

THE

SPRING 2020



BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST.VINCENT DE PAUL


THIS, TOO,
WILL PASS

VINCENTIAN
JOURNEY

FROM OWNERSHIP
TO STEWARDSHIP

HOW LITTLE WE
NEED, HOW
MUCH WE
ACTUALLY HAVE.

THE VOICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN IRELAND

A photograph of a person walking away on a dirt path through a forest. The sun is low in the sky, creating a strong lens flare and casting a long shadow of the person onto the path. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting late autumn or winter. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

*"If you become a helper
of hearts, springs of
wisdom will flow from
your heart."*

- Rumi



This magazine is named in honour of the principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam

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Little did I know when I was finalising the Spring Bulletin that my editorial would be written in the middle of a global crisis. The central theme of this edition was to illustrate the fantastic support and help the Society received from the public during our Annual Appeal. Highlighting all the tremendous work carried out by SVP members on the ground during the Christmas period and the continual campaigning by our Social Justice team and committee to the government to help the most vulnerable in society.

Unfortunately, this now all seems like a very distant memory when you look at what has transpired in the last few weeks. We are witnessing the world being turned on its head as the Covid-19 virus sweeps through almost 200 countries and territories, affecting countless lives with the numbers of people infected and those dying increasing daily.

This pandemic has completely changed how we function and interact with each other; where in a very short period of time we have become all too familiar with terms such as 'self-isolation', 'social distancing' and 'stay home, stay safe'. How we currently operate as an organisation has also had to change, bringing various new challenges, which require constant reassessment.

However, amid these challenging and stressful times for everyone, something truly incredible is happening. Something I can only describe as an undeniable emergence

of genuine compassion and care, as well as a tremendous sense of solidarity with each other. From all corners of Ireland; young, old, communities, groups, businesses, our government, many have pulled together and offered support to one another wherever they can. To make life just that little bit more tolerable and manageable. For example, many distilleries have shifted their production lines to making hand sanitiser due to huge shortages and donating what they can to our health care providers and charities who run vital services for some of the most vulnerable in our society such as our ten SVP hostels around the country. Vodafone linking in with the charity Alone to provide 1,000 smart phones to older people in isolation with essential apps for communications. GAA clubs linking up with local community groups and organisations to collect and deliver food or prepare meals for the countless older people and those living alone. Even a simple phone call or funny text from a colleague, family member or friend to bring a smile or sense of camaraderie to everyone in our time of social isolation and need. There are endless examples of people coming together to support one another; it is truly a sight to behold and the words from Louis Armstrong's song "What a Wonderful World" is on constant replay in my head.

Even in the last two weeks, I have witnessed incredible acts of unity, and I stand in awe of my many work colleagues and the countless SVP volunteers as they go way above and beyond what is required or asked of them. All are working cohesively, stepping up where needed. I can honestly say I am so honoured to work with so many amazing people and to be able to support our dedicated, selfless volunteers who at times put their own safety at risk to help other people. The sense of unity between us all is apparent and stark, and unfortunately, something as tragic as this pandemic reminds us of why we do what we do.

I am hoping that reading the Spring edition of the Bulletin, albeit for many, in isolation, there is a sense of pride of being part of what is for me one of the most caring organisations in Ireland.

And if I can finish on what may sound like a bit of a cliché, 'We are in this together and will come out of this together' and when this is all finished, and it will, we will realise how little we need, how much we actually have and the true value of human connection.

Linda O'Connell



A Time for Action and Hope

I have just participated in our special Mass for members, families and friends by watching it with my own family while isolated at home. It underlined the surreal new reality that we all have become accustomed to. At a time when we are isolated from each other, I felt that it was important for us to connect spiritually. This was made possible thanks to Fr Michael Toomey from Saints Peter & Paul's Parish Church Clonmel celebrating our Mass and broadcasting via the web.

His homily together with Fr Paschal Scallion's recorded reflection lifted us and left us in no doubt as to how much our mission has been vital in past years and will be in the future. It's good to sometimes stop and reflect on what you are doing, and this crisis has undoubtedly allowed us to do that.

I was delighted that Fr Michael spoke so warmly of his association with the Daughters of Charity, our fellow Vincentians, who have greatly supported us in mind and deeds throughout the years, we will always be joined by the same ethos.

For the first time in our history we are unable to visit people requesting our help. But as with previous National crisis, we are ensuring by hook or by crook that those in need are getting help. By linking in with An Post and other organisations, we are able to deliver support while still adhering to Government directives designed to keep us all safe. It is great to be part of the wonderful community response to this crisis that is occurring throughout Ireland, making a difference in the lives of so many.

Our staff have also been busy supporting us and those in need, receiving calls from all over the country. Keeping our homeless hostels open, keeping us connected via social media, advocating for measures to ensure the needs of those affected are being addressed, and managing the many financial and administrative responsibilities we have.

On behalf of us, I thank them all for their efforts.

This terrible situation has exposed a vulnerability in so many with hundreds of thousands having lost their jobs and worrying what the future will hold for them. We have so often said that most workers are only one or two pay packets away from falling into poverty. Sadly we can now see this reality.

Kieran Stafford
National President



We must prepare ourselves and make our resources available to those who will be seeking help over the next number of months when the full effects of this crisis will become apparent. Many who have lost their jobs will not easily get back into work and will need our support. We will be called upon to help those who would have never contacted us before, with some who would have even donated previously to us. This could be soul-destroying for them, and we will have to call on all our skills and Vincentian experience to help them to get back on their feet.

I thought my final contribution to the SVP Bulletin as National President would have been a reflection of my time in the role that I have been privileged to serve in, and that my last few months in the position would be relatively quiet. How wrong I was, and I recall the words of the late great Gay Byrne when he was asked how the financial losses, he suffered had affected his life plans he replied: "when men make plans God smiles";

I count myself extraordinarily fortunate to be a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society and to have worked with so many great members and staff over that time helping many people in need.

In the various roles I have held in the Society over the years, I have learned so much. I have been so enriched by fellow Vincentians along with those in poverty that I have visited. I am happy to have played my small part in the overall history of the Society in Ireland and look forward to continuing my visitation work in the future.

To all members and staff, I sincerely thank you for your dedication and work for those in need. I will always be grateful for the kindness and support given to me over the years.

I wish you and your families well, stay safe and God Bless.





From all at SVP - Thank you for your contribution





Larry Tuomey, member of the world governing council of SVP; Bernie Hogan, President St. Michen's Conference; Liam Casey, SVP East Region President and Kieran Stafford, SVP National President.

SVP unveil plaque where first meeting was held in Ireland, 175 years ago

Dublin 8 December 2019....This afternoon the Society of St Vincent de Paul has marked its 175th anniversary in Ireland with the unveiling of a plaque in Charles Street West in Dublin on the site where the first meeting to form the Society in Ireland took place.

The unveiling of the plaque on Ormond Building in Charles Street West, was performed by Kieran Stafford, SVP national president and Bernie Hogan, President of St. Michan's Conference, which was the first Conference of SVP to be established in 1844.

On Monday 16 December 1844 at 8.30pm seven men, including two clergymen, held a meeting at the White Cross Rooms in Charles Street West in the Parish of St Michan, Dublin, to plan the introduction of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Ireland.

During the following year they went on to establish five branches throughout Dublin.

Now 175 years later SVP is the best known and most widely supported organisation of social concern and action in

Ireland with over 11,500 volunteers and 1200 Conferences active in every county in Ireland serving the poorest and most vulnerable in our communities.

Since its foundation the Society has provided help and support to those most in need, through the Famine in the 19th century, two World Wars, an Uprising, a Civil War and cycles of economic austerity.

"Sadly today we still see poverty in many different situations and circumstances" said SVP national president Kieran Stafford.

"There are almost 750,000 living below the poverty line including 100,000 people at work; record numbers of homeless; 50% of lone parent families experiencing deprivation and 61% of families struggling with education costs.

"We know and meet the people behind the figures every week bringing friendship and support." he said.

VINCENTIAN FAMILY 2020 CALENDAR



JANUARY

- 1 New Year's Day
- 4 St Elizabeth / Ann Seton
- 7 NCVF Meeting, SMcD St - 4.30pm
- 16 Fr Gowan CM
- 25 Foundation of CM's

FEBRUARY

- 4 Foundation Day CHF's
- 10 BI Rosalie Rendu
- 26 Ash Wednesday

MARCH

- 10 NCVF meeting, SMcD St - 4.30pm
- 17 St Patrick's Day

APRIL

- 9 Holy Thursday
- 10 Good Friday
- 12 Easter

MAY

- 4 May Public Holiday
- 9 St Louise de Marillac
- 24 Ascension
- 26 NCVF Meeting, SMcD St - 4.30pm
- 31 Pentecost

JUNE

- 1 June Public Holiday

AUGUST

- 3 August Public Holiday

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Day of Prayer for the Environment
- 9 BI Frédéric Ozanam
- 12 Vincentian Family Pilgrimage to Knock
- 27 St Vincent de Paul

OCTOBER

- 10 Training day Exec.mtg- Dunardagh
- 11 Margaret Alyward
- 17 Eradication of Poverty Day
- 26 October Public Holiday

NOVEMBER

- 27 Miraculous Medal
- 28 St Catherine Labouré
- 29 Foundation of DC's

DECEMBER

- 7 De Paul Fundraising
- 25 Christmas Day
- 28 St Stephen's Public Holiday



#GE2020



Society of St Vincent de Paul

#NOPOVERTY

Investing in measures to end poverty

With rising living costs and the persistence of low income, our economy isn't working for everyone and many are being left behind. The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) see first hand how surviving on a low income is very stressful and emotionally draining and the impact it has on people's physical and mental health. The longer it goes on, the more difficult it is for people to see a way out as poverty stops people from choosing a different path.

Five Election Priorities

Poverty not only prevents people from reaching their potential, it also holds back the economy. Dealing with the fallout from poverty, leads to increased Government spending on health, education, social welfare and justice. We know that ending poverty will require significant investment in supports and services, but making the right investments now will bring much greater social and economic benefits in the future.

Poverty is not inevitable and its eradication is possible but it requires well designed targeted and universal policies, resources and political will. We are asking that the 33rd Dáil and 26th Seanad commit to making the fight against poverty a key priority.

SVP's Election 2020 Priorities

- 1** Make the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goal of No Poverty by 2030 legally binding by introducing a Poverty Reduction Act.
- 2** End the housing and homelessness crisis by increasing the output of social housing built by local authorities or AHBs and by introducing a National Affordable Cost Rental option for low income renters.
- 3** Ensure everyone can access and participate in education on an equal basis by providing genuinely free primary and secondary education and enhancing supports for further education through SUSI.
- 4** Benchmark social welfare rates against the cost of the Minimum Essential Standard of Living and introduce a Living Wage.
- 5** Help address the climate emergency by ending energy poverty through investment in energy efficiency schemes and by improving rural public transport links.

For a detailed overview of our election 2020 asks visits: www.svp.ie/election2020 and join the conversation online on our social media pages



Is Ireland on the right road to end poverty?

By *Tricia Keilthy*
Head of Social Justice and Policy

In the 1990s, Ireland launched its first anti-poverty strategy. The publication of the strategy was significant as it was the first time the broader impacts of poverty and social exclusion on society were articulated in national policy. It signalled that poverty would be at the top of the national agenda and that the interests of the most marginalised would be central to the policymaking process.

