year!

Rachel Dunne, Committee Secretary

Rachel has recently joined the committee, she has been involved in the programme as President of Mary I Conference in Limerick and now brings a new view from her role within the Students Union set up. We are delighted to have her on board.

Becca Gallagher, National Youth Development Coordinator

Becca also sits as a non-voting member of the committee. Becca represents the youth development team and provides significant input in relation to the Young SVP Programme and youth development within the Society.

If you, or someone you know, has an interest in getting involved in the Committee please do contact me; aine.stafford@svp.ie for more information about what's involved.



Young SVP & One World Week 2018

Young SVP in the East Region were delighted to receive a grant to assist them with activities from the National Youth Council of Ireland as part of One World Week 2018.

Valerie Duffy, of the NYCI Development Education Programme said:

"The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relate to every aspect of our lives – poverty, hunger, health, education, climate, peace, equality, sustainability, gender equality, justice and partnerships. Young people around Ireland have taken up the challenge to change the world between now and 2030".

Young SVP was chosen from among a large volume of high quality applications from all over Ireland. The work of Young SVP members at a local level will play a vital role in supporting Ireland to create a better world for current and future generations and in setting Ireland on a path to achieving the SDGs.

What is One World Week?

One World Week is a week of youth-led awareness raising, education and action that takes place throughout Ireland during the third week in November every year. One World Week

invites youth groups and young people to think about the issue of Activism and young people – on a personal, local, national, and global level.

During One World Week young people learn about local and global justice issues and take action to bring about change. Youth groups all over the country run activities, public events, quizzes and debates, invite guest speakers, have intercultural evenings or express themselves through drama and art. Those interested can find out more about One World Week check out www.oneworldweek.ie and www.youthdev.ed.ie

Far & Near at Dublin Institute of Technology

On the 19th of November the SVP Conference in DIT hosted a workshop for their fellow students "Far & Near: Young SVP Thinking Globally & Acting Locally". Through the workshop we; developed our understanding of different approaches to development and considered the links between development and the work of Young SVP. We also thought about the power dynamics inherent in representing others in social justice work.

Thank you to DIT SVP for hosting the workshop!

Young SVP Schools Get Together

On the 22nd November students and teachers from nine different schools came together in Sunshine House Balbriggan for 'Young SVP Thinking Globally & Acting Locally'. The Get Together was officially opened by Mary Ita Niall from SVP in North County Dublin, who reminded us of the words of Frederic Ozanam "I would like to embrace the whole world in a network of love". Next, we heard from Bobby McCormack from Development Perspectives, who explained the background of the SDGs and encouraged us all to be vigilant in recognising our own blind spots. Becca Gallagher, SVP National Youth Development Co-ordinator, facilitated a session on Poverty in Ireland. After lunch, the students learned how to be peer facilitators and received certificates of achievement. They then returned to their schools to facilitate their own workshops of poverty for their classmates. A highlight of the day was Jack Natin, President of TCD SVP, inspiring us all to take action to make a difference.

A big thank you to Jack, Emma, Lara and Conall from TCD SVP for their invaluable support and enthusiasm on the day!

Thank you to the students, teachers, SVP members and staff and Bobby from Development Perspectives who supported the day. Thank you also to the NYCI and SVP North County for funding the event and Sunshine House for hosting.



The SVP GDPR Compliance Journey

What is GDPR?

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a new regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy for all individuals within the European Union, which came into law on the 25th May 2018. The GDPR aims to give more control to individuals over their personal data and to simplify and clarify the rules for organisations who collect and store any personal data.

This new legislation is something of a 'game changer' for everyone as it is prompting us all to review how we approach processing any personal data. Much of what we are being asked to reflect on is to put ourselves in the shoes of the data subject (people we assist) and ask if we are conducting our business appropriately in terms of Data Privacy and Data Protection for that individual.

So, what is the Society doing to become compliant with the GDPR?

The work started early in 2018 with a risk assessment of how the Society manages any personal data. As the Society manages significant amounts of personal information with many Members involved it was no surprise that there were a large number of risks identified. From the list of risks an implementation plan to support all areas around the Society to work towards compliance and reduce the risks began.

There are 4 major initiatives now in place to support Members and employees:

1. Set of GDPR Policies

In order to support everyone to understand what is required to be compliant the following policies have been approved and will become effective from January 1st 2019.

1 Overall Data Protection Policy for the Society	Reviewed/updated
2 Data retention and destruction Policy	New
3 Data Breach Policy	New
4 Email acceptable usage Policy	Reviewed/updated
5 Subject Access Rights Policy	New
6 Right to be forgotten Policy	New
7 (IT System) Access Control and Password Policy	New
8 IT Acceptable usage Policy – last updated Aug 2015	Review/update

The policies are all available to be viewed/downloaded on the CRM Knowledge Base for Members as well as on the HR SharePoint site for employees. Copies are available on request from your Regional Office.

2. Conference Booklet

A GDPR booklet has been developed to support Members to understand how to be compliant with GDPR when handling any personal data and carrying out the work of the conference. The Booklet can be used as a reference and will answer many of the questions that have been raised on how to ensure the Conference work is compliant with GDPR.

3. Roll out of official emails for Area Presidents and Conferences

One of the highest risks that was identified was not having SVP emails for the key official roles within the Society who could be communicating sensitive or personal information as part of the role.

For this reason official SVP emails are being rolled out to each Area President and Conference. Every Area President and Conference will be encouraged to use the official email for any SVP correspondence which will significantly reduce the risk of a data breach as well as increase compliance.

If any Area President or Conference President would like to find out about how to get an email then please contact your Regional Office.

4. Online training via the Privacy Engine System

GDPR can be very daunting and we have engaged a specialist company to assist with providing a central system, which has the most up to date training on all aspects of Data Protection. There are modules, which each Member can complete, online. Some regions have begun sending out invites to Members to complete the training so please take the time to log in and watch the videos if you are sent an invite. If you would like to be set up on the online training system please contact your Regional Office.

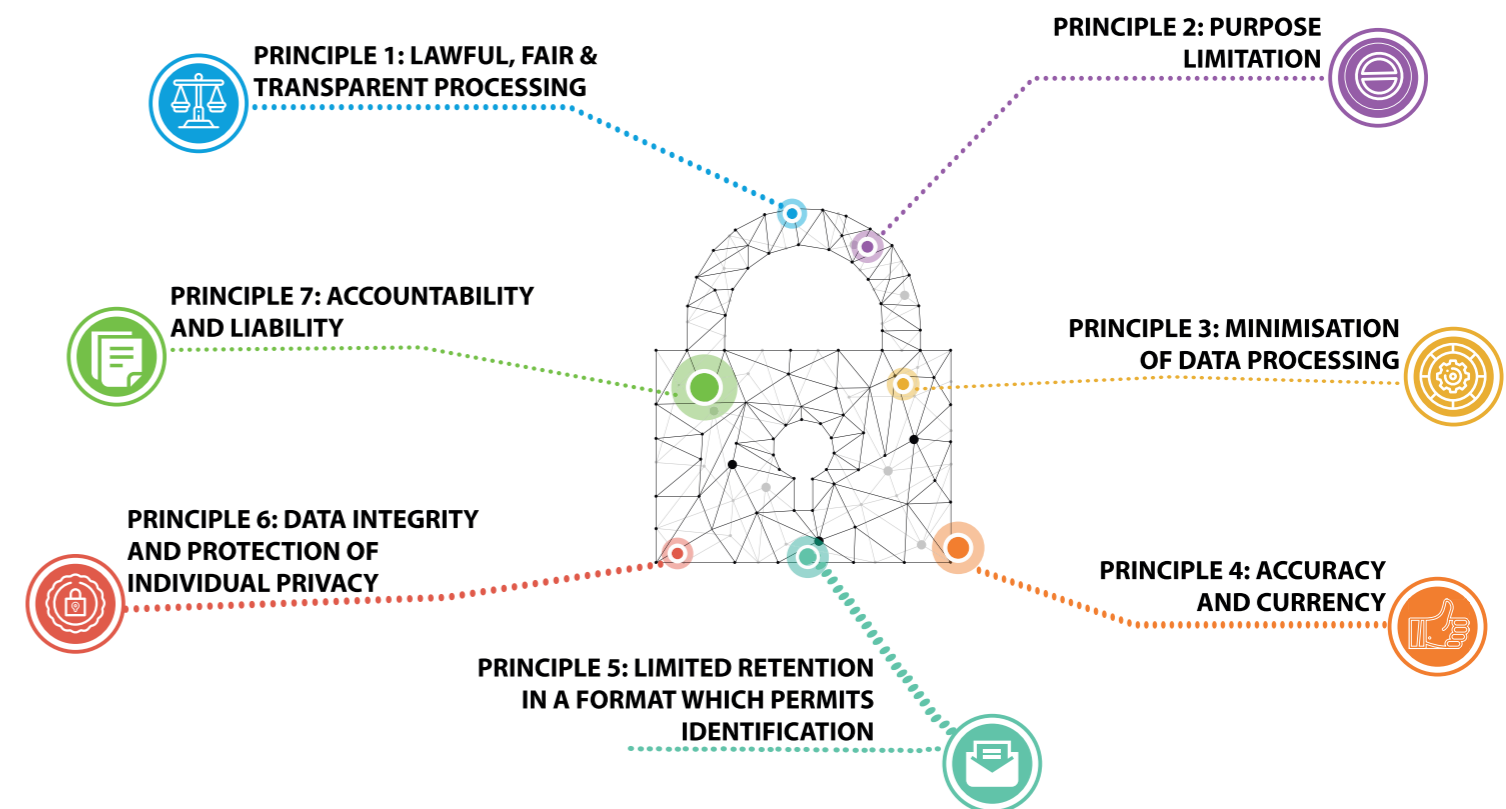
The journey to compliance with GDPR will take time for the Society. The willingness of Members and employees to engage and adapt has meant that the Society is making great strides to reduce the risks of being found in breach of the new laws significantly.

