



The VOICE

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Newsletter

Columbus Diocese

Spring 2017

Volume 37 Issue No 2

President's Message Warren Wright



Blessings to all Vincentians in the Columbus Diocese as we approach Pentecost! May the Spirit of the Lord be on all of you as you bring good news to the poor!

In late March 2017, I attended the 2017

Midyear Meeting in St. Louis. A part of that meeting was a spiritual retreat focused on the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism. What is the Vincentian Charism? It is the gift of grace that St. Vincent de Paul received in 1617 to bring good news to the poor. Two events occurred in 1617 that led to the Vincentian Charism. On January 25, 1617, in the Village of Folleville, France, Vincent preached "the first sermon of the Mission", several days after hearing the confession of a dying man that made him aware of the spiritual abandonment of poor persons in the countryside. Then, in August 1617 in Chatillon, Vincent witnessed the material poverty and misery of his parishioners. After preaching about the condition of a sick family, a group of persons responded immediately to the needs and led to the formation of the Ladies of Charity, known today as the International Association of Charities (IAC).

The theme of this 400th Anniversary is from Matthew 25: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." On this joyous occasion, I offer a reflection from Fr. Tomaz Mavric, CM,

Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission (CM): "As we look outward to the cry of the poor, we should not forget to look inward, to the cry of the poor within us, to the poverty within us that cries for help, for freedom, for redemption. It was Vincent's acceptance and recognition of his own poverty that led him to purify his own heart, the heart that then beat so strongly for persons on the margins of society! Vincent's approach to the person was not the approach of a theology from "above," but rather an approach to the person from Vincent's own poverty, the approach of a theology from "below." To welcome the stranger within us, to recognize that he exists in every one of us, to embrace this stranger, accept him, and then give it all to Jesus to heal our wounds, to surrender completely to Him and trust totally in His Providence: this was Vincent's way. Let it be the way of each one of us!

The lasting fruits of these 400 years are seen in the thousands and thousands of members of the numerous branches of the Vincentian Family who have walked before us, lived Vincent's way, the Vincentian Charism, to the best of their abilities. Now it is our turn."

Let us renew and reinvigorate our efforts to grow in holiness through service to one another and those in need. With the guidance of our conference presidents and spiritual advisors, let us make use of the many resources we have for our spiritual growth as Vincentians: the Rule, the Manual, Vincentian Celebrations, the Spirituality of the Home Visit, Serving in Hope Modules, Voice of the Poor Module, Vincentian Guide to Diversity and Multicultural Issues, Walking the Vincentian Pathway (a Personal Guide), Walking the Vincentian Pathway (Conference President and Spiritual Advisor Record and Planner), Catholic Social Teaching,

Seeds of Hope, Vincentian Reflection, Vincentian Meditations and Servant Leadership.

In closing, many thanks for the twinning contributions of six of our conferences (St. Margaret of Cortona, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Ladislav, St. Philip, St. Pius X, and Seton Parish Pickerington) to our systemic change activities that include the Vincentian Ohio Action Network (VOAN) and Accompanying Restored Citizens with Hope (ARCH), the Microloan Program, and *Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' By World* classes.

For those still contemplating a contribution, I welcome the opportunity to answer your questions at one of your conference meetings. Please know that, under direction of National SVDP leadership, SVDP is committed to "Ending Poverty through Systemic Change". We are ONE Society. Systemic change activities have been implemented throughout various councils over the last 6 years. In our Columbus Diocese, persons served by our SVdP conferences will be BETTER SERVED when we show our commitment to charity *and* justice (systemic change) activities. Our systemic change activities will help those we serve to thrive, not just survive, and live more fully human lives.

Many blessings,

Warren

God never spares His servants from trial because He does not wish to spare them the merit and glory", Frederic Ozanam

Mark Your Calendar! Save these dates!

Sunday, August 20, Day of Recollection, 9AM to 3:30PM with 2PM Mass, St. Martin de Porres Center, Ohio Dominican University on "Building Neighborhoods of Hope"

Saturday, September 16, Friends of the Poor Walk, 9AM Details to be announced.