By making poverty a priority the Government were successful in reducing the rate of poverty from 15% in 1994 to 6% in 2002. A new target to eliminate poverty by 2016 was set.

Unfortunately, in the years that followed and through periods of boom and bust, poverty increased. Although this trend is now thankfully reversing, there are still far too many people in Ireland who are struggling to make ends meet. In 2018, almost 700,000 people were going without basics like adequate heating, nutritious food and suitable clothing. Children, people with disabilities and those experiencing long term unemployment are the groups most at risk of poverty in Ireland today.

Members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) see first-hand the daily struggle for individuals and families living in poverty. Over a series of visits, SVP members will hear from a family about the reality of living in poverty. They will see the parents cutting back on food when they can, not heating their homes, and putting big expenses on the long finger so that the daily needs of the household can be met.

It is clear that poverty remains a pressing and ongoing crisis in Ireland today.

SVP therefore welcomed the publication of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion in January 2020 and the Government commitment to reduce poverty to 2% or less by 2025. The Roadmap outlines 22 targets and 66 commitments for various Government departments.

But a key question is whether it contains the necessary actions to put Ireland on the right road to ending poverty for good? From the perspective of SVP, it is very positive that the Roadmap emphasises the need for every Government department to work together and implement policies that make Ireland a more equal place to live. With rising living costs, access



to quality services such as health, transport, education, childcare and adequate housing are vital so people can get out and stay out of poverty.

However, it places little or no emphasis on the need to improve income supports for those most at risk of income inadequacy. SVP are disappointed there is no firm commitment to increase or benchmark social welfare payments in line with the cost of a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.

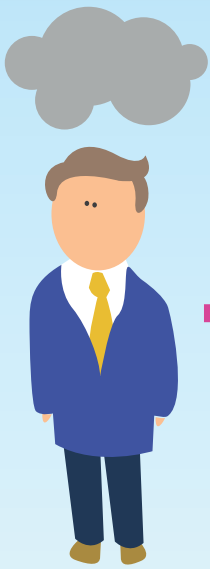
The danger is that even where social welfare payments help address very basic needs, they can contribute to locking people in a cycle of poverty without adequate means to access opportunities or to fully participate in society.

Benchmarking social welfare rates against the cost of a Minimum Essential Standard of Living would set a social protection floor that no one should be expected to live below – one that protects people from undue hardship, helps people access opportunities and sustainable employment, values caring work, supports those who cannot access employment due to an illness or disability and fulfils the basic human right of living with dignity.

Despite this shortcoming, the publication of the Roadmap is a significant step forward and SVP will continue to work with Government to ensure everyone can reach their potential.

Importantly, SVP is asking the incoming Government to once again put the needs of those experiencing poverty and marginalisation first and ensure all sectors work together in solidarity for the common good.

This service is free for you!



It helps to talk

At one time or another the work that we do can be challenging or difficult and can leave us feeling overwhelmed.

The society wants to support our members and ensure they have access to appropriate supports to enable us to continue our work, especially when this impacts on our own health and wellbeing.



Sometimes just talking to friends or family can help but other times it may be better to talk to someone trained to listen who can offer support, guidance and a fresh outlook.

SVP is working with Inspire Workplaces to ensure all of our members have access to an independent source of support.

This service is free to all SVP members and you can contact Inspire Workplaces 24/7 to talk to someone who can offer support and access face to face or telephone counselling. This service is completely confidential and voluntary.

SVP will not be informed about who is accessing the counselling service and will receive only anonymous utilisation statistics to evaluate the service. However if you are at risk of harm to yourself or to others, or involved in criminal activity we are bound by law to waive confidentiality.

We are here to help 24/7/365.

SVP Member Support Programme



For free, confidential and immediate support call



Ireland **1800 201 346**
Northern Ireland **0808 234 5183**





MAUREEN O'CONNELL
BEQUEST REPORT

A Living Legacy

St Vincent de Paul
GALWAY

SVP
Society of St Vincent de Paul



St Vincent de Paul/Maureen O'Connell Bequest

Addressing poverty and social exclusion in Galway city and county

*By Harry Kenney
Chair, Maureen O'Connell Bequest Committee
SVP West Region*



As the Maureen O'Connell Bequest Fund has now been fully disbursed and allocated, a report entitled "A Living Legacy", has been launched setting out the way in which Miss O'Connell's legacy has been used to support families, empower individuals and enhance quality of life in communities throughout Galway City and County.

The late Maureen O'Connell was the owner of a popular pub in Galway and she made a bequest to the Society of St Vincent de Paul for the general objectives and purposes of the Society in Galway city and county. The Society received funds from Miss O'Connell's estate totalling almost €8 million. At the time this was the largest bequest to a charity in Ireland. Accumulated bank interest and other income increased this amount to €10.5 million. It was stipulated in the will that the bequest was to be used for the general purposes and objects of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Galway City and County.

Following consultation with St Vincent de Paul members and representatives of local community, voluntary and statutory organisations, a plan on how the bequest was to be used was drawn up and the Maureen O'Connell Fund was established. The plan covered three main headings; community, family and individual.

The aim was to provide support to vulnerable families and individuals and most of the funding has been used to further SVP objectives and purposes. It was decided, however, after consultation to support other organisations already involved in the community and voluntary sector. These organisations were being affected by cuts in their funding due to the severe

economic downturn and this support contributed to enabling them to continue their work. The range of spending has been on enhancing education, developing family resilience, accommodation, enabling community development, improving quality of life for older people and improving life opportunities for young people.

The Maureen O'Connell bequest is separate from the main SVP visitation work. However, the aims are the same.

The funding of all projects comes entirely from the Maureen O'Connell bequest and does not involve any public or corporate donations. In fact, it has enabled a substantial amount of these donations to be used for other SVP purposes.

Over 90 projects have received funding including:

- Substantial capital projects, including:
 - St Vincent de Paul social housing involving the renovation of existing property and purchase of additional units;
 - new "Vincent's" shops;
 - Resource Centres providing a range of services to older people, families and younger people and individuals who are socially isolated or marginalised, in particular the SVP Resource Centre, known as Croi na Gaillimhe, and the Tuam Youth and Family Centre.
- Education including:
 - Incredible years programmes for younger children;
 - After-school homework clubs for children who are experiencing educational disadvantage
 - Children's language development project for children with speech and language difficulties
 - School completion programmes to assist with pupil retention in school
 - Learning mentor initiative to support students to progress to leaving cert level
 - Sensory garden and play area for children with special needs
- Family skills programmes including:
 - A project to strengthen communication between parents and their teenage children
 - Family support helping families to develop their strengths and skills
 - Household management and budgeting courses
 - A centre where non-resident parents can spend time with their children in a safe venue
- Courses for unemployed people to help them return to work including:



The Maureen O'Connell bequest has provided an opportunity for St. Vincent de Paul to make a lasting difference through investing in projects and activities that aim to increase the resilience of families, individuals and communities and to tackle the causes of poverty and social exclusion in Galway city and county. This would not have been possible without the kindness and generosity of the late Maureen O'Connell for which the Society is very grateful. The building which houses the SVP Resource Centre in Galway has been renamed Maureen O'Connell House as a lasting tribute to her memory.

Go ndéana Dia Trócaire uirthi.



Networking and support

Training courses to improve existing or learn new skills

- Counselling for young people who are experiencing difficulties in their lives including:
 - Various counselling services
 - Youth homelessness project
- Community facilities including:
 - Men's sheds
 - Sports clubs
 - Youth clubs
 - Integration projects
- Direct assistance to over 3,000 households and over 8,500 participants through family and community programmes. The number helped indirectly through the various projects is impossible to calculate but would be many thousands.
- A separate fund to support local SVP Conferences to help individuals and families in situations in which the amount of funding required would be outside the scope of the visitation conferences. This fund is primarily intended to help those who are having difficulty coping due to accident, illness or redundancy and it has provided relief and peace of mind to many families. To date 196 requests for assistance have been received and a total of €800,000 paid.

Projects receiving grants are carefully monitored to ensure that the funding is only used for the agreed purposes.

As the Maureen O'Connell Bequest Fund has now been fully disbursed and allocated, a report entitled "A Living Legacy", has been launched setting out the way in which Miss O'Connell's legacy has been used to support families, empower individuals and enhance quality of life in communities throughout Galway City and County. This report can be viewed at <https://svp.ie/mocreport>



Ozanam Come Dancing 2020

Raised a staggering €67,000 - Resulting in €60,000 towards our youth programmes in the centre

Ozanam Come Dancing is the big annual fundraising event held by SVP's Ozanam House Resource Centre, Dublin 1. Ozanam House provides childcare, youth programmes, adult education classes and community programmes for the elderly to over 500 members of our community. The event raises funds for the centre's youth programmes that operate throughout the year, allowing us to offer much needed supports to 300 children and young people from Dublin's north inner city.

The show was held in Liberty Hall on Friday 6th March last. A sell-out crowd of 420 people filled the venue and were entertained by 11 amazing volunteer couples who danced Salsa, the Charleston, Swing, the Jive, Disco, Foxtrot, Argentine Tango and the Paso Doble.

The host for the night was TV presenter, broadcaster & fashion designer, Brendan Courtney who returned for his sixth year as our host. Brendan was joined this year by our wonderful celebrity Judges, comedienne, singer and actress Katherine Lynch; actor and playwright, Thommas Kane Byrne and professional dancer and dance adjudicator, Brian Keogh. All shared their wisdom, insight and humour throughout the evening. The

incredibly talented children and young adults from 'C & N Dance Academy' in Ballymun provided the entertainment on the night.

Our volunteer dancers came on board from within the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, the local community and many of our corporate and community partners including CDETB, Danceworld, AIB and Eversheds-Sutherland. A huge thank you goes to all of our 11 Couples for their incredible commitment, hard work, fundraising efforts and support. They put on a truly incredible show on the night and amazed everyone with what can be achieved after only 9 weeks of lessons. They really were the stars of the show! Thanks also to our teacher and choreographer June Carr whose guidance and support contributes so much to the success of the event.

Our congratulations go to Holy and Tiarnan who danced the 'Argentine Tango' and are our Ozanam Come Dancing Winners 2020!

A big thank you must go to our dancers' sponsors. Thanks also to the many companies who donated goods and services to the event, and the prizes for our mega raffle prize draw. A total of 58 companies and individuals supported the event in some capacity.

A very special thanks also to all of our many incredible volunteer helpers who worked so hard and gave so much of

their time throughout the organisation and planning of the show and on the night itself where 32 volunteers helped to make the show such a success.

This wonderful event allows us to take a moment to celebrate our centre and our organisation, SVP. Everyone associated with the event shows us that by working together, supporting each other and being there to assist those in need, we can truly make a difference in the lives of others. It is a wonderful example of the difference volunteering can make in our communities and society as a whole.

Everyone involved made Ozanam Come Dancing 2020 an incredibly successful evening that will benefit the children and young people of the north inner city so much. Thank You all.

We look forward to seeing you all on the stage next year!



Congratulations go to Holy and Tiarnan who danced the 'Argentine Tango' and are our Ozanam Come Dancing Winners 2020!



Vincentian Journey

From Ownership to Stewardship - A personal perspective

*John Lupton
Mid West Regional President.*

In that world of a mere few months ago, the pre-Covid-19 World, all was so safe, so certain and so secure. Now however we are anything but safe, the world of any certainty is a million miles away and we feel insecure and fearful for our families, our vulnerable relatives and friends and for those whom we serve as members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It's as if we had a bad dream but on waking up it does not go away. It is our new reality.

