



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Greater Toronto Central Council

In the Loop

December 2024

From the Chair:

When I was growing up, my mother was fond of saying that an idle mind is the devil's workshop! Looking at my SSVP "to do" list, I can assure you there's not a whiff of sulphur anywhere in my vicinity. Here's a peek at part of my list:

- Research into and preparation of policy documents dealing with:
 - the status of various issues and their legal implications,
 - Equity of Service across the GTA,
 - technology, privacy and documentation standards across the Conferences,
 - issues with Canada Revenue Agency and Benevity,
- Preparation for meetings with Regional and National Councils to discuss areas of concern,
- Continuing to work on our Mimico housing project and preparation for the next phase of the project,
- Continuing education and training for Conferences and Particular Councils,
- Ongoing discussions with the Archdiocese on issues of concern,
- Sorting out issues with problematic Conferences and Vincentians
- Successful launch of the new website and then developing the further portals and modules,
- Regular Committee work on Governance, Engagement, Finance and others
- Moderating the Particular Council Presidents Round Table.

I share this list with you, not to seek your sympathy or a pat on the back, but rather to remind you of the breadth and depth of the work of the Greater Toronto Central Council which is to say the breadth and depth of your work, your mission; because we're all in this together. We all have problems; we all struggle with the day-to-day realities of helping our Neighbours in Need. We simply cannot afford to be the kind of organization of which William Butler Yeats might have been thinking when he wrote the immortal lines, "The best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity".

Recently, the members of my home Conference came together to enjoy a potluck supper of soup, salads and sweets. It was both delicious and wonderfully congenial. The business portion consisted of a frank discussion about the nature of our outreach, the impact of the rising cost of living, the advancing age of our Vincentians and how best to manage all these issues in a way that respected our donors, our neighbours and ourselves. As I said, we all have problems. These issues, in one guise or another, to a greater or lesser degree, are shared by most of our 114 Conferences and in turn by our 11 Particular Councils and of course by Toronto Central Council. But as Tom Hanks character in *A League of Their Own* reminded us, "if it was easy, everybody would do it."

As we embark once again on the hopeful season of Advent, I thank each of you for your continued commitment to the Society and its critical work. Whatever role you are playing, know that it's important to the overall success of our efforts. The GTCC has managed to weather the many challenges it's faced over the past 170 years; I have every confidence that, with God's grace and dedicated Vincentians like you, we'll continue to do so.

Learning Sessions

Spirituality Sessions:

Culturally Responsive Service to our Neighbours in Need

In this session we reflect on how we might be culturally responsive, or sensitive, to the varieties of cultural, linguistic and religious communities we serve here in the GTA. **Tuesday, January 7, 2025 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm**

[Click here to join](#) Meeting ID: 252 216 318 169 Passcode: 2QR3nW9v

To join by phone, dial 437-703-4669 Phone Meeting ID: 793 108 867#

Book Study: 'Fratelli Tutti' by Pope Francis (2020)

Join us as we work through, reflect and discuss Fratelli Tutti on the last Monday of the month, January through April, from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm.

Fratelli Tutti available for sale or free on the Vatican Website:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.pdf

Mondays, January 27th, February 24th, March 31st, April 28th, 2025 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm

[Click here to join](#) Meeting ID: 232 445 962 026 Passcode: z2rb7xH3

To join by phone, dial 437-703-4669 Phone Meeting ID: 933 461 485#

Serving Refugees living in Hotels/Motels - Update:

We are still working on coordinating a presentation with specialists who will share details of the complexity of housing persons in need including refugees, in hotels and motels throughout the GTA. Once the presentation details are firm, we will circulate the virtual meeting coordinates; we are hopeful we can hold this session early in the New Year.

From the desk of Head Office

Sharing what other Vincentians are asking through info@ssvptoronto.ca; hopefully this information will assist you in your efforts.

