

the Record

Autumn 2018



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Student poverty:
a wall on the
bridge of higher
education

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St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

The Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

This logo represents the hand of Christ that blesses the cup, the hand of love that offers the cup, and the hand of suffering that receives the cup.

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National Council of Australia
PO Box 243, Deakin West, ACT, 2600

Contact: Donna Scheerlinck
Phone: 02 6202 1200
Email: admin@svdp.org.au
Web: vinnies.org.au
Editor: Colleen O'Sullivan
colleen@svdp.org.au

The Record is overseen by an editorial committee.

Advertising: Donna Scheerlinck
Phone: 02 6202 1200
Email: admin@svdp.org.au
Design: Damon Carr
Ramesh Weeraratne
Design & Print Office
Catholic Archdiocese
of Melbourne

Phone: 03 9926 5759

Printing: Doran Printing
46 Industrial Drive,
Braeside, Victoria, 3195

Phone: 03 9587 4333

Email: sales@doran.com.au
Web: www.doran.com.au

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia wishes to acknowledge that we are on Aboriginal land. We pay respects to all traditional custodians.

This publication may contain images of deceased members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. They are used with the greatest respect and appreciation.

Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the publishers.

Available online:
www.vinnies.org.au

poetry

Purgatory

Soul: Come, show me where God's house is,

I'm a stranger in paradise.

Guide: You're not ready for that just yet

there are some things you must forget;

it's common: most people don't outlive

the warps their upbringings give,

the blinkered vision, the prejudice

make impossible the perspective

you need for your journey.

Soul: Which means that purgatory is for me?

Guide: Yes, but it isn't torture.

Gradually, you will become mature

and see what made you unfree,

the bonds bound at your mother's knee,

the wrong assumptions of your culture

that dimmed your life's adventure.

You will recognise and regret them.

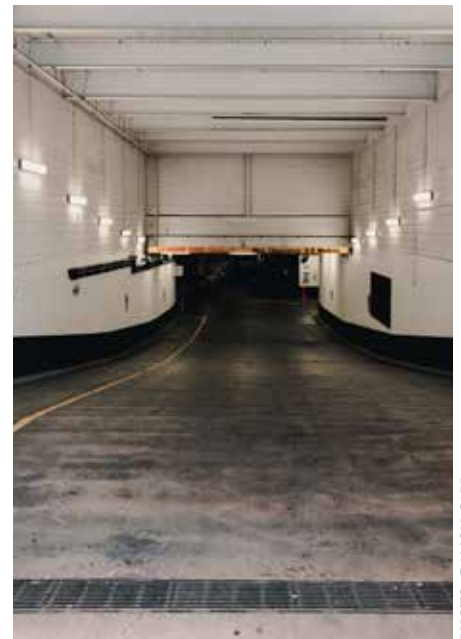


PHOTO: DAMON CARR

Soul: Is that purgatory, then?

Guide: Yes. You will be distressed, some parts must be excised, but you will find a loved presence close to your inmost sense, pain and joy alternately.

Soul: Will I see God's house, finally?

Guide: Yes, after more stages, startling beautiful, bewildering. ♦

Reg Naulty

Poetry contributions welcome:

The Record accepts poetry submissions and invites you to submit a poem on the topic of your choice in 2018. The deadline for the Winter Record is 1 June 2018 and the deadline for the Spring Record is 31 August 2018.

The Mail: *The Record* also welcomes letters to the editor but we reserve the right to edit them for legal reasons, space or clarity. Letters will be published only if full name and address and telephone numbers are provided, although the address will be withheld from publication if so requested.

Post to:

The Record
PO Box 243
Deakin West ACT 2600
or email colleen@svdp.org.au ♦

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HTML version of The Record

Readers of *The Record* may be interested to learn that the St Vincent de Paul Society is about to launch a new online version of the publication. A dedicated website has been created especially for *The Record* and can be found at <https://record.vinnies.org.au>

The project has been implemented by the Society's volunteer National Web Advisor, Dr Tikka Wilson, who is a consultant based in Canberra. Dr Wilson said the new website would enable readers to more easily access a digital version of *The Record* online. Readers will also be able to search across issues for people or topics of interest to them.