From a personal perspective as a Vincentian two concepts come to mind i.e. ownership and stewardship (or Trusteeship). In the last few years, with the particular duties and responsibilities which I've had as a volunteer member of SVP I was constantly faced with these two conflicting concepts, but yet from my perspective I would suggest that the ongoing evolving Vincentian journey is a journey between these two concepts i.e. from ownership to stewardship (or Trusteeship)

Ownership

The ownership mentality to some extent lurks in all of us as human beings and thus as SVP volunteers and is reflected in attitudes and comments/reactions such as *"our money....., my clients, no one wants to take over 'my' role we don't visit travellers, people in emergency accommodation or people in direct provision, we don't do (this need) or (that need)When I look around a house on a visit I know the difference between 'wants' and 'needs'.... I suppose we could do with a new member or two but we can't get someone suitable.... I wouldn't believe in a public recruitment event at all, you could get the wrong type of person....."*

The 'Ownership' mentality is so certain, so safe and so secure. It's the mentality that 'Our work springs from ourselves alone" – a claim that our meeting prayer warns us against as it prevents us to "bear witness to Christ's love".

Stewardship (or Trusteeship)

Stewardship or Trusteeship is however a millions miles away from ownership and the development of such a stewardship mentality is I would suggest the inherent process and goal of our journey as Vincentians. It gives us an awareness that we are "agents" and not owners of the Trust. The Trust is the Society

of St. Vincent de Paul and all of its resources, be it financial or otherwise. The Trust belongs to the beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries and thus belongs to those we serve. Therefore, we can truly say as our founding fathers have affirmed that we are the "servants of the poor". In order to be so I have found that it is a necessary pre-requisite to have an awareness of my own vulnerability and poverty in order to empathise fully with those whom I serve. It is liberating to be merely an agent, or a steward (or Trustee) as we act on behalf of others and not on behalf of ourselves and thus can unshackle ourselves of the stifling mentality of "control". Thus without the limitations of ownership and control no act of charity is alien to us, for no need is excluded, no individuals or groups are excluded, and there is no limitation to our visitation. We do not have the burden of being masters but are liberated through a consciousness of our role as servants to the poor and of the transient nature of any particular role of service that we may be asked to carry out by way of officership in the Society.

We are also most conscious of the fact that collectively as Conferences or Councils we have no claim to any funding to which we may have stewardship as stewardship has a distinct responsibility but that is not one of ownership.

The other evening in this Covid-19 World, as I washed my hands (for the umpteenth time in recent days!!) my mind was drawn to "my" hands with an almost magnetic pull and silent question, which shook me as it was so evidently rhetorical, – are those my hands? – I realised that not even our hands are in our ownership. Aristotle referred to the hand as the "tool of tools". The hand I believe, especially for us Vincentians, is the hand of service to others and thus in a way we are the stewards of our hands which are in the ownership of those whom we serve. In the awfulness of this Covid-19 world, I believe what is of most importance is how we react to this awfulness. By leaving aside the "control" of ownership and taking care of our "hands" of stewardship we are sustained in our Vincentian journey, that same journey taken by our founder Blessed Frederick of "embracing the whole world in a network of love" and today, all of us living Vincentians, in a very real way, hold that very World, that very precious world, in our hands.



How can a Just Transition work for people in energy poverty?

In 2019, it became clear to all of us that avoiding climate breakdown requires immediate action. At a European level, we are already committed to a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Nationally, a Climate Action (Amendment) Bill was proposed to the Dáil last year, which would have given the Government's Climate Action Plan a legal basis.

At St Vincent de Paul, we are committed to tackling the structural causes of injustice and inequality in all its forms. The UN Special Rapporteur on Poverty has said that it will be the poorest who suffer most from climate breakdown, despite contributing the least to the situation we are now in. As well as the direct consequences of the changing climate, people in poverty could end up suffering as a result of the changes we make to avoid the crisis. This is something we can and must avoid.

Preventing climate breakdown – and adapting to changes that may now be inevitable – will require many areas of our lives to change. As an economy, we must decarbonise production and the world of work. As individuals and communities, we will also see changes in our consumption habits, the way we travel, the way we heat our homes.

At SVP we are committed to making sure that these changes lead to better lives for those on low incomes and people in poverty. This societal transition must be just and equitable, benefitting the most vulnerable and sharing the rewards of a thriving economy with those who need it most.

We are asking that the next Programme for Government has firm and ambitious commitments to tackle energy and transport poverty.

It is estimated that energy poverty (measured as spending 10 per cent or more of a household's disposable income on energy) affects one in six households in Ireland, with the rate for lone parents reaching 31 per cent.

Our recent report, *Growing Up in the Cold*, looked at the consequences of energy poverty for households with children. We reported that 12.3 per cent of children in Ireland are currently living in homes with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rotting window frames or floors. Five-year olds in energy poor homes have a significantly increased risk of having had two or more courses of antibiotics in the past twelve months (38% compared to 24%). The link between energy poverty and health was also displayed in our report *Stories of Struggle*: "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 bricks or coal. It's a big home but very cold and [my daughter] is asthmatic."

At SVP we believe everyone should be able to live in a warm home. We are advocating for a just transition that tackles energy poverty by providing people with well insulated homes that they can afford to heat; that advice is provided at a community level to households about how they can make use of government schemes and incentives; that people living in rural areas can access and afford travel to jobs and services; and that changes in the economy provide good quality jobs paid at least a living wage to communities and sectors where they are needed.

To make sure that the just transition works for everyone, we would like the next Dáil to:

- Commence and finance a deep retrofit programme for all local authority housing with an annual investment of €200 million.
- Develop a strategy to upgrade the stock of private rental properties by introducing minimum energy requirements for the sector with a target of all properties reaching a C grade or higher by 2030. Minimum ratings should be introduced in parallel with an information campaign, tax incentives and grants for smaller landlords that are conditional on enhanced security of tenure for tenants, and additional funding for inspections and enforcement of standards.
- Establish a service of community energy advisors working in partnership with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to engage and inform hard to reach energy users who would most benefit from energy efficiency upgrades across all tenure types.
- Invest an additional €50 million annually into the Rural Transport Programme, increasing the range of public transport options, promoting social inclusion for those in rural areas, and incentivising greater public transport usage.



Issy Petrie, Research and Policy Officer

WordPower is sharing stories in the East Region



**Word
Power**



“A book is a magical thing that lets you travel to far-away places without ever leaving your chair” -Katrina Mayer

Christmas Book Appeal

During December WordPower ran a Christmas Book Appeal in collaboration with Kildare FM and Kildare and Wicklow Libraries. Three radio interviews were given about WordPower and there was an accompanying social media campaign on Instagram @svppower. The libraries then acted as drop off points for the donated books.

A list of Recommended Reads was compiled and published to help people decide on books to donate and this was sent out to companies along with the Giving Tree information. The appeal resulted in a large number of donations. We were delighted to receive many lovely books for a variety of age groups. These books are now helping to make up the contents of our WordPower packs.

Sharing the Magic of Reading

We have also published a guidance booklet 'Advice on Sharing the Magic of Reading with your Child', which will be going out in all the book packs. The booklet contains helpful suggestions on reading with children and incorporating language development into everyday life. The advice from this booklet is also available on a WordPower fridge magnet!

Dublin City of Literature

WordPower were delighted to create a very positive link with Dublin City of Literature. Every WordPower pack that goes out during the month of March will contain a copy of 'Boot' by Shane Hegarty, which is the Citywide Read for Children for 2020. Boot is the story of a robot who wakes up in a scrapyard with only two and a half memories and who has to go on an adventure to find friends and home. We have received some donated copies of this book from the publisher Hachette, along with accompanying bookmarks and activity packs from Dublin City of Literature.

World Book Day 2020

World Book Day this year took part on the 5th March and WordPower were delighted to be part of the event for the second year in a row. This year the theme was 'Share a million stories'. The aim of World Book Day is to encourage children to explore the joy of books and reading by providing them with opportunities to have a book of their own. WordPower used the event as an opportunity to raise awareness about WordPower on social media, to highlight the importance of books and reading, to encourage people to visit their local library and to promote our fundraising page.

We were very fortunate to receive a donation of books from Tribes Press to celebrate World Book Day 2020! Sharing Stories

There are now 70 Conferences in the East Region participating in WordPower and close to 2000 book packs have been sent out to date. If you are a Conference in the East and would like to request books, please email wordpower.east@svp.ie.

Thank you so much to everyone who has supported WordPower so far. You are helping us get more books to more children!

Links:

- WordPower publications <https://www.svp.ie/wordpower2019>
- WordPower Fundraising Page <https://www.svp.ie/wordpower>
- Dublin City of Literature <http://www.dublincityofliterature.ie/>
- World Book Day <https://www.worldbookday.com/world-book-day-ireland/>

Thank you for supporting the 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.



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a registered charity - CHY6892 / CRA 20013806



A €250
DONATION
COULD BE WORTH

An extra **113**
EURO
PER YEAR

FIND
OUT
ABOUT **CHY3**

www.svp.ie/CHY3

“Increase donations for your Conference today at NO EXTRA cost to your supporters”

Did you know?

Through the CHY 3 Tax Efficient Giving Scheme, Revenue allows charities to claim tax relief on all eligible donations, single or multiple that amount to €250 or over in a calendar year from both PAYE and Self Assessed donors*. This means SVP can get a 45% tax refund from Revenue on donations from supporters who give €250 or more in a calendar year. For example, if someone donates €250 to your Conference this means that their donation could actually be worth €363 to your Conference with tax relief.

How to claim?

To claim the tax relief on eligible receipted donations and increase the value of donations, whether you are a donor or an SVP Conference, just follow these easy steps:

1. Conference Treasurer: Record details of each donation received (monthly, annual or other) by donor name in the Treasurers Ledger/Agresso. Records of each donation must be maintained as Revenue may ask to see them. Send all donors whose donation(s) amount to €250 or more in one year a CHY3 cert and return envelope with their thank you letter / receipt.
2. Donors: Donors simply sign the form once and return to National Office in the freepost envelope provided. As the CHY3 is an enduring cert, it covers any future donations received for 5 years.
3. National Office: National Office then processes the claim directly with Revenue and will return eligible funds directly to the local Conference.

Not claimed previously?

SVP can claim on donations made in the previous 4 years e.g. in 2020 we can claim the tax back on donations for 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016. So if your Conference has not claimed the tax back on donations made to your Conference in the four previous years, we can submit claims for each year that has not been claimed going back 4 years

Where can I get CHY forms and information packs?

1. Donors: Your Conference or Regional Office will send you the CHY3 form.
2. SVP Conferences: To request more CHY3 certs, freepost envelopes and letter templates simply call Deirdre Mullen on 01 884 8217 or email Deirdre.mullen@svp.ie.

* Donations from Ltd Companies are not included in CHY3 Tax Effective Giving Scheme.



Is Geography a Barrier to Education?



*By Marcella Stakem,
Social Justice Research
and Policy Officer*

Participating in Higher Education is an important policy objective in Ireland. However, we continue to see persistent social inequality in higher education with low-income households being one of the named groups not to participate at levels experienced by their more advantaged peers. SVP members see this reality through home visitation and the administration of SVP Education Bursary schemes for Further and Higher Education. One of the reasons members cite for

the under-representation of low-income households in Higher Education are inadequate financial supports through the SUSI grant, this is more apparent for students who have to travel by car or public transport to their chosen place of study.