If there is any questions contact email: svp.gdpr@svp.ie

GDPR

What does GDPR mean to the work I do for SVP?

The 7 principles – know the obligations for the Society



No Child 2020

Building a national conversation



In January 2019, the Irish Times in partnership with Children's Rights Alliance began to publish a series of features and articles to build a national conversation on the causes of child poverty and what it will take to end it. The conversation is inspired by the one hundred year anniversary of the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil on 21 January 1919 and will continue throughout 2019, looking at different aspects of child poverty and the impact on children, families and society.

The Democratic Programme set out a bold and confident declaration of economic and social principles for the new Irish Government. Of special note is its promise that the first duty of Government was to provide for children:

"It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to secure that no child shall suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing, or shelter, but that all shall be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training as Citizens of a Free and Gaelic Ireland."

Thousands of children in 1919 lived in squalor and appalling poverty. Disease was rife, tenement life was cramped and the life chances for children living in poverty were grim. In 1919 the Society of St Vincent de Paul had been operating in Ireland for 75 years, with the first SVP members meeting in Dublin in 1844 in an effort to address the poverty, hunger and deprivation they witnessed.

One hundred years later and while child poverty takes on different guises today, it is still a blight on many childhoods. Today, there are over 100,000 children in Ireland growing up in households where there is consistent poverty. Ireland has the fastest growing economy in the Eurozone yet we have one of the highest child poverty rates in Europe.

Poverty isn't inevitable and there are solutions

Life for children living in poverty in 2019 can be very tough. These children are sometimes hungry, often don't do as well at school, and cannot always afford to participate in activities with their friends. They earn less when they become adults and have poorer mental health. It affects their health, wellbeing, anxiety levels and behaviour – every aspect of their lives.

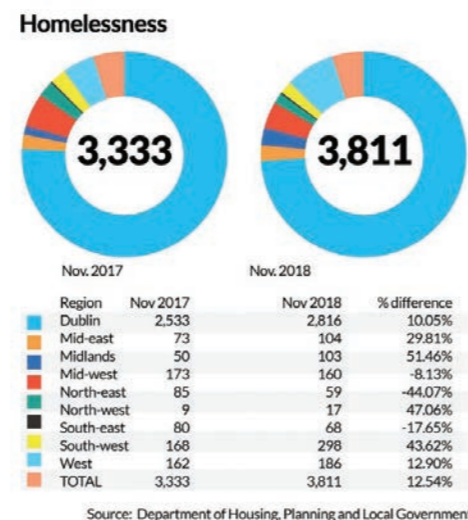
24,000 children were lifted out of consistent poverty between 2016 and 2017, however in order to meet its own target, the

Government still has to lift 69,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020. Looking forward, the forthcoming National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2019-2025) must take the opportunity to set ambitious targets to reduce poverty among children and families. Adequate incomes, both in and out of employment, must be combined with access to good quality, affordable public services in the areas of childcare, housing, education, health and energy if we are to make inroads into child poverty and break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

There has been some progress in recent years through increasing targeted payments to families on low incomes, including help with back-to-schools costs. There have also been increases to support asylum-seeking children living in direct provision and older children in their teens who are more likely to be in poverty. The introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme will be important in giving children access to quality childcare and relieving the financial burden on parents. However, much more needs to be done if the ideals set out in the 1919 Democratic Programme of the first Dáil are to become a reality for children living in poverty today.

If you would like to learn more about No Child 2020 visit the Children's Rights Alliance website at www.childrensrights.ie and join the conversation at <http://irishtimes.com/nochild2020>.

Read SVP's own research on child poverty here: www.svp.ie/storiesofstruggle



Thank you for supporting the SVP Annual Appeal



Thank you for helping save someone from a life of poverty.

Your generous support enables us to provide food, heat and other practical assistance to homes throughout Ireland this winter.



The Magic of Christmas Support

SVP_Ireland
SVP SUNDAY - This Christmas, over 140,000 people in communities across the country will ask SVP for help. Our Volunteers will be out in force collecting for our Annual Appeal this weekend at your local church. Thank you for all your support!! [#svpireland](http://svp.ie/donate) pic.twitter.com/uwVFTJVsRL



SVP_Ireland
 Here's a suggested shopping list of non-perishable items for our **@SVP_Ireland** Food Appeal. Buy items on the list with an expiry well into 2019. Drop to your local SVP svp.ie/dropoffpoints and we'll distribute it through our network of local volunteers. svp.ie/foodappeal pic.twitter.com/KWhjapXhVp

SVP Christmas shopping list

Snacks	Themed Food	Beverages	Cereals & Cakes/Biscuits
Christmas Cake / Bûche de Noël	Themed Fruit and veg trays	Tea and Coffee	Breakfast Cereals
Christmas Scones/Buns	Themed Vegetables	Sugar	Milk
Biscuits	Custard	Soft Drinks	Hotellies
Chocolate	Pastry / Themed Soup		Hot Chocolate
Mince Pies	Themed Spaghetti Bolognese		Hot Sauce
Crêpes	Beans		Hotch Potch
Popcorn	Themed Sauce / Dressing		
Truffles			
Themed / Christmassy Biscuits			
Themed / Christmassy Sweets			
Themed / Christmassy Jams			

Guidelines
 • Please ensure that all food items are non-perishable.
 • Please ensure that all food items have an expiry date well into 2019.
 • No alcohol please.

SVP - Ireland @SVP_Ireland · 24 Dec 2018
 Absolutely wonderful we wish you a fantastic Christmas and thank you so much for all the support! Well done 🙌🙌🙌



St. Joseph of Cluny, Killiney @StJosephOfCluny · 24 Dec 2018
 Wishing all our students, staff and all our #clunysfamily a very Merry Christmas! 🎄🎅🎁 We hope Santa is good to everyone 🙌🙌



St. Ronan's RS @stronanrs · 24 Dec 2018
 Some of the fantastic donations for our @SVP_Ireland food hampers organised by our school and prefect councils... thank you so much communitypartnership.ie parish.ie athleticschool.ie happyschool.ie @Young_SVP



SVP - Ireland @SVP_Ireland · 24 Dec 2018
 Members of **#Fermanagh Running Club** **#Kesh** Ederney presenting food parcels to St. Joseph's **#Ederney** for Christmas



SVP - Ireland @SVP_Ireland · 24 Dec 2018
 A big thank you to **@RedHat Cork** who held a Giving Tree and a fantastic bake sale in aid of SVP Cork! Have a great Christmas. 🙌🙌🙌



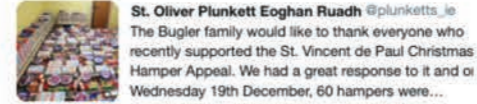
Bernard Joyce @BernardJoyce · 22 Dec 2018
 Lovely gesture by **#Mayo Footballers** **@MayoGAA** & **@cormhaigheo** to sing carols for **@SVP_Ireland** outside **@Elverys** **#Castlebar** **@castlebarNOW** lovecastlebar.com



sharon o shea @shazzoshea · 22 Dec 2018
@WaterfordFire **#Sounding** great today in Waterford for **@SVP_Ireland** **#HappyChristmas** and thank you for all you do 365 days a year! **@CorkCityFire** **@MulliganEddie** **@GreatFireRun**



SVP - Ireland @SVP_Ireland · 21 Dec 2018
 My goodness that is fantastic. So many people will be helped this Christmas because of the generosity of people like this 🙌🙌🙌



SVP - Ireland @SVP_Ireland · 21 Dec 2018
 So so sweet! Amazing little elves happy Christmas 🙌🙌🙌



SVP - Ireland @SVP_Ireland · 21 Dec 2018
 That's totally amazing 🙌🙌 thank you so much. Santa definitely has his on these very good and kind children 🎅🙌🙌



SVP_Ireland
 Jack had his final exams today. But his mam had her hours cut. He had to work to help put food on the table. There was no hope of him making it. That is unless https://t.co/60yB8j9hQJ the phone to SVP... and you are there to answer. DONATE: svp.ie/finalexam pic.twitter.com/WDL5U6FCLZ



SVP_Ireland
 Will you donate to our Annual Appeal. You can save someone from a life of poverty. [#SVPireland](http://svp.ie/donate) pic.twitter.com/4Kq4mN4D



SVP_Ireland
 Wow check out the amazing amount of shoeboxes collected by St Enda's and Ardoyne GAC **@AontroimGAA** **#SaffronAid3** pic.twitter.com/gJ43GJEDWv



SVP - Ireland @SVP_Ireland · 24 Dec 2018
 A bucket collection was held outside of the Mount St Joseph Abbey, Roscrea in aid of SVP. Pictured are SVP's Conty Cunningham & John Lupton, Regional President of St Vincent de Paul being presented with a cheque for €1750 by Mr. Grealish, Dom Malachy & some first-year students.



The Salvation Army @salvationarmyuk · 24 Dec 2018
 A big thank you to everyone who donated to our **#ChristmasFamilyAppeal**, run in partnership with **@SVP_Ireland** and supported by **@Transtek**, **Ni** and **@U10radio**. This year we collected 15,000 Christmas toys and gifts for disadvantaged children in Northern Ireland!



Monaghan Institute @MonaghanInst · 21 Dec 2018
 Thank you Monaghan Institute Student Union, Students & Staff for the tremendous response to our Christmas St Vincent De Paul food appeal. We have been informed already that our donations have been distributed to families throughout the county! **@SVPireland** **#SupportingTheCommunity**



ISL Waste Management @ISL_Waste · 21 Dec 2018
 More **#Christmas** dress up pictures!



St. Louis Monaghan @StLouisMonaghan · 23 Dec 2018
 Well done to our Transition Year students who helped the wonderful **@SVP_Ireland** members in Monaghan pack their Christmas Hampers over the weekend. Well done girls. We are very proud of you!



Bishop Denis Nulty @BishopDNulty · 23 Dec 2018
 Delighted to visit **@newbridgeparish** this morning applauding the great work of Newbridge Share Food Appeal, **@SVP_Ireland** and the local schools who support those in greatest need at this time **@KANDLEI** **@CathNewsireland**



RE Department SMG @RE_stmarys · 21 Dec 2018
 Another incredible response to our annual KS4 **@SVP_Ireland** Family Gift Appeal!



