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BERITA VINCENTPAUL

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For Members Only

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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, MALAYSIA

Since the early 1950's Conferences of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul were in existence in most of the states of Malaya, and Particular Councils were formed in Penang, Selangor and Singapore. The desirability to form a national body with a common constitution to ensure its growth as one unit was, therefore, discussed at various levels for several years, but the need for such formation became imperative only in 1963 when the Federation Government sponsored the establishment of the Malayan Welfare Council to coordinate the activities of all national voluntary organizations in the country. Membership of this Council would be confined only to organizations formed at national level and the need to organise was urgent.

Membership of this Council would mean Government recognition of the National Society as a voluntary charitable organisation, and would have many benefits such as grants from the Government etc. Organising at national level would also mean simplification of registration of new Conferences, publication of news bulletins to keep all informed of its activities,

concerted national drives for funds, Government approval for exemption of income tax on donations to the Society, etc.

The need for an early formation of this National Society being agreed, the task of calling meetings of representatives from all conferences to draw up a constitution, etc. fell on the Particular Council of Selangor. It was encouraging that all concerned rose to the occasion and at two preliminary meetings on 5th and 29th June 1963 in Kuala Lumpur, presided over by Bishop Mgrs. Vendargon, a draft constitution was drawn up. An Inaugural Meeting of the National Society was then called on 27th July 1963 in Kuala Lumpur at which 42 delegates were present including 4 Spiritual Directors and 2 observers from Singapore. This meeting approved the draft constitution with some amendments, and the protem committee was given the task of registering the Constitution with the Registrar of Societies. The Constitution provides for the formation of a National Society for the whole nation, State Councils for each state, and Conferences in the parishes. Under the Rules any new conference that is formed in a parish will only have to inform its State Council, which in turn will report to the National Council. This procedure will simplify the formation and registration of conferences as the Constitution of the National Society covers the whole organisation at every level.

EDITOR'S LETTER

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Malaysia has grown over the years: from 1934 to 1964 and to 2014. These are milestone years in our history. The number of conferences has increased. Geographically the Society has spread out to the other states and onto East Malaysia. 61 active conferences with almost 800 members in 80 years, a National Council for 50 years, the count continues!

This growth can be attributed to women membership. In 1964, women still needed the approval of the Spiritual Advisor to become members. When the response by young men to join SSSVP was poor, the restriction was dropped.

Our members have matured with Vincentian experience and inched closer to God with Vincentian spirituality. Vincentian virtues have guided us in the way we work. In "Reflections", the veterans share their pearls of wisdom.

We remember our retired and departed members who gave themselves to help form the Society to what it is today. We offer our gratitude and prayers as we observe St. Vincent de Paul Feast Day.

Work has evolved with more services and special projects for friends-in-need. Providing the fish is just an interim, teaching them how to fish and keep fish is

to enable them to make choices and improvement changes for themselves, their families and communities. We have cast our nets wide and, a line to a country-in-need.

In this issue, we get a sense of how the Spirit has moved through the Society. Stepping into the future, we have to be more open and more ready to take the leap of faith to follow and do God's Will.

God bless,
~ **Editorial Team**



CORRECTION

In the last issue of Berita Vincent Paul in May 2014, the article "Kuching's New SSVP Thrift Shop" was written by James Ting, Publicity Officer, Conference of St. Joseph, Kuching and not Aloysius Lai as previously noted. The error is regretted.

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In the meantime efforts were made to form State Councils for the states having more than one conference, and resulted formation of State Councils of Penang, Selangor and Malacca.

The Constitution of the National Society was registered on 4th December 1963. Annual General Meetings of all conferences were then held under this new Constitution, and the First General Meeting of the National Council was held on 18th April 1964 in Kuala Lumpur.

It is hoped that with this important event in the activities of the Society in Malaysia, the work of charity for God's poor in this country will grow. No work of charity is foreign to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the need is great. The spirit of charity from young men in the parishes is appealed to for service in the running of the Society which will provide an opportunity to young people to work for the glory of God and for their own personal sanctification.



Lapel pin made for the anniversary.
The National Council of SSVP Malaysia
was aggregated on 6th August 1964.

~ Adapted from the 1964 archives of The National Society of St. Vincent de Paul Malaysia

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



TOGETHER WE CAN

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

As other senior Vincentians have looked at the past in this issue of Berita VincentPaul which is in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the Aggregation of our National Council, I would take this opportunity to address leaders at all levels of our Society as to how we should move from here.

Although our National Council is already 50 years old this month, as a Society we are really, in substance, in our infancy or at most, in our adolescence.

Having been a member of our Society since the late 70's, I have seen painfully slow growth caused principally by a lack of vision, fear of new challenges and general complacency of our leaders; except in a few Councils and Conferences.

In his direction to His disciples, Jesus sent a clear message that leadership was first and foremost an act of service. This is exactly what our Vincentian vocation calls us to be: - **servant leaders**. It would be useful to recall the words of St. Matthew, when our Lord said, “...**whoever wants to be great among you must be your**

servant, and whoever wants to be first among you, must be slave to all – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve”.

This, my friends, is not an option; it is a command by Our Lord.

Knowing most of our current leaders personally, the aforesaid itself would make us even more afraid of the challenges ahead.

But fear not; have faith in Him. Did He not say through St. Matthew the following: “**Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest. For my yoke is good and my burden is light.**”

So I say to my friends, fear not for the Lord is with us in every step of our Vincentian journey. He will not allow us to fail. We should have real faith that we are following Our Lord's command when we act “for the least of our brethren”.

Remember, we did not choose to be Vincentians; He chose us.

It is really important to ask ourselves what is the core of our intention or motivation to take up leadership positions in our Society. Why am I a Vincentian leader? This question has to be answered with absolute honesty and it should come from our hearts not our minds.

Our journey as Vincentian leaders which starts in our hearts as to our motivation and/or intention, must then travel to our heads to map out two important roles: a visionary role i.e. to do the right things in furtherance of our vocation and an implementation roles i.e. to do the said right things in a right manner; in ordinary parlance – our ends and our means should fall within the four corners of our Vincentian vocation.

Our visionary role must necessarily lead us to a fundamental question – where do we like to see our Conference/Council in the future? A clear vision provides direction; without a clear vision, our leadership would be no more than a passage of time.

While the vision and mission of our Society as a whole may be clear to us, we must correspondingly have a clear vision of where we would like our individual Conferences/Councils to be in the future and then make the choices and/or decisions that would lead us to achieving that vision.

Remember in Alice in Wonderland, when Alice came to a fork on the road and asked the Cat which way to go, the Cat asked her where she was going. When she said she didn't know, the Cat replied that then it didn't matter which way she took.

On the other side of the coin, you may recall the words of Robert Frost, one of my favourite poets, when he said:

**“Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less travelled by,
and that has made all the difference.”**

A retired General once famously stated that he loved wartime better than peacetime. It was not because he loved war but he observed that in wartime everyone in the army knew why they were there, what their purpose was and how they should accomplish that purpose. However, in peacetime, the sense of purpose, direction and accomplishment was sorely missing.

Similar conditions challenged Blessed Frederic Ozanam and his colleagues in the formative years of our Society – our faith was challenged and that challenge was met by showing our faith through works of charity as our Lord told us through St. James that **“faith without deeds” is “dead”**.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Are we then just existing or even, floundering, with no clear vision or direction?

It would be encouraging for us to always remember that if we **“act justly, love mercifully and walk humbly”** our Lord would lead us to the proper end of doing His will.

Then comes the challenge of implementing our vision and direction. Our Lord gave us the greatest example of the implementation of our Vincentian vision. You would recall that after washing the disciples' feet, He asked them whether they understood what He had done. He then explained that as their Lord had washed their feet, it was now over to them **“to wash one another's feet”** and that they should do as He had done. Then He sent these fishermen out to become **“fishers of men”**.