The maintenance grant is provided to assist with a student's day to day living expenses. It is calculated at two rates: adjacent and non-adjacent, depending on the distance between a student's home and college. The adjacent rate is payable if the student's home is determined by the awarding authority to be 45km or less from the approved institution they are attending. The non-adjacent rate is payable in all other cases. The non-adjacent grant rate was changed from 24km to 45km in Budget 2011 which has had a significant impact on households which SVP support.

To qualify for the highest level of support from SUSI; the special grant rate, last year's household income should be under €24,000 and at least one member of the household is dependent on social welfare. Where the student is eligible for the non-adjacent payment and on the special rate, they

will receive maintenance of €658 per month. Just over 12% of students who applied for a grant received the maximum amount possible in 2018. The highest rate does not cover costs for students if living away from home, which is the only option for many if they wish to pursue educational opportunities.

Over 80% of students from Cavan, Mayo, Wexford, Longford, Roscommon, Monaghan, Leitrim, Laois and Offaly travel more than 45km to go to college and are therefore eligible for the non-adjacent SUSI rate.

A study in 2013 examined the impact of travel distance on higher education participation, it showed that travel distance has a negative impact on the likelihood of school leavers from lower-socio economic backgrounds proceeding to higher education.

For every extra 10 kilometres of travel distance, the likelihood of participation decreased by 2.7%. Thus, for a school leaver living 50 kilometres from a Higher Education Institute, their probability of higher education participation is lowered by 13.5% than if they lived next to the Higher Education Institute. This is most likely because the greater travel distances result in a range of higher direct and indirect costs and the impact of these distance-related costs on participation is likely to be more pronounced for those on lower incomes.

Monthly Cost of Living Expenses 2019-2020 NUI Galway

Expense	Cost
Rent (private rented)	€540
Bills (phone, electricity, internet)	€90
Food	€220
Clothes/Laundry	€50
Books/study materials/printing	€40
Recreation	€160
Travel	€40
Heating/Oil	€15
Monthly Total	€1 155
Academic Year Total	€10,395

Source: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/student-life/accommodation/financial-matters/cost-of-living/>

Those students who do commute from home to college are not commuting by choice according to SVP members, but due to the high accommodation costs in cities and towns. The Chairperson of the Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education has stated that students who are commuting long distances are experiencing exhaustion and isolation which is impacting on their attendance levels and academic performance. Along with the emotional and physical cost of commuting, there is also the financial cost. An average commute for students can cost upwards of €200 per month and this is on travel expenses alone. SVP works closely with thousands of students to support their access to further and higher education, and strongly believe that equality of opportunity, progression and outcome must be the central goals of our education system. Equity in access to higher and further education is broadly social, cultural, geographic and economic. A commitment to annual increases to the student grant and reducing the 45km non-adjacent grant rate to the previous distance of 24km would be important first steps in ensuring low income households can participate in higher education if they wish to do so. Until such a time as this occurs, SVP will continue to highlight the inequality that persists in our Higher Education system.

<p>Orange with banana & a cup of tea with milk = 0.52c</p>	<p>Instant Latte and an apple = 0.70c</p>	<p>Lentil Stew & bread = 1.16</p>
<p>Tea with milk and chocolate rice cakes = 0.54c</p>	<p>DAY 3 #SURVIVEONS</p>	<p>3 slices of marmalade on top of cup of tea = 0.28c</p>
<p>Red milk biscuits = 0.09c</p>	<p>Total cost for Day 3 = 2.99</p>	<p>COULD YOU SURVIVE FIVE?</p>

YOUNG SVT #SURVIVEONS

WE ARE CHALLENGING YOU!

COULD YOU SURVIVE ON €5 A DAY FOR ALL YOUR FOOD AND DRINK COSTS?

HELP TO RAISE AWARENESS AND GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHALLENGES A PERSON ON A LOW INCOME FACES

2ND - 6TH MARCH 2020

COULD I DO IT? #SURVIVEONS **FIVE?** REGISTER TODAY!

<p>Sweet & Sour Chicken for dinner. Much cheaper than jar sauces. Sweet & sour sauce 77cents</p>	<p>To make this fresh I would have needed to spend €13.64 (Tesco brand). Can't really understand why people living on low income opt for the cheaper sauces. Because one meal would have been half my weekly budget</p>	<p>I'm guilty of saying it's so 'easy' to eat healthy and give your family healthy food</p>
<p>It's actually very difficult if you simply don't have the money</p>	<p>428,171 people in Ireland regularly go without adequate food</p>	<p>COULD YOU SURVIVE ON FIVE? Just €5 a day for all your food and drink costs for five days</p>

COULD YOU SURVIVE ON FIVE?

food and drink

help raise awareness

2ND TO 6TH MARCH

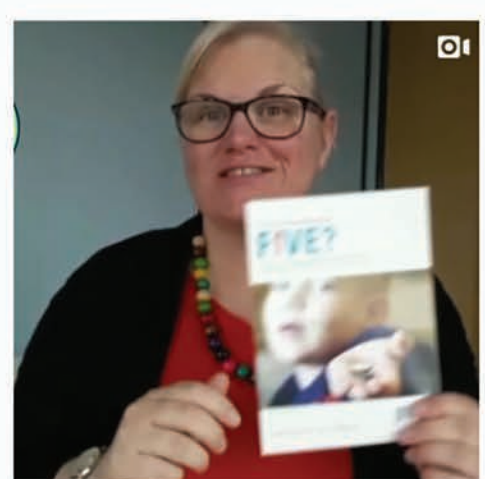
at a Lifetime.

YOUNG SVT



428,171

people in Ireland regularly go without adequate food



COULD YOU SURVIVE ON **FIVE?**

Register Now youth@svt



COULD YOU SURVIVE ON FIVE?

Young SVP Survived on 5 ...or did they?

Young SVP Conferences and groups in schools, colleges and other youth settings across the country were invited to get involved in our inaugural Young SVP Challenge Week from 2-6th March. Over 700 students, teachers and staff members registered to take part and help to raise awareness of what it could be like to live on a low income with very little money left for food.

The Challenge: Individuals were asked to consume no more than €5 worth of food and drink each day for five days. Every single item of food/drink consumed needed to be accounted for, the value calculated and then to make sure it fits into their tight budget. There was no option to accept/eat freebies – absolutely everything consumed was to be incorporated into the daily limit including food given by others, food eaten at social events, food already in the fridge/cupboard, condiments added to meals, cups of tea/coffee right down to the last drop of milk and each grain of sugar...EVERYTHING.

The concept is based on the idea that a person living on a low income has minimal leeway in terms of how they spend the money that they have, and very often the one area they can be forced to make cuts is on their variable costs. In essence, one of these areas is food and groceries.

YOUR CHALLENGE

Could you survive on €5 a day for just five days to cover ALL your food and drink costs?

You are a single person, working full time on minimum wage, which is €357 per week after tax in 2019. You live alone in a rented flat in Dublin and are unable to access housing assistance subsidies.

According to Minimum Essential Budget Standards Research Centre (budgeting.ie), your minimum weekly expenses for essential items in 2019 are as follows*:

JOIN THE SURVIVE ON FIVE CHALLENGE

Housing	€235
Personal Care (haircuts, deodorant etc)	€12.11
Clothing	€9.01
Health	€4.21
Household Services (bin charges etc)	€4.03
Household Energy	€30.19
Communications	€9.21
Transport	€32.00

This leaves you with just €5 per day for all your food and drink costs.

The above budget does not even allow for household goods, education, insurance, social inclusion and participation, contingencies or personal costs as can be found on the minimum essential standard of living budget on budgeting.ie.

*These costs are annual costs divided over 52 weeks.

Our Youth Development Team, SVP staff and members across the regions, also took part to help highlight the issues that people on a low income may face when it comes to food choices/lack thereof. Three of the team did a trial run week in advance of 'challenge week' and blogs were posted encouraging others to get involved. We all struggled and had low points throughout the five days, and all felt as a five-day challenge, it was hard enough. The thoughts of trying to live with such a limited budget in the longer term would be incredibly stressful and unhealthy, both physically and mentally.

The following are just some of quotes, posts and insights that were captured through the challenge:

Fed up. Had Bran Flakes for breakfast & lunch because I misjudged the amount of chicken I had left.

I had to spend €4 on Lemsips so I'm in minus figures now. I'm lucky I had it to spend.

Still not hungry as such, but I would love something nice. Meals have become a chore instead of something to look forward too.

It made me realise how wasteful I can be with food. I will try to change that.

It has been an eye opener as to how hard it is to survive on a very limited budget. I took no joy in planning & preparing my meals because I was limited with my ingredients.

Struggled today. Not with hunger but with boredom. I miss fruit.

Food has occupied my mind all week & although I didn't go hungry it definitely had a negative impact on me. There is no way I could do this day in & day out.

Living like this long term would definitely have a negative impact on a persons mental health.

I can't imagine what I would be surviving on if I had to save up for basic ingredients like olive oil or stock cubes.

No freedom to choose items I wanted, how expensive fish and seafood are and I actually got trolley envy looking at other peoples shopping.

I couldn't afford it, which left me feeling isolated, disappointed and embarrassed... This isn't an acceptable way for people to have to exist.

Mentally exhausted from thinking and calculating all day.

I can definitely see how preparing healthy and home cooked food is very difficult to do on a low income.

I'm guilty of saying it's so 'easy' to eat healthy and give your family healthy food.

It's difficult having to really think about all your food choices and where and how you should spend your money.

There is a huge link between obesity and poverty, simplest way to see why is to compare the price of 4 chicken filets with a bag of chicken nuggets.

It's actually very difficult if you simply don't have the money.

Monitoring the cost of everything you eat or drink completely sucks the joy out of it.

Harder than I thought it was gonna be, really difficult not being able to snack throughout the day.

Thought I was doing well today.... didn't think I would be 41c over budget. Really puts it in to perspective.

I think it's fair to say we are all finding it very difficult.

Finding it a struggle

Overall I found this week very challenging and it was very difficult to survive on so little food. I felt very hungry everyday. The food I was eating was not very good for me.

428,171 People in Ireland go regularly without adequate food

All our 200+ Young SVP groups were invited to take part in the #Surviveon5 challenge. One group of students in a school in West Dublin were offered the opportunity to take part, and the general response to their teacher was that "it would be impossible" which in itself raises awareness of the issue!

To the teachers and groups, we provided some basic information about how the challenge works, what those taking part might expect and we were very clear from the get-go that this challenge would not be easy it would be the complete opposite. We warned people that they would have to go without certain luxuries, that socialising would be difficult, along with the complications of having to think about and calculate the cost of everything you consume ... despite all our warnings a courageous 721 individuals registered with us to take part... these brave young people from 37 different schools, colleges and groups across the country committed to giving this challenge a go and to tell us about their experiences as they progressed.

Our challenge participants were asked to tell us, and others, about their experiences of the challenge in several different ways...by writing a diary/blog, by making short videos/vlogs each day, by raising awareness in their own school/communities, and by posting their stories on social media using the #surviveon5. As we continue to gather these stories, learnings and experiences, we will be adding them to our webpage dedicated to this year's challenge...please do check it out www.svp.ie/surviveon5.