Intersport Elverys @Elverys · 21 Dec 2018
 The **@MayoGAA** Senior team along with **@cormhaigheo**, will be singing Carols outside our store on Bridge Street tomorrow from 2-3pm for **@SVP_Ireland**. Make sure you are there. **#mayogaa** **#gaa**

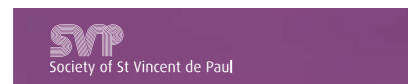
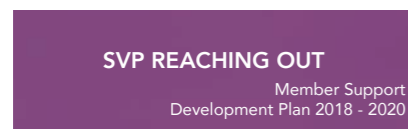


SVP Reaching Out 2019

by **Brendan Hennessy**,
National Member Support Development Officer

How interesting in the year of Brexit and all that, that SVP's national development plan is called Reaching Out. Why Reaching Out? Because it is only when we value those we assist, our volunteers and our staff that we can truly say that SVP is 'Reaching Out'.

Reaching Out was endorsed by the National Council of September 2018 in a most Vincentian way – in the spirit of action. Each of our eight regions committed themselves to undertake four achievable actions under the headings of: Responding to Need; Member/Volunteer Supports; Recruitment and Member Development.



In order for SVP to achieve these actions Reaching Out stressed the collaborative nature of the plan:

“Each priority area will need the full support of the membership and staff in agreeing key actions to help effect real change, thus ensuring the plan makes a significant difference to those the Society serves and to the members who so unselfishly give up their time when delivering on the work of our founder Frederic Ozanam. The role of the leadership of the Society (Conference, Area and Regional Presidents) in delivering this plan will be the key to its success”.

Reaching Out envisages National and Regional teams working together to support and oversee the plan. Regional Councils should decide the actions to implement the priorities identified at National Council. Recognising that chosen priorities cross regional boundaries, the MSO team will share ideas and perspectives from around the country. Many of these priorities can be achieved at local level through the likes of area gatherings and by sharing resources, others however require a national approach and consensus. Reaching Out is ambitious, not only

in what it aims to achieve, but also in how we set about achieving it.

“It is our hope that the benefits of Reaching Out will be far reaching. Frederic Ozanam asks us to Reach Out to those who need us most, we are seeking the active engagement of all members in its delivery. We believe it is this active participation that will support the Society in continuing its good work to those we serve in the most effective way possible in the years to come.”

Amongst the local actions envisaged for 2019 are:

- Skills based training such as active listening.
- Methods on how to review and reflect on cases and casework.
- Resources and ideas on assessment of need.
- The communication and promotion of best practice and guidance.



At National level Reaching Out envisages in the longer term that SVP undertakes:

- A locally driven national volunteer campaign.
- A review of communications and the implementation of recommendations.
- To provide a high-quality member support service to our volunteers

Through the Area Gatherings of 2017-18 the Member Support team have seen first hand the active participation of members and volunteer leaders in a new development in SVP. Over 2000 members gave up an extra few hours of their time to experience something new, and the positive response was overwhelming. In that context the objectives of Reaching Out are not 'new' but it is a way for SVP as an organisation to hone our skills, to learn from one another and, most importantly, to provide a high-quality volunteer service to those who seek our help.



St. Colman's Conference, Macroom, Co. Cork

by **Sean O' Leary**

St. Colman's Conference was founded in 1938. The parish Priest of Macroom at the time was Canon Barrett who was left the proceeds of the sale of a house by a retired RIC Officer by the name of Con Lynch. The legacy was for the establishment of a Conference of the Society in Macroom. Canon Barrett called a meeting, and the following officers were elected; President: J.M Fitzgerald, Treasurer: Dan Murphy, Secretary: Paddy Desmond.

The new Conference was affiliated to the North Cork Area.

In 1987 the President of St. Colman's realised that the geographical area around Macroom was much too large for one Conference to service, so steps were taken to establish smaller Conferences in outlying parishes. As a result, Ballyvourney was established to cover Clondrohid, Carrignaima and Kilnamartyra. Naomh Ronan covered Ballingeary and Inchigeela. Kilmurry covered Cloughduv, Canovee and Aherla/Ovens and Aghabullogue covered Coachford and Rylane. The reduced-in-size Macroom Conference covered Macroom town, Ballinagree, Rusheen and Kilmichael. Cork Regional President Mr. Jack Barriscale decided it was now time to establish a new area to include the newly created Conferences as well as Blessed Virgin, Bandon, with Mr. Gerry Holland replacing Mr. J.R. Dowling as President. The new area to be known as Mid Cork, with Sean O' Leary of Macroom Conference as Area President.

In the early years of the Macroom Conference, there were no females allowed to join until in 1974 when Noelle Moylan and Maureen O' Leary were invited to join. There are now more

females than males in the Conference.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Macroom Conference a celebratory mass was held by Most Rev. John Magee, Bishop of Cloyne, in Macroom church on the 20th May 1988. The National President of the Society, Mr Frank Cox, gave the homily. He was the first lay person to do so in Macroom church.

Another important date in the history of Macroom Conference was the celebrating of the 150th anniversary of the Society in Ireland. It was marked with the first concert to be held at the internationally known Green Glens Millstreet on the 20th March 1994, featuring Cara O' Sullivan (soprano) & Bridget Knowles (contralto) with the Cork Youth Orchestra under conductor Conor O' Ceallachan. A superb night of music and song was enjoyed by the large crowds from Cork and Kerry who attended.

To raise funds for the Ethiopian Famine Relief, the Conference chose a ballroom that had been closed for many years. With the goodwill of the owners, the Kelleher family of Kelleher's garage Macroom, the Montrose Ballroom was made available to us. A once-off license was procured, and as soon as the fire officer was satisfied with the safety aspect, it was "full steam ahead". Joe Mac and the Dixies were booked for the once-off opening of a much-loved ballroom, supported the "Lee Sound", on the 19th January 1985. The crowd was so large that all doors had to be opened as a safety precaution. A pleasant footnote is that a local anonymous person paid the full cost of the band on the night.

Tackling energy poverty and climate change: Two sides of the same coin?

by Tricia Keilthy,
Social Policy Development Officer



SVP's work in communities across the country demonstrates that energy poverty remains a major issue affecting large volumes of households, estimated at up to 28% of the population. Every week, SVP members meet hundreds of individuals and families living in cold, damp and poorly insulated homes, struggling to meet the costs of their utility bill. In 2017, fuel and utilities represented 14.5% of overall expenditure on direct assistance to households.

“There are six of us with two bedrooms, living room, kitchen and bathroom. We have one small heater, and we move it from room to room.” (VPSJ/SVP 2018 Stories of Struggle)

Although energy poverty remains a significant issue for SVP, there has been a lot of progress concerning this issue over the past number of years. Better engagement from suppliers and the introduction of pre-pay meters has led to a significant reduction in the number of disconnections. This has been coupled with a much greater investment in energy efficiency schemes for low-income households.

However, significant challenges remain. In the past 12 months, most suppliers have increased their prices, adding at least €300 per year to the average bill. Gaps in energy efficiency schemes are also limiting progress on tackling energy poverty. For example, private renters are much more likely to live in poorly insulated homes, but it is very difficult to access grants for energy upgrades as they are only currently available to homeowners. Although the fuel allowance has increased in the past two budgets, it is still 21% lower than in 2010 once you take into account recent price increases.

Another factor that could potentially make the experiences of the people SVP assist much more difficult is an increase in the carbon tax. Research has shown that an increase in the carbon tax, as it is currently designed, would hit low-income households harder, particularly those living in rural areas. A significant increase in the tax could potentially add €10.50 to a bag of coal, €2.25 on a bale of briquettes, and 26.5 cents on a litre of diesel. And unless there is greater investment in public transport and energy efficiency schemes, low-income households will have to absorb these costs as they are unable to afford the switch to climate-friendly alternatives.

“I can't afford to fill the oil tank; I can fill a barrel with kerosene from time to time, or get fifty euro of briquettes or coal. It's a big home, but very cold and [my daughter] is asthmatic.

(VPSJ/SVP 2018 Stories of Struggle)

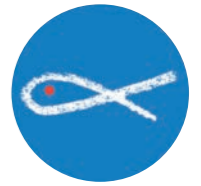
While the impact of a carbon tax on poor households here in Ireland is of concern, we also know that poorer communities across the globe are more likely to experience the effects of climate change such as flooding and drought. The injustice of this is all the more apparent once you consider that the wealthiest 10% of the world's population are responsible for 50% of global emissions. Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of this generation, and significant efforts are required from Governments across the world to avoid environmental catastrophe. At present Ireland is one of the worst performers in reducing carbon emissions and if we don't meet our climate action commitments we face fines of up to €500 million. It is therefore imperative that SVP are part of the climate change discussions at local and national level so that measures are put in place to adequately protect low-income households from the costs of climate action.

Practically, this means ensuring low-income groups, regardless of tenure, can live in energy efficient homes, providing better access public transport in both rural and urban areas and putting in place protections from future energy price hikes through the introduction of social tariffs. In the short, to medium term, it will be crucially important that energy-poor households are compensated from any increases in the cost of fuel, as a result of carbon pricing, through the tax and benefit system.

It is clear that if Ireland is to be successful in addressing both climate change and energy poverty, the Government need to see both issues as being on two sides of the same coin and, critically, of equal importance. That's why the principles of climate justice, such as safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change equitably, must underpin all policy decisions.



SVP AROUND THE WORLD



How international president balances his full-time job with his volunteer role with SVP



International president Renato Lima was in the USA in January. While in Phoenix Arizona he told a local radio station that that every year he tries to visit around 15 countries even though he has a full-time job outside his volunteer work for SVP.

He was also interviewed by The Catholic Sun where he expanded on how he juggles his time. It's God, family, church, St. Vincent de Paul, he said.

