

VINCENTIAN NEWS



Society of St Vincent de Paul

Autumn 2017 Volume 4 Number 13



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A portrait of Fr Perry Gildea C.M., an older man with white hair and glasses, smiling slightly. The background of the portrait is a soft, blue and purple sky with clouds.

Spiritual Reflections

Fr Perry Gildea C.M

Our Lady and Vincentian Spirituality

In May of 1842 Frederic Ozanam wrote to a friend “some personal word of thanks for your thoughtfulness in involving me in the excellent work of the brochures about M. Ratisbonne. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul would be glad to distribute them....I have no doubt that the circulation of this wonderful story will do great good. Personally, I am deeply moved by it. Alphonse Ratisbonne was a member of a very successful French Jewish family, deeply antagonistic to Catholicism as an older brother had not only converted to Catholicism but become a priest. In January of 1842 Alphonse was in Rome on holiday. Visiting with a friend, a very devout Catholic he was persuaded to accept a miraculous medal which he did simply in order not to be offensive. A couple of days later with the same person he was taken to a Church while his companion arranged a funeral. It was the Church of St Andrea delle Frate. While his friend was in the sacristy he became aware that all the light in the Church was concentrated in one side chapel. Drawn towards the light he was suddenly aware of the Virgin Mary of the Miraculous Medal beckoning to him. In an instant, he was overwhelmed with a sense of his own sinfulness and a desire for baptism. His companion returned to find him weeping and saying he had seen Our Lady of the Medal. In the following days he was taken to the Jesuits and shortly after baptised and received into the Church. He was later ordained like his brother. This famous story of the conversion of Alphonse Ratisbonne is part of history of the Miraculous Medal.

The Miraculous Medal was revealed by Our Lady to St Catherine Laboure, a postulant of the Daughters of Charity. This happened in the gallery of the mother house chapel in the Rue de Bac, Paris. That was in 1830. The medal, instantly popular, had such an impact it was labelled “miraculous” and has been part of Vincentian Spirituality ever since. While Ozanam was anxious to promote the Ratisbonne story and devotion to the medal, devotion to Mary has been part and parcel of the Vincentian Charism since the time of St. Vincent and St. Louise. The first conference of Charity founded in Chatillon les Dombes, the 400th anniversary of which we celebrate this year, has Our Lady as patron. St Vincent wrote “And because when the Mother of God has been invoked and taken as patroness in important matters, everything can only go well and accrue to the glory of Jesus her Son, the ladies take her for their patroness and protector of the work, most humbly entreating her to take special care of it.” This became the pattern for the foundation documents of subsequent conferences of charity.

While Mary is Mother of the Church, and its guardian and inspiration, devotion to Mary must be a fundamental part of the spirituality of a Vincentian. As Visitation is one of the fundamental methods of the Society, the Visitation of Elizabeth and Zachery by Mary is especially significant. As she arrives Mary is enthusiastically greeted by Elizabeth as the mother of the Lord, Mary’s reply is the Magnificat. We are told that this is the hymn of thanksgiving of the ‘Poor of Jahweh’ the ‘Anawim’. These were a group of Israelites who emerged during the time of the Exile. Bereft of everything, possessions, home, and all the traditional elements of their religion, they developed a spirituality in their nothingness, of total trust in God. The Incarnation, was the reward of that trust. Hence Mary can say she glorifies God for his great goodness and faithfulness to his promise. She also identifies with the Anawim as a ‘lowly handmaid’ and in some of the strongest verses, “His mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him, .. he has routed the proud of heart, he has pulled down princes from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away”. Mary identifies totally with the poor.

We need to spend prayerful time reflecting on the mysteries of Mary’s life and her insight into poverty. St Vincent and St Louise enthusiastically encouraged devotion to Our Lady and especially meditation on the mysteries of the rosary. Careful reflection on the mysteries of the Rosary will reveal not only the totality of God’s saving plan but Mary’s essential part in salvation. It will also be our inspiration. Pope Benedict pointed out that Mary was the first evangelist as at the Visitation she brought Jesus, as yet unborn, to Elizabeth, Zachery and John. She brought them the very incarnate love of God. When, Vincentians visit, they similarly must bring not just aid but God’s love to those we serve. Let Mary be our guide and model.

Welcome by Pauline Brown, Regional Manager



A very warm welcome to the latest edition of the Vincentian News! I hope you have had an enjoyable and restful summer.

I trust you will enjoy the contributions from so many of our members which highlight the wide variety and breadth of our work

around the Region. The support the Society continues to give is demonstrated by the range of photographs and articles. As always, though, I do continue to appeal for your ongoing contributions and stories or case studies that will remind us of the positive impact the Society makes in the lives of those who seek our help and assistance.

You may be aware from my article in the previous Vincentian News that I mentioned the Society's support behind the End Holiday Hunger campaign that one of our partner organisations, Children in Northern led over the summer? I can confirm that a very successful programme of activities was organised during July and August. A range of nutritional cookery classes were held in Portadown to a group of vulnerable young people who had been identified by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. In total there were three groups of twenty participants involved in gaining an understanding of learning how to choose food, make a nutritional meal and all on a budget! The learning they gained enabled them to share this information at home with their parents and siblings and in receiving a recognised certificate ensured they could include this learning to their overall educational achievements. This holistic approach to learning, education, budgeting and understanding is invaluable to ensuring we take a proactive role in self sufficiency and giving these young people the necessary skills for the future. We would hope that in the future this pilot programme can be rolled out across Northern Ireland as other Health Trusts, the Public Health Agency and Schools gain an awareness of the difference this type of approach can make in the lives of young people. I was very fortunate to be invited to see the programme in action and to meet some of the participants. It was very apparent that they

had grown in confidence and were enjoying themselves and having fun!