Please check out #surviveon5 and our different accounts...

📷 Instagram @youngsvpofficial / @svp_ireland

🐦 Twitter @young_svp / @svp_ireland

📘 Facebook @young_svp / @svp_ireland

... here you will see an assortment of the really interesting and insightful posts from many of our groups.

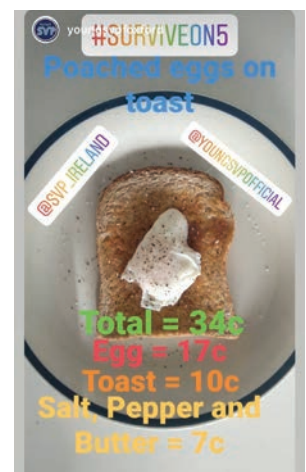
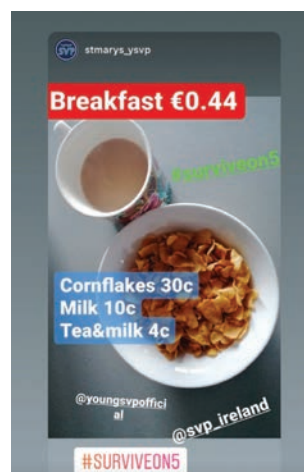
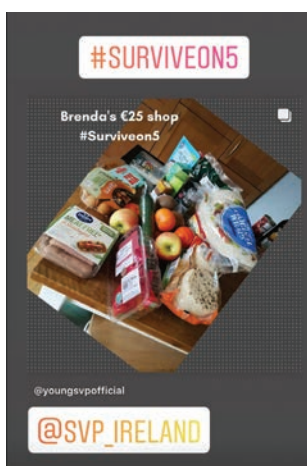
Huge learning for many taking part in #surviveon5 was that they could not do it. The challenge was never meant as a competition, and it was not designed for a participant to 'fail'. A large number of our young people and others just could not manage it, simple things like being invited for a coffee with a friend, or wanting to have an extra biscuit with a cuppa before bed was enough to put people beyond their budget.

Participants felt that while it may be possible to 'survive' on €5 per day, it was extremely restrictive and limiting. Plenty of people commented on how they felt their diet was unhealthy because they couldn't afford enough variety within the budget, cooking tasty meals was an issue as every sprinkle of spice/ added element built on the basic cost. Also noted as significant, was being able to afford the bigger/more expensive items – a jar of coffee, a bottle of hot sauce, anything that costs more than a couple of €€ was basically out of budget, raising the question how do people manage this in the longer term?

We all accept that we opted into this challenge and that it was difficult even for just five days...for so many others, this is an ongoing reality, and they have no choice. While some of our participants made it to the end of the challenge within the tight budget no one enjoyed it, no one found it easy and everyone agrees no-one should have to #surviveon5.

If you would like to take the challenge yourself / as part of a group, please let us know, you can help us to raise even more awareness of the issue of food poverty and struggling to live on a low and inadequate income.

Email; youth@svp.ie for more info.





Young SVP hold One World Week event in North County Dublin

Young SVP marked One World Week by holding a Sustainable Fashion event in Balbriggan Co. Dublin. Secondary school students from North Dublin gathered in Sunshine House on the 19th November 2019 to learn about Sustainable Fashion, the work of the Vincent's charity shops and how they can get involved through Young SVP.

The students learned some striking facts about the environmental and human impact of the fashion industry. Did you know that it takes 200 gallons of water to make one pair of jeans? That is the equivalent of 285 showers. They also heard about how the Vincent's shops promote sustainability and how they as young people can get involved in this too. They were interested to learn that 95% of discarded clothing can be recycled or upcycled.

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) awarded Young SVP a grant to assist them with their activities as part of NYCI One World Week 2019.

Leo Gilmartin, of the NYCI Development Education Programme said:

"The Climate Revolution has reached the shores of Ireland. Young people across the planet have become instrumental and a leading voice in taking action against the climate emergency. Young people want change and want a say on about how we treat our environment to protect the future of the planet and ultimately the human race itself."

Young SVP's activity was chosen from among a large volume of high quality applications from all over Ireland. We look forward to seeing the group take action during One World Week this year. Their work 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 Climate action and in Ireland achieving the SDGs".

One World Week is a week of youth-led awareness raising, education and action that takes place throughout Ireland every year. In 2019 One World Week ran from December 1st to 8th, with a focus on climate action and invites youth groups and young people to think about the issue of Climate Action and young people – on a personal, local, national, and global level. After the students have learned about Sustainable Fashion with Young SVP they returned to school to plan their own One World Week Event.

Thank you to Loreto Balbriggan, Loreto Swords, Ardgillan Community College, St Mary's Glasnevin, Holy Faith Clontarf and Skerries Community College for attending and to Sunshine House for hosting the event. Special thanks to the Vincent's Retail Team for collaborating on this event.



Vincentian Family Pilgrimage

Knock Shrine *Saturday 12th September 2020*

2020 Vision “Faith into action”



St. Vincent de Paul



St. Louise de Marillac



Blessed Frédéric Ozanam



Sunshine House - 'Stop the world I want to get off experience'

Anna Martin

A week in Sunshine House is for me a 'stop the world I want to get off experience'. No social media, Facebook, Snapchat, mobile phones, etc. Just pure, clean, energetic, fun, fun, fun, and that's for children and volunteers alike.

I have experienced some wonderful holidays in my life but my weeks in Sunshine are up there with the best of them. And as the saying goes 'if it's not broken don't fix it' and the proof of that is that the holidays in Sunshine have been catering for children for the last eighty-odd years.

It's a wonderful week packed with activity. The children arrive on Saturday, full of laughter and excitement. The experienced ones drop their bags and run immediately to swings, monkey bars, slides, etc. The first-timers a bit more reticent, maybe needing a bit more encouragement.

Generally, the competition starts immediately on the monkey bars, especially with the boys and in no time their poor hands are red and sore. But there's no stopping them. Budding Ronaldo's are red-faced and sweating already testing their football skills. New volunteers and experienced ones are pushing swings helping others on the various apparatus.

Then the excitement as they are called, to get their dormitories allocated. And the effort other volunteers have to get their attention and get them all together with their cases. The anxiety of some of the children, will I be with my friend, cousin, sister, brother. But this is a week devoted to the wellbeing, comfort, joy and happiness of the children.

And every effort is made to that end. We, the volunteers, are there solely to play alongside the children. Just like older brothers and sisters. It's the one place where we can be kids again too, taking part in all the activities.

Beach competitions, swimming and football every morning. And the children always know what the sand competition is on because it is the same category every day every year. And of course, the volunteers get stuck in with the children, and it always amuses me how competitive we all become. Then at night, the excitement when the prizes for all the different competitions of that day are presented. And what I love is every child on that week wins a prize for something. As well as carrying home a bigger prize at the end of the week.

One year I was the manager of a football team, now what I know about football would fit on the head of a pin. Obviously, they were stuck for a manager. But you can imagine my delight when I met this young lad in town one day he calls my name I'm looking at him. He's a bit familiar. 'Do you remember me?' he says, a big smile on his face. 'You were the manager of our team'. Then I did remember him. 'Yes, I said, laughing. 'I wouldn't mind, but I knew nothing about football' I said, 'I know' he says. 'But you were brilliant at the cheering and the Ole, Ole, Oles.' 'We won, do you remember?'. I did, will I never forget.

I could go on, but I will finish by saying a week in Sunshine is a week where I will come home enriched and rewarded by the experience, the fantastic children and volunteers.



Down Memory Lane

By Martin Coffey

I remember the first time I ever left home to go away on holiday by myself. I didn't know it was a holiday of course because nobody ever told me. I clearly remember one night in particular when the Da' arrived home from work on his bike. He always seemed to get home at around six o'clock every evening and as soon as the Ma' would hear the Angelus Bells ringing out from our local church she'd say "*Your Daddy will be in any minute now, pour the tea*", and as sure as not he'd walk in the door pushing his bike through the kitchen and out to his shed. He cycled through hail, rain and snow to and from work every day. He worked in the Bank as a Porter and every year he would get a new suit made, paid for by the Bank of course, and a new woollen overcoat every three years.

The Ma' and Da' always sat at the head of our table and each of us, in accordance with our age, had their place, eldest near the top and youngest at the end. But of course, with me being in the middle I was always scrunched in between one brother

and one sister. Now us middle ones never had a chair to sit on at the table, so we always had to stand. Some of the older ones would have a chair or a tea chest to sit on and the little ones would sit on a long wooden stool that the Da' made from bits of wood he'd have found up in the local dump. Our tea came out of a big kettle because an ordinary tea pot would be too small for all of us and we got two slices of bread and margarine to eat for our tea. The Da' would have his dinner placed in front of him and if it was a plate of stew, he'd always pour a drop of milk into it.

Well this particular evening as he was lapping up his stew, he told me to go upstairs and wash my face and hands because he was going to bring me out on his bike when he'd finished his dinner. So, off I went and did as I was told, as we did then, without question. Well in next to no time at all I was sitting on the crossbar of his bike and heading off in towards town. I was enjoying the trip as the Da' would always be singing and whistling as he pedalled along. We eventually came to a very big

house, well it looked like one of them tenement houses that my Da's cousin lived in, and it was across the road from a park, I later found out it was Mountjoy Square. It was a big house and when we climbed what seemed like a hundred stairs, we went in to a room where a Doctor was waiting to examine me. Now, at this point I had no idea what this was all about but I just did what the Da' told me to do. The Doctor did his thing by listening to my chest but never said a word and meself and the Da' were heading home in next to no time at all.

Now, a couple of weeks later, on a Saturday morning, the Da' tells me to get dressed because he was bringing me into town, and so I did. This time we came to Amiens Street train station. There was a great big group of young boys, all around my own age, standing up near the platform. The Da' told me to go and stand with the boys and so I did. He pedalled away off home and left me standing there, I had no idea what was going on or why he left me there. A rough looking boy asked me my name and told me we were going down to the country on a train. Then, all of a sudden, the penny dropped, I was being sent away to a boy's orphanage down the country, but why, what did I do wrong on the Ma', I was nearly always good in school. So, eventually the bunch of us lads were marched further up the platform where we boarded a train for the country. Most of the other young boys were delighted and excitedly talking about Balbriggan, wherever that was I didn't know.

And so, it was that I ended up in the Sunshine House in Balbriggan for a week's holiday. I became pals with a young boy named Billy Pidgeon, he was great because he seemed to know the ropes and told me not to worry and not to be crying. I was delighted when my new pal told me that we'd be going back home at the end of the week, I wasn't being left in an orphanage after all. At home, I shared a bed with two of my brothers and I never had a bed to myself until I went to the Sunshine House. I had a great time in Balbriggan playing games and going down to the beach where we were given little black swimming shorts to wear. Most nights we had a film show and on the last night of our holiday there was a concert. I got up on

the small stage and sang "*Old McDonald had a farm*" and I won a prize for it. I couldn't wait to get home to show the Ma' what I had won.

I remember one night when it was dark, the Leaders took us for a walk and told us about a man by the name of McKenzie and that every night he haunted the Sunshine House and especially the toilets. I later reckoned that was a way to stop us running in and out to the toilet all night. We were all told to sit down on the ground while we were told a Ghost Story. I was sitting next to Billy Pigeon and we were nearly crying and shaking with the fright, we had to hold each other's hand to make sure that the ghost didn't take one of us away. Billy told me to say a Hail Mary before I got into bed and that way the ghost wouldn't go near me. I knew he must be right because he had been here before and that's what he must have done as well.