Our Lord here was, by example, helping us, Vincentian leaders, to start as servant leaders and then lead our members to accomplish the mission of our Society through our respective Conference/Councils.

Our vision should be to grow into something bigger and better than what we already are. Remember Blessed Frederic Ozanam's vision to embrace the **whole world** in a network of love! St. James too reminded us not deceive ourselves by merely *listening* to the Word but rather by doing what it says.

As leaders, it is imperative that we first recognize the realities in our communities (the micro level) and our country (the macro level). We then have to manage the change we desire and if I may, transform the growth of our Society, either incrementally or exponentially, as the circumstances and good judgment allow us.

Remember my friends, the only constant in life is change; it is a given. Our Society will have to adapt or die. The great Jack Welch once said

that if the rate of change inside an organization is less than the rate on the outside, then the end is in sight. Change is never easy and more importantly changing the mindset of our members may be a monumental task. People, generally, do not like to live outside their comfort zones.

Most people are averse to change; they think they can only do so much and they often underestimate their abilities to implement change. Leaders with a clear vision and direction must be **focused** and be **persistent** about the changes that have to be made; otherwise most people, not just our members, would revert to their old ways.

There is an old Sanskrit saying: *“you judge yourself by what you are capable of achieving; others judge you by what you have actually achieved.”* Let not the above saying be of any discouragement to us. One does not have to be a “peak performer” or a “high achiever” to take up a leadership role in our Society.

A Vincentian leader is a servant-leader. Our faith, small as the **“mustard seed”** it is, can **“move mountains”**.

Take St. Peter, the Rock, as our example. It is good to remember that the same Peter who *denied even knowing* Jesus, so soon thereafter called on us to **“repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and that we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**

It has been stated very often that most successful leaders are confident, driven and self-reliant people. As Vincentian servant-leaders however, we are called to be different; while we should have commitment, confidence and competence, we are also called to be *“Still”* and *“Know”* that He is God for whom nothing is impossible.

On another note, while we need to

rely on our Lord to recalibrate our vision, direction and methods we also need to encourage active and reliable *“truth-tellers”* in our Society. We are all vulnerable leaders. We all have short comings. We must not be afraid to admit our weaknesses, mistakes and short comings. If one is a Vincentian servant-leader who does not have at least one reliable *truth-teller* in one's Conference/Council, then something is wrong with one's leadership. We must encourage *truth-tellers*; they will be there to tell us where and when we are going wrong. One need not do everything the *truth-teller* says but one has to hear them out and listen with an open mind. Remember we are not called to lead by relying solely on ourselves. Vincentian servant-leadership is not something we do to people; it is something we do with people.

Therefore, my dear Brothers and Sisters, we know that we live in really challenging times in today's Malaysia. However, with clear vision, careful planning, courageous implementation and complete confidence that Our Lord is with us in this our journey, we shall see our Society grow properly and rapidly. As the Psalms encourage us: **“Place your burden on the Lord and He shall sustain you”**

As one motivational speaker said: “To make a difference is not a matter of accident; people choose to be different — **we are the ones we have been waiting for**”.

Together we can make that difference.



~ **Watson Peters**
August 2014

CONFERENCES IN MALAYSIA AND YEAR OF FORMATION

Penang

Assumption	1934
Holy Name of Jesus, Balik Pulau	1963
Holy Spirit	1975
Immaculate Conception, Pulau Tikus	1955
Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Butterworth	1959
Our Lady of Sorrows	1955
St. Anne, Bukit Mertajam	1954
St. Francis Xavier	1955
St. John Britto	1970
Risen Christ, Air Itam	1978

Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur

Christ the King, Selayang	1991
Holy Rosary, Brickfields	1954
Our Lady of Fatima, Brickfields	1964
Sacred Heart, Jalan Peel	1965
St. Joseph, Sentul	1956
Divine Mercy	2012

Melaka

Holy Spirit, Jasin	1991
St. Anne, Alor Gajah	1989
St. Anthony	1961
St. Joseph	1996
St. James, Merlimau	2000
St. Martin de Porres	1965
St. Theresa	1969

Selangor

Assumption, PJ	1960
Holy Family, Kajang	1962
Holy Trinity, PJ	1990
St. Francis Xavier, PJ	1969
St. Ignatius, PJ	1979
St. Jude, Rawang	2000
Holy Redeemer, Klang	1974
Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang	1956
St. Anne, Port Klang	1963
Holy Eucharist, Batang Berjuntai	1989

Perak

St. Anthony, Teluk Intan	1971
St. Louis, Taiping	1957
St. Mary, Tapah	1968
St. Patrick, Kuala Kangsar	1977
Our Lady of Lourdes, Ipoh	1964

Negeri Sembilan

Immaculate Conception, Port Dickson	1972
St. Aloysius, Mantin	1972
St. John Vianney, Tampin	1967
Visitation, Seremban	1965

Kedah

Christ the King, Sungai Petani	1966
Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kulim	1993
St. Michael, Alor Setar	1959

Pahang

Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mentakab	1991
St. Thomas, Kuantan	1972

Johor

Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru	1961
Our Lady of Fatima, Tangkak	1996
St. Andrew, Muar	1981
St. Anthony, Chaah	2008
St. Henry, Batu Pahat	1974
St. Louis, Kluang	1980
St. Philip, Segamat	1975

Sarawak

Holy Spirit, Lundu	2008
St. Ann, Kota Padawan	1990
St. Joseph, Kuching	1989
St. Stephen, Bau	1991
St. Theresa, Serian	1986
Sacred Heart of Jesus, Sibu	1999

Sabah

Holy Trinity, Tawau	2014
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1934: THE FIRST SSVP CONFERENCE IN MALAYSIA: CONFERENCE OF THE ASSUMPTION, PENANG

In 1933, the parish priest of the Assumption Church in Farquhar Street, Penang, Rev. Fr. Jean-Baptiste Souhait, was very distressed with the number of poor parishioners. He saw the dire need for some 'Catholic action' to alleviate poverty. Thus, he started the first conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Malaysia.

Fr. Souhait, and a few senior church members called for a meeting and they established the first conference of the Assumption. The following were the first office bearers:

President: Mr. C.A. Reutens

Hon. Secretary: Mr. E.G. Valberg

Hon. Treasurer: Mr. G.B. Baptist

with Messrs B.C. de Souza, W.A. Reid and H.L. Cutter as ordinary members.

A request for the formation of the Society was forwarded to the SSVP Headquarters in France. The "Letter of Aggregation" was received on 27 June 1934.

The formation of the conference was well received and many parishioners were generous



with donations or monthly subscriptions. Financially sound, the members then carried out their work of giving out rations and visiting the poor. They also helped pay house rent for the poor but special focus was on the educational needs of children.

When the Second World War broke out and subsequently with the occupation of Penang by the Japanese forces, works of the society stopped. In September 1945, with the re-occupation of the Allied Forces, the Church of the Assumption re-opened and the conference was re-activated.

In 1955, two Vincentians from Holland, Bro. De Grys and Bro. Bergers, joined the conference and were surprised

when the Conference of the Assumption was the only conference in Penang. They invited representatives from other parishes to a meeting at the Church of the Assumption. At this meeting, it was decided that the other parishes set up conferences of their own, and to coordinate between these conferences, a 'Particular Council' of Georgetown was formed.

Note: In 1955 the Church of the Assumption was elevated, by a Decree of the Vatican, to the status of the Cathedral of the Diocese of Penang.

During the post-war years, the Conference had difficulty in recruiting young men as members. It decided to open membership to women.

REFLECTIONS



In the 70s, people began shifting from the city center to the suburban areas and the mainland.