The photo below includes some of the participants and members of the Southern Health and Social Trust.

I am aware that on a local level the Society has played their part also in supporting children and young people over the summer period. Assisting parents with the financial cost of childcare, attendance at summer schemes, outings and securing a short break at Clare Lodge has been something we have been doing over many years. Many of our members have told me not only of the relief that parents experience but also of their joy that their children can participate in events and activities that they would otherwise be excluded from. You will notice as you read through this edition that 2 conferences have highlighted great examples of how we support children and young people, and their families during the summer. The positive impact on the 95 children who benefitted from Society support in Limavady and Kilkeel is fantastic! We do know that this support has happened all over the Region so can I please urge other conferences to record and capture details of the number of families and young people that were assisted on the portal. This will give us, as a Society, an overall picture of the level of support and assistance over the summer period.

As always, I would wish to advise all our members of the ongoing support of all of our staff. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if we can help in anyway. The next edition of the Vincentian News will be in January 2018 so please remember to capture all of your events and photos and submit them to Regional Office.

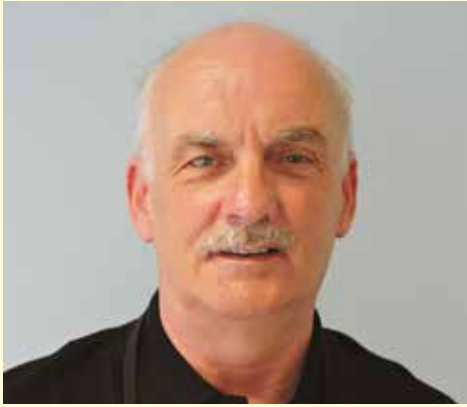
May I take this opportunity to express my sincere and personal thanks to our outgoing Regional President, Aidan Crawford who has provided me with much needed guidance



and support in my role as Regional Manager. He has been invaluable. I would also like to extend my congratulations to our new Regional President, Brendan O'Neill and to wish him every success in his new role. I would also wish to assure our new Regional President of both mine and all of the staff's ongoing and continued support.

Your news in Vincentian News!

Do you have an event or a story that you would like to see featured in a future issue of Vincentian News? If so, we'd love to hear from you. Just email the details of your event and a picture if you have one to karen@dcpr.co.uk before the end of December 2017.



Farewell to Aidan

Aidan Crawford, has made a monumental difference in his role at the helm of our organisation and he will be sorely missed. Vincentian News chatted to Aidan as he prepares to hand over the reins to his successor.

How long have you been with SVP and how long of that period has been as President?

I have been with SVP for 23 years, five of which have been as Conference President, five as Area President and five as Regional President.

What qualities do you feel are important for a President, both personal and professional?

Personally you need patience and understanding, be able to problem solve and to be available to members. Another important trait is the ability to put yourself into the shoes of others and see things from their perspective. Professionally you need to have a sound knowledge of the rules of the society, employment legislation and finance as well as good networks of contacts to call upon when needed.

How has the organisation changed and developed over the years?

New rules and governance have been put in place by the government and charity commission so we needed to move with the times. Because of technological advances, we updated our methods of communication and training and we now have new roles within the society, for example, information and membership officers along with child protection officers.

What moments have been most memorable during your time as President?

Overseeing the building of Clare Lodge in Newcastle and other capital projects have stood out for me. Additionally, the work we undertook with refugees over the years, including sending out 34 containers of aid estimated at £17 million, are, without doubt, some of the most memorable times. The two containers of food that went to Yemen were especially notable as we were the only organisation which managed to get aid through to the people in need there.

What are your greatest achievements in the role?

I feel I contributed to a successful reorganisation of the society, which included the renovations that took place in the Regional Office in Belfast, helping us to meet the requirements of those in need into the 21st Century.

Is there something that you had wished to achieve that remained out of reach?

My biggest disappointment was that we did not succeed in the vision of our youth project. As they say 'the children are our future' and it is vital that we have their support, encouraging them to continue with the wonderful work of the organisation.

How have you stayed so motivated?

Always putting the needs of the poor and vulnerable to the fore and working with some of the most dedicated people in the Society.

How would you like to see the organisation progress as it moves forward?

We need to ensure that the Society continues with its tireless work and we need to bring in more new members who can bring with them new ideas and new energy.

What are your hopes for SVP into the future?

That it continues to be strong and a voice for the poor.

Have you a message for incoming President, Brendan O'Neill?

At times it may be tough and you can't please everyone but always remember your end goal, helping the people in need. I wish Brendan every success in the role and if I can be of any assistance, he only has to ask.

Will you continue to be an active member of SVP?

No, I've decided that my passion now lies with the refugee plight, which is one of the world's largest humanitarian crises.

I have networks of contacts through the UK and the Middle East and believe I can be more useful in helping these people at present.

What advice would you give to someone interested in supporting SVP?

Anyone who is interested in supporting SVP should be aware that they are supporting the disadvantaged in their own communities and it is very rewarding to see these people being helped.

What are your plans for the future?

I intend to spend more time with my young grandchildren and family. I might even get time now to play a round or two of golf!

Do you have any personal goals that you would like to achieve?

As I wish to continue with charity work, my personal goal would be to maintain contact with the people I've met during my time in SVP in order to mutually help and support each other.

How do you plan to spend your spare time?

I have two young grandchildren who I adore and I intend to spend as much time with them as I can. I know my wife will want all those odd jobs around the house done now as well!

How would you describe yourself to someone who had never met you?

Dedicated, determined and hard-working. I speak my mind and always have people's best interests at heart. I might not be everyone's cup of tea but when I start a job, I want to make sure it is done right and by the rules.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

As it was volunteers with whom I primarily worked, the best advice I ever got was 'to lead and not to drive'.

Tell us something interesting about yourself?