- Can we continue to order **collection envelopes** and supplies while the mail strike is on? Yes, please do! Please include your Conference name with your order: info@ssvptoronto.ca, we will work with you to get the materials to the east, west or central areas for pick up.
- When do **camp registration packages** go out? The camper registration packages will be sent to the Society c/o the Parish addresses the week of March 3rd. Campers are registered on a first come, first served basis. There will be short promotional videos on the new website to help families connect with this wonderful outreach.
- Do all members need **Vulnerable Sector Checks**? Yes, all members of the Society must complete a Vulnerable Sector Check; please visit the website, members tab - screening for new member's information which include requirements for each police jurisdiction.
- We received a lot of requests for materials, brochures, posters etc. for **World Day of the Poor**, we are wondering how things went for your Conference? The Engagement Committee will be issuing a short few question survey to receive feedback so we can continue this outreach to draw attention to the needs of our Neighbours, and the work of the Society.
- **Annual Reports** will be issued to Conference Presidents and Treasurers just prior to Christmas. This year we have a dedicated staff person ready to assist you – Jodi! You will be receiving communications from the email address: annualreports@ssvptoronto.ca, please watch for the report forms, and information from the Finance Department.
- The **Head Office** continues to be open from Monday through Thursday, 8:00 am until 2:00 pm, our office is not open on Friday. Like any other place of business, our lines can ring off the hook, or be wide open. Please feel free to follow-up with an email if you are unable to get through. Our hours reflect the times in most demand of our services; we are being responsible with our allocation of resources, and thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Getting to know the Greater Toronto Central Council Conference and Particular Council Outreach:

For 170 years, the volunteers and staff of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have been helping those in need in their homes and ours. Our diverse outreach addresses food insecurity in our local communities, and includes professionally run shelters, recovery programs, summer camps and much more.

The Greater Toronto Central Council consists of 114 Conferences attached to 11 Particular Councils, covering the following geographic areas from west to east, north to south:

Peel, Peel North, Etobicoke, Humber Valley, Toronto West, Toronto North,
Toronto East, Scarborough West, Scarborough East, York South and Durham

Within these Conferences we have 1,400 Vincentians making 30,000 visits to Neighbours in Need each year. Imagine, 1,400 Vincentians out in pairs, on any given day or evening, bringing material aid, hope and friendship to persons in need in their local communities. Many Conferences had successful membership drives this fall, persons who wish to put their faith in action are drawn to the meaningful, impactful work of the Society; a warm welcome to all who have joined! Our Particular Council Presidents meet on a quarterly basis to share successes and challenges, unifying the Society across the GTA. Consider attending your local Particular Council meeting to learn more about the outreach of your neighbouring Conferences, share and support each other in your efforts to serve.

Please share the good work you do with your Parish Community, they deserve to know how their support is being used. Hopefully your pastor will agree to publish a synopsis of your outreach in the bulletin, these brief reports are always well received by the parish. A reminder to complete your annual reports, the statistical information helps position the Society as an agency maximizing its outreach, while attracting both new members and continual support. Brochures are available to enclose with your tax receipts, consider ordering a quantity from info@ssvptoronto.ca

A Christmas Message from the Chair

Country music fans may remember a song written by Carl Smith in 1950 which became a big hit for Mickey Gilley in 1974. "I Overlooked an Orchid while Searching for a Rose" is not a traditional Christmas song, but I have found the sentiment particularly appropriate at this time of year. We are often too busy looking for just the right presents when the greatest gift of all is right in front of us. In a similar vein, we can easily get caught up in the festive trappings and in our efforts to help our neighbours and entirely miss the challenges faced by those closest to us, our family, friends and colleagues.

For every "ho, ho, ho" you hear there's at least one silent tear being shed by someone who's alone and lonely, wearing a smile and desperately trying to keep up appearances and down suspicions. This Christmas, I encourage you to keep your eyes open for the orchids, whatever and whomever they may be. May you bring to them the peace and joy that is the promise of the Christ child; in so doing you'll no doubt find a measure of it yourself.

To all our talented and dedicated staff whose commitment to those in our care is beyond inspirational and who are too often the orchids we overlook and to all the hard-working Vincentians who keep the flame of hope alive in their work with our neighbours in need, I wish you a happy, healthy and holy Christmas and all the best for 2025 and beyond.

- Bro. Gary. Valcour