In 1988, the Cathedral of the Assumption was amalgamated with three other parishes in Georgetown to form one parish (known as City Parish). All these four churches are within short distance of one another (about 2 km), and all four have SSVP conferences of their own.



1950s. Activities with friends-in-need

In 2000 when the Quit Rent Act was repealed, the population in the city area decreased. In 2003, the status of Cathedral Church held by the Cathedral of the Assumption was transferred to the Church of the Holy Spirit.

All these resulted in a decrease in congregation size.

Conference membership declined. The number of friends-in-need shrank. The conference then focussed on providing tuition to children from poor family.

In 1984, the conference celebrated its golden jubilee with a 3-day event. Guests included delegates from ASEAN countries.

As the years went by, the church became a non-parish church with no activities (only Sunday

Masses). Many who attended Masses at the church were visitors from other parishes. There was much difficulty in recruiting members.

By end of 2013, in spite of funds getting low, the conference decided to embark on “special works”. The special works included tuition for children and helping the poor and voiceless with government administrative matters (e.g. registration of identity card, birth certificate, marriage certificate).

Presently, there are five members in the conference. I have been a member since the early 90s. It was my late sister, Sr. Teresa Lai who influenced me to join the society. Although we are few in number, we are dedicated to our works.

When membership and adoptees decreased over the years, there was talk to close down or amalgamate with one of the other 3 conferences in the City Parish. However, since we were the first conference in Malaysia, we were all determined that it should remain. Hence we continue to keep the Conference of the Assumption, 80 years old now, strong and active.

~ **Lucia Lai**
Secretary, Conference of Assumption,
Penang and National SSVP Webmaster



AS I LOOK BACK

I came into the Society of St. Vincent de Paul on the 16th of March 1967 while serving as a teacher in Tampin (Negeri Sembilan) when I was invited one evening to join in the meeting of the parish conference. The conference had just been established two years earlier in 1965 sponsored by Conference of the Visitation, Seremban. There were just six members at that time – all middleaged men. They were warm and welcoming. I became the seventh member of the conference after a period of exposure and discernment. The President made the weekly meeting a learning session as well. He would delve on specific areas taken from the 1958 Irish Manual of the Society that served as a basic (yet comprehensive) guide into deeper understanding of the Apostolate. Today forty-seven years later as I look back I am thankful that the weekly sharing in Tampin had set a steadfast foundation in me and had helped me grow into the richness of the Society and its mission. This had helped live out the calling as well as help others understand.

In my early years the conference spiritual director would be present for a few minutes at the onset of the meeting to expound the day's Scripture message before leaving to attend to other parish matters. This has always been a spiritual blessing. The presence of the spiritual director invariably linked up special activities of the conference with the apostolic

activity of the parish as a whole. More often than not he would return before the close to give his dismissal blessings.

To me attending the weekly meetings faithfully in the evening week after week over the years soon became a natural thing to do. Eventually it became (to me personally) an engagement that I would not set aside. I have always believed that if there is indeed a sincere desire to grow in the Apostolate and its works then there is this need to be reasonably immersed in its history. The love for the poor can only be manifested when we give of ourselves to them.

My tenure at the helm of the Society at both the state and national levels had been great opportunities for me focus on formation which I believe to a fair extent might have helped lay the essential fundamentals in those who attended these sessions.

My membership moved a number of times in keeping with my departmental postings. Being a headmaster I had moved from Tampin (St. John Baptist Vianney) to Gemas (St. Christopher) which I had established and then to Port Dickson (Immaculate Conception) before moving finally to Seremban (St. Paul the Hermit in Rahang). With the amalgamation of the three conferences in Seremban into one in the early nineties, I am finally in the Visitation and have been there since.

Let me share these thoughts as I conclude:

- * The central thrust of the Apostolate has always been and continues to be the personal sanctification of its members
- * In the words of the founder Frederic Ozanam, we are a “mission-centred Apostolate of the Catholic Church and witnessing to Jesus has always been the decisive element”
- * The Spirit of the Society which is the core thrust of the Apostolate has constantly been enhanced through assemblies (gatherings) such as international and national conventions, seminars, regional interactive groupings, twinning, formation programmes and more recently the Pan Asian Congress or PANASCO
- * Mutual example and true friendship are (in the Society) an essential precept to “love of God in the person of their fellow men”.



~ **Eddie Joseph**
President (1986 – 1992), National Society of St. Vincent de Paul Malaysia

THE HEART AND MIND OF A VINCENTIAN: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The first thought that comes to mind as I write this article is the fact that as a Vincentian, I am taught to love first and think later.

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation, “Evangelii Gaudium” (The Joy of the Gospel) speaks about “faith working through love.” He says :“ Works of love directed to one’s neighbor are the most perfect external manifestation of the interior grace of the Spirit: the foundation of the New Law is in the grace of the Holy Spirit who is manifested in the faith, which works through love”.

The essence of our work is love, which we are able to extend to others – and this love is only possible with the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Therefore the heart of our work is the mind of the Holy Spirit.

I move on now to give you a brief overview of the historic perspective of the Society in Malaysia. As I reflect on the vocation in the SSVP over the last 35 years, I must confess that when I joined the Society I was not sure what I had let myself in for. The scope of the work was so great and the members so few. Yet, in the vineyard of the Lord numbers are not important. We trudged on... The “doling” of food took centre stage and the face of the Vincentian in most parishes was the face of the poor. Over and over again we were reminded of the Spirit of Ozanam and the love of the poor as espoused by St. Vincent de Paul. We were told to teach the poor how to fish instead of giving them fish. Thus, the advent

of projects and self-help projects to provide assistance and care for the children, the aged and single mothers, to name a few, seemed a natural progression of the Society. The National and State Councils were instrumental in leading the charge in providing finance and guidance for these projects to be launched and sustained.

Many conferences became “Project Conferences” and the responsibility of the conference was to sustain the project.

This brief overview will not do justice to the Society if I do not say something about the all important “human element”. This “human element” in all its weaknesses has been and still is the body and soul of the Society. Yet, as frail human beings trying to establish the Kingdom of God here on Earth, the Vincentian is called to be many things to many people. And in the process many may have been hurt as this journey of our faith takes many twists and turns. The relationship between clergy and members has not always been cordial but of late it has improved tremendously. The relationship between Vincentians, both in and out of the conference has had its ups and downs. Plans have been blocked, reduced or simply ignored. The fact that this vocation of ours is still very much alive in our country is due to the abundant love of its adherents and the tremendous outpouring of grace of the Holy Spirit. Your will be done!

Let me just conclude with this little story:

A family of five was enjoying their day at the beach. The children were bathing in the sea and making castles in the sand when in the distance a little old lady appeared. Her grey hair was blowing in the wind and her clothes were dirty and ragged. She was muttering something to herself as she picked up things from the beach and put them into a bag.

The parents called the children to their side and told them to stay away from the old lady. As she passed by, she smiled at the family. But her greeting was not returned.

Many weeks later they learnt that the little old lady had made it her lifelong crusade to pick up bits of glass from the beach so children would not cut their feet.

Let us, like this little old lady, continue to pick up pieces of glass from the streets of life so that the poor can walk on them without getting hurt.



~ **Peter Soosai**
President, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur State Council

LESS FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Eating 80% full is healthy. Donating the remaining 20% is to shower kindness. People in Malaysia are generally fortunate to have in abundance as food shortage has never really been an issue. Unfortunately, in many parts of world, millions of people are starving and evacuating their homeland as a result of natural or man-made disasters like floods or civil wars. According to United Nations 2010 statistics, there are up to 925 million starving people worldwide.