Apart from his international duties with SVP he has a one-hour weekly meeting and a three-hour weekly home visits with his local Conference. He doesn't do emails on the weekends

He undertakes his international travels during his holidays and other time he can take off from his full-time work.

Australia

SVP helps spearhead campaign to reduce cost of living pressures

This scenario will be familiar to SVP in Ireland.

In the run-up to local elections in March the SVP is spearheading a campaign demanding urgent action from political parties in New South Wales to reduce cost of living pressures

The campaign wants an end to no-grounds evictions, 5000 social houses built each year, mandated minimum efficiency standards for these homes and an end to homelessness by 2030.

The campaign says the NSW housing crisis is the worst in Australia. One-third of voters rent and almost 300,000 households are in rental stress, struggling to pay for basics like food and power bills.



France

A useful use of Facebook

In January 2018, Jean-Charles Mayer, responsible for communications within SVP in France founded a Facebook group called, "What if we spoke about loneliness and isolation" ("Et si on parlait de solitude et d'isolement"). This group, has become a very useful tool for identifying and helping people who are suffering, brings together some 1,500 people across France. It starts from the fact that many people suffer from loneliness behind their screens, despite the incredible progress of communication.

It's a closed group, to preserve confidentiality, but anyone can join and everyone is free to say whatever they want. The rule is kindness and fraternity," says the founder.

Since its creation, it has met with growing success. Every day, there are about 10 posts, which themselves generate hundreds of comments. "We have shy people who confide through a computer. People answer each other; the community members support each other," says Jean-Charles Mayer. He explains that moderators are there to ensure that the desired spirit of caring is preserved. If they witness really dramatic situations, they contact the person directly and send a team to meet him.

"It's not a communication tool; it's really a tool to help people," he said

USA

SVP worker charged with stealing more than \$550,000 from the Society



This story shows the importance of good governance and proper procedures.

An SVP worker in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin has been charged with a felony for stealing more than \$550,000 between January 2011 and May 2018 from St. Vincent De Paul.

Donna M. Larue, 60, who worked for the Society as a book-keeper since 2009, was charged with forging signatures on checks and cashing them. Larue was the only person in charge of facilitating donations from nine churches in Sheboygan County.

According to the complaint, 201 cheques were identified as either forged or written without permission for a total of \$557,715. While most of the cheques were addressed to Larue herself, five were issued to other people and two were issued to the apartment complex where she lived at the time.

Vincentians, Resilient by Nature

by Renato Lima de Oliveira,
16th General President of the
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul



In addition to the other qualities of Vincentians, such as an interested spirit and a desire to build a better world, we could also add, resilience ... a difficult concept to understand, but one that says much about who we are. The word is often used in Exact Sciences (specifically in Physics) and designates the property of some materials to accumulate energy when pressure or stress is applied and then, these materials are able to return to their original state without undergoing any deformation.

The word resilience comes from the Latin “*resilio*,” which means to return to the natural state. The concept of resilience in human science can be summed up in the following manner: the ability of an individual to behave in a healthy in the midst of an insane environment [1], that is, the ability of the individual to overcome and cope with adversity. In other words, resilience is the ability of people to deal appropriately with the challenges and pressures of every-day life.

In the world of business and human resources, people are seen as resilient when they reveal their ability to be flexible and strong, knowing how to overcome obstacles and continue to carry out their responsibilities with the same vigour and determination. An example of such resilience is seen in the pole that is used by athletes when competing in the high jump ... the pole bends to its limit without breaking and ultimately enables the athlete to cross over the bar at incredible heights.

Vincentians, by nature, are resilient. They endure the hardships of life, especially setbacks when attempting to assist families who are in need. People are resilient when they accept things as they are, (seeing the positive in a situation and looking for ways to get the most out of a difficult situation). People are also resilient when they forgive others and give such persons a second chance (acting in such manner, Vincentians reveal their faith in the fact that unjust situations can be made just).

All the members of the Vincentian Conferences and of the 150 branches of the Vincentian Family are resilient since they have the ability to endure the vicissitudes of life without losing their hope in the ideals that guide their journey through life as well as their ministry on behalf of others. Resilient men and women are not disappointed by other people, do not judge or place labels on others. They know how to be balanced and focus their activ-



ity on that which is righteous and virtuous.

Vincentians are resilient by nature, and that is why their “*inner flame*” never fades, not even in the midst of disappointment and/or discouragement (be it disappointment/discouragement with people or with institutions). Vincentians never give up, but continue to seek ways to resolve the problems that might arise in their group or that might have to be confronted by the men and women who are being assisted.

This ability to problem-solve often becomes contagious to the families in need because they are encouraged to affirm their gifts and abilities. Resilient Vincentians, through a cultivation of empathy, attempt to identify with and express their solidarity to those men and women who experience so many different forms of suffering. Horace [2], the great Italian thinker, said that “*adversity has the effect of exposing talents that, in favourable circumstances, would have remained hidden*” [3].

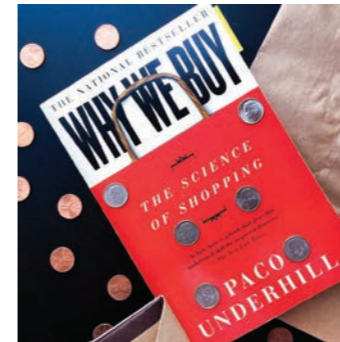
So, my dear Vincentians, let us use our ability to be resilient as we minister on behalf of the most disadvantaged members of society.

- [1] Rutter, M. *Developing Minds: Challenge and Continuity across the Life Span*. United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 1992.
- [2] Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65 BC – 8 BC) was distinguished Latin lyrical poet.
- [3] Horace. *Odes: Book II, ode X*.

Exploring Vincent's Modern Charity Shops

at the 4th SVP National Retail Conference

On Monday 10th June 2019, The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) will hold its 4th National Retail Conference in University of Limerick and is delighted to welcome Paco Underhill as the keynote speaker. Mr. Underhill is founder of US-based market research company Envirosell and author of the international best seller "Why We Buy – The Science of Shopping".



National Retail Development Manager, Dermot McGilloway states:

"Consumer confidence in Ireland is still very fragile as a direct result of a high personal tax burden, the continued high cost of housing, subdued wage growth and uncertainty over Brexit. The customer wants more for their Euro than ever before. For that reason, the focus of the SVP National Retail Conference in 2019 will be on how we deliver even more value and quality to the hard-pressed consumer".

For example, the leisure retail sector which includes restaurants and bars invest as much developing their décor, ambience and layout of the establishment as they do on the menu and adopt a "sell the sizzle not the steak" approach. From a Vincent's perspective, Mr. McGilloway noted that the modern charity shop customer has come to expect exceptional value for money as standard and will now gravitate towards the charity retailer who can also provide an educational and recreational experience that strongly promotes the values and ethos of the charity. McGilloway adds that the Irish consumer, particularly the millennial generation, enjoy the thrill of the "treasure hunt" in their local charity shop but also expect to access these products online and stresses that there is plenty of strong competition in this field. Mr. McGilloway remarked that: "the National Retail Team is fully committed to meeting and exceeding the expectations of the modern consumer at every touchpoint during customer contact."

Building on this theme at the National Retail Conference, other speakers will include: The Chief Executive of the UK Charity Retail Association, Mr. Robin Osterley and a speaker from Brown Thomas in Ireland. The National Retail Team has also organized a supplier exhibition and an Awards ceremony to celebrate the magnificent contribution of shop staff and volunteers in 2018.

It is anticipated that this Conference will draw some interest

The poster is dark blue with a gold glitter border at the top. It features the text: 'Invitation National Retail Conference June 10th, 2019 University of Limerick'. Below this, it lists the agenda: '10:00 Supplier Exhibition', '3:30 Keynote Speaker Mr. Paco Underhill (Paco is a best-selling author, Retail Psychologist, & founder of US market research company Envirosell)', and '7:30pm Awards Dinner'. A quote on the right says: 'SVP would like to acknowledge the contribution of our head line and secondary sponsors who have made this event possible'. At the bottom, there are logos for 'VINCENT'S' and 'SVP Society of St. Vincent de Paul'.

from the international network of SVP charity shops, so anyone interested in attending is encouraged to book early to avoid disappointment. One place has been allocated for each shop in the national network.

For further information please email dermot.mcgilloway@svp.ie, check Eventbrite or call 01 8198407.

This event has been sponsored by:

Headline Sponsor



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Retail Compliance and Health and Safety Focus January/February 2019

by Vincent O'Kane,
National Retail Compliance and Monitoring Officer

As our Retail Shop and Order Fulfillment Centre network continues to expand across Ireland successfully, it is crucial that central communication is clear and concise to support our excellent team of Shop Managers and Volunteers. It is also essential that all shops in each Region are receiving the same transparent message.

The safety of our Staff and Volunteers is paramount, and many policies and procedures are introduced to support all aspects of health and safety for our teams, and that all necessary internal regulations are being adhered to.

In January and February 2019, the Retail team held a number of Compliance and Health and Safety training workshops across the island of Ireland covering all eight Regions.

All 227 of our Vincent's Shops were invited to attend these sessions to provide the Shop Manager and Senior Volunteer population with the opportunity to be refreshed on current policies. These policies include Customer Care; Health and Safety; Shop Security; Social Media; and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). The attendees at these meetings were also updated on our current strategy on Volunteer Recruitment for the Retail Shops for 2019

We are planning to run similar sessions for our six, (soon to be eight) Order Fulfillment Centre units in the next few weeks which will have a key focus on Health and Safety and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) being introduced and rolled out across the eight OFC units.

In addition, external regulatory authorities such as The Charity Regulator, The HSA (Health and Safety Authority) Fire Service Authorities as well as the European Union (amongst others) will have directives we must respect and comply with (as well with all the similar authorities associated with our Retail Shops in the North). At the workshops' attendees were made aware of the expectations the external authorities will have in how the Vincent's shops operate and what assistance is available from National Office when required.

In March 2019, we will be introducing a new updated Health and Safety folder whereby each shop and OFC will be working with the same documentation concerning directives to risk assessments, accident/incident reporting, and working in a safe environment for our staff, volunteers and our customers.