'Readers can scroll through our articles and view photos at their leisure on this new website. You will also be able to share this content with your family and friends and in doing so, spread the good works of the St Vincent de Paul Society far and wide,' Tikka said. ♦

Volunteer sails on Ship for World Youth

A volunteer for the St Vincent de Paul Society South Australia was one of 12 young Australians to be selected to participate in a six-week international leadership program that saw him board the Nippon Maru 'Ship for World Youth' earlier this year.

In January Raffaele Piccolo joined 240 other young leaders from around the world in the prestigious youth development program 'The Ship for World Youth Leaders Program', operated by the Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan. Raffaele was also appointed an Assistant National Leader of the Australian Delegation.

The program aims to enhance participants' international outlook and foster a spirit of international cooperation to develop young leaders who are willing to make positive changes in their local communities and on a global scale.

Raffaele said it was an absolute honour and privilege to be selected to participate in such a prestigious program.



Raffaele Piccolo, pictured back row third from the left, is seen here with the Australian Delegation on the Ship for World Youth. Raffaele volunteers for the Society in South Australia.

'I am acutely aware that I, and the delegation, will be representing Australia to the world. I hope to do my local community proud.'

Raffaele, who is a Gawler resident, began volunteering at Fred's Van in Salisbury in 2017 and said he had long known of Fred's Van's good works before he became a supporter of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

When asked why he chose to volunteer for the Society, Raffaele said: 'I have always wanted to volunteer with Fred's Van. Moreover, I wanted an opportunity to give back to my community.'

Raffaele traveled to Japan on 15 January 2018 and while on board the

Ship for World Youth he attended seminars conducted by field experts, planned independent activities and convened participant-led workshops around themes of cross-cultural understanding, volunteerism, education and youth-led change.

The ship stopped in several countries during the trip, including Singapore, India and Sri Lanka as part of the journey alongside delegations from India, Mexico, Mozambique, Oman, Peru, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka and Japan. Raffaele also had the opportunity to meet with local dignitaries in Japan (including the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr Shinzō Abe), India and Sri Lanka. ♦

Vincentian wins state-wide volunteer award

Late last year, Vincentian Beverley Kerr was named the NSW Volunteer of the Year for her extraordinary commitment to social justice through her work for the Society.

The announcement was made at an award ceremony held in Sydney on 8 December. As readers might recall, Beverley had already received Senior

2017 Illawarra Region Volunteer and the overall regional winner's award in September, which featured in The Record (Summer 2017–2018).

'Mrs Kerr was chosen for her true spirit of volunteerism and her commitment to ending poverty and injustice. Her dedication to the St Vincent de Paul Society's mission to transform lives and provide a "hand up" offers a shining example of a selfless volunteer heart,' said Gemma Rygate, Chief Executive Officer of The Centre for Volunteering.

Mrs Kerr holds critical leadership roles in the running of the organisation, such as President of Matthew Talbot Homeless support services. She also volunteers in her own community of Corrimall, where she works at a grassroots level with people suffering disadvantage. She often works seven days a week, offering emergency assistance to the homeless, those affected by addiction, domestic violence or mental health issues. ♦

Queensland volunteer rewarded for dedication

Youth volunteer for the St Vincent de Paul Society, Daniel Ingledew, has been rewarded by the charity organisation for his dedication to helping children in southern Brisbane, recently receiving a Vinnies Value award from the Society's Queensland CEO Peter Maher.

Daniel volunteers with the Society's Youth's Soccer Stars program. He was involved in founding and establishing the program which brings together children aged 8 to 11 years old and from various backgrounds for free fortnightly games of recreational soccer on Saturday mornings.

The 21-year-old volunteer has a reputation among the children and his fellow volunteers as someone who always goes the extra mile for the participants and families involved in the program, as evidenced by his attendance at 25 Soccer Stars mornings in 2017.

As part of his ongoing commitment to volunteering, the Brisbane resident was also a leader at one of the Society's kids' camps and during a trip for Soccer Stars participants to a Brisbane Roar match. Daniel offered his time while completing an honours degree in psychology at the University of Queensland, from which he recently graduated.