And so, the following Saturday came along all too quickly, it was time to go home. It was very sad really because some of the young boys were actually crying and wanted to stay another week, they had such a great time of it. I remember meself and Billy sitting together in the train watching all the green fields and the cows going by faster and faster as the train picked up speed. And we could even see the beach where we made sandcastles together. So, that was my first ever holiday away from home, a week in the Sunshine House in Balbriggan.

SVP (Croí na Gaillimhe) Volunteer Honoured At National Awards Ceremony

Marian Merrick won the Volunteer of the Year award in the Social Work and Inclusion Category at the Volunteer Ireland Awards in the Carlton Hotel in Dublin.

Marian is a volunteer activist in the area of human rights for 20 years and currently leads the Asylum Seeker Support team in Croí na Gaillimhe Resource Centre (SVP), working with other volunteers, Janet Kehelly, Project Worker and Loretta Needham, Manager of Croí na Gaillimhe. This specialised team help people in the asylum process prepare for their International Protection interviews.

Over 1 million people in Ireland volunteer and these awards aim to celebrate the hard work and dedication of volunteers across the country.

In 2014 Marian established a specialist team of case workers and interpreters, offering one to one support to people as they prepared for their interview with the Department of Justice. This involves preparing a detailed timeline of the sequence of event/s which lead to a person leaving their country of origin and reasons why they cannot return. Marian spends time with each client, working to ensure that they present as accurate account of their story as possible.

She regularly provides legal teams with the critical country of origin material which can change the outcome for the person. We have no doubt that the Marians work has made a major impact on the outcomes for people seeking asylum or subsidiary protection in Galway. But above all Marian is a woman who cares deeply about social justice and doing all she can to prevent injustice. The women and men living in direct provision in Galway are the people that know this most.



Marian Merrick, Volunteer with Croí na Gaillimhe, St Vincent de Paul, Award winning participant and Nina Arwitz, CEO Volunteer Ireland.



Marian Merrick with Ellen Coyne, Head of Politics with Joe.ie

This, too, will pass

By Áine Stafford, National Youth Committee Chair

'This, too, will pass' is a quote I rely on a lot during difficult times when I am sick or in hospital. Accepting difficult times can be very hard. Once we have accepted what is happening and accepted that we can't change it, it gets easier.

Reminding myself that this difficult time will pass and being grateful for all the things I will be able to look forward to when it is over helps me.

I suppose during this uncertain time being someone with Cystic Fibrosis it seems strange to say, but I honestly feel extremely

lucky. I feel lucky because of the amount of kindness I have seen shown to others in the community and towards my own family.

From people putting a lovely letter and a little present in my letterbox to people messaging to check in on me.

People offering to do our shopping and people dropping off delicious baked goods! I am used to self-isolating, and a lot of the time it would be in a hospital where the food definitely isn't as nice as home.

So I also feel lucky that I have all the luxuries and comforts of my own home. This is a difficult time for everyone for different reasons, and my heart goes out to everyone who is struggling at the moment as I know there are so many but just remember this, too, will pass, and when it does think of all the amazing things we will appreciate even more

SVP around the world

USA

Visitors admire a new mosaic of Blessed Frederic Ozanam at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington Jan. 26. TYLER ORSBURN | CNS

WASHINGTON — A mosaic of Blessed Frederic Ozanam was unveiled in Washington in January, in time for the 175th anniversary of the Society's establishment in the United States.

According to the Catholic Herald, Bishop Donald J. Hying of Madison, Wis., the national episcopal adviser to the Society said, "that it is a great joy and blessing to gather as Vincentians for the unveiling".

The unveiling took place during Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. The mosaic hangs in St. Vincent de Paul Chapel at the basilica.



Australia

AdNews reported that the advertising watchdog dismissed complaints about an SVP bushfire awareness adv.

The advertisement included news footage of a koala being rescued after mistakenly attempting to return to an area of bushland that was on fire.

Further footage included the vision of bushland totally engulfed in flames and images of firefighters responding to blaze in a residential area.

The advertisement contained graphics throughout providing viewers with details on how to donate to the bushfire appeal.

The Ad Standards Community Panel acknowledged that the content and subject matter of the advertisement would be upsetting to some viewers, including children, but considered that the advertisement is using factual information in an informative manner to raise awareness of an issue and includes a call to action.

It said the overall tone is to encourage donations to the charity so that it can assist bushfire victims and in its view the overall

impact of the advertisement is justified by the content of the service advertised, dismissing the complaints.

Also in Australia

The SVP was highly critical of the Australian Government after it was named as a beneficiary of the religious discrimination bill.

When Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Attorney-General Christian Porter unveiled the second draft of the controversial bill at a press conference, Porter explained one of the 11 changes to the bill meant "organisations like St Vincent de Paul can make decisions in areas such as staff based on the faith of that organisation."

According to the Bill "A religious organisation, a church or a religious, educational institution or St Vincent de Paul, [can] make a decision based on faith, which might mean preferring someone of their own faith in an employment position,"

Australian SVP national president Claire Victory wasn't impressed. She said Vinnies hadn't commented on the bill at all and was "surprised and disappointed" by the name-drop.

She said Vinnies "does not require employees and volunteers working in the society's commercial activities to be Catholic."

"Certain roles within our conferences and councils which have particular responsibility for overseeing our mission and Catholic ethos are usually filled by Catholics," she said.

"But they may also be filled by people who share basic Catholic beliefs."

In a statement, SVP told the Government, "Don't use Vinnies in the religious freedom debate."

"We're not happy that anyone who is in need of assistance or is seeking to work or volunteer with us might think we would discriminate," Ms Victory said.

And finally

According to the Australian Daily Mail Terrified volunteers and shoppers barricade themselves into an SVP charity store in Ingham Queensland as a MASSIVE python tried to get inside. The shop was in lockdown for 15 minutes.

Two men handled the snake outside and placed it in a bag before tying it up.

More than seven years ago, another python was found in the same store.



THE NAMES
OF POVERTY

During the last meeting of the Council General International of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Paris, one of the members stated that we should be more knowledgeable about complex world of poverty. The idea seemed good to me. So here I am over a coffee devoting myself to researching with you a reality which touches millions of people. I'm truly afraid to read the digital newspapers because I see that in 2019, rather than diminishing, poverty is on the increase!

Let's begin by stressing that the struggle against poverty is abetted by a recognition of human rights as well as the improvement of social and political structures. It must be acknowledged that, without major changes in relations between labour and capital, economics and politics and national and international issues, there will be precarious solutions to alleviate poverty. Don't you think? Faced with this scenario, eradicating poverty becomes a challenge for Vincentians. Hence, we must avoid partial or one-sided solutions which can lead to the creation of other kinds of poverty and dissatisfaction, like, for example, populism.

The concept of poverty is dynamic and comparative, hence its complexity. But... how can we clear up some of this disorder? I herein prompt you to think about some of the terms used to refer to poverty, often linked to the prevailing social culture of the time, which help us to grasp more fully the diverse sufferings of those who endure them:

- 1) **Exploited:** This term refers to underpaid persons or groups. In other words, those who are paid less than what they should be paid for their work. On a large scale, the ruling class is the one making the profit.
- 2) **Marginalised:** it refers to the relegation to the fringes of society due to lack of access to rights, resources, and opportunities. Marginalised groups live in slums or in highly deprived geographic areas of a country. In other words, they live out in the open, on the fringes. Goods, services and a dignified life are enjoyed by those at the 'centre'. A song by Atahualpa Yupanqui says as follows: "...the sorrows are ours, the cattle belong to others".
- 3) **Excluded:** Similar to the preceding term but deeper. To put it plainly, these people are no longer in the system. Aside from the barest minimum, they are forced to lead a life of great deprivation. From an economic point of view, they're not living but surviving. They are those who have been 'rejected', those who are not needed, those who are in most respects invisible. Maybe, this issue is raised on a campaign trail.
- 4) **Servants:** These people are responsible for performing menial duties; thus, they are regarded as inferior by those

who exploit them. Up until recently, domestic workers were called 'servants' in numerous households. As a result, they are denied a dignified treatment due to their condition of servants. To make matters worse, most are denied a dignified treatment due to their condition of servants. To make matters worse, most are employed on a casual basis and therefore fall outside state regulatory systems.

- 5) **The Proletariat:** Arising from the Marxist theory, it refers to those poor people whose only possession of significant material value is their labour-power and their offspring. They have no access to land for housing. Consequently, their only asset is their offspring.
- 6) **Shamefaced Poor:** These are people belonging to the upper or middle class have fallen upon hard times and find themselves in helpless situations. They find it difficult or outright impossible to ask for help. This position of insecurity can be transitory or permanent.
- 7) **Criminals and Layabouts:** These two terms criminalise poverty and are the most discriminatory. These terms imply that all the poor are thieves, that their situation is the result of their own making, that they are ill-disciplined, that they want everything to be easy and that they lack an entrepreneurial spirit. These terms don't differentiate- all poor people are thieves, dangerous, enemies of hard work and bed lovers. Sometimes, this discrimination is intensified due to their skin colour or foreign origin.

We know that labelling is a way of categorisation. As Vincentians, we must go beyond any offensive or criminalising word or term used to refer to poor people. By the same token, as Vincentians, the misery of others must hurt us, forcing us to be better trained in order to find better ways to serve.

Poverty is too complex an issue to be addressed individually. Frederic Ozanam knew how to surround himself with friends who put wings to his desire to change the world through love and justice. One of his friends was renowned Dominican preacher, Henri Dominique Lacordaire. They met at the end of 1833, and the friendship went on all their lives. And what about us? Our organisation is spread across the world; hence, it would be good to engage in reinforcing not only our own fraternity but that of our brothers and sisters among the poor- to strive for an improvement in our service. Without a doubt, this is the vision of Jesus and of St. Vincent de Paul.



SVP North East and Midlands Region twins with SVP Zimbabwe. In early 2019 the regions twinning officer met a group of young people in Zimbabwe. He was struck by their energy and their frustration. They had worked hard to get an education but were frustrated by the lack of opportunity.

This is an article one of them wrote for the SVP twinning officer: Michael Kenny, Twinning officer, SVP North East and Midlands Region

Why Zimbabwean youths are failing to find sustainable careers

a Zimbabwean young persons' perspective

Zimbabwe as a state is currently treading on volatile economic grounds. The development and sustainability of a career is dependent on an economic environment that is stable enough to allow one to make plans for the future and be able to support them. However, every career path in Zimbabwe is affected by the ever-changing situation such as, an unreliable currency, soaring inflation, limited provision of basic services and perennial cash shortages which in my opinion have led to a dreadful lack of investor confidence.

With a vast endowment of natural resources and a good number of relatively well educated and technically skilled youths Zimbabwe holds more than enough potential to attract and hub a lot of investors. However, as you might have guessed, on the ground, the investment climate in Zimbabwe is rather harsh. The Zimbabwe Investment Authority (ZIA) licenses foreign investors but does not allow them to own more than thirty-five percent equity in areas such as agriculture, wholesale and transport to mention a few. This has pushed investors away. Lack of investment has led to a great deal of unemployment for the youths in Zimbabwe. Companies have cut down their number of employees and some even closed due to outstanding debts.