Believe it or not, I was a soccer referee in the Irish League and also a GAA referee for a number of years. One of the nicest people I met while refereeing was Nobby Stiles. I was

refereeing a Manchester Utd match at the Milk Cup when I hurt my ankle and Nobby took me into the Man Utd dressing room and got his physio to look after me - a proper gentleman.

What's your favourite book?

The Great Escape by Paul Brickhill.

Have you any unfulfilled ambitions?

My only ambition is to see my grandchildren and family be happy and successful.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

I have to say my answer is threefold; my family who have supported me in all the charity work I've done; Arch Deacon Donnelly, my spiritual director in the Mid-Antrim area whose wise words and counselling were invaluable to me; and in recent years, Mr Cormac Wilson, with his loyalty and dedication to both me and the Society. We became great friends as well as colleagues.

Farewell and thanks from Aidan Crawford

I wish to formally acknowledge the support granted to me from all of our members and staff during my five years as Regional President. It has been a privilege to serve you all and to represent the Northern Region at a national level. We have, together, made a lot of progress over the years and whilst there is still work to be done, I commend your commitment to continuing to help make a difference in the lives of those who come to the Society of St Vincent de Paul seeking our assistance.

May I take this opportunity to wish you every blessing in the future and to wish our new Regional President, Brendan O'Neill, every success over the coming years.

Aidan

Conference Helpline numbers – answerphone messages

Does your Conference have a dedicated Helpline number?

If so, we would ask all Conferences to ensure that your phone has a personalised SVP answerphone message set up.

On many occasions service users have stated that they have been too afraid to leave their details on answerphones as they are not sure they belong to SVP. Making the call can be extremely difficult, challenging and embarrassing for people and it is important that they are confident that they are leaving their personal and sensitive details with SVP.

If you have a helpline and have not set up an answerphone message, we would ask you to consider doing this.

Some sample messages you may wish to use:

General message

"Thank you for calling the (*Conference name*) of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Please leave your name and number and we will return your call as soon as possible."

During busy times eg Christmas

"Thank you for calling the (*Conference name*) of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Please leave your name and number. We are especially busy at this time of year and we will endeavour to return your call as soon as possible."

You can record a message that meets your Conference needs and change your answerphone message at anytime.

Dunnes bag pack

The annual Dunnes Stores bag pack will take place on **Friday 13 and Saturday 14 October**. Members should contact Cathy Carroll at Regional Office for collection boxes. Good luck with your fundraising efforts!



Good News Appeal

We would love to share some good news stories of how SVP has helped turn lives around.

We are appealing for uplifting stories from across our Conference areas – have you personally been supported and helped through a difficult time by SVP or perhaps you know someone who might be willing to share their story of the difference SVP has made to their lives either today or in past years?

If so, please get in touch. Every Vincentian gives so much and to hear positive stories about the difference our organisation's support can make would mean a lot to our members and volunteers. Thank you in advance.

Brendan O'Neill

We welcome Brendan O'Neill to the role of Regional President as he starts his five year tenure. He chats to Vincentian News about his new role.

Congratulations on your election to President. How did you feel when you heard the news?

I was very thankful and am looking forward to getting started. I realise it will be a very busy time and I would like to thank Aidan Crawford for his well wishes and advice.

What qualities are required for the position of President - personal and professional?

It is important to be well organised, a good listener, to be diplomatic and compassionate. I feel that these attributes which apply to both personal and professional life.

When and how did you become involved with SVP?

I don't think that anyone wakens up on a given day and just decides to join The Society. I believe that we are led to this either by our own prayers or by the prayers of others. This really is a vocation.

What will your new role as President entail?

I will work with the senior team to direct the organisation into the future. Times are tough and getting tougher.

Do you have any specific aims and objectives for your new role?

For many and I will keep those in need at the centre of all of my plans.

How will you be able to support Conferences?

I strongly believe that the best work is done on the ground, so I plan to attend Area Council meetings and conference meetings where possible to hear what volunteers are dealing with and to support them as necessary.

What advice would you give to someone interested in supporting SVP?

I would tell them that we are passionate about what we do. All of the people I have met in the Society, whether volunteers or staff care about what they do. They go the extra mile and put others first.

How do you stay motivated?

It doesn't take much to motivate me. I try to see opportunity in everything. Things

What is the best advice you ever received?

Can and should change, change is healthy so it is important to be 'on the ball' all of the time.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Family takes up most of my time, whether it is my own children or my grandchildren. I like to watch Liverpool FC with my grandson when they are on TV. We go as often as possible to Anfield to watch the greatest football club on earth! My other passion is GAA. Aontroim abú! I also go to the gym three or four times a week.

Are you a member of any other organisations in North Down?

I am involved with the property committee in our parish. We look after the parish estate in terms of maintenance and remodeling.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

That would certainly be my father. He was a man full of integrity and a definite role model.



Vincent's News

RETAIL UPDATE

Vincent's Kircubbin

Tracy Scott-Stewart has been recruited as full-time manager for our Vincent's shop in Kircubbin.

Tracy, whose retail career began with Marks and Spencer, where she worked for ten years specialising in visual merchandising, brings a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to SVP. She has also worked for River Island and Top Man, where she was regularly sent to open new stores and carry out inspections to ensure adherence to each brand's high standards.

Tracy fulfilled a life-long dream of opening her own vintage shop in Hollywood and from that gained experience in starting up and running a small business.

She has a great understanding of both retail and of the work of the Society and has already proven herself to be a valuable asset to the Kircubbin Vincent's and the area of North Down & Ards.

Mill Street, Newry

Paula Clarke has been recruited as a part-time sales assistant in the Mill Street, Newry Vincent's and it is with delight that we can announce she will be the new manager of the shop.