Daniel explained that it's the smiles on the faces of the Soccer Stars participants that drive him to give up his time each fortnight. 'I just enjoy playing soccer with the kids. You can see how much fun they are having and it is just really fulfilling that we can make their day in a sense,' he said.

'We can bring them a really fun morning and see the smiles on their



Daniel Ingledew accepts his Vinnies Value award from St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland CEO Peter Maher.

faces, knowing that we are making a difference to them and their parents as well.'

Daniel said his involvement with Soccer Stars came about after speaking with St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland Youth Engagement and Development Officer for Brisbane, Anthony Forshaw, after being involved with the Society in high school.

'I met up with Anthony a few years ago and he mentioned that he had this idea of starting up Soccer Stars, so I got involved from day one, which was really cool,' he said.

'At my high school they had a Vinnies group and I started with that when I was in Year 9 because it appealed to me and I really enjoyed it and enjoyed all the activities involved with it.

'Then after I finished high school I was looking to get involved again, so I got in contact with Anthony.'

Anthony said Daniel was a worthy winner of the Vinnies Value award.

'Dan works with all the children in an unconditional, enthusiastic and positive manner, with the aim of increasing their self-confidence. He has also mentored new Soccer Stars leaders, providing them with guidance, support and leadership skills,' Anthony said.

Soccer Stars supplies shin pads and socks as well as morning tea. Daniel said it gives the children involved a fun and active morning each fortnight which can have a real impact on participants' mental and physical wellbeing.

'It's such a simple thing really, playing soccer with them every second Saturday, but it does make a difference—they tell us that and we can see it in their faces as well,' he said.

'The kids just want to have fun. They are not looking to make big life choices or anything like that, they just want a break from it all and sometimes just playing soccer gives them that.' ♦

Australia Day Honours for Vincentians

On 26 January, numerous volunteers and members of the St Vincent de Paul Society were recognised across Australia for tirelessly providing a hand-up to people in need.

They included the following:

South Australia

Brian Spencer (AM), for significant service to the community through the St Vincent de Paul Society in South Australia, and to business. Brian was elected to the Society's National Council in 2013 and remains chair of the National Marketing Committee. He was Vice President of the Society in South Australia from 2009 to 2013 and State President from 2013 to 2017. Brian first became a conference member in the early 1970s and volunteered at a homeless men's shelter in Whitmore Square. He has been a volunteer and parishioner at St Martin de Porres Catholic Parish in Hallett Cove since 1973. Brian became re-acquainted with the Society when he volunteered for Fred's Van, a mobile food service for homeless people, from 1993 to 2003. In 2003 Brian began carrying out home visitations in Hallett Cove. He went on to become President of the Hallett Cove Conference in 2004, Regional President for Fleurieu from 2007 to 2013, and has been a State Councillor since 2007. Outside of the Society, Brian has held the following positions:

- Past mentor, Port Adelaide AFL Football Club
- Proprietor of Spencer Consulting since 2002
- Employee of Electricity Trust of South Australia (1972–2002),



Brian Spencer's efforts were recognised in the Australia Day 2018 Honours List.

holding the position of General Manager, Business Services, from 1998 to 2002

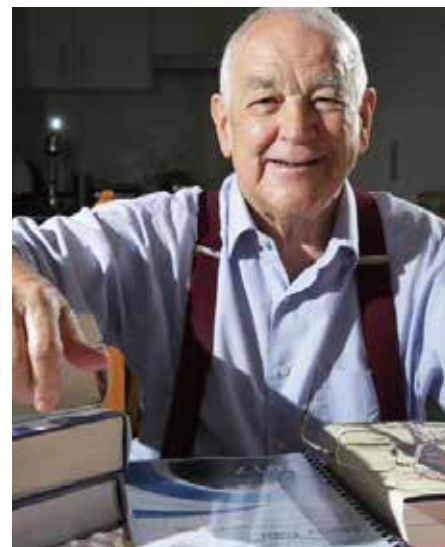
- Fellow, Australian Institute of Company Directors, current.