It is common practice for a Catholic/ Vincentian to self-reflect before having a meal: have we contributed enough to the society? Do we realize that a bowl of rice or porridge served does not come by so effortlessly? Do we really appreciate the food we have? Do we remind ourselves not to overeat or waste food and discard leftovers?

At the end of 2011, the world's population has exceeded 7 billion people. Food intake and daily consumption are basic needs but global warming, overconsumption of resources and overdevelopment of land have resulted in drastic reduction in food yield. If we fail to put a stop to our wasteful habits the consequences will be disastrous.

At a personal level, overeating causes drowsiness. Our level of concentration at work drops. Overeating causes obesity and overloading on the body system. It causes more harm than good. So eat lightly and healthily and only up to 80% full.

In my view, Vincentians should initiate the "eat 80% full and donate 20%" campaign. How do we practice it? Let us consider a meal outside. If a normal 3-variety and 1 plate of rice cost RM5, by reducing 1 variety we will save RM 1. With 3 meals a day we save RM3 and at the same time feel contented that

we have not overeaten or wasted. So, saving up to RM100.00 a month is possible. Instead of eating out with friends, invite them to dine at home. This saves more. It also fosters closer relationship.

We should appreciate our good fortune and try to contribute to the Society of St Vincent de Paul by adopting the "eat 80% full and donate 20%" attitude. Let our Vincentian lives be more meaningful by giving and servicing. Let us live more simply by "want not waste not". As a consequence, allow our wisdom to grow with self-enlightenment. Allow the purified mind to visualize Christ clearer. Allow the peace and serenity in us to manifest in the Society as we work with mutual respect, self-discipline, humility, tolerance, love and understanding just as St Vincent de Paul himself has role-modelled for us.

~ **David Heng**
President, Melaka SSVV State Council

SNAPSHOT OF SSVV IN PENANG TODAY

The Society in Penang started with 6 members in 1933. Today, there are 117 members. The old are still active but a younger generation of Vincentians have taken over and are at the helm.

The ten conferences at the various parishes in the state have activities of their own. Giving out cash aid and rations to the friends-in-need (FINs) are the common works of the conferences. Most conferences hold Christmas parties for the FIN. Educational aids in the form of cash allowances and school uniforms are available in various conferences. The State Council awards students with excellent results.

Self-help projects are on-going in some conferences. A thrift shop at the Conference of Our Lady of Sorrows has been operating for many years. Members also visit "orang asli" settlements with cash aid for some of the families. Conferences organise fund-raising dinners from time to time.

There are regular hospital visits. Members offer free tuition, legal aid and various social services. Seminars and conventions have good attendances. The conferences also donate and contribute to countries hit by natural disasters.

With the active participation, contribution and commitment of senior and the many more young members in the conferences, the future of SSVV in Penang is very well-entrenched.



~ **Andrew Yong**
Delegate, Penang State Council

THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE JOURNEY OF A VINCENTIAN

My journey as a Vincentian began some 43 years ago and still counting.....

Early growing years were literally centred within the perimeters and precincts of the Church of the Holy Family in Kajang. The Catholic community in Kajang then was relatively small and closely knit. There were several opportunities for us as young lads to serve and be involved in the life of the Church. As the years went by I had served as an altar boy, warden, commentator, BEC leader and member of the Parish Council.

The early formative years of my faith life had laid the first foundations that enabled me to embrace the Vincentian vocation. The primary object of the Society of Vincent de Paul was to preserve the Faith of young men and to sanctify them. In Ozanam's own words "The end of the Society is to enkindle and spread among the young the spirit of Catholicism."

It was precisely this spirituality of Blessed Frederic Ozanam that profoundly inspired me to follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to his compassionate and liberating love. During those early years it was apparent that the youth of the day had to be challenged. There were so few young individuals actively involved in the Society. The Society had no formal structures within itself to provide a platform for young persons to develop and practice their spirituality. Change had to come and reluctantly, I was elected to the Board of the National Council as its Treasurer in the year 1986. Being the youngest member of the Board then, I began to challenge the elders of the Society that change was imperative and

must be the order of the day, if the Society was to remain relevant and faithful to the Rule and life of the Society.

The winds of change were blowing across the nation with new emphasis in youth development. These initiatives culminated with the hosting of the first ever National Youth Convention on 1st May, 1989. Thereafter roads shows were held regionally where young members gathered to meet, discern, share and encounter the suffering Christ in their midst.

As these developmental activities gained momentum, the 1st Ozanam School of Charity was launched on 16th June, 1989. The subject matters introduced was of great interest to young people endeavoring to experience the purpose of life and highlighted the various stages of development dealing with the psychology of holiness. The National Formation Team was constituted in 1989 for the sole purpose of developing and disseminating information on topics that included the History of the Society, the SVP Declaration in the Modern World, Vincentian Spirituality, Conference Management and the Cause for Beautification of Frederic Ozanam.

Interestingly today, the Society has grown from strength to strength in its outreach programs. In our daily struggle for justice, we are constantly connected with civil society groups and in our search for justice, we are always mindful of the demands of charity. From a traditional "doling out" aid agency, the Society has diversified into several people empowering projects and activities. Homes for the marginalised and the abandoned, educational and

service centres, soup kitchens, dialysis centre, operate in the midst of largely secular communities. The evangelistic presence of the living Christ is aptly visible in all our projects.

Notwithstanding, the ageing demographics of membership of the Society in Malaysia is cause for great concern. In this digital age, there appears to be a growing lack of interest from young individuals to immerse and challenge themselves in emulating the ideals that Frederic Ozanam who dedicated his entire life for charity and holiness. The Society in Malaysia has to transform itself and return to basics if it is to sustain itself as an apostolate of love, hope and charity. The demands of charity and social justice have been increasingly sophisticated, complex and challenging.

The question which divides men in our days is no longer one of political forms, it is a social question. It is to determine whether the spirit of sacrifice will gain the upper hand; whether society will be only a great system of exploitation for the benefit of the strongest, or a consecration of each one for the good of all specially for the protection of the weak.

~ **Bryan Perera**

Vice President (2006-2012) and Treasurer (1986-1992) of SSVPMalaysia, Past President Selangor State Council, now ordinary member of the Conference of the Holy Family, Kajang.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF AGGREGATION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF MALAYSIA: THOUGHTS FOR MOVING FORWARD

I am pleased to share some personal thoughts on this historic milestone of the Society in Malaysia. A review of the developments indicates much has been done in the past 50 years, despite the numerous obstacles, shortcomings and limited resources faced by the Society. One cannot also overlook the positive developments in the intangibles, the spiritual enrichment of members. I would credit this to the dedication, hard work, commitment and ingenuity of the leaders and members. Or else, how would one have “survived” the test of time in such a challenging and, sometimes, hostile environment.

The focus at this crossroad of the Society is the next 50 years. In short, this hinges on the National Council, Generation Y and direction for the next decade or so (50 years may not be practical nor viable). Spirituality will continue to be the bedrock on which these need to be developed. All these call for foresight, courage, honesty, commitment and decisive action. To gel it all together, requires dynamic and visionary leadership.

The composition and mode of electing the National Council needs to be re-looked

at objectively. The present system, though based on democratic principles, is not conducive to producing the best results. The “principle of ascending”, that is, being elected state representatives to be eligible for membership of the National Council smacks of elitism. The issue of the number of delegates from a State/Diocesan Council, determined by the number of conferences, works to the advantage of councils with a disproportionate number of parishes. The status of delegates appears to be contrary to the “principle of ascendancy”. Where is the equity when delegates can leapfrog over elected representatives to share a higher platform? Voting is skewed by state/diocesan blocs and is unlikely to produce the best results, when regional interests prevail. The gain of a higher council is at the “expense” of a lower council. Performance or success at conference or state level is no guarantee of the same at a higher level. The higher level can be beyond one’s depth. With all the above, what is the alternative?