Paula has great experience working in customer service having been team leader in Costa, Newry. She has a fantastic work ethic and is very empathetic, describing herself as "firm but fair". She has a deep knowledge of the working of the shop and understands the importance of maximising every donation received.

In her new role, Paula will have the full support of a fantastic team of staff and volunteers.

We would like to extend our warmest of welcomes to Tracy and congratulations to Paula – we look forward to working with them in the future!

New location

Vincent's on Armagh's Thomas Street will be relocating to Ogle Street in the city at the end of September 2017. The new shop will be open for business straightaway ensuring there is continuity of service for our local supporters.

Sad news

We are sorry to inform you of the death of our colleague Kathleen O'Connor nee Murphy, who died on 24 August 2017. Kathleen worked in the Mill Street, Newry Vincent's for 20 years and will be greatly missed by her fellow co-workers and the extended circle of St Joseph's Conference, Newry.

She was much loved by members, staff, volunteers and customers and we extend our deepest sympathies to her brother Micheal Murphy (St Joseph's Conference), her children and grandchildren and all her extended family and friends.

Renovation for Vincent's, Ormeau Road

The Vincent's shop on the Ormeau Road, which was the first of our 32 branches to be transformed under the 'Renewing the Routes' programme in 2014, has recently undergone an extensive renovation with the shop reopened to the public in Belfast in March 2017. Ciara McCarney, shop manager, said: "Our key purpose is to help those in need and our local shops play a vital role in this service. Not only are they a lifeline to many who visit the shop to purchase affordable necessities and have a friendly chat with our volunteers, they are also an important source of revenue for the charity which allows us to expand our work further into the local community. We're delighted with the results of our renovation and have welcomed many new faces to the shop since we reopened."



Summer offers in Dungiven

Vincent's in Dungiven held its annual summer sale in July. There were fantastic bargains and offers in store throughout the day which was well supported by the local community.



St Vincent de Paul Launch New Retail Strategy for Fermanagh Vincent's Shops

Key team members from the Society's retail division recently visited our Enniskillen branch of Vincent's, to meet the dedicated team of volunteers running the shops in both Enniskillen and Lisnaskea and to unveil the organisation's new retail strategy for its retail arm.

Anne Crossan, regional services manager for Vincent's stores across the Northern Region, explains: "We wanted to personally meet, greet and thank all of our wonderful volunteers who run our Vincent's shops locally. They are the lifeblood of our shops and we appreciate all of the time that they donate to making Vincent's in both Lisnaskea and Enniskillen such a great success.

"The shops are very popular and we are also very grateful to and appreciative of all of our customers who donate and purchase items from Vincent's. All of



Team members from Vincent's in Enniskillen and Lisnaskea.

the money that we raise in the shops goes back into helping people in the local areas through our extensive Society services.

"I am delighted to have joined the Vincent's team recently and we have refocused our retail strategy for all of our shops in the Region in order to deliver even better service to customers, which in turn will benefit the organisation. Our

key priorities for the forthcoming months include training, branding, recycling and stock rotation and we will be rolling out these plans across each of our 32 Vincent's shops across the North.

"We think that this is a really exciting time for retail in Enniskillen and Lisnaskea and hope that our customers enjoy the positive changes we are making."



Eye Catching

Here are some samples of window displays for the National Retail competition – winners to be announced on 29 September at the National Retail Conference in Croke Park.



First Ever Vincent's Volunteer Recruitment Day

We held our very first Vincent's volunteer recruitment day recently in West Belfast's Kennedy Centre. Rasa Visockiene, National Volunteer Coordinator, joined Anne Crossan, Regional Retail Services Manager and Eileen McCabe from Vincent's in Turf Lodge to chat to customers in the Kennedy Centre, a popular shopping centre in West Belfast.

Anne explains: "We got a great reception and it is evident that SVP is very close to the people of West Belfast's heart, with many shoppers stopping to have a chat and find out more about what we do, especially across our network of Vincent's shops.

"We were delighted that quite a number of people were interested in volunteering for us, which will be a great help to our local shop teams. We hope to repeat this exercise across the region, offering all of our Vincent's outlets this support in recruiting new volunteers."



Membership News

Conference Presidents' Training

On Saturday 17 June 2017, 17 members participated in Conference Presidents' Training which was delivered at Regional Office by Geraldine Magee, Regional Training Co-ordinator.

The training was well received by all participants, with many highlighting the benefits of being able to network with fellow Conference Presidents and share ideas and good practice, which they could bring back to their own Conferences.

If you are a Conference President and you would like this training, please do not hesitate to contact the Membership Support Officer for your area.

Maria Fyfe – Regional Office
Tel: 028 9075 0151

Joann Barr – Derry Office
Tel: 028 713 77311



Access NI – retrospective & re-vetting

All Conferences will have received information relating to the updated SVP Access NI Policy.

The policy now stipulates the following:

Retrospective vetting – any member who has not previously completed an Access NI with SVP must now do so.

Re-vetting – any member who has completed an Access NI more than three years ago must now renew their Access NI. The Membership Support Officers (MSOs) will be working very closely with the Area Presidents and Conference Presidents in your Area to ensure that all members affected by the policy change have the opportunity and support to complete their vetting before the deadline of March 2018.

In Belfast a number of drop-in sessions were delivered during August and member feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with many members commenting on how quick and easy the process is. The Information Officers have been on hand to help members with the essential ID validation and the completion of the Access NI paperwork. Many members have also availed of the opportunity to complete their application on-line with their Conference President completing their ID Validation locally.

In a matter of days well in excess of 100 members completed their vetting with most of their checks being returned within a week.

We plan to run more sessions in September for members across Belfast as well as delivering sessions across the Northern Region.

Your MSO will happily answer any questions you have about the process:

Maria Fyfe – Regional Office
Joann Barr – Derry Office

Tel: 028 9075 0151
Tel: 028 7137 7311

Medals & certificates

Long Service Medals will no longer be held at a Regional level. If a Conference would like to recognise the dedication and service of a member the medals must be ordered from National by contacting your Membership Support Officer.