A huge number of unemployed youths have turned to the informal job sector (local carpentry, vending, welding, backyard car repairs) just to try and support themselves and their families. In an unfortunate turn of events, on January 12, 2019, fuel (petrol & diesel) prices rose 150% overnight. Subsequently, this has led to rise in the prices for the raw materials and basic supplies needed to run these informal jobs. Poorly funded youth small businesses have taken a huge blow with these changes and a lot are facing closure as they cannot adjust their prices since their customs are not able to pay extra for anything. I worked for a start-up online magazine, the Power020, which stopped functioning in March 2019. The idea behind the magazine was to provide a platform for young businesses to get recognition and hopefully get investment opportunities, but horror struck when major advertisers pulled out and the magazine could barely pay content creators and photographers.

The Indigenization and Economic Act passed by the government in 2007 was supposed to catapult the potential of the local youths to greater heights. But from the perspective of a regular youth there is barely enough clear information on how these policies can benefit us. Qualified Zimbabwean youth, the future of the country, are not involved in the most profitable ventures such as agriculture or mining. An alternative to this plight is for youths to look for an angle that the senior generation was not well versed in such as Information Technology; to find salient IT solutions to Zimbabwean problems.

In my two years as a contributor at The Power020 magazine I met several startup companies founded by young Zimbabweans

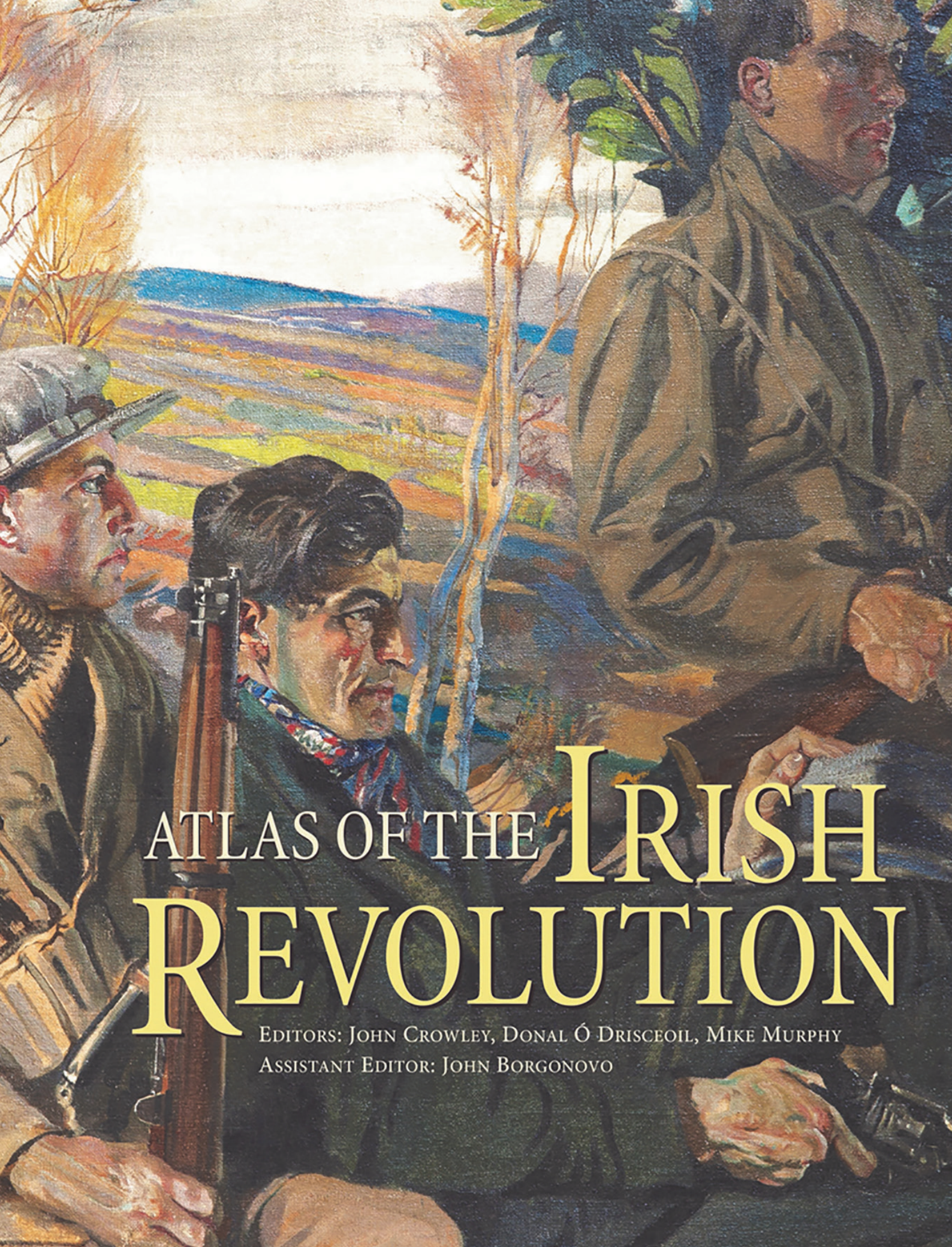
which were aimed at providing market linkages to small scale horticulture farmers and also breeding and selling small ruminant animals. I had light bulb moments several times where I imagined if all these youngsters could be put in one place in the form of an app to help them get access to foreign markets. However, Zimbabwe has the most expensive internet data tariffs. A gigabyte averages \$75.20, about 289 times more than India according to Forbes Africa. In Italy it averages \$1.73, France \$2.99 and UK \$6.66. Now with these prices it is not possible for youths to even try such solutions like the rest of the world. Data is just too expensive for them to process the apps not to talk of the prices for cloud computing and paying the people who will write code.

The Dollarization in Zimbabwe (use of USD) wiped out previous savings which were in local currency. Banks lost a great deal of their customers who were forced to turn to other forms of informal payment methods. The Econet Group of Companies, a local mobile cellphone communication provider introduced the Ecocash P2P (phone to phone) service in 2011 and reached an incredible 5+ million users over the years. Youths were able to rise to the occasion and set themselves up as agents for this thriving mobile money ecosystem. However, in a bid to sustain themselves they began to capitalize on cash shortages and re-sale cash to mobile money holders. As a result, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe closed the whole operation.

Zimbabwe has a bottle neck approach to education. If you are not academically brilliant, you cannot make it. Therefore, those that fall out end up choosing career paths out of desperation. I would rather be in talent management or writing articles for a living, but because a scholarship became available, I had no option but to study the offered program since my family cannot afford to pay for any higher education institution. The majority of Zimbabweans live on a hand to mouth basis. Careers that do not provide income and security are not sustainable.

In conclusion these are just but a few examples of how it's so hard to find a sustainable career in Zimbabwe as a young person. The government needs to apply fiscal policies to resuscitate youth-oriented development financing in Zimbabwe. Maybe that way a new generation of employed youths and young business owners can be a reality.

Written by a concerned Zimbabwean youth.
(Many have gotten into trouble for these kinds of writings so I'd rather remain anonymous)



ATLAS OF THE IRISH
REVOLUTION

EDITORS: JOHN CROWLEY, DONAL Ó DRISCEOIL, MIKE MURPHY
ASSISTANT EDITOR: JOHN BORGONOVO

A book about events from 100 years ago which we are about to commemorate

by Jim Walsh

During the next few years, a number of significant events in Irish history will be reaching their 100th anniversary.

The War of Independence, which ended in 1921 and the Irish Civil War in 1922 and 1923.

Those events helped shape the Ireland of today, and their consequences are still evident in the animosity between the main parties involved at the time of writing in discussion to form a Government.

For many people looking back at that period, their knowledge and understanding have been shaped by a learning of history or family stories that were unduly focused on painting a black and white version of what happened.

In more recent years a sense of balance has been brought into the teaching of Irish history and the commemoration of the events of 1916 just four years ago was an excellent example of how a difficult period of history could be marked with an inclusive series of events, allowing everyone to participate. For anyone with interest in the facts about Irish history during that period the Atlas of the Irish Revolution 1913-1923 is a must-have.

At almost 1,000 pages and weighing over 4.5kg it is not a book for reading in bed or indeed anywhere other than at a sturdy table. Your local library is a good place to look for it unless you can afford over €50 or more in a bookshop. Online it is being advertised from between €89 and €117.

Produced by Cork University Press in late 2017 it has over 300 original maps, a few hundred illustrations from the period and more than 140 contributions from scholars and writers. Here you will find a whole range of detailed information around the military, political, socio-economic and cultural experiences of the formative years of the state.

The maps, in particular, are riveting. If you want to see exactly what buildings were destroyed by fire in the Sackville (O'Connell) Street area of Dublin during the 1916 rising the map is here. There are also maps showing, for example, the towns and villages wholly or partly wrecked by English forces between 1919 and 1921 and even the parishes where priests condemned IRA activities.

One particular chapter which will be of particular interest to SVP members is a chapter on Urban and Rural Living conditions before the revolution written by Caitriona Crowe. She takes two areas, one in inner-city Dublin and the other a small townland in west Cork to illustrate the divides in Ireland before the decade of turbulent events that ended with a Civil War. In Dublin, she describes life in Henrietta Street where three of the houses held 100 people or more. In number 14 there were 17 households ranging in size from two to eleven. They lived in 45 rooms spread over five floors, including the basement. The city was a dangerous place to live during this decade gunfire, explosions, curfews and house raids were common. The scourges of poverty – tuberculosis, diphtheria, dysentery and renal disease were constant companions to tenement dwellers who also fell victim to the influenza outbreak in 1918. When this book was being produced, I doubt if the compilers ever thought that the world would be facing another pandemic in 2020.

The 1918/19 flu pandemic (the “Spanish flu”) as it was known killed upwards of 50 million worldwide. Coming at the end of the First World War, this pandemic caused huge upheaval in Ireland and throughout the world. In Ireland, 23,000 people died, and around 800,000 were infected.

In a situation somewhat similar to today tenement dwellers were engaged in a struggle to survive in a competitive rental market which gave them little chance to save for a dwelling of their own. As now, poverty dampened aspirations for children's education. Although then they were needed to work and contribute to the household income. The advent of proper local-authority housing in the 1930s was the first major alleviation of this vicious circle.

By contrast, says Caitriona Crowe the people in the townland of Ardaturrish in west Cork lived in a far healthier environment. *“The fact that the townland dwellers in Cork owned their own property put them at a level above their contemporaries in the tenements. The security of homeownership allowed educational aspirations for offspring to develop, and also the idea of inheritance for good or ill entered the picture. Property ownership was accompanied by conservatism, both political and religious and in these small farms we see the genesis of twentieth-century rural Ireland”.*

Altogether a fascinating look.

Sacred Heart Conference SVP, Castlebar Annual Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine, 2019

Every year, the Sacred Heart Conference SVP in Castlebar bring residents, patients and service users from the Sacred Heart Hospital to Knock Shrine. Numbers vary from year to year but generally the average is between 50 and 60. All must receive medical clearance before they embark on the journey.

The members of the Conference are assisted each year by nurses, nursing aids and staff from the Sacred Heart Hospital and the Day Care Unit. Further assistance is provided by the Irish Wheelchair Association staff and volunteers from St Johns Ambulance organization. The pilgrimage would not be possible without such wonderful support.