Request for Comments

Warren Wright, Diocesan Council president, has presented a proposal for long term funding of our recent efforts to promote programs for systemic change. These programs and methods of funding deserve consideration and comment by all Vincentians. The proposal can be read on line.

<http://www.vincentianvoice.org/warrenproposal.pdf>

The Vincentian Rule recommends consensus decision making. Input from Vincentians is crucial for consensus. The VOICE, and especially the coming Summer 2017 issue, can be a forum for Vincentians to express their opinions on elements of this proposal on our way to consensus. . The VOICE editor requests comments from all Vincentians. Some topics for comments are suggested below. Please do not limit your considerations to those suggestion. Email comments to kielkopf.1@osu.edu by July 15.

I. On the request for \$1,000/yr from each conference:

1. Is it too high, too low or should it vary depending upon a conference's annual income?
2. What if there is no consensus on the programs with reluctance to make the annual contribution? Would voluntary contributions be a reliable way of funding systemic change programs?
3. Is diocesan wide twinning feasible?
4. Should the diocesan council look at other ways of providing funds for systemic change such as having a thrift store or special fund raising events?
5. Should funds for traditional works of charity be kept separate from funds for systemic change programs?
6. Should conferences inform their parishioners that funds donated in 5th Sunday collections will be used for Systemic Change programs as well as for direct charity?

II. On the Microloan program

1. Can the program actually help a significant number of people who use payday lenders?
2. Can it continue in the long run with only dedicated volunteers?

III. On the VOAN program

1. Should we create activist groups which in the long run may promote goals contrary to Vincentian values?
2. Can we justify using funds collected from our parishioners to promote policies which may disagree with their politics?
3. Are VOAN programs suitable only for urban areas?

IV On the ARCH program

1. How would typical Vincentians be involved in the program?
2. If we fund programs for those released from incarceration by funding VOAN groups such as RCC4C isn't this redundant?

V. On the mentoring program

1. Is this an evidence based program? Does aHa have evidence that their mentoring works?
2. Can we justify paying people to be mentored? Is this a bribe?
3. Can middle class white people be effective mentors for African-Americans trapped in generational poverty?

Some conferences and Vincentians have already commented on the proposal.

Conferences on Systemic Change Proposals

A consensus of the Columbus Immaculate Conception, whose main source of funding is about \$4,000 from each of the 5th Sundays, was that it was not too high. Members pointed out that \$1,000/yr is less than \$84/month. In IC there is strong support for the Microloan program. Jim Emley of IC was the leader in starting the program and IC was the first conference to make a security deposit in a credit union. It was also observed that the mentoring program under aHa answers the question so many had about what is the next step after having seen and discussed the Bridges Out of Poverty videos. However, there is skepticism about significantly reducing poverty with these programs. We know that we can help alleviate immediate needs as we do with our works of charity.

Charles F. Kielkopf
President IC SVdP

Several members of our St. Francis of Assisi conference are regular attendees of Voices of the Poor Meetings and the Restored Citizens Meeting. We are very supportive and aware of the systemic change efforts being proposed by the Diocesan Council. Warren Wright attended our meeting to explain the request for funding from our conference for the efforts. Even though we are a small conference and our funds are limited, we have voted to pay our portion quarterly to support the systemic change efforts. Deb Zabloudil came to speak at our meeting and did a wonderful job of explaining the microloan program. Members who had some questions about the program were satisfied with the information to support this endeavor. We wish to support emergency requests whenever we can, but we realize the importance of systemic change to help remove obstacles in our clients' way to moving forward in their lives.

Also, in April our conference hosted the NNEMAP Food Pantry Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon at St. Francis of Assisi. Our members participate in this to support the food pantry in our area, even if they can't directly volunteer at the food pantry. A great time was had by all.

NNEMAP Food Pantry is a cooperative ministry of over 30 churches distributing food and material assistance to residents of the near Northside of Columbus. NNEMAP's clientele consists of families living at or near the poverty level.

Lorri Kuczynski
SVDP President
St. Francis of Assisi

Pete Schlom of St. Michael's in Worthington has some reservations

All of this turns on actually succeeding in getting people out of whatever cycle they are in, so it would be useful to know the rate of success in Newark and other early adopters of this program, especially over the long-term.