New South Wales

Kevin Coorey (OAM), for service to the community through a range of roles. Kevin, of Telopea, has been a member of the Society and of St Oliver Plunkett Parish in Harris Park since 1951. He has served in the St John Ambulance service since 1964 and was recognised as an Officer Brother in 1999. He was also a recipient of the Diocesan Medal in 2014.

Jennifer Ellis (OAM), for service to community health as a midwife. Jennifer, of Gerogery, has volunteered for the Society's Humanitarian Settlement Services for Refugees since 2015. She has been a Senior Registered Midwife at Wodonga Hospital and Albury Wodonga Health since 1998. She was Team Leader on the Labour Ward for many years.

Leslie Dell (OAM), for service to business, to education and to the community. Leslie was a Member



Leslie Dell

of the Mary Immaculate Waverley Conference from 1986 to 1988 and a member of the Mater Dei Blakehurst Conference from 1996 to 2006. He is a member of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish Wyoming and has been a Pastoral Council Member since 2015. Leslie chaired the College Council of St Clare's College Waverley from 1968 to 1988 and remained a member of the College Council until 2007. He was President of the Parents and Friends Association from 1972 to 1980 and again from 1983 to 1987. He has been an Order of St Clare Associate Member since 1988. Outside of the Society and education system, Leslie has held the following positions:

- Direct Selling Association of Australia: Consultant, 2009–2011; Executive Director, 2003–2009; Honorary Chairman, Government and Public Relations Committee, 1975–1994; Inductee, Hall of Fame, 1988; Life Member, 1995
- Director of Finance, Nutrimerics International, 1968–1988
- Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales: Director, 1998–2017 and 1977–1978; Honorary Treasurer,

2004–2017; Chairman, Finance Committee, 2004–2017; Director, Block Grant Authority, 2002–2017; member, Schools Grant Committee, 2002–2014; member, Schools Grants Review Committee, 2014–2017; Liaison Officer, 2008–2011

- Volunteer, Coast Shelter Gosford, since 2015.

Pamela Richardson (AM), for service to veterans and their families and to the community of Mascot. Pamela has been a member of the Society since 1987. She has been President of the Mascot Conference since 2013 and was President of the South Sydney Regional Council from 1998 to 2005. She is a parishioner and catechist at St Therese Catholic Parish, Mascot and a volunteer of Meals on Wheels since 2008. Outside of the Society, Pamela has held the following positions:

- Women's Royal Australian Army Corps: Vice-President since 2008; President, 2000–2008; Life Member, since 2014
- Mascot Sub-Branch, Returned and Services League of Australia: Honorary Secretary since 2008; trustee since 2008; member since 1999
- Inaugural Member, NSW RSL Corps of Guards, since 2011
- Standard Bearer, Australian Reserve Forces Day Council, since 2005
- Member, Critical Incident Support Team, Randwick State Emergency Service.

Colleen Godsell (AM), for significant service to youth through Scouting, and through roles with education, historical preservation, Indigenous tourism and social welfare groups. Colleen has been a volunteer at Matthew Talbot Hostel since 2011. She is current chair of the 1st Mosman 1908 Scout Group and has been a volunteer since 1990. Colleen has held the following positions:

- Sydney Church of England Coeducational Grammar School (SCECGS) Redlands: Board Director since 2006; Chair, Public Relations Committee; member, Masterplan Committee; current board representative, Parents and Friends Association
- Member, Community Advisory Committee, Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, since 2016
- Member, Business Advisory Committee, The Tribal Warrior Association, Heritage Tours of Sydney Harbour (Indigenous owned and operated tourism venture), current
- Participant, Macquarie University Neurology Department Kokoda Challenge, 2016
- Benefactor, Naduri Village School, Papua New Guinea, 2016
- Past President and Past Corporate Sponsorships Director, Specific Learning Difficulties Association of NSW (SPELD NSW)
- President, NSW Police Safety House Program, 1995–2007
- Justice of the Peace, current

- Director, Waycol Enterprises (Frontline Print), since 1984
- Member, Australian Institute of Company Directors
- Member, Australian Business Chamber.