Let us address the core issue, that is, the mode of elections. Why not introduce open elections, where intending

candidates meeting some minimum membership and age criteria (to be agreed upon) can vie for positions, irrespective of their status in the Society. Candidates need to have been members of the Society, for say at least 8 - 10 years, so that they have adequate knowledge of the Society and its ideals. Do away with the system of electing delegates. Members, who are already holding office at conference and state levels, should not vie for higher posts until they complete their term of office so that they do not disrupt the status quo. This would leave the field open to those who are available without any commitments (they are likely to have planned for this) and willing and eager to assume greater responsibilities and rule out default candidates. Regional interests can be taken care of by entrusting council members with specific portfolios. The office bearers of State/Diocesan Councils can continue to be members of the National Council, except that any member from the floor, meeting the stipulated criteria, can offer him/herself for office. This would enable the net to be cast wider and not restrict choices to legacy candidates and stale baggage. This proposal can be discussed and fine-tuned by the SSVP.

REFLECTIONS

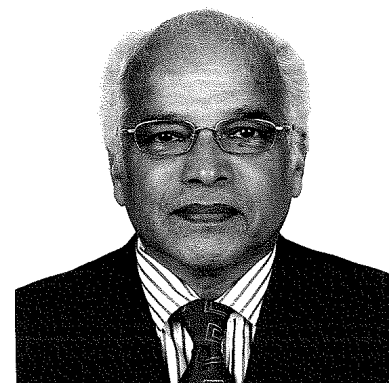
The next issue to be addressed is Generation Y. Though life expectancy has increased over the years, one cannot ignore demographics. We have a mixed membership with a slant towards senior members. If we do not recruit or attract sufficient new young members and insist on pursuing a vanishing or depleting market, we face the possibility of eventually running out of suitable members. We are fortunate in having an increasingly young population in our country. We must employ all means possible to attract and retain Generation Y members. This means giving the young members more opportunities and positions, entrusting them with more responsibilities, providing guidance rather than directions, adopting a more charitable stance towards mistakes and standing back. It also means allowing sufficient time and opportunities for such members to develop. They should be allowed to formulate their own plans to “entice” their kind into the Society. They may have new, radical and unconventional means, untested previously, to serve the cause of SSVP, but they must be allowed room to disprove our fears and anxieties. Untested and unproven means should not be the yardstick to assess their plans. The seniors’ responsibility is to guide them (not prescribe), and not hinder so that the ideals of the SSVP

are upheld. If they fail, all is not lost. We can learn from the cause of the failure, rather than write them off. So, let us ask ourselves, who is our target? The depleting pond or flourishing pool?

We have succeeded in the past, despite some bold and risky decisions. In the sixties, we did not succumb when the U.S. Catholic Welfare Services discontinued their shipment of flour, milk powder, butter and other foodstuffs, which formed our main rations to our “adoptees”. During the same decade, we proposed to Australia to divert their twinning grants to more deserving countries such as India. In the interim, we started to share the aid we received from Australia with conferences in Indonesia. The above initiatives were the *raison d’être* for our existence and works. Yet, we decided to forgo them. In the process, not only did we prove all the pundits and soothsayers wrong, but renewed our zeal and enthusiasm to undertake more challenging initiatives. We were trailblazers in 1987, when we established Rumah Ozanam. It was the spark that triggered the subsequent setup of several homes and centres. All of these appear to be a little jaded now, given the mushrooming of similar initiatives by other charitable bodies. A moot point often

overlooked despite all these challenging developments is the dishing out cash or foodstuffs to adoptees. How do we justify such practice? It is not compatible with our current status and the times. Therefore, the SSVP needs to decide how it will seize the opportunity and move ahead. We need fresh minds, new and untested ideas and bold measures. This is where Generation Y comes into play. We cannot rely solely on our present resources and the school of experience to make the quantum leap.

The intention in proposing these potentially provocative ideas is to invite discussions and further thought. It is hoped that members would be coaxed into some healthy and fruitful discussions. No malice or negative aspersions are intended. Even, if after much discussions and brainstorming, the status quo is maintained, I would consider my effort in writing this piece worthwhile.



~ **Christopher Fernandez**
*President (1998 – 2004) SSVP
Malaysia, Past President Selangor and
Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur*

MY VINCENTIAN JOURNEY

No matter how calamitous the situation appears to be, you can rest assured that the good Lord will surely fashion something from it that can be cherished; if not immediately, then through the long haul.

Well, that was precisely what happened to me.

In 1954 the family was utterly devastated when my dad, the sole bread winner, passed on. Being just nine then, the severity of what loomed did not register. It must have been a constant swim upstream for my dear mum, God rest her soul, to keep the family at an even keel. With seven of us at school and a little one at home she must have had to scrape the barrel every day to provide for the family. What little savings she had was fast depleting and it was not difficult to imagine the trauma and anguish that must have held sway.

Earlier on, during our frequent trips to the church, I had witnessed people, most of whom looked frail and famished patiently waiting in line to be served by a group of stern looking guys. The air was punctuated by the shrill call of numbers and the occasional bark of stern orders. As soon as a number was called out, a poor emaciated soul stepped forward. Quite instinctively a

measure of rice was poured into the receptacle he or she was holding and in addition to that each individual was handed what looked like tins of goodies, some really big and some small.

That was my very first encounter with the Society of St. Vincent De Paul. Not very edifying, you might say, but I was impressed just the same.

Well, disenchanted with what the family was going through, my elder brother and I decided to try our luck with this group in church and see if we could solicit some goodies. When we showed up, a tough looking individual gave us the once over and bellowed an order to leave at once. Just as we were about to leave, another gentleman, a far more affable looking one approached us and inquired what the problem was. After we had related our predicament, he promptly took us aside and gave us all kinds of stuff. But it turned out to be a paradox when we got home. My mother was furious and chided us for “begging” and made us promise that under no circumstances would we resort to something like that in future. Of course we were rather confused, but the old girl shut us off with the rationale that the Almighty was aware of our quandary and that He would

surely provide, and provide He did, in such mysterious ways. In retrospect, this episode taught me an invaluable lesson on the need to respect the dignity and feelings of the FIN (friends-in-need) whom we help.

After leaving school I worked for a couple of years in Kluang and later got transferred to Segamat, and it was here that I was very fortunate to meet the inimitable Rev. Fr. Felix St. Martin, a priest verily worth his weight in gold. Sometime in 1968 Fr. Martin initiated the move to form the SSVF in Segamat, and with a group of well-intentioned people the Society was formed. The late Dr. Roche Francis D’Costa had the distinction of being the first President, and I had the privilege of being part of this august group of men and women. The doctor’s humility was the genre that endeared him to all and sundry and his geniality managed to keep everyone’s ego intact. This man of God introduced a number of innovative moves in the society, all at his own cost. Notable among them was the “Vincentian Workshop” where young adults were invited to hone their skills in power mechanics, motor mechanics and carpentry. Already there was a definite depart from the doling out of rations routine that the Society was synonymous with.

REFLECTIONS

I remember one instance when members were challenged to carry out some repairs to an old ramshackle that belonged to an elderly couple. Everyone rose to the occasion and eventually it turned out to be a splendid job.

Those were exciting formative years for me. But just as things were warming up and I was getting second wind, a transfer order came through and caused a five-year sojourn from Vincentian activities. They picked up where I left off sometime in 1973 and the journey has continued since then.

Earlier on, every so often we were reminded that the primary aim of the Society is and will always be the personal sanctification of oneself. At first glance this tenet seems flawed, selfish and even egotistical, but in retrospect it does make a lot of sense, because without Christ in the equation and shorn of a mature spirituality and personal conviction the task of helping others is reduced to mere welfare aid. There are numerous Biblical quotes that testify to this but allow me to quote my favorite which is taken from James Chapter 2, Verse 14: "My brothers, what good is it for someone to say that he has faith if his actions do not prove it? Can that faith save him?"