I'd vote for going forward this year if there was some assurance this program is effective in getting those in poverty on their feet. Defining what "effective" means is key; ideally we'd like it to be 100%, but realistically, what are we willing to accept? 10%, 25%, 50%, higher or are we OK with improving just one life regardless of resource used? There are a lot of ways to look at / define success, but there needs to be something in place that is the goal, and the program needs to be held to it. There have been many programs that have thrown money at the problem over the decades (many of them from various governmental agencies) and then delivered little except more poverty. I realize that the failure at government can be traced in part to huge bureaucracies and perverse incentives, but it is important to avoid these mistakes; the common feature with almost all of these programs was money was the only solution.

Financially, too many SVDP conferences are on the edge of solvency to just agree to this without an expectation that success (or failure) will be assessed. In other words, just throwing money at a situation a la past government programs is not acceptable.

It would also be useful to have an accounting of the results of the first 3 years of the program here in Franklin county, especially since Warren's proposal requires funding to retain personnel with the program. Salaries are not normally part of SVDP expenditures, so an extraordinary request should come with more than ordinary expectations. From where we sit, the enthusiasm for the program outlined in the letter seemed disproportionate since there was no accounting of achievements. Could we have an appraisal of what has resulted since inception?

Heads Up on the Location of 2017 Friends of the Poor Walk

John Willig will again serve as Chair for organizing the 2017 Friends of the Poor Walk. The walk will take place on Saturday, September 16, 2017 at a new venue. The new location is the Topiary Park in downtown Columbus with one corner at Washington and Town. The park is

adjacent to the downtown public library and *Christo Rey* high school. .Stay tuned for more information.

Report on 2017 Top Hat Celebration

On Saturday April 23 sixty five Vincentians from seventeen conferences gathered at St. Charles for a 4:30 PM Mass followed by a dinner in St. Charles' Cavello Hall to recognize the 2017 Top Hat honorees. The celebrant for the Mass was Fr. Charles Klinger, Diocesan Council Spiritual Advisor. The distinguished individual Vincentian honored with the Top Hat award, which is actually a nineteenth century top hat, was Walt Ohm of the St. Anthony conference. The outstanding Vincentian group presented with a plaque was the "SOUP Group" from the Kenton Immaculate Conception conference.

Walt Ohm is one of those long serving Vincentians who has served in just about every Vincentian ministry in his conference. A special talent of Walt has been applying for and receiving grants from the Catholic Foundation for providing rent assistance. Read Walt's Top Hat nomination in Top Hat report:

<http://www.vincentianvoice.org/events.html?>

You can read the SOUP Group's nomination also by going to

<http://www.vincentianvoice.org/events.html?>

The SOUP Group supplies cleaning and hygiene products; not soup! In Kenton, several churches cooperate to provide a free "soup lunch" during the last week of each month. At these soup lunches a group of Vincentians from the Immaculate Conception conference distribute free cleaning and hygiene products which they have bought in bulk quantities and carefully poured into smaller containers.

April 24 was the Second Sunday of Easter and also Divine Mercy Sunday. Fr. Klinger's homily focused on Divine Mercy. He modified the saying "You cannot give what you do not have" to reflect on "You can give what you have." The modification led to the lesson that we

can show mercy indefinitely because God gives us mercy without limits.

Keith McCormish from Faith Mission was the after dinner speaker. Keith spoke on his participation in Mt. Carmel's Community Friendship Program. Keith began by reminding his audience that frequently when homeless individuals and families find housing they become separated from the only community they still had: those who were sharing homelessness with them. The Community Friendship Program bridges the gap from the communities of the homeless to new communities by inviting members of these communities to share a meal and an evening gathering to foster growth of friendships of like-minded people. The program's website tells us

"The Friends Program gives newly housed people who've recently experienced homelessness an opportunity to share, connect and build relationships with others in the community while developing a healthy and beneficial social support system."