Maria Fyfe – Regional Office
Tel: 028 9075 0151

Joann Barr – Derry Office
Tel: 028 7137 7311

There is no charge for the medals, however, they cannot be supplied on the day.

If you are planning a special recognition event for any member and would like medals or certificates, please contact your MSO and they will order them on your behalf.

Medals are available for

- General Recognition/
Occasional Medals for services to SVP
- 15 years' service
- 25 years' service
- 50 years' service



Eamon Dallat, new Area President, North Derry

I am a father of three grown up children - two boys who live in Belfast and a daughter who lives in Kildare. I have been married to Mary for close to 44 years and we now have six grandchildren. I spent most of my life working as a civil servant and a few years before retiring joined my local St Vincent de Paul Conference in Dungiven.

I have been active in my local church as Lay Reader, Eucharist Minister and Alter Server for many years and am also Chairperson on Saint Patrick's College Board of Governors in Dungiven. In addition, I am Treasurer of an Irish Prolife organisation called Cherish all the Children Equally.

I love being a member of my local Conference and feel blessed to have the opportunity to make a small difference to the lives of those needing help. St Vincent de Paul has also created new friendships which I greatly cherish. Some of these have arisen from just holding the Red Box on Sunday mornings.



As a new Area President I have already met some of our North Derry Council members and am looking forward to seeing and getting to know many more at an Area Mass which our Conference is hosting on the Feast of St Vincent de Paul on 27 September. I am hoping that I can act as a good communications link between our Conferences in North Derry and our Regional Office.



Kilmore summer bus trip

A party of 43 people set off on a beautiful sunny June day on Kilmore Conference's annual bus trip.

The coach left Crossgar village at 9.30am and proceeded to Loughinisland before heading through Newcastle and then along the coast to Kilkeel, where they stopped off at the Kilmorey Arms for a comfort break and some welcome tea, coffee and scones.

The trip then moved on to Newry via the Fairy Glen in Rostrevor with free time to browse and shop in the town centre, Buttercrane Shopping Centre and The Quays.

Following the retail therapy, a lovely dinner was served in the Canal Court Hotel by friendly staff before the party headed home.

A great time was had by all!

Enjoying a great end to the bus trip at the Canal Court Hotel.



Looking back.....

St Canice's Conference, Limavady

A Conference was formed in Limavady in 1887. The first President was John Kealey. The first entry in the earliest record in our possession reads: "At a meeting held on 30 September 1891, there were 16 persons present when it was resolved to form a new Society". Money received at the meeting amounted to £1-6s-7d. Good Friday and Christmas Day were times of annual collection. The Conference met each Sunday after 11 o'clock mass. The place of meeting is not recorded until 24 January 1897, when Termoncanice School is mentioned. Previous to this the minutes simply state, "The meeting was held here".

On 5 December 1897, the Chapter Room of St Mary's Church is named and has been the place of the weekly meeting ever since. In winter in both meeting places the Conference had the comfort of a coal fire. Entries recorded the purchase of coal for this purpose and payment to a Mrs O'Kane for lighting the fire. The Conference of those days appears to have been very active, attendance of members seldom being less than nine. For instance, there were 19 members present on 8 March 1892, when the meeting was presided over by the Rev Dr O'Brien PPVF.

On the 27 December 1891, two Conference 'brothers' were detailed to go to Ballykelly to endeavour to have a Conference established in that area of the parish. Church door collectors were appointed each month and on at least three occasions it was recommended that these collectors should be responsible for keeping order on the gallery stairs during mass!

On the 8 January 1892, three loads of turf and 11 hundredweight of coal were distributed, coal costing £1- 0s-4d. On the 6 May 1894, the President authorised the purchase of 50 framed religious pictures for distribution to poor families. The cost was 15s-0d. Coal was supplied in winter for the children's Catechism class. On Sunday 19 December 1897, the Conference held its pre-Christmas

meeting and granted relief to a further 18 families. When this minute book finished in April 1897, the balance on hand was £5-12s-6d. We have no records from this date until October 1922.

The Christmas list of relief averaged 3s-6d per family on 22 December 1926. One lady refused a ticket for 3s-0d - presumably it was regarded as being insufficient! It is recorded that the ticket "was torn up and she got nothing". In those earlier books where individuals had been receiving assistance over a lengthy period, there comes a meeting where a ticket is passed for them but the word **LAST** is written clearly against their name. Invariably, after a couple of weeks, the name is re-instated on the list! On 29 July 1928 the word **LAST** appears against the name of a widow, with the added note that she will get no more tickets until she starts going to Mass!

On 24 January 1932, it is noted that the Conference paid the cost of a car to convey local nuns to Largy district to give religious instruction to children who were attending a non-Catholic school. From time to time items record payment of a car to convey a priest on a sick call. There are frequent payments for funeral items - making and covering a coffin £2, shroud 7s-6d, hearse £1 (1935).

Random items from the minutes include £15 granted to a runaway couple. (The Conference must have approved of their action!) and £30 lodged with the Conference on 30 January 1963 by a lady who requested the Conference to carry out her funeral arrangements when she died. Her wishes were carried out six years later when she died on the 18 May 1969. The Conference 'adopted' a boy from Termonbacca Orphanage on 1 January 1969. Contributions to his upkeep were made. He was visited periodically with gifts at Christmas and birthdays until he was old enough to go out into the world. A taxi was provided for many years to bring residents of Roe Park House to Mass on Sundays and Holydays.

In November 1976, the day of the meeting was changed from Sunday mornings to Wednesday evenings by general agreement and to suit potential lady members. Around this time the Conference welcomed its first lady member, Mrs Rose O'Hara.