Thankfully the Vincentian vocation which transcends the periphery of race and creed affords an excellent way to fulfill the primary Christian obligation of service to the poor, hungry, homeless, abused, marginalized, downtrodden and the list goes on. In relation to this, I would be remiss if there was no mention of the positively progressive paradigm shift that the Society has rather boldly adopted over the years, to address the various issues plaguing the poor.

Slowly but surely the Society has migrated from the recurring route of an organization that is easily identified by its practice of doling out monthly rations. It has categorically made impactful inroads in addressing the holistic needs of the human person. From mundane issues, like payment of school bus fares and acquiring Government welfare aid to more complex ones like applications for birth certificates/identity cards for irregular cases and nurturing to maturity a select group of families groomed in the micro-credit programme.

In the years of belonging to the Vincentian family, I have witnessed abject poverty, listened to heartwrenching accounts and seen poignant sights of intense pain and suffering. Thankfully it has not always been a prickly experience, as there have

been delightful moments of pure joy, bemusement and amazement, and you know what, the stark truth is, all these events can become a learning curve and more importantly can be transformed into mute, spiritual expansion. Like every Vincentian, I too am eternally grateful to the good Lord for the immeasurable blessings that have inundated my family's spiritual coffers.

Being almost three score and ten now, I must confess that my journey is at the tail end, and I thank God for the grace of being passionate about my Vincentian vocation. One trait in me that has unwittingly increased my baggage is to call a spade a spade, and during my watch I must have stepped on a number of Vincentian toes, so to my beloved sisters and brothers out there whom I have hurt knowingly or unknowingly, my profound and sincere apologies.

Love you all, and God bless!!!



~ Philip Packium
Vice President (1976-1977) National Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Past President Conference of St. Philip, Segamat and current Johor State Delegate

SSVP MALAYSIA - A Journey of Hope

Our journey of hope began 80 years ago in the beautiful island of Penang – an important trading port of call for many traders and migrants from India, Burma, Ceylon, China, England and the Middle East who came to this land of ours in search for a better life.

SSVP Malaysia was started by the parish priest and a few foreign parishioners at the Church of Assumption in Penang. This first Conference was aggregated in June, 1934. From one conference, a few more slowly started off and after World War II, the momentum built up in different parts of the country until the time came when the need for a unifying superior council came about. This eventually led to the formation and subsequent formal aggregation of the National Council of Malaysia 50 years ago on the 6th August, 1964.

Our journey of hope began from our status as a British colony and by the time we were officially aggregated 50 years, we were a newly independent country with the economy dependant largely on rubber plantations and the tin mining industry. The pioneer local Vincentians were mainly first and second generation migrants from India, Ceylon and China plus the mix of Eurasian and Portuguese communities from Penang and Malacca.

Conferences were twinned with SSVP Australia then and twinning grants kept the Conferences going and dry rations through the US Catholic Welfare Services helped a lot. After about 25 years of being a receiving country, in the early eighties, the leadership felt that the time had come for the Society



in Malaysia to be truly independent from twinning and we ourselves stopped being a recipient country. We owe a great debt of gratitude to SSVP Australia for the twinning grants which helped us grow in strength and numbers in our formative years.

For the next 20 years or so, the Society in Malaysia was neither a donor country nor a receiving country focusing instead on developing special works – primarily orphanages and homes for children starting off with The Ozanam Home in Petaling Jaya. After Malaysia was appointed a member of the International Executive Committee (IEC) in 2010 for a two year term, the exposure and networking with members of the International structure provided us an opportunity to become a donor country by twinning with Nepal – a small step taken from the trading port of colonial Penang 80 years ago to a region where highest mountains in the world exist– the Himalayas.

For us in Malaysia, this has been truly a journey of hope as we have become agents of change in Nepal through our Vincentian networking

and helping people in need of hope sustain their families and children for a better future.

We are living that dream of Blessed Frederic Ozanam – to encircle the world in a network of charity by taking on the challenge to organize the gathering of Vincentians in Asia Oceania region by hosting PANASCO 8 in Kuala Lumpur in conjunction with the golden Jubilee of the National Council this year.

A journey of hope which began 80 years ago continues as we envision the outcome of PANASCO 8 to be results driven and action oriented. We hope PANASCO 8 would be the catalyst to spur us to greater heights.

~ **Dunstan Dominic**
Vice President, SSVP Archdiocese of
Kuala Lumpur

2014: THE NEWEST CONFERENCE IN MALAYSIA – HOLY TRINITY, TAWAU



Seated, left to right: Matius, Sr. Anita, Sr. Liza, Angela Teoh, Datuk Watson Peters, Msgr. Nicholas Ong, Aloysius Kee, Dunstan Dominic, Francis Kamuntah, Michael Chok.

Standing, left to right: Mikihanus, Edward Koh, Naomi, Susie Tai, Pauline Lee, Michael Wong, Augustine Chan, Grace, Lucy Lim, Margaret Soon, Gibson, Anceito

TAWAU: 8th June and it was Pentecost Sunday. God showered his abundant blessings on SSVP Malaysia and on Tawau with the inauguration of the newest conference in Malaysia and the first conference in the state of Sabah.

The National President Bro. Watson Peters, Vice-President Bro. Aloysius Kee and Hon. Secretary Bro. Dunstan Dominic were present to help set up the conference. The Vicar General of Sandakan Diocese, Monsignor Nicholas Ong gave his sponsorship and spiritual advice.

The office bearers for the new conference are:

President: Sis. Angela Teoh

Vice-President: Bro. Peter Thien

Hon. Secretary: Sis. Naomi

Hon. Treasurer: Bro. Edward Koh

Assistant Treasurers:

Sis. Lucy Lim and Bro. Roland

Spiritual Advisor: Msgr. Nicholas Ong.

~ **Edward Koh**

Treasurer, Conference of the Holy Trinity, Tawau.

MICRO CREDIT COMMUNITY PILOT PROJECT SEGAMAT, JOHOR

BACKGROUND

As members of the small Conference of St. Philip in the rural town of Segamat, Johor, we have diligently practised the more common types of assistance: cash, food, medical, education and sometimes business aid. We realized that many of the less fortunate have little, if any, savings to fall back upon. When Sister Mercy Daniel of the Melaka Johor Diocesan Office for Human Development (MJDOHD) invited SSVP members to join the Training of Trainers Formation Sessions, with the **objective of forming a savings group** among the less fortunate, we saw it as a golden opportunity to move out of our comfort zone.

TRAINING

One member of our conference attended the numerous enjoyable sessions conducted by expert, Dr. Paul Sinnapan, which focused in great detail on the social and economic problems facing the lower income group. Practical skills were also imparted to be used in the project. SSVP Segamat was extremely pleased when we were chosen in tandem with the Parish Office for Human Development (POHD) to conduct the pilot project.



PROCESS

Choosing The Participants

As advised by Dr. Paul and Sister Mercy, we chose ten families to participate in the project; all spoke Tamil, were Hindu and lived relatively close to each other in Kampung Abdullah, Segamat, an area that experienced serious flooding in December, 2006 and again in January, 2011. Some of these families were FINs already known to us, others were more recent acquaintances.

Collecting The Information

Systematic home visits were made to each family and interviews were conducted as advised by our trainers. As Vincentians, we are used to journeying with our FINs and these proved no exception, sharing confidential, intimate and often distressing details of their lives. Their problems included absent fathers, unemployment, alcoholism, mental illness, truancy, juvenile delinquency, health issues, borrowing money from loan sharks and domestic violence.