The program meets monthly so participants can see each other regularly, establish genuine friendships, and ease the transition into independent living. Each meeting includes a meal and an activity, which has ranged from a cooking class and holiday caroling to board game night and Franklinton National Night Out. Meetings are held each fourth Tuesday from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Mount Carmel West's Healthy Living Center. Visit <http://www.mountcarmelhealth.com/friendsprogram>

Vincentian Meditations

After the Top Hat dinner, two booklets, from National SVdP, designed for the conferences' spiritual reflections were available. Vincentians taking the booklets were asked to bring them to their conferences.. One was a workbook for conference's spiritual advisors to check-off how they were using National's resources for the spiritual development of members of their conferences. There is also space to write-up plans for how resources will be

used in the future. The workbook is titled "Walking the Vincentian Pathway." The other book by Thomas McKenna, C.M. is titled simply "Vincentian Meditations." Fr. McKenna presents sixteen short essays elaborating on diverse aspects of Vincentian spirituality. Each essay stands alone. They are short but probably not short enough for the conference spiritual advisor to read. However, having conference members take turns reading the short paragraphs might be a way to hold attention to the interesting but subtle themes.

Consider the reflection titled "Louise and the Tax Collector in the Back of the Room" based on Luke's parable in 18:9-14. Fr. McKenna imagines being the tax collector in the back of the temple lamenting his sinfulness while the Pharisee in the front reminds God of his righteousness. Fr. McKenna portrays a scenario in which the tax collector is marginalized in his own society because he collaborated with the Romans to make a good income. Fr. McKenna imagines how suffering through this marginalized status, and the flaws which led him into it, the tax collector attained the high level of spirituality he expresses in the back of the room. And it is high!

He then applies this pattern of spiritual growth in a marginalize status along with personal flaws to the spiritual growth of St. Louise de Marillac (1591-1660) a Vincentian foundress. Although in the nobility Louise was marginalized because of illegitimate birth and some nasty turns in French politics. Also she was widowed early and left with a ner-do-well son about whom she worried all of her life. From apt quotations from Louise's writings Fr. McKenna shows how she struggled in a marginalized status with a dominant flaw of being always anxious to a high spiritual level recognizing her sinfulness just as did the tax collector in the back of the room.

Remember in Your Prayers

Ken Bowers, Tuesday volunteer at St. Lawrence Haven
Bill Edmonds, Associate member of St. Mary Conference, Delaware

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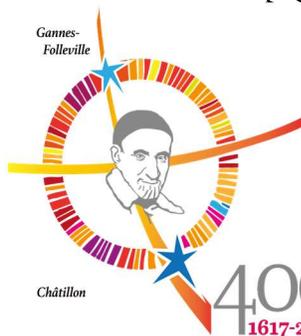
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Explanation of the 400th anniversary logo:

It is built from a basic figure: the circle ... (the world, history, life, etc. ...) This circle is formed by different lines that constitute rays in different colors (red, green, blue)...

These lines or rays symbolize the congregations, groups, associations founded from the Vincentian charism. They also symbolize society with its imperfections and joys, hopes and strains...

This circle is a link between two stars that remind both "theological places" where Vincent de Paul saw the footprints of God in his life and through n his words have become major events: Folleville-Gannes and Châtillon sur Chalaronne.

The stars: Their place reminds the location on the French territory. They are linked by a cross of light that recalls the Resurrection and Pentecost.

The cross reminds us that it is always a sign of a new Spirit that inhabits us and invites us to live as Vincentian Family in our world, reason for which the face of Vincent is at the intersection of the cross.

Committee Chairs:

- Ozanam Orientation: Maureen Meck, Kevin Murphy
- Voice of the Poor: Danielle Gray
- VOICE & Website: Charles Kielkopf
- 2016 Friends of the Poor Walk: John Willig
- Publicity: Dianne Keller-Smith
- Music: Joann Wright
- Photographer: Angela Ray

Secretary, Pat Summers

(e-mail: psummers@colsdio.org)

Office:

197 East Gay Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Phone: (614) 221-3554

Manager, Diocesan Ministries, Heather Swiger:

St. Lawrence Haven & Clothing Distribution

Center: (614) 241-2569, hswiger@colsdio.org

Send news items and articles for The VOICE to Charles Kielkopf kielkopf.1@osu.edu or to the Diocesan office.