Queensland

Michael (Mike) Gilmour was recognised with an Australia Day Achievement Award as part of the 2018 Brisbane Lord Mayor's Australia Day Awards. Mike has been a member of the Society for the past 14 years and previously served as president of the Sacred Heart Red Hill Conference for four years and is currently president of the Rosalie Regional Council. Sacred Heart Red Hill Conference, the oldest conference in Queensland, was on the brink of closure, with only a handful of members; Mike guided it into an amalgamation with the Rosalie Conference, which reinvigorated membership to more than 25 volunteers. In his service to the Society, Mike has been described as a tenacious advocate for social welfare for families in the inner north-western suburbs. He has also brought his leadership and financial knowledge to improve delivery of services and recruitment of volunteers and has served as a member of the Society's finance committee since 2014. Outside of the Society, Mike has been a board member and director of Open Minds Australia, an independent not-for-profit organisation that works with people to enhance their mental health and wellbeing. ♦

2018 Walk For Justice For Refugees

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a member of the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA), which is once again hosting rallies for refugees this Palm Sunday. The 2018 Walk For Justice For Refugees will take place throughout Australia on 25 March. People from all faith groups, community organisations and members of the public are invited to join the Palm Sunday walk, bringing banners and other messages of support in solidarity with refugees and people seeking asylum.

In recent years thousands of people, including those representing CAPSA, have attended the walk. It's important that we keep up this momentum to demonstrate the growing concern across the community about the harsh and punitive treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

According to CAPSA, now more than ever Australians need to stand together for justice for refugees. The Australian Government continues to punish people who seek protection in Australia, as reflected in the following:

- Thousands of people have been held on Nauru and Manus Island during the last four years, and the deliberate cruelty of the offshore detention regime has resulted in nine deaths, many people developing serious mental illness and untold misery and despair.
- The men marooned on Manus are fearful for their safety as Australia abandons them in Papua New Guinea.



Vincentians shown here supporting asylum seekers by marching on Palm Sunday in Canberra in 2017.

- There are still over 100 children on Nauru who, with their families and other adults, are being denied hope for the future.
- So far only around 240 people have been offered protection by America. It is now clear that refugees from countries covered by the USA travel ban including Iran, Somalia and Syria are not being offered places and currently have no prospect other than remaining in indefinite limbo.
- The Australian Government has rejected the offer by New Zealand to provide protection for 150 people per year.
- There are concerns that many people will be pressured to return to unsafe places.
- Over 30,000 asylum seekers in our communities continue to be neglected. Those recognised as refugees have been given only temporary solutions, while many on Bridging visas face an uncertain future.
- Many families are separated by our harsh system and most have no hope of ever being reunited with their loved ones.

CAPSA believes Australia is responsible for these people. Instead of spending millions to prolong their despair, Australia should immediately offer protection to those who are refugees (the majority) and review the claims of those who do not have refugee status. The humane thing to do is to #BringThemHere and #LetThemStay. For details of a rally near you, see below:

- Sydney
<https://www.facebook.com/events/163333934168474/>
- Melbourne
<https://www.facebook.com/events/142529579757550>
- Newcastle
<https://www.facebook.com/events/576928105985311/>
- Perth <https://www.facebook.com/events/2038952673042985/>
- Adelaide
<https://www.facebook.com/events/207964319756021/>
- Canberra: 1pm Garema Place
- Cairns: Cairns for Refugees will have information outside several churches in Cairns after the service on Palm Sunday. ♦



Jennifer and Alex Popov said they felt privileged to represent both the St Vincent de Paul Society and St Mary MacKillop Oran Park Parish during the ordination of the new Bishop of Wollongong Diocese, Brian Mascord, on 22 February. They were part of the group from St Mary MacKillop Parish to present the crozier at WIN Entertainment Centre, and said it was 'a magnificent night!' From left to right are: Alex and Jennifer Popov, Dianne Campbell, Leigh and Elliott Hearn, with Fr David Catterall presenting the crozier ♦

book review

New spiritual guide released

Sr. M. Veronika Häusler

*The Strength of Mercy:
Four Weeks with Louise de Marillac*
New City Press, 2018

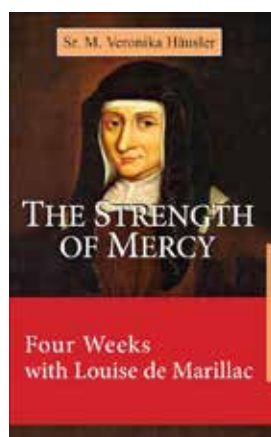
This new book about Louise de Marillac is a short and compact exploration of the life and writings of the founder of the Daughters of Charity and friend of St Vincent de Paul.