On 19 August 1987, the Conference is in a healthy state in this 100th year of its existence. Apart from visitation to needy families, some members visit the hospitals and the prison at Magilligan.

(This research was carried out by the late Jim Loughrey to mark the centenary of the Conference in 1987).



St. Vincent De Paul Society, April 1947

Breakfast Club for children at Kilkeel Summer Scheme

St Colman's Conference recently worked alongside Kingdom Youth Club in Kilkeel to jointly fund breakfast and lunch for around 30 primary school children attending the Club's summer scheme.

Activities were organised by the youth leaders from 11.00am to 1.30pm each week day with breakfast provided from 10.30am and a light lunch at 1.30pm.

SVP spokesman, Seamus Mullan, said: "The Society became involved to ensure that children who get free school meals during school term-time don't miss out during the holiday period. We are currently raising funds for the project through

the Thursday car boot sale at The Kingdom and we would like to thank everyone who supports us through the sale and also our regular church door collections."

Youth Club leader, Lee McNally, said: "We are proud to run this fantastic initiative in partnership with St Vincent de Paul. This is the first year a breakfast club has been run throughout our summer scheme and arose from a meeting between the local SVP branch and ourselves. This is a great resource for many families in the area and has been warmly welcomed by both parents and young people. The Youth Club would like to thank St Vincent de Paul for this opportunity and look forward to working with it again in the future."



This year's summer scheme participants.



The Kingdom's car boot sale.

Summer Scheme 2017

St Canice's Conference Limavady once again funded local children to attend the annual Roe Valley Leisure Centre summer scheme. We felt it was important that families who were unable to afford the cost of sending their children, were not disadvantaged. It was also important that these children did not miss out on the fun and experience of being involved with the summer scheme, which also give their families a break from trying to entertain the children over the summer holidays. We funded 65 children over a four week period, with children attending either one or two weeks, at a total cost of £1650. We believe that as we are helping disadvantaged children directly, that this is money well spent. Below is an extract from a letter of thanks we received from a single parent family.

Mum's letter of thanks:

'Thank you for getting my boys into the summer scheme, they had a ball and were sad when it ended. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your help.'

Children's letter of thanks.

'Thank you for paying for us to go to the summer scheme. It was good fun and we made lots of friends, and without them we couldn't go. Me and my brothers had good craic, thank you so much.'



Sean O'Neill

St Canice's Conference, Limavady.

Tales and teapots in Ballymoney

Pictured are staff and pupils from Our Lady of Lourdes school in Ballymoney presenting a cheque for £100 to our Conference from a 'Tales and Teapots' afternoon they held earlier this year.

Included are Noel Burns and Kevin Mckillop from St Patrick's Conference, Ballymoney.



Killyclogher's Marathon Man!

Chris Gallagher completed the outstanding feat of running four marathons in four days in support of St Vincent de Paul Killyclogher. The Extremme North event was run around the Innisowen 100 route in Donegal from Thursday 17 to Sunday 20 August.

Representatives from SVP and Cappagh Parish were there to support Chris and thank him for undertaking such a huge challenge in support of Killyclogher SVP.

The pictures here were taken as Chris crossed the finish line at the Redcastle Hotel in Donegal after completing four events in four days. He received a medal for each day which all joined together to form one large presentation medal.

Pictured are Michael Deehan, President St Mary's Killyclogher; Tommy Moohan, Shop Manager Vincent's Killyclogher; Chris Gallagher from Killyclogher and Fr Daniel McFaul.



Long service rewarded

Our congratulations to Kevin Mckillop from St Patrick's Conference, Ballymoney, who was recently presented with a Long Service Certificate and Medal to mark 50 years' service to SVP and also to mark his retirement.

In picture with Kevin Mckillop are Dominic Cassidy, Area President, Aidan Crawford, former Regional President and Eugene Wallace, Conference President.

Clare Lodge

Summer news

Our wonderful facility in Newcastle, Clare Lodge, has been open to guests for two years and while we know the summer is very popular, we are continuing to attract groups and individuals throughout the autumn.

This summer we have had guests staying from a number of Conferences north and south, as well as a number of new and returning groups including:

Rainbow Club
Living Youth
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
Gateway Club Belfast
Patrician Youth Group

A good mix from voluntary, community and statutory agencies to name just a few.

The good news is that they have spread the word and recommended Clare Lodge to others, who in turn have booked in for this autumn.

A great testament to the hard work and dedication of SVP staff, committee and volunteers - and we know everyone had a brilliant time.

I would like to give special thanks to the local Conferences in Kilmegan and East Down which provided financial support for entertainment over the summer and gave up their time to ensure guests felt welcome, supported and valued. This type of volunteering is essential to the people we support and can make such a difference to people's lives!

But don't take my word for it, have a look at some of the feedback.

Autumn/Winter

We are delighted to be hosting retreats once again for SVP Conferences in Armagh and also East Down and would encourage other areas to consider Clare Lodge for this type of event.

Have a look at some of the events coming up as I am sure you will find something of interest but book early to avoid disappointment

- Halloween Family Break - 30 Oct - 1 Nov
- Christmas Party - overnight stay. Dates available November/December
- Christmas dinners/lunch - November & December
- Members' weekend - 19 - 21 January 2018 & 26 - 28 January 2018 (other dates available - please contact Clare Lodge for more information). This offer includes breakfast on both mornings, dinner on Saturday night followed by entertainment and a one hour therapy session of choice.
- Family Christmas event - 9 & 16 December

A minimum of 12 individuals or six families needed for all events.