Analyzing The Information

The information, meticulously analyzed by Sister Mercy, identified three main common areas of need: medical, education and budgeting.



Holding Sessions/Events

We were then advised to hold a series of sessions/events to build trust between the FINs and also SSVP. We applied the suggested formula of ice breakers/games, small and large group sharing of experiences of both FINs and experts, learning new skills, afternoon tea and our own addition, the very popular lucky draw.



The sessions were:

Session 1: Let's talk about Diabetes

Session 2: Let's talk about Education

Session 3 - 5: Let's talk about Budgeting

Evaluation: Home Visits to obtain feedback and to encourage FINs to continue saving.

Session 6: Setting Up Small Businesses

Session 7: Empowering Women To Be Entrepreneurs

Session 8: Collective Savings

Current Evaluation

SSVP Segamat is satisfied that savings are continuing despite minor glitches. We are pleased that our FINs can better differentiate between needs and wants. They report that they are stronger resisting the power of advertising, keeping up with others and avoiding the clutches of loan sharks.

Despite the challenges and difficulties where we were constantly called upon to practise the Five Vincentian Virtues of zeal, humility, gentleness, simplicity and

selflessness, SSVP Segamat are glad we have ventured into unknown territory and will continue to support this project. With hindsight, we would recommend increasing the number of families participating from ten to twenty families to maximize the use of human and financial resources. At the risk of stating the obvious, families in lower socioeconomic status groups are often in a state of flux; they can move away from the area due to work, remarriage or other reasons often beyond their control.

This project is well-suited to our small conference; we lack capacity to build and maintain large projects but by the grace of God, we are willing and able to invest our time, effort and limited resources in building and strengthening human relationships.

By providing skills that build upon the skills that they already possess and in the process giving people a voice, we have witnessed the empowerment of our FINs; they are making success happen for themselves.

SSVP Segamat is very grateful to MJDOHD, Sister Mercy Daniel, Dr. Paul Sinnapan and other animators without whom this venture into the field of Micro Credit Community Project would not have been possible.



~ **Suzanne Sia**

President, State Council of Johor and SSVP Conference of St. Philip, Segamat Johor.

THE OUR LADY OF FATIMA EDUCATION PROGRAMME



KUALA LUMPUR January 2014: The Conference of Our Lady of Fatima, Kuala Lumpur started an education programme for underprivileged children from ages of 3-12 years. About 40 children attend the English Language and Mathematics classes on Sunday afternoons. Teachers are volunteers from the parish.



Transport is provided for the children. They also get a meal at break time.



Sundays became *Sundaes* for the children!

~ **Angela Francis**

Treasurer, Wilayah State Council and Conference of Our Lady of Fatima

SKF BEARING DONATION FOR CONFERENCE OF ST. JOSEPH, MELAKA



MELAKA: Conference of St. Joseph was one of the recipients selected to receive donation from SKF Bearing Industries (M) Sdn. Bhd.'s "Successful Management Fitness and Charity Challenge 2014." Five members attended this function and Bro. Peter Fam, Vice President received the cheque on behalf of the conference.

The article below is extracted from the SKF Group Website.

"This year, SKF Nilai, Management team took up the challenge to improve their fitness and well-being through a 20-week Step Challenge initiative and at the same time, contribute to local charities in the community.

At the completion of the Step Challenge, winners had the opportunity to choose the organization or individual to make charity donations to. The money collected were contributions by both the participants and SKF Nilai. It totalled RM 26,000.00.

On 25th June 2014, SKF Nilai invited all the 13 chosen charity organizations and individuals to attend the cheque presentation ceremony held at the SKF Auditorium. Amongst the recipients were organizations that are committed to helping the sick, elderly, handicapped, orphans and others. Each received a RM 2,000 cheque from Dario Cardone, Country Manager of SKF Malaysia.

Dario commented "This initiative is in line with SKF "We Care". The Management Fitness and Charity Challenge reflects our commitment to promote health and fitness to our employees. It also helps to improve the bonding and camaraderie among the management team, at the same time contributing to a social cause. I am convinced that our colleagues are proud to be associated with such an initiative. "After the event, the recipients were invited to tea at the canteen. They expressed their sincere gratitude for the donation. The employees were very pleased to be given the opportunity to help the needy in the community".

~ **Anthony Tan**

Hon. Secretary, Conference of St. Joseph, Melaka.

3 ACTIVITIES AT SSVP CONFERENCE OF ST. THERESA, SERIAN

ACTIVITY 1: Bro. Terrison Taum and Bro. Simon Siar Anak Manyus visited our FIN at Kampung Merian Bedup. He was involved in the road accident along the Kuching – Serian road while going to work a few years ago.

He is paralysed from waist down and can move around using wheel chair. He stays alone near his sister house. His sister helps to cook and do washing for him besides looking after her own family. SSVP, Conference of St. Theresa, Serian, takes him as a FIN and bought building materials for his house. The house was built with the help of the relatives and friends.



Bro. Terrison Taum visiting home of FIN at Kampung Merian Bedup.



FIN resting on his bed.

ACTIVITY 2: Bro. Justin Julian, Bro. Terrison Taum and Bro. Simon Siar Anak Manyus visited FIN #2 at Kampung Rayang, Serian. The FIN's house was burned down in the morning of 21 July 2014.

According to the FIN, he was in the living room with his wife and grandchildren when he saw smoke from his bedroom. He alerted the rest of the family. The fire spread so fast that they had no time to salvage their belongings. The fire brigade from Serian station stopped the fire from spreading to the kitchen. SSVP, Conference of St. Theresa, Serian, donated some cash, good quality second hand clothes and some food to ease the burden of the family.



FIN's house after the fire.



The kitchen was not damaged.

ACTIVITY 3: Bro. Simon Siar Anak Manyus visited the home of FIN #3 at Kampung Kakeng Karuh, Serian. She is a single mother with five children. Her husband left her when their children were still young. Her parents passed away a few years ago. Besides giving her monthly allowance, SSVP, Conference of St. Theresa, Serian, bought some building materials for repairing the kitchen and verandah of her house.



Bro. Simon Siar with FINs.

~ Simon Siar
Delegate, SSVP Kuching Archdiocese.

MIGRANTS CONVERGE AT ST. JOSEPH CHURCH, SENTUL



SENTUL: The Conference of St Joseph is one of the oldest in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. It has been providing shelter, food, medical aid, education assistance and other necessities to the poor for 58 years now. In 2011, the parish priest appointed the conference to also

take charge of the Migrant Ministry. The migrants are Africans, Sri Lankans and the majority is from Myanmar.

Most of the Africans are students who come for Sunday Mass. Their main is shortage of funds. Due to large sum of money needed, we refer them to their respective embassies.

Majority of the Sri Lankans claim to have been deceived into coming to Malaysia. They paid almost 10,000 - 20,000 Sri Lankan Rupees to agencies for promise of work and better life. In the many cases we faced, we helped them find jobs and provided food rations every month.

The Myanmarers are mostly political and religious refugees. They are from the Kalay Diocese known as the Zomi (Chin) from the north western part of Myanmar. They have become members of the Myanmar Catholic Community Malaysia (MCCM) at St John's Cathedral but the group worship at our St Joseph Church, Sentul twice a month.

Recently on 27th July 2014, the Myanmarers celebrated their Parents Day with Mass, variety show, fellowship and gifts for parents.

~ **Patricia Rasiah**
Secretary, Conference of St. Joseph,
Sentul

OUR LADY OF GOOD HEALTH – NKF DIALYSIS CENTRE



The OUR LADY of Good Health – NKF Dialysis Centre in Kampung Pandan, Kuala Lumpur is a joint venture between the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (project of Conference of the Sacred Heart) and the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia. The Centre's main objectives are to provide life saving dialysis treatment to poor patients with final stages of kidney failure and to create public awareness of kidney-related health problems.