The author, Sr. M. Veronika Häusler, is a Caritas theologian and spiritual director. As a Daughter of Charity, she vividly brings to us Louise's life and her encouraging message for our own spiritual journey.

Louise (1591-1660) gained an education from a young age and went on to marry and have a son with a disability. Following her husband's death from illness in 1625, she

revisited her vocation sparked many years earlier as a girl. In 1624 or 1625, Louise met Vincent de Paul and he became her spiritual director and later accepted her collaboration in 1629. As Häusler writes, the Daughters of Charity was formed in 1633 and in 1642 Louise and four sisters took the vows of poverty, obedience, chastity, and service to the poor.

The introduction is devoted to the eventful life of Louise de Marillac; however, the subsequent chapters are far more religious in tone and will appeal to readers seeking not just historical facts but an interpretation of Louise's spiritual writings.



The new book is described as a 'four-week companion containing 4 x 7 daily reflections'. The volumes in New City Press's "7 x 4" series include a meditation a day for four weeks, which the publisher calls '...a bit of food for thought, a reflection that lets a reader ponder the spiritual significance of each and every day. Small enough to slip into a purse or coat pocket, these books fit easily into everyday routines'.

For more information about *The Strength of Mercy: Four Weeks with Louise de Marillac* book visit: <https://www.newcitypress.com/the-strength-of-mercy.html> ♦

Imagine a family

Early in 2017, the St Vincent de Paul Society Tasmania's then Youth Officer for the Southern Regional Council, Claire Scanlan, and later her successor, Erin Crean, devised a program designed to involve school youth conferences in collaboration with parish conferences.

The program is titled 'Imagine a family' and its goals are for:

- school conferences and parish conferences to be closely connected
- school conferences to learn about the specific issues facing families in their area
- schools to direct their fundraising efforts under the umbrella of Vinnies national appeals towards the immediate needs of a family e.g. paying a power bill during winter and providing food and gifts for Christmas.

Each parish conference is paired with schools in its area. By providing non-identifying information describing the members of a family in need to the school conference, the parish conference provides assistance, too.

St Dominic Conference, Glenorchy took up the challenge although it was near the end of the school year. Guilford Young College, a senior secondary college for Years 11 and 12, accepted the information provided and, in the three weeks remaining in the school year, provided parcels for a family of five: the parents and three boys. On the last day of the school year in 2017 the students made a presentation to the parish conference member Des



With the gifts for donation are, from left, GYC Glenorchy Campus Year 12 student Macayla Hansen, Director of Ministry Kylie Sullivan, St Dominic Conference members Tony Coad and Des Mortimer, and Year 11 student Samson Ryan.



St Dominic Conference member Des Mortimer addresses the GYC student cohort. Two of the student leaders who helped with the appeal, Macayla Hansen (left) and Claudia Fone, are also pictured with some of the Christmas treats donated by the GYC, Glenorchy Campus.



Students from Food and Cooking Essentials classes at GYC made a wonderful array of Christmas goodies for donation to the families: mini Christmas puddings, rocky road, mini meringues and truffles.

Mortimer, who thanked the college and spoke about the Society. The students' generosity extended beyond their selected family as the catering class provided a large number of boxes of Christmas treats for the Vinnies hamper appeal.

A second family, with 10 members, was adopted by another Catholic college in the parish, Dominic College (with students from Prep

to Year 10), which provided the family with cash for Christmas treats.

Other conferences in the region have reported similar responses from schools in their area.

This year will see better planning, with parish conferences working more closely with the youth conferences. The feeling is that this could be how conferences will attract young members when they leave school. ♦

50th anniversary of St Vincent de Paul Swansea Conference

On 24 February the Swansea Conference of St Vincent de Paul celebrated 50 years of service to the poor and needy of the area. The well attended Saturday evening Vigil Mass at St Patrick's Church was concelebrated by Bishop Bill Wright and our parish priest Fr Gerard Mackie.