In October 2018, the Regional Management team and OFCs managers all successfully completed QQI Level 6 Manual Handling Training (Train the Trainer) Course. This now permits the team to roll out manual handling training to all our managers and volunteers across the retail network. This training will commence early Spring 2019, and all volunteers and staff in our network must receive this training.

Other aspects of retail compliance we are reviewing and updating include cash and stock management, and with the on-going introduction of EPOS (Electronic Point of Sale) Again the objective is around transparency of cash and stock. EPOS will give our operation a massive platform whereby sales and revenues for the Society will grow and shop and OFC network are working closely with each other in ensuring we have the right product in the right location at the right time – especially beneficial around the key seasons (e.g. Christmas/Summer/and key events in the promotional calendar). The Compliance and Health and Safety journey will develop and evolve with time for the Vincent's Shops and Order Fulfillment Centers. We intend to make this path as clear and informative for all our managers, staff, volunteers (and customers) so that the experience in a Vincent's shop is a positive and safe environment for all involved with our Society.

Retail Volunteers – Volunteering Creates Memories



Volunteering can offer you:

- A chance to meet new people.
- The opportunity to use your skills to raise money for our work.
- Training and support to build new skills.
- Experience in customer care, merchandising, sorting and pricing, branding, sales, team work, fashion and communication.
- A Manual handling certification (in OFC's).
- A chance to be part of a local, regional, and national SVP community.

There are currently have volunteering opportunities in over 220 Vincent's shops across Ireland and seven Order Fulfillment Centres in Dublin, Waterford, Cork, Tralee, Nenagh, Athenry and Drogheda.

We are always looking for enthusiastic, energetic people who are willing to give a minimum of a 3 hour commitment per week. To find the full list and contact details of Vincent's shops and OFCs nationwide visit www.svp.ie/shops.

To apply visit your local Vincent's shop or OFC or email: retail-volunteer@svp.ie



VOLUNTEERING...IT'S GOOD FOR YOU

96% of volunteers say that it makes them happier.



BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING



To find out more visit www.svp.ie/volunteer

It is our vision in our Vincent's shops to promote friendship, social justice, self-sufficiency and a great value and stimulating shopping experience in the most customer-focused charity retailing environment in Ireland.

This Spring we will be running a volunteer drive – Volunteering Creates Memories – inviting the public to be a part of this vision and to be active in helping local communities while building an extraordinary life experience.

It is well known that volunteering brings many personal benefits.





Bailieborough Fashion Show 2018

by Stephen McGuire,
Shop Manager

30 years ago a Bailieborough charity known as Fred's Fashions (now known as St. Anthony's Conference) held a fashion show, and it was decided that we would commemorate this event with another show to be held in the town. When the manager announced to the Conference meeting that we should hold one on the run up to Christmas, there was a variety of comments such as "It would be great to show the town exactly what we sell".

After a lengthy discussion the Conference agreed on the idea, it is then our troubles really began! I started by making out a timetable of events over the 9 weeks- lead-in period and then put up a notice asking for people to commit to a variety of jobs on the evening such as selling raffle tickets, manning the door to assisting the models. We then wrote to all the local business to enquire about sponsorship and hand delivered the letters with a call back by us 3 weeks later to see if the business could help us. We were amazed at the generosity of the local business's in general.

We then set about doing it as professionally as possible and tendered for a stage company to provide the catwalk and lights, a DJ to play the music and an MC for the evening. The next job on the agenda was to find models so we coerced, cajoled and

pleaded with staff and customers alike to model for us on the night. We eventually received commitments from five ladies and two very brave gentlemen comprised of customers, Tus and volunteers.

The night arrived and we were delighted that our National Retail Manager, Dermot McGilloway, and our representative on the Regional Retail Committee, John Rooney joined us for the evening. After our initial introduction by our President Eilish McKenna, it was down to business. The fact that we had a great team of volunteers helping with the outfits and the professionalism of our MC, Peter Murtagh the night went off without a hitch.

Due to the generosity of our various sponsors and gifts for the raffle (22 prizes) we made an amazing €2,000. A great night was had by all and I would encourage other Conferences to consider it as we have seen a fantastic new set of customers shopping with us which has seen our weekly takings increase substantially. All it takes is good planning and buy in from all the staff volunteers and customers.



Shops or Order Fulfilment Centres



for:

- Fulfilment*
- Friendship*
- Fun*
- Experience*
- Sense of community*



Volunteering creates memories

www.svp.ie

VOLUNTEERS JOIN US

Work in your local Vincent's shop or Order Fulfilment Centre

It is our vision in our shops – Vincent's – to promote friendship, social justice, self-sufficiency and a great value and stimulating shopping experience in the most customer -focused charity retailing environment in Ireland.

Would you like to be a part of this vision?

We have volunteering opportunities in over 220 shops across Ireland and seven Order Fulfilment Centres in Dublin, Waterford, Cork, Tralee, Nenagh, Athenry and Drogheda.

WE OFFER YOU

- A chance to meet new people
- The opportunity to use your skills to raise money for our work
- Training and support to build new skills
- Gain experience in customer care, merchandising, sorting and pricing, branding, sales, team work, fashion, communication
- Manual handling certification (in OFC's)
- Be part of a local, regional, and national SVP community

WE ARE LOOKING FOR

Enthusiastic, energetic people who are willing to give a minimum of a 3 hour commitment per week. To find the full list and contact details of Vincent's shops and OFCs nationwide visit www.svp.ie/shops

HOW TO APPLY

- Visit your local Vincent's shop or OFC.
- Email retailvolunteer@svp.ie

FOR MORE INFO

Call from ROI 018386990, NI 00353 1 8386990 or Email retailvolunteer@svp.ie

Be active in helping your community and build an extraordinary life experience



Inspiration from SVP Zimbabwe

by Michael Kenny, Twinning Officer, North East and Midlands Region

"Giddy" is a combination of excitement and delight. That is my sense after seeing the marvellous work done by the SVP Zimbabwe National Council and Chinoyhi Conference, and Caritas Zimbabwe in renovating and restoring Nazareth Shelter over the last four years as part of the SVP Twinning programme.

Nazareth Shelter in Chinoyhi, a bustling market town 90 minutes by road North West of Harare, Zimbabwe, is a home for destitute older people who have no one to care for them in old age. This is relatively unusual in Southern African culture as families always care for their older folk. However, every so often, an older person becomes orphaned from their family and, in a very poor society with no social protection, they fall on very hard times. Like Vincentians, SVP Zimbabwe and Caritas in the Diocese of Chinoyhi responded. Over the years the 40 bed Nazareth Shelter had fallen into disrepair and Diocese of Chinoyhi did not have the resources for renovation.

The situation was brought to the attention of Mary Toole, St Oliver's SVP Conference Navan member and Twinning officer for the North East and Midlands (NE&M) Region, and Michael O'Keefe, Regional chairperson and Kells Conference member. As part of the NE&M twinning programme response, and in conjunction with the SVP Zimbabwe National Council and the Chinoyhi SVP Conference, a plan was prepared, costed and implemented. The National Twinning Committee, Chaired by Rose McGowan, co-funded the project from the national twinning budget.

Undertaking such a project in a developing country with a collapsing economy was a mammoth task. When I visited in January last Ms Tendai Kusembedzera, SVP Zimbabwe National President, and Mary-Carmel Mudiwa, Administration Officer, Caritas Zimbabwe-Diocese of Chinoyhi, organised a dedication ceremony on January 19th of the renovated building. I was giddy with excitement when I saw:

- The re-built boundary wall
- The re-erected entry gate
- The brightly painted building – outside and inside
- The new fascia and soffit boards and the repaired roof
- The solar water heaters which mean older people can now wash in warm water
- The gas cooker – no need to collect firewood to cook
- An industrial washing machine
- Built-in wardrobes in each room
- Comfortable beds
- A rebuilt ablution block and toilets
- A new clothes iron and board

The residents were so happy, and now they were proud of their home for life. The staff of five, three of whom were full-time volunteers who were there when I last visited three years ago, were also so happy. It was a great day.

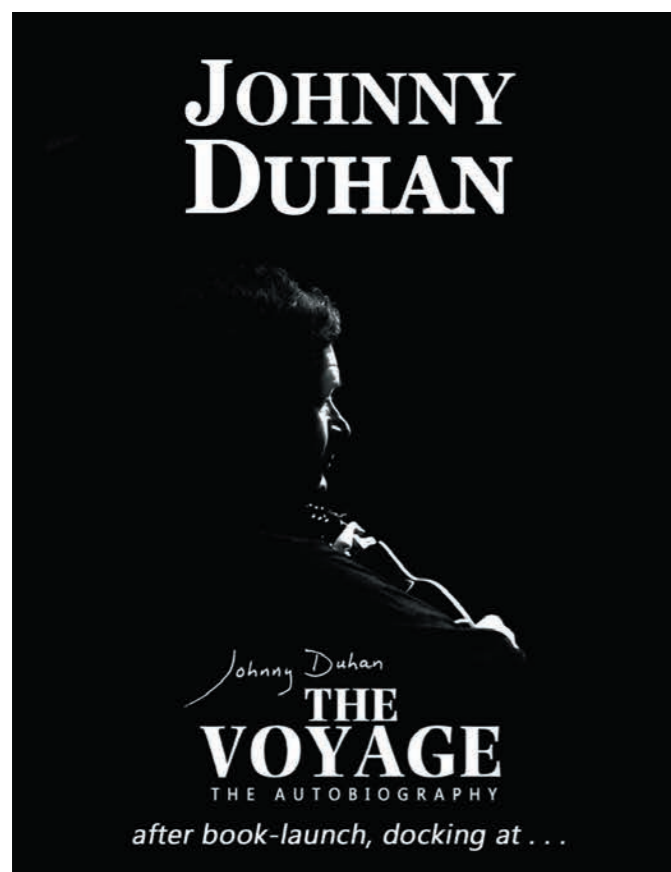
A beautiful plaque to honour Mary Toole and Michael O'Keefe, who both died in 2013, was unveiled by the SVP Zimbabwe National President. A beautiful remembrance.