The Centre has 20 dialysis machines and can cater to 96 patients at any one time. The facility is comfortable and conducive for patients undergoing treatment.

It is managed and maintained by NKF's medical and technical staff and assisted by members of SSVP Conference of the Sacred Heart.

The project started in 2007 with the necessary approvals from the various parties (church, SSVP, NKF) and sponsors. The main sponsor, Tex Cycle Sdn Bhd purchased the land and helped SSVP financially with the construction of the building and acquisition of machines and equipment. Doors opened to patients in mid-2009. The Centre was officially opened by the then Archbishop Murphy Pakiam in September 2009.

To date, the Centre has 7 staff nurses, 6 dialysis assistants, 1 nephrologist attending to 80 patients receiving treatment on regular basis 3 times a week. The Centre operates from 7.00am till 10.00pm Monday to Saturday on 3 shifts

~ **S. Perry**

Project Manager at SSVP Conference of the Sacred Heart and at the Our Lady of Good Health-NKF Dialysis Centre

CHANGING LIVES

Crime invades every aspect of our lives. The rate of crime continues to escalate. The number of criminal cases registered each year keeps increasing and threatens to overwhelm our criminal courts. Our prisons are oppressively overcrowded and grossly understaffed. Tragically, an individual who commits a crime is likely to commit that crime again.

Statistically, if there is no intervention, as many as 80% of those completing prison terms will backslide and find themselves in the dock again, facing new charges.

In July 2008, the Second Chance Community Home (SCCH), a special project of the Conference of the Holy Family, Kajang, opened its doors to accord second chances to those who had spent time behind bars, grappled with addictions and were in need of a special place to make a clean start.

In the past 6 years, more than 100 discharged prisoners, parolees and ex-inmates of government rehabilitation centres have been provided residential care with dignity and respect. Residents are given assistance to navigate



the passage from incarceration to freedom making it easier for them and safer for the community as they rebuild their self-esteem to reintegrate into mainstream society. We have seen successes and failures. Residents are reconciled with family. Others gained employment or embarked on small business ventures.

The growing support and sponsorship by different churches, church groups, individuals and corporations in the form of financial donation,

skills building and Christian education have made a great difference in touching the lives of these men. The visible good works and testimony of lives transformed give us the encouragement to continue the journey into the years ahead.

~ Daniel Lew

Home Administrator, Second Chance Community Home, Project of the Conference of Holy Family, Kajang

OCTOBER 2013 VISIT TO CONFERENCES IN NEPAL

The Mission: A team of five from SSVP Malaysia travelled to Nepal to visit our twin conferences for formation and training. Sister Elizabeth Loo, National Twinning Coordinator of SSVP Malaysia shared the concept of “Twinning of Conferences”. Bro. Andrew Leo presented the “5 Vincentian Virtues”. The local parish priests and religious made sure that none was lost in translation. We were also loaded with good condition used clothes, food stuffs, stationary and cash for friends-in-need. The funds were mainly donated for education, provision, medical needs, purchasing building materials for homes and sponsoring work by local conferences.



Our Vincentian Brothers and Hosts: We were joined by Bro Joseph Pandian from India – the International Territorial Vice President of SSVP West Asia, Bro Gabriel Mondial from Bangladesh – the West Asia SSVP Coordinator and Bro VMJ Balaswamy – the National President of SSVP India. At our main base in Katmandu, we were very well taken care of by Father Robin, Parish Priest of Assumption Church. The local SSVP members in the other locations turned out in numbers and were wonderful hosts.

Formation and Training: They were conducted for the Conference of St. Ignatius in Banayater, the Conference of John Vianney in Godavari and the SSVP Conference in Dharan. The session for the Conferences of Damak, Maheshpur and Bagan were held at the Cluny Convent in Damak.

Our FINs: We visited the old, the paralysed, the blind, the sick, widows and orphans. Many women have husbands working abroad, leaving them to look after aged parents and young children.

Our Twin Conferences: They are new, eager to learn and need helping hand. They need more formation and training, more advice and sharing of experiences, moral and financial support for their work.

Memories from the Trip: New friends, breathtaking awesome sights, flavourful cuisine, potholes in roads, some fatigue but generally a great time!

~ **Grace Lim**
Secretary, Conference of St. Henry,
Batu Pahat



SEPTEMBER 27

FEAST OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL



PRAYER TO OUR PATRON SAINT

*Noble Saint Vincent de Paul,
beloved servant of the poor,
may we follow your example and do good works
among those whom society has abandoned,
enslaved, or forgotten.
Inspire us to feed the hungry,
to love a child,
to provide comfort and medicine to the sick,
to clothe those whose garments are threadbare,
and to offer hope and our Lord's words
to all who need respite.
Pray for us to our beloved God
that we may commit ourselves selflessly
to doing the same charitable acts
that you did all your life,
and intercede with him
that we may have the favor of his guidance
and strength and love upon this important and meaningful work.*

Amen.

OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading: From a writing by Saint Vincent de Paul, priest
(*Epist. 2546: Correspondance, entretiens, documents, Paris 1922-1925, 7*)

SERVING THE POOR IS TO BE OUR FIRST PREFERENCE

Even though the poor are often rough and unrefined, we must not judge them from external appearances nor from the mental gifts they seem to have received. On the contrary, if you consider the poor in the light of faith, then you will observe that they are taking the place of the Son of God who chose to be poor. Although in his passion he almost lost the appearance of a man and was considered a fool by the Gentiles and a stumbling block by the Jews, he showed them that his mission was to preach to the poor: He sent me to preach the good news to the poor. We also ought to have this same spirit and imitate Christ's actions, that is, we must take care of the poor, console them, help them, support their cause.

Since Christ willed to be born poor, he chose for himself disciples who were poor. He made himself the servant of the poor and shared their

poverty. He went so far as to say that he would consider every deed which either helps or harms the poor as done for or against himself. Since God surely loves the poor, he also loves those who love the poor. For when one person holds another dear, he also includes in his affection anyone who loves or serves the one he loves. That is why we hope that God will love us for the sake of the poor. So when we visit the poor and needy, we try to be understanding where they are concerned. We sympathize with them so fully that we can echo Paul's words: I have become all things to all men. Therefore, we must try to be stirred by our neighbors' worries and distress. We must beg God to pour into our hearts sentiments of pity and compassion and to fill them again and again with these dispositions.

It is our duty to prefer the service of the poor to everything else and to offer such service as quickly as possible. If a needy person requires medicine or other help during prayer time, do whatever has to be done with peace of mind. Offer the deed to God as your prayer. Do not become upset or feel guilty because you interrupted your prayer to serve the poor. God is not neglected if you leave him for such service. One of God's works is merely interrupted so that another can be carried out. So when you leave prayer to serve some poor person, remember that this very service is performed for God. Charity is certainly greater than any rule. Moreover, all rules must lead to charity. Since she is a noble mistress, we must do whatever she commands. With renewed devotion, then, we must serve the poor, especially outcasts and beggars. They have been given to us as our masters and patrons.

வரவறேபு

오신 것을 환영합니다

WELCOME ергемжлегдсен н

Dobrodošli

ようこそ ергемжлегдсен н

SELAMAT DATANG

CHLO MUNG



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 35, Jalan Bukit Bintang
 55100 Kuala Lumpur
 Malaysia.*

SSVP
 PANASCO 8
 KUALA LUMPUR
 1st - 5th OCT 2014



Thy Will Be Done - A Vincentian Response

欢迎光临

BIENVENUE

Bienvenue

BEM-VINDO

Welcome

BEM-VINDO

ようこそ

DOBRODOŠLI

欢迎光临

오신 것을 환영합니다

வரவறேபு

Selamat Datang

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