For more information contact:

Clare Lodge Centre

3 Castle Place

Newcastle, County Down

BT33 0AB

Tel: 028 4372 2849

(00 44 if dialling from outside Northern Ireland)

Email: clare.lodge@svpni.co.uk

To all the Staff
at Clare Lodge
thank you so much
for your hospitality
A VERY special
THANK YOU

AND WITH IT YOU WILL FIND,
Sincere APPRECIATION
BECAUSE YOU ARE SO kind.

With Thanks
TO YOU

We had a great time
and kids loved it
Many thanks to you all!!

From the Cunningham
Family
XoXoXoXo

Staff + Management of
Clare Lodge.

Thank you all for your kindness
and friendly hospitality.
For almost the first time since
my husband passed away in
December last year, I found a
sense of peace and a little joy,
something I never thought I'd ever
feel again. He loved Newcastle
as much as me and looked forward
to coming here each year.
Heartfelt Thanks
Dawn xx

To: The Staff and Management
of St. Vincent De Paul

From the bottom of our hearts, we
thank you for your generosity and
warm welcome to us each year! We
thoroughly enjoyed our stay and the
delicious food you heartily prepared
for everybody! Thank you for making
our summer so memorable one! ☺

God Bless!

love,
MAGADA family





**Mid Term Family Entertainment
Clare Lodge
£200 per family of 4**

Monday 30th Oct - Wednesday 1st Nov

Monday:

Create your own Halloween Pizza
4.30 pm 5.30pm

Lots of fun to be had at the Kids /family Disco from 7.30-9.30pm,

Tuesday:

Explore your creative side by making Halloween Masks in our Craft session from 2- 4pm

Take part in the Halloween parade and afterwards enjoy the delightful firework display which illuminates the sky above
Hot chocolate & Marshmallows to finish

Wednesday:

Create and decorate your own memory box before saying a final farewell! 10am-12am



*Book Early to
avoid
disappointment!*



Christmas

**Lunch Menu
£15 per person**

Starter

Home made Vegetable Soup
served with wheaten bread

Main

Turkey stuffing & Roast Ham
Roast Beef
Open Baked Salmon
Vegetarian option available

All served with Buttery Mash, Roast Patoto,
Glazed Carrots & Sprouts

Dessert

Xmas Pudding & Custard
Ice Cream
Trifle
Tea/Coffee & Mince Pie

*For further information
Contact Clare Lodge*



DINNER MENU £20

STARTER

HOME-MADE VEGETABLE SOUP & WHEATEN BREAD
GRAPE & MELON WITH MINT

MAIN

TURKEY STUFFING & ROAST HAM
ROAST BEEF
OVEN BAKED SALMON

VEGETARIAN OPTION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ALL ABOVE SERVED WITH BUTTERY MASH, ROAST POTATO, GLAZED CARROTS
& SPROUTS

DESSERT

XMAS PUDDING & CUSTARD/ICE-CREAM
PAVLOVA
TRIFLE
TEA COFFEE & MINCE PIES



**Contact Clare Lodge on
02843722849
clare.lodge@svpni.co.uk**



Clare Lodge

**Family Christmas
£120 per family of 4**

Saturday 16th Dec - Sunday 17th Dec

Saturday:

Arrival for Lunch at 1pm
Visit Santa's Grotto 2pm - 5pm
Dinner 5.30pm

Lots of fun to be had at the family Disco from 7.30-9.30pm,

Sunday:

Explore your creative side by making Christmas Decorations in our Craft session from 10-12pm

Lunch and Final Goodbye 1pm



*Book Early to
avoid
disappointment!*

Clare Lodge Summer Activities

Below is a selection of photographs of just some of the activities that have taken place in Clare Lodge over the summer months.





End of old Pound Coin - **DEADLINE 15th October 2017.....**

After this date, the old "round pound" will cease being legal tender. As this date approaches it is important that we prepare for its demise. Conferences and Shops are advised to check with their bank "well in advance" for arrangements that apply after 15th October 2017 locally.

GIFT AID CAMPAIGN 2017

Each year millions of pounds are claimed back by UK charities from HMRC on donations made by tax payers to the value of 25p for every £1 donated.

Every year the Society in the Northern Region receives in excess of £2m in donations and subscriptions. If £500k of this was from taxpayers, the Society could be reclaiming an extra £125,000 from HMRC ($£500k \times 0.25p$)



"Making your donations go further"

When you receive donations we are asking that you encourage eligible donors to complete a Gift Aid declaration. The Conference keeps the donation and sends the signed declaration to the regional office. Gift Aid funds reclaimed will be used for the benefit of the Society throughout the region and to enhance our works.



WILL YOU

REMEMBER SVP IN YOUR WILL?

With a gift in your Will to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul you will help build a better future for people in need and create lasting solutions to tackle poverty.

LAUNCH OF LEGACY BOOKLET

A new publication has just been launched in the region designed at encouraging donors to consider SVP in their Will.

The short eight page document provides some practical advice for potential donors along with information about who we are and what we do.

"A gift in your Will to the Society of St Vincent de Paul will help build a better future for people in need in Ireland and create lasting solutions to tackle poverty."

Kieran Stafford
National President SVP



Desmond Heaney

Desmond Heaney, who passed peacefully away on Sunday 23 July at his home in Glengormley, was a member of the St Bernard's Conference for 25 years. He retired in December 2016 just six months short of this 90th birthday when the Conferences of St Mary's on the Hill and St Bernard's amalgamated.

During his time in the Conference Desmond worked tirelessly to help those in need and also provided guidance to his fellow members in his spiritual reflections at the beginning of each weekly meeting. A Belfast man who was highly educated and had been awarded four degrees, Desmond was always kind and compassionate in his dealings with others and epitomised the Vincentian values of trust and respect for others.

Desmond studied for the priesthood as a young man and retained his deep religious devotion. He was the Sacristan in St Bernard's Church and also a Eucharistic Minister.

The passing of Desmond is a huge loss to the parish that he served so diligently and to his family whom he loved so much.