SVP members in the North East and Midlands Region can be very proud of the impact of their twinning levy ring-fenced for SVP twinning work. This project and the inspiration of Mary and Michael is having life changing impact.

For more details on the Nazareth Shelter Project see pages 22 and 23, Spring issue of the SVP Bulletin at https://issuu.com/svp15/docs/spring_2016_svp.



Dedication plaque in black granite with hand inscribed images and text in Shona, Irish and English on a plinth inside the gate of Nazareth Shelter



THE VINNIES

An excerpt from John Duhan's recent book
"The Voyage" – An autobiography

As we turned into the small council estate Mary changed down to first on account of the icy conditions. A group of children skating on polished ice in the middle of the road moved aside to let us pass. Recognising Mary's car, several of the kids followed us to the first house on our list, Mrs Brady's. While we were taking bags of toys and books from the boot, one of the onlookers – the daughter of another of our clients – nudged one of her friends. *'The Vinnies have stuff for us too. I'm going home to tell my Da.'*

Mrs Brady's scrap of front garden, normally an eyesore of weeds and rubble, was glittering under a blanket of sunlit hoarfrost. As usual, Mrs Brady took ages to answer her door. Surrounded by kids with tight crew cuts and bulging eyes, she rubbed her hands down the front of her cardigan and stared at us with a blank expression. *'I'm just washing out a few socks.'* She glanced at her brood. *'You'd never be finished slaving for this lot.'*

Mary touched the youngest boy's nose, glancing at his mother. *'How come you got them such tight haircuts in such cold weather?'*

Mrs Brady looked away. *'On account of the scratchies. I had to get stuff at the chemist to rub all over them. It burned their skin. I had to put it on as well. And I had to wash out all the sheets. It's a right nuisance, so it is.'*

Mary handed her a bag of toys and a white envelope. *'We've marked down the age group on the parcels, and there's a couple of dolls for the younger ones. There's seventy pounds in vouchers in the envelope, but, remember, that's for two weeks.'* She glanced at me. *'We have some books for the kids as well.'*

I handed a carrier bag to Mrs Brady's eldest daughter, glancing at Mrs Brady. *'I hope you're still putting on the light for them at night so that they can read? If they get into the habit of reading, it will help them at school.'*

Mrs Brady took a step back into the hall. *'The bulbs keep blowing out and they're very expensive. My husband's going to get a set of Christmas lights up at Dunnes.'*

I glanced at Mary then turned to Mrs Brady. *'You're husband's home, is he?'*

Mrs Brady nodded. *'He got out yesterday but he has to go back for two months after Christmas. Then they'll be lettin' him out for good behaviour, in a few months' time.'* She took a step back into her hallway. *'Thank's very much for everything.'* *'Happy Christmas, Mrs Brady.'*

Out on the street the neighbourhood kids were sliding on the ice, white plumes of frosty breath billowing from their mouths. We got back into the car and Mary started the engine. I took a couple of envelopes from a pile on the dashboard. *'Lily's next, then the Ferrets.'*

Mary drove round the corner and parked beside a lamppost scrawled with graffiti. Before getting out of the car, she took a brolly from the back seat. *'Just in case that wild mongrel's on the prowl near Lily's.'*

I took a bag of toys from the boot and suggested doing separate runs, to save time. *'As you're afraid of the dog, I'll call on Lily.'* Mary grinned and took the bag of toys from me. *'No thanks, you get on better with Mr Ferret.'*

The Ferret's doorbell was broken so I rattled the letterbox. Mr Ferret, a man of indeterminate age, opened the door and squinted through the thick lens of his glasses. As usual, he had a pained expression on his pinched, grey face. *'Good day, sir.'* He glanced up at the clear blue sky. *'Isn't it lovely? If only it wasn't so cold. I suffer from chilblains, and the cold also affects my kidneys. I was up half the night last night, going to the lav. My chest pain has cleared up, though, thank God. Dr Burke says it was only a minor infection. He gave me a prescription and the pills worked wonders. I have to go back to him again next Thursday for a more thorough check-up. He's worried about my heart. I might have to go to the hospital for an x-ray, he says. Might have to get stents in. He'll know next week when he examines me.'*

I held back a smile and handed Mr Ferret the white envelope. *'I'd better get a move on. We have a good few calls. Regards to Mrs Ferret. And happy Christmas.'*

Back at the car, Mary held up two envelopes. *'I think the two of us should call on Martin, and we may as well do the Barretts together as they're beside him.'*

Martin greeted us with his usual smile, taking a thin roll-up cigarette from his mouth. Beside him, his nine-year-old daughter, Kathleen – the girl who had run home from the street when she spotted us taking the bags of toys from the boot – was sucking her thumb, staring at the bag in Mary's hands. Martin invited us into the house but we declined, explaining that we had too many calls to make. I gave him the envelope and explained its contents while Mary handed the bag of toys to

Kathleen, warning her that she wasn't to open it till Christmas morning. Kathleen disappeared into the house with her cache of toys. Martin thanked us and took a long pull from his cigarette, glancing across the street towards a house where his recently absconded wife was now living with another man. *'She came over last night to give Kathleen money for clothes for Christmas. I wasn't going to let her in, but then I thought it wouldn't be fair on Kathleen.'* He coughed. *'She told me they'll be moving out of the estate soon. Your man, it seems, has a managerial job lined up in a bar on the other side of town. They're planning to rent a house in an uppity estate near Merlin. She always wanted to live in a nice neighbourhood.'*

Mary shook her head. *'What about Kathleen? Is she going to take her with her?'*

Martin lowered his eyes. *'Weekends. She says your man would feel awkward with her around on a permanent basis.'* He took a drag from his cigarette and his face grew tense. *'I ran into him the other day up at the shop. He said hello to me. Would you believe it? I felt like lashing into him.'*

Mary touched Martin's arm. *'What ever you do, don't resort to violence; it'll do no good. Think of Kathleen. She's your concern now.'*

Martin's eyes grew moist. *'I found her crying in bed last night. But she's grand today. I put up the Christmas tree this morning and that took her mind off things.'* He drew a wheezy breath and sighed. *'We're just going to have to get used to the fact that her mother won't be coming home.'* He paused. *'I didn't tell you, he has her pregnant.'*

Mary touched Martin's arm. Martin started sobbing.

I turned away. Mary took a step back from the door. *'We'll say a prayer for you. Try and keep your chin up, for Kathleen's sake.'* Martin pulled himself together and wiped his eyes with the back of his hand. *'Don't worry, I'm not going to let myself go under.'* Mary touched his arm again. *'That's the spirit! We'll see you after the New Year.'*

I was about to wish him a happy Christmas but bit my tongue. After four other solo runs the envelopes and toys were all distributed. On our way back to the car we decided to call on a client who was no longer on our books, just to wish her happy Christmas.

Though I gave the letterbox a good rattle, there was a long delay before the door opened. A young woman with sunken eyes and hollow cheeks appeared before us, transformed from the last time we'd visited her. For a moment she didn't know who we were, then a flicker of recognition came into her dull eyes. *'I'm just out of bed. Come in, come in.'*

The living room was freezing. Two of her boys were hugging themselves beneath a blanket on a grubby settee watching TV. There was no fire and not a sign of a Christmas decoration. Mary glanced at the soiled carpet and shook her head. 'Jesus, Helen, what's going on? This isn't at all like you.'

Helen glanced at the two boys. 'Conor, Jimmy, go upstairs. I want to talk to these people.'

Once the two boys were out of earshot their mother apologised for the mess, lowering her gaze to avoid eye contact. 'I've been meaning to tidy the place up. Everything's been piling up on me.'

I looked at the dark shadows under her eyes. 'You're not back taking stuff, are you?'

She shrugged. 'A bit of hash, when I can afford it.'

I noted her sunken cheeks. 'Are you sure you're not on anything stronger? You look fairly caved in.'

She gave me a sour look and folded her arms. 'I'm positive. Jack was doing coke, but he's gone now, the bastard. I kicked him out. I caught him stealing the children's allowance money from my bag. That was it! I've put up with enough from him. It was bad enough when he was drinking but the coke made him devious and aggressive. I don't need that kind of agro in my life. I'm fucked up enough as it is.'

I glanced towards the empty grate. 'Have you no coal?' Helen lowered her eyes. 'I was doing fine but Jack really messed my head up. He's living with another one now in Shantalla. She's only seventeen, the poor bitch.'

A child started roaring upstairs. Mary and I moved towards the door. As we backed into the narrow hallway a high-pitched voice came down the stairs: 'Are the Vinnies gone yet, Mammy? You'd better come up. Conor's murdering Tommy.'

At the front door Mary touched Helen's arm. 'We don't have any vouchers but we'll contact our president, Nonie, and she'll get you some.'

I stepped outside. 'We'll get you some coal delivered as well.' Mary smiled at Helen. 'Try and cheer up for the children's sake. And don't be worrying, we'll help you tackle the bigger problems after the New Year.'

Helen started crying. 'I'm sorry about this, I really am. After all the help you gave me in the past I couldn't get up the courage to go to you again.'

Johnny Dukan
THE VOYAGE
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
after book-launch, docking at . . .

April
11th: Wexford Arts Centre 053 9123764
13th: Venue Theatre, Ratoath 01 6895600
18th: Riverbank, Newbridge 045 448327
23rd: **John Field Room, NCH** 01 4170000
25th: Limerick Gallery of Art 061 310633
26th: Village Theatre, Carrabane 087 2283377
27th: Monasterevin Centre 045 529857

May
3rd: The Glens, Manorhamilton 071 9855833
4th: Courthouse, Tinahely 0402 38529
8th: Town Hall Theatre, Galway 091 569777
24th: Town Hall Theatre, Westport 098 28469

NCH NATIONAL CONCERT HALL AN CEOLÁRAS NAISIÚNTA

INDUCTION TRAINING AND SAFEGUARDING - NORTH EAST AND MIDLANDS REGION

The first training of 2019 in the North East and Midlands took place in January and early February. All 3 Modules were covered and was attended well by new members. Some well-experienced members also attended to refresh their knowledge and add to their skills, particularly in visitation and safeguarding. They reported the training as being very beneficial and highly recommended it to other members.