The format of the pilgrimage follows a certain pattern or routine developed by our President Anne Leonard and executed by her SVP team and additional volunteers.

- 12.45pm - All SVP members and volunteers assemble at the hospital along with all the transport facilities; coach, wheelchair buses, cars etc.
- 1.45pm - All residents, patients and service users are boarded on relevant transport as per requirements.
- 1.50pm - Depart for Knock Shrine
- 2.30pm - Arrive at St Johns Rest and Care Centre at Knock Shrine. Allow for all to disembark and avail of facilities at the Centre (including refreshments if required)
- 2.50 pm - Assemble in Basilica for Mass at 3pm including blessing of the sick etc.
- 4.15 pm - After mass, re-assemble in the Rest and Care Centre

for meal – various sandwiches prepared by SVP members, scones, cakes, tarts, buns, biscuits, teas, coffees and afterwards (if desired) mild alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks, followed by music, singing and dancing and some shopping if time permits.

- 6pm - Return to the Sacred Heart Hospital, Castlebar and assist with the arrangements for all residents, patients and Day Care Unit users to be safely escorted home.

The members of the Sacred Heart Conference feel privileged to be allowed carry out this annual activity. In particular they wish to express sincere thanks to the Director of Nursing and her staff and all the volunteers for their unstinted cooperation and service over so many years.

Also, the members are thankful to their predecessors in the conference for initiating and organizing the pilgrimage day in the past and proving above all that 'our work never springs from ourselves alone'.



Pupils of St. Josephs Primary School, Fermanagh



The teachers, staff, and the pupils of St. Josephs Primary School were so helpful in donating a great selection of food Hampers to our community in the Area for the last number of years. The Ederney Conference, Fermanagh are very thankful for their generosity.



St Patrick's Conference Strabane

10 year old, Rhea Gillespie from Strabane presenting a cheque for £1160 to St Patrick's Conference Strabane. Rhea raised the money by starting with her pocket money and then through the proceeds of a hamper raffle. This is the second year



Pictured are Fr Gerry Sweeney PP Rhea Gillespie, Mary Hegarty and Mary Barrett from the local Conference.

St Malachy's Conference Beragh



Fr Colum Curry presents Fionnuala Farley with her 25 year service medal & certificate in recognition for her work with St Malachy's Conference Beragh



St Malachy's SVP Conference, Beragh long service award presentation to Fionnuala Farley on 25 years service. Fionnuala is pictured with members from Beragh, Omagh & Fr Colum Curry.



Members of St Malachy's Conference Beragh meet to draw ticket for snow folk which were knitted by Pat O'Loughlin and raised over £300. Also in photo is Margaret McAleer Hair Affair, Omagh who helped sell the tickets



Fionnuala Farley pictured with Patrick Friel, Omagh Area President & Michael Donnelly from St Columbia's conference omagh at the presentation of her long service medal & certificate recognising 25 years service.

Local Schools Donate to St. Nicholas Conference of St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Food Appeal

The response from local schools in Carrick-on-Suir this year to the annual Christmas Food Appeal by St. Nicholas Conference of St.Vincent de Paul was overwhelming and will facilitate up to 85 hampers being distributed before Christmas to local families and people most in need. The collection of the non-perishable goods took place on Monday 16th December from the Greenschool CBS, the Presentation Primary School, Comeragh College and Edmund Rice Secondary School by St. Nicholas Conference members, Michael Lonergan, President, Tom O’Keeffe and John Connolly, Secretary.

Students, pupils and teachers in liaison with family and friends all generously donated to the appeal and President Michael Lonergan thanked the students, principals and teachers for their excellent and most generous contribution that helps so many people. Michael told the students that the St.Vincent de Paul Society was founded in Carrick-on-Suir in the year of the famine, in 1845. He also spoke of the teams of volunteers nationwide who help out and of the 230 St.Vincent de Paul Charity shops in the country, which generates income for the Society. Edmund Rice Secondary School 1st year choir sang at SuperValu on Friday 13th December and fundraised €935 for the Christmas food appeal and other initiatives that they will be involved in during the year.

Some of the money raised on the Friday went towards the purchase of more food and vouchers for local butchers and SuperValu. And food donations also came from the school community, parents, teachers and students. The Student Council also donated €100 towards buying food and the school was also involved in the St.Vincent de Paul ‘Giving Tree Initiative’ where teachers each donated a gift designated for a particular young age group.



Donations by the Edmund Rice Secondary School to the to the annual Christmas Food Appeal by St. Nicholas Conference of St.Vincent de Paul were collected on Monday 16th December. Pictured are students from the school’s Young St.Vincent de Paul and Social Justice Committee with (on left) Tom O’Keeffe St. Nicholas Conference of St.Vincent de Paul and Teacher Mr. Stevenson and on (right standing) Teacher Tracy Murray, Michael Lonergan, President and John Connolly, Secretary, St. Nicholas Conference of St.Vincent de Paul and acting Vice Principal, Linda Barry.



Donations by the Presentation Primary School to the annual Christmas Food Appeal by St. Nicholas Conference of St.Vincent de Paul were collected on Monday 16th December. Pictured are John Connolly, Secretary and Michael Lonergan, President of St. Nicholas Conference of St.Vincent de Paul, Emma Power, Home School Community Liaison Coordinator, Principal Pat Robinson and Tom O’Keeffe, St. Nicholas Conference with pupils from 4th, 5th and 6th class.



Donations by the Greenschool CBS to the to the annual Christmas Food Appeal by St. Nicholas Conference of St.Vincent de Paul were collected on Monday 16th December. Pictured are St.Vincent de Paul Conference members Tom O’Keeffe and Secretary John Connolly, Principal Denis Cotter and President of St. Nicholas Conference of St.Vincent de Paul, Michael Lonergan with 6th class pupils.



Donations by Comeragh College to the to the annual Christmas Food Appeal by St. Nicholas Conference of St.Vincent de Paul were collected on Monday 16th December. Pictured are students with St.Vincent de Paul Conference member Tom O’Keeffe, Teacher Anne Cleere and President of St. Nicholas Conference of St.Vincent de Paul, Michael Lonergan and Secretary John Connolly.



Christmas fundraiser at Mercy Ballymahon

Sr Vincent Keena Ballymahon branch of SVP, TY students, Niall Chawke and Jack Mulleady, deputy principal Mercy Ballymahon Mr Gary Kenny

Presentation to SVP Ballymahon of a cheque for €911.30 from the proceeds of a Christmas fundraiser at Mercy Ballymahon.



Very generous donation from Longford Variety group made to Conference President Christine Tracy and Conference Secretary Niamh O Reilly for Bethany House and St. Martha's Hostels Longford.



Donations received from Gallery Café Longford from their 'Giving Tree' to Bethany House



Very generous donation received from Moyne Community School Co. Longford after their Christmas Jumper Day for Bethany House.

55 years' service to the Society



Patrick Threadgold recognised for 55 years' service to SVP - Sacred Heart/The Folly Conference, Waterford city.

Patrick was born in Dublin and moved to Waterford when he was quite young. Patrick experienced the kindness of SVP himself as a child when his father died, and two volunteers called to his home to provide friendship and support to his mother and the family. In later life, during his time working in a factory in Waterford, a friend of his recommended to him to join the organisation as a volunteer.

He joined the Society in the early 60's and has given 55 years of dedicated service. Patrick was recently presented with a certificate and medal to recognise his distinguished service to the Society at his Conference meeting by newly elected Waterford Area President, Eugene Lanigan Snr.

Patrick has thoroughly enjoyed his time as a member; and two changes he would like to see in the Society going forward would be two collectors present at church gate collections and the encouragement of more young volunteers to join.

*Seated: Left - Seamus O'Connell, Right - Patrick Threadgold
Standing L-R: Eugene Lanigan Snr, Johnny McCarthy, Sr Margaret Breen, Ray Kearney, Sr Barbara Burke, Winnie Power*

Have, have not...

by Clare O'Reilly

We complain about every little thing;
Luxuries of which they can only dream-
Must come now, delays we will not suffer
We can be so hard on one another

We need to take a step back and realise
That we are the lucky ones who have the prize
Our lives are blessed with all we need and so much more
Why do we rant and rave, what are we craving for?

Set aside your complaints without delay
And join me please, as for this, I fervently pray
That those of us who have, shall be content, give thanks
and find a way
To restore balance and help those who have not,
arise and have their day!

In Tribute

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

Paddy Casey (1933-2020) St Dympna's Conference, Mullingar

Conferences in the Mullingar area and the wider Vincentian family have lost a much loved and respected member and friend with the sad passing of Paddy on 10th January 2020. Paddy was a man of deep faith, kind, compassionate and non-judgemental and while of a quiet and seemingly shy disposition, was always willing to give advice, prompting and encouraging members to further achievement. It could be said of Paddy that 'he was always there', in the good and not-so-good times.

Paddy was native of Cornadough, Newtowncashel, County Longford. He received his early education in St. Mel's, Longford following which he took up employment with Westmeath County Council. He joined the society in Mullingar in 1963, and, in 1966 was one of the first members of the newly formed St. Dympna's Hospital Visitation Conference, visiting St. Loman's Psychiatric Hospital and later ex patients in the community on a weekly basis. He remained an active member until towards the end of 2017 when illness prevented him from active society work. Over 30 years ago, Paddy took early retirement. This enabled him to pursue his own interests and devote more time to the work of the society and to parochial matters.

Paddy performed many roles within conferences in the area, acting at various times as conference president, secretary and treasurer. He was also active in the work of Special Works Conferences St. Joseph's (Housing) and St. Margaret's (Shop), both formed in 2000. He was a strong advocate of promoting education as a way out of poverty and was on the initial education committee established in the 1990s and which continues to operate a scheme of education grants to the marginalised in the area. Paddy had a great facility with figures and his expertise was put to good effect in his role as conference treasurer and treasurer of the Mullingar Area Council. He was witty and droll and enjoyed nothing better than the weekly game of golf with his SVP friends until illness called a halt.

He will be sadly missed by his eight nieces and two nephews and their families (who paid him a glowing tribute at his funeral obsequies), and wider family and friends, to whom we offer our sincere condolences.

His was a life well lived.

May his gentle soul rest in peace.

Leo Loftus (1932 – 2020) Ballina Conferences, North Mayo

Leo Loftus, who passed away on 24th February, was an active member of the Society in Ballina for over sixty years. He served in many roles during this time and as a prominent solicitor in the town acted as legal adviser to the Ballina Conferences and was instrumental in taking the brave decision in 1993 to purchase a building which would provide the Society with an identity in the town.

This building provided the wherewithal to expand our services and incorporate all our activities under the one roof. Named Ozanam House it now incorporates the SVP Resource Centre and Vincent's Fashion shop. However, it was his Vincentian Christianity and wisdom that set Leo apart - he was Ballina's free legal aid for many decades before the term was ever utilised. He had great wisdom and knowledge which he imparted with quiet humility. Leo was at his happiest at his weekly Conference meetings and relished the family visitation afterwards. He genuinely cared about the progress of those the Society assisted and always gave people the benefit of the doubt. He impressed the importance of a good education on many families as the pathway out of the poverty trap.

Leo was always available to Society - whether it was to give advice, to assist with fundraising or to represent the Society on various forums. He will be greatly missed by his wife Mary, his sons and daughters and by his Vincentian family and friends - Ar dheis De go raibh a Anam Dilis.



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