He will be remembered as a true Vincentian who embodied the values and virtues of our founder.

We tender our sympathies to his sons and daughters, his grandchildren and his great grandchildren as well as his sister Doreen and niece Ann.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.



Celia Matthews

Celia Matthews, a much loved member of the joint Conferences of Most Holy Redeemer Bally-holme and Saint Comgall's Donaghadee, died on 20 March 2017 following a short illness. Celia was only 58 and had been in the best of health.

Celia was from County Donegal and never let us forget it. She had taken a roundabout route to North Down via some locations in England and further afield. Everywhere she went she made an impact.

When she joined the Conference in 2003 none of us knew her. However, we were soon to learn that a real gem had joined us. Celia was so compassionate on visits and gave reports right from the heart; she tried so hard to get people back on their feet. Many of those she had visited were in tears when they learned of her passing.

Celia was elected Conference President in 2010 and served as an outstanding President for five years, leading by example and inspiring us by her enthusiasm. She was very appreciative of the Vincentian work members did and gave wonderful warm-hearted leadership and encouragement all the time — she was great craic too! She was naturally spiritual and in a gentle way guided us — she went on the Vincentian Pilgrimage to Knock.

She excelled at Christmas time with her meticulous preparation of hampers and toys for families who otherwise might have little on Christmas Day. Her plans will be followed for many years. Celia believed that if something was worth doing it should be done well.

She knew that the Conference had to move with the times and by good leadership and example got the Conference not only to go on the Agresso and portal systems but to embrace them because, ultimately, they exist to enable us to provide a better service for those we are privileged to help.

When the cross-community foodbank, Storehouse, opened in Bangor, it was Celia more than any-one else who, with her County Donegal woman straightforwardness and honesty, cut through all the red tape and helped the Parish to get involved. Storehouse has been of immense help to the less fortunate in Bangor and generous in assisting our Conference and others in the Area in our Vincentian work.

Celia's great loves were her husband George and her children Nicola, Rebecca, Andrew and Sara. She was so proud of all of them. Last year when things were frantic coming up to Christmas, she remarked that one of her daughters had told her that the only way that she would find out what Celia wanted for Christmas would be to ask the Conference for a visit!

We are grateful that Celia gave us so much love and time. Our sympathy goes out to George and their children; they were so good about keeping us informed.

May Celia rest in peace.

IN MEMORIAM

Josie O'Hanlon

St Molaise Conference and the wider SVP community mourn the loss of our dear friend and colleague and highly regarded member, Josie O'Hanlon.

Josie was a devoted member of our Conference for more than 68 years and throughout his life he showed dedication to the poor and disadvantaged in our community. He consistently offered friendship, charity and loyalty to those in need.

Josie celebrated his 98th birthday on 19 June this year and had continued to work and enjoy good health until very recently.

He was the country's longest server draper, joining his father Joseph in the well-known O'Hanlon's Drapery Shop in the mid 1930s and spending 83 wonderful years in the business. He was very talented and skilled, sitting down at his famous 'Singer' sewing machine to carry out repairs. He would have opened the shop at any time of night if people wanted it.

Josie had a vivid memory and was very outgoing and full of fun – he loved to tell stories and had jokes for everyone. He never retired and continued working until shortly before his unexpected illness.

Josie was a very active member of Devenish Parish and Sacred Heart Chapel and he lovingly quoting from Latin verses from his youth, rehearsed as an altar boy. He was truly a servant of the Lord, blessed with wonderful faith throughout his life. As an active Vincentian for nearly seven decades, he was presented with a bronze and silver medal for devoted service for 40 and 50 years respectively. Earlier this year he received a beautiful certificate to honour his unwavering 68 years of working for the Society.

His requiem mass was widely attended and celebrated by Canon Michael McGourty PP and by Fr Niall Green and also by Fr Artie McCann, friends of the family. In his homily, Canon McGourty referred to Josie as 'the Patriarch of our community'. Josie was very devoted to his family throughout his very happy and inspirational life. He is survived by his wife Mary and their four children, six grandchildren and the wider family circle. Josie is a wonderful example of a life well lived. He will be dearly missed.

Let perpetual light shine upon him.

Rest in peace Josie.



Billy Duffy

A man of vision and a true gentleman, Billy Duffy, was a very dedicated member of the Society in Magherafelt and the Mid Ulster area for more than 44 years, working tirelessly on behalf of the needy.

He served at various times as President (1984-87), Secretary and Treasurer in Magherafelt and as Treasurer for the area and was still a serving member of the Conference right up to his passing.

One of the most enthusiastic and obliging members, Billy would often say: "You tell me what you want me to do and I will do it", be it collections, visits, meetings, hamper deliveries, charity quizzes or any other Society business. He was a member of our sister organisation, St Dismas Conference, for 20+ years, visiting prisoners and providing help and friendship to the least advantaged in our society. He only stopped visiting when walking became difficult for him.

In Magherafelt he oversaw the acquisition of the Conference meeting house and the setting up of Vincent's in Magherafelt. Always there for help and guidance, he would be a calming influence in all discussions and debates, listening carefully to all concerned and giving his measured opinion.

He was a very tall man who had a "larger than life" personality and on nights out was always ready with a song when needed. The only time that he was absent from the Conference was when he was nursing his wife Doreen, to whom he was devoted, during her illness and subsequent passing.

On a personal level, Billy was a great friend to all our Conference members and we are heartbroken to lose such a kind and caring member. His immense contribution to the Society of St Vincent de Paul will be sadly missed by the staff, volunteers and those he visited. His impact on the lives of thousands of individuals is a testament to his faith and generosity of spirit. We extend our deepest sympathy to his two sons, three daughters and all of the grandchildren and great grandchildren in the family circle.

Gerardine Kielt
President, Magherafelt