Our new members are currently in Conferences receiving their practical training and from there will be assigned to more permanent position in a Conference in need of their particular skills.

The next training in the North East and Midlands is on March 2nd and 9th in Cootehill, Co. Cavan.

If you are interested in attending this training, please contact the Membership Support Officer for the North East and Midlands Region, Kathryn.Corrigan@svp.ie



Michael Grogan, Area President Drogheda, Maeve Wickham, Mary Finnegan, Marie Thompson

What does the Parable of the Talents mean?

by Labhras Loughran, Rathmines

The parable of the talents in Mark's and Luke's Gospel is difficult to understand and maybe a little frightening because of that. But one interpretation of it is, it's about our talent to love.

As Christians we are told by Christ to love God and to love one another. This is his central message. So, this talent to love is the one we should most endeavour to use and the one we should most celebrate. Saying that is not demeaning our other talents. Our capacity to create is wonderful and in our society, which prizes fame above all else, it is the one that is most celebrated. And it should be celebrated, for a great artist not only shows us something beautiful but also something new, and thereby extends our human perception.

Shakespeare wrote beautifully about love in the Sonnets, but he also showed us that kingship and autocracy is deeply flawed. Shakespeare is wonderful and we celebrate him and his art. But

our capacity to love is even more wonderful. Even the greatest artist cannot show God anything new. Trying to do brings to mind the question from the St. James bible 'Canst thou pull Leviathan out with a hook?' But every human can relate to God by loving. It is every human being's greatest, most powerful most wonderful talent.

So, don't be afraid and bury your greatest talent in the ground. That is a terrible waste. Find a way to use it and thereby grow it. Then when you come to meet Christ in the next life you can say to him, I did use it, Lord, I did my best with it. Don't be in the position where you forlornly have to tell him that you were frightened, was not sure what to do with it and therefore simply hid it in the ground.

Imagine the regret that you might feel then.

How Ireland changed between papal visits

by Jim Walsh

If there is a book guaranteed to cause a row in the most sedate of book clubs *The Renaissance Nation* by David McWilliams is it.

McWilliams is an economist but one who approaches economics with a jaundiced eye. He once said that *"Women are too clever for economics and by that I mean they realise the economic models that most [male] economists work off do not reflect their day-to-day life."*

He tells a story in *Renaissance Nation* about being in Kiev working for a French bank, and his task was to find out what was going on in Russia and the Ukraine. Having met the IMF, the World Bank and various EU delegations along with consultants and other bottom-feeders (not a complimentary term) he says *"It struck me that these rarified bureaucrats hadn't a rasher what was going on in the place. They were typical economists; removed distant and naïve. You wouldn't give them a post office account back home."*

He says that he learned more from a barman in a Kitty O'Shea's pub in Kiev, who was a mine of information about the local economy and the running of a cash business.

McWilliam's writing style is designed to be controversial telling a story through the eyes of characters that he applies exotic names to. In his earlier book *The Pope's Children*, a book about

the Celtic Tiger he introduced us to Breakfast Roll Man. In *Renaissance Nation*, we meet Sliotar Mom, the Exam Whisperer and visit Applegreen Land.

But there is a very serious side to this book and one of the chapters that will particularly interest SVP members who visit those who don't benefit from the improvements in our economy is the one he calls the Wealth Divide. There is evidence says McWilliams that Irish people generally think that the wealth gap in Ireland is bad *"but unfortunately it's far worse than they think,"* he says.

Wealth inequality, he makes a clear distinction between income and wealth, is not just confined to Ireland and is the issue of our time he says. *"The reality is that the richest 20% in Ireland own 73% of the country's wealth while the bottom 20% (over 1.5million people, own a measly 0.2% of Ireland's wealth."*

In Ireland 87cents of every euro of all the wealth of the richest people in the country is held in land, property and houses. He says that once wealth inequality at this level becomes accepted, it's not only those at the bottom but also those in the middle who feel that they might slip back and lose hope.

The bookends for this look at the Irish economic growth are

the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979 and the visit of Pope Francis I last year.

In that time Ireland has jumped from being the 42nd richest country in the world to being in the top ten today.

The heroes in this book are what McWilliams terms *The Radical Centre*. These he says are the everyday people who are slow to judge others, who live by their own set of civilized rules, who return lost wallets or mislaid bikes, who pick up their dog's poo in bags and deposit it in a municipal bin, who do the accounts for the local GAA club (he could have added SVP and a multiple of charities and organizations) and who take it upon themselves to start a small business.

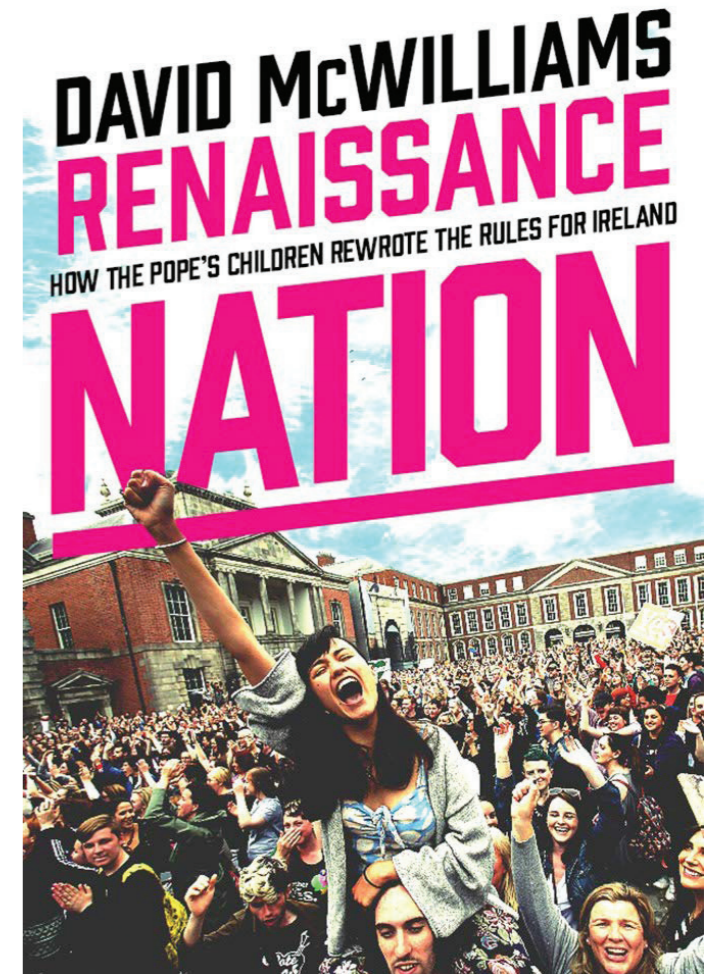
These are the common people who, through their tolerance, respect those around them. They can be found in the background, beavering away, and are driven by the expectation that tomorrow will be a little bit better than today, and therefore worth getting up for.

This relentless effort put in every day in every small town, every suburb and village in the country without the need for acclamation or bragging is the dynamo of the economic miracle.

However, he warns there is a danger because too few own too much the radical centre will shift to the radical left or the radical right.

Not everyone will like this book. It is provocative, and challenges accepted social, religious and economic dogmas.

But it is essential reading if you want to understand what has been happening to bring about so much economic and social change.





SVP Cork's annual Flag Day

SVP Cork's annual Flag Day was held in wet winter weather and biting cold. Collectors young and old took to the street's and experienced the humbling and unwavering generosity of the public to SVP.

The reflections from our volunteers and "TY" students reveal how they saw Cork with different eyes.

"It was really wet and cold and miserable. We were all soaked from the weather, the majority of people were nice but there were a few disapproving old ladies. I can see how hard it is to live on the street having to beg."

"I think SVP is a very good and caring organisation, I think the work they do is amazing. They're always looking after people, our class went out collecting for them. They're all so kind in there"

"Collecting money for SVP was hard but it was one of the greatest experiences I had. I learnt that it could be difficult for the homeless people to collect money because not a lot of people would give money"

"The day I went fundraising for SVP made me realise how homelessness is truly a big problem in Cork today. To know that I have clothes, warmth, food and love made me think how lucky I am but made me realise what about the people on the streets? To know

that a small contribution can go a long way I was happy to help the community. It can go towards food and even turn a bad day into a good day."

"As I was given the time after big break the rain had eased so it was just wet but not raining. The location we were given was Paul street outside Tesco. First there wasn't many people who came up to us just passing and doing their own shopping, after a while people came up and dropped a couple of euros in and notes. Most people were really nice, they talked to us and asked us questions. The overall experience was really good and knowing that its for a good cause makes you feel good so if I was to be asked again I would."

"My thoughts and feelings for people who are homeless was awful for the weather conditions they have to face"

"You wouldn't actually notice how many people are homeless until you are involved with an organisation that helps them. It was cold and wet the day that we did it and I couldn't even imagine what it was like for people who didn't have a home to go to."

"My thoughts and feeling for the people who are homeless were awful for the weather conditions they have to face also it gets very cold and dark for night-time and children would find it hard to get an education."

"While collecting for SVP I hadn't realised how many people are homeless today and how important it is to help out in any way possible and it made me realise just how lucky I am to have a roof over my head. I will make sure to help out more often in any way I can because you never know what people are going through these days."

"When I was out collecting money I felt cold and thinking will I get anything from the people passing me. After I got a few change from this woman I felt happy. It was very tiring standing there for two hours collecting money. It's hard to be out there especially in such bad weather I had to smile so people would approach me."

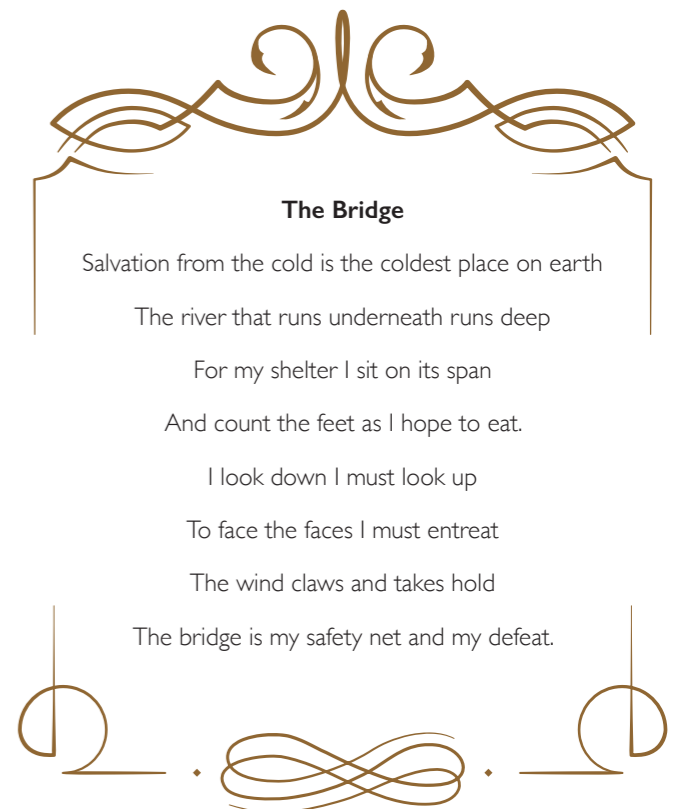
"I love the SVP charity because I now know how the homeless feel in Ireland. It made me happy and it made my heart grow bigger for them. Collecting money was the best. I met many people who did donations to "The rain never bothered me anyway"

"The weather was really wet and cold. Even though we were only out for three hours we still got soaked and were freezing. It really made me appreciate the work that SVP does. Some people stayed out for longer while the weather was wetter and colder and they don't have a fleece lined coat or warm house to go back to."

"It was cold and tiring standing out collecting money for even three hours. It's hard to imagine how homeless people stay out all day in the bad weather. It was kind of upsetting that less than ten people donated in the three hours of collecting. This must mean it's very hard for homeless people to get money to buy what they might need."

"Standing outside for hours for SVP made me appreciate the rads and a cup of tea even more. The rain made the wind feel even colder. The people donating were very kind and generous."

"When I was collecting I was soaking from head to toe I was absolutely drenched I would have moved but I had to stay to collect. After I finished collecting in the rain I went and got food for myself. I appreciated the food a lot more than usual, I honestly thought I'd never get to eat. Overall this was a good experience for me and I now know how it feels to be out in the cold and rain for hours with no food so I know how the homeless feel."



The Bridge

Salvation from the cold is the coldest place on earth

The river that runs underneath runs deep

For my shelter I sit on its span

And count the feet as I hope to eat.

I look down I must look up

To face the faces I must entreat

The wind claws and takes hold

The bridge is my safety net and my defeat.

18 wonderful, dedicated years to SVP



Phyllis Morgan SVP Conference President of St Clare's Bluebell retired from SVP after 18 wonderful, dedicated years to the Society of St Vincent de Paul, we are truly grateful to her for her time and dedication. Photo: Liam Casey SVP East Region President presented Phyllis with a bouquet of flowers before she went out on her last visitation in December with her Conference members.

Mullingar SVP door collection today



Cathal Huges - Manager of Eurospar.

Mullingar SVP had a door collection today at Eurospar / Marshall's Green Road in Mullingar in order to connect with our community, feel the pulse, raise some funds and create awareness of the work of our society as we head into the 175th Year of people helping people.

Have you ever thought of helping - Ring 089 226 8269.

World Day of the Poor

Citizens of Dublin marked the first anniversary of the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights on the eve of the Catholic World Day of the Poor. The Pillar calls among others, for protection of the right to Housing, Health Services, Education or Minimum Income. Archbishop Diarmuid Martin also attended and spoke about World Day of the Poor.

SVP's Nessian Vaughan represented the Society at this event which was organised by ATD. Nessian read a piece written by a woman who is overcoming poverty through education and by addressing her literacy needs.

ATD (All Together in Dignity) Fourth World is a movement of solidarity among and in collaboration with the most excluded families around the world. Founded in 1957 by Joseph Wresinski, ATD Fourth World brings together women and men from all cultures and social classes and is active in 34 countries.



Mullingar Running Club presentation



Members of Fermanagh Running Club Kesh Ederney Presenting food parcels to St.Josphe's Ederney For Christmas

Presentation of funds raised by the Mary Immaculate College Students



From the left – Patrick O'Connor, Clubs and Sports Officer, Mary Immaculate College Students' Union; John Lupton, Midwest Regional President; Rachel Dunne, President Mary Immaculate College Students' Union; Professor Emer Ring, Dean of Early Childhood and Teacher Education, MIC; Michelle Putti, Midwest Regional Co-ordinator, and Dr. Lisha O'Sullivan, Acting Head of Department of Reflective Pedagogy and Early Childhood Studies, MIC.

Mount St Joseph Abbey, Roscrea

At a Sunday Carol service in December, a 'Bucket Collection' was held outside of the Abbey Church in aid of St.Vincent de Paul. Last night, Conty Cunningham, President of St. Cronan's Conference, and John Lupton, Regional President of St Vincent

St. Francis Education Conference

On Saturday 2nd February, the SVP, received an extremely generous donation of €5,000 for the St. Francis Education Conference, raised by three teenagers who exemplify the Christian values of their school. 5th Year Ursuline Secondary School students Marion Gillman, Elizabeth Grace and Laura Ryan first heard about the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul from their Religion teacher in school. SVP's social justice work and service to the poor resonated with the girls and they answered the call to action, raising the money by organising the Winter Ball, attended by 360 of their peers on January 3rd in the Clonmel Park Hotel. The three students are delighted with their achievement and they acknowledged the help and support received from their parents as well as the assistance they received from the Clonmel Park Hotel.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul operates in small groups, called Conferences and St. Francis Education Conference in Clonmel is one of those groups, with a focussed concern to support individuals seeking financial assistance towards education.

This Conference recognises the importance of further and higher education, particularly for people who live in disadvantaged circumstances. During 2018 it has given over €80,000 to 88 individuals for help with costs such as rent, transport, materials, uniforms and fees. Applications are considered carefully,

sensitively and thoroughly by a committee of six members. SVP strives to eliminate the barriers that might prevent someone from attending a FET College or 3rd Level Institution and usually the barriers are cost related, but not always. The Conference draws on the skills, strengths and wide network of the Committee members, to advise and signpost applicants towards making the right decisions.

Mary Roche Cleary, President
St. Francis Education Conference
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul



In Tribute

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

Jacqui O' Sullivan

The Conference of St. Michael's, Halston Street were very saddened by the loss of a dear colleague and friend Jacqui O' Sullivan who died on the 18th of July 2018. She was a devoted member of our conference for over thirty years, performing her role as secretary with total efficiency and dedication.

Jacqui was a caring and sympathetic member who had a wonderful outlook in dealing with clients. She had great empathy and compassion for those in need. It was through her vibrant enthusiasm for life and a wonderful sense of humour that enhanced the lives of those around her. It would be difficult to remember even one occasion when she wasn't smiling.

Jacqui was a warm, engaging person who had many friends from all walks of life. She will be fondly remembered by everyone whose lives she touched. We will sadly miss such a lovely person who brightened up our world.

We wish to express our heartfelt sympathy to her husband Mark, mother Brigid, brother Lawrence and all of her relatives and friends.

May her gentle soul rest in peace.

Liam Mc Conalogue St Francis Conference Convoy Co. Donegal

It is with great shock and sadness that our Conference learned of the sudden death of Liam McConalogue. He has been a member for nearly 20 years, and his local knowledge proved to be invaluable in the weekly decisions that arise in any Conference. A quiet man, but with great thinking ability. His opinions on the very situation were always sought, always listened to and always respected. He was the first member to arrive at the meetings, open the hall, turn on the heat and arrange the table and chairs for the rest of us. He was the last man to leave, turn the heat off and ensure that our Parish Hall was left in ship

shape order for the next occasion. He served as an exceptionally efficient treasurer for many years but ever conscious of SVP rules stood down when his term of office was up.

However, he still kept a close eye on finance, managed it well and ensured all returns and deadlines were adhered to. We could go on and describe his immense contributions to the Parish Church, to the local GAA club, to the cross borders walking group, to the men's shed and other areas where he helped in silence, and none of us heard anything about.

He was an excellent SVP visitor. He was regarded as being all things to all people and a foundation stone of our Conference and the many organisations he belonged to. Liam's funeral was one of the biggest ever witnessed in Convoy, and a number of Priests took part in the ceremony.

Our Curate Father Stephen Gorman paid an eloquent tribute to him for his dedication to the community. He is a person who will be missed in our community for a long time. We extend our deepest sympathy to his sisters Margaret & Bernadette, brothers in law, nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles and his wide circle of friends.

May his soul Rest in Peace.
as Margaret for over 20 years. She was an inspiration to us all. During her time in the Conference she was readily available to anyone in need day or night and was always there for the sick and lonely spending many hours visiting the local nursing home.

Margaret died aged 94 having been lovingly cared for in her final illness by the devoted family. Her funeral was one of the largest seen in Kilcock and Fr. George – who knew her so well – thanked her touchingly for her wonderful work and commitment to the community. Mass was celebrated by a number of priests including Fr. McVerry.

She is survived by her four daughters, and one son, a number of grandchildren and great grandchildren who will miss "Nanny" dearly.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.



REGIONAL OFFICES

National Office

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

East Region

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

South West Region

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

Mid West Region

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

North East & Midlands Region

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

West Region

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

South East Region

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

North Region

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

North West Region

The Diamond, Raphoe, Donegal
Phone: 074-9173933, Email: info.northwest@svp.ie