In attendance on the night, along with parishioners of Jesus, the Good Shepherd Parish, were St Vincent de Paul members from other conferences in the Newcastle area, several conference presidents, regional presidents and President of the Maitland/Newcastle Central Council, John McKendry and his wife Joan.

The Mini Vinnies group from St Patrick's Primary School were also present at the Mass, with many taking an active part in the liturgy. The Swansea Conference and St Pat's Mini Vinnies enjoy a close and mutually supportive relationship and thanks must go to School Principal Peter Green and Religious Education Coordinator Nicki Graham, who continue to foster this valuable connection.

During the Mass five children who are enrolled in the parish Confirmation program were presented to the congregation and introduced to Bishop Bill.

Bishop Bill presented well earned service badges to five members of the Swansea Conference: Alice Doro, Marion Ward and Michael Gore received their 10-year badges, while Glenda Doggett and John Murphy were presented with 15-year badges. Congratulations to these five members on their commitment to the work of the Society.



The Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle Bill Wright and Swansea Conference member Alice Doro.



Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle Bill Wright, seen here at the anniversary celebration with Swansea Conference Treasurer Paul Prior, and young Mini Vinnies Rose, Ava and Charlotte.

Following Mass, parishioners and guests enjoyed supper, served in the school hall. During the evening Brian Halligan, Eastlakes Regional President, thanked everyone for their presence at the Mass and celebratory supper. The anniversary cake was then cut by Paul Prior, Swansea Conference Treasurer, ably assisted by Rose, Ava and Charlotte, three of St Patrick's Mini Vinnies. Paul has been a dedicated Vincentian for 58 years and is an inspiration to all.

Some of the conference members summed up their thoughts on why they joined the Society:

I hoped in some small way I could make a difference in the lives of people in need.

Joining the Swansea Conference has been one of the best decisions I have made in my retiring years.

Sharing the joy of caring for the poor with such a committed group each week inspires me to be a better Christian. ♦

Walls and bridges

BY DR JOHN FALZON

Societies build walls, not because they are strong but because they are weak. They build walls to keep out people seeking refuge. They build walls to lock up disproportionate numbers of First Nations people. Economic structures build walls to lock out vast numbers of people from paid work or from secure work that includes sick leave, annual leave and dependable, regular hours.

The idea of democracy is that the people, all of the people, determine how we will live together, how we will allocate resources, how we will build a future. One would think that the democratic vision would naturally lean towards a reduction of inequality—after all, it is predicated on the idea that everyone, not just a powerful elite, participates in determining our collective future. One would think that. But, as wonderful as our democracy is, it still excludes massive sections of the population. I'm not talking about the right to vote. I'm talking about the right to be listened to and respected.

Pope Francis, in an address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in October last year, sounded a prophetic note of warning to those societies that allow democracy to be effectively denuded by the power of wealth concentrated in the hands of the few, as opposed to the power of people, shared equally and collectively:

Inequality and exploitation are neither inevitable nor a historical constant. They are not inevitable because, apart



from the conduct of individuals, they also depend on the economic rules that a society chooses to adopt. We can think of energy production, the labour market, the banking system, welfare, the tax system, and the area of education. Depending on how these sectors are designed, there are different consequences for how income and wealth are distributed among those who helped to produce them. If profit becomes the chief aim, democracy tends to become a plutocracy in which inequalities and the exploitation of the planet increase.

This is a radical message if ever there was one. It is telling us that if we want to reduce inequality then we have to change the rules that give it effect.

It is warning us that, no matter how much we cherish our democracy, it is being transformed into a plutocracy. What looks like the rule of the people is, more and more, the rule of the rich.

Of course, the gospel golden rule is: *'In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you'* (Matthew 7:12). Many feel this has been displaced by another golden rule: *Whoever has the gold makes the rules!*

As French historian Pierre Rosanvallon

has put it, 'Inequality is felt most acutely when citizens believe that the rules apply differently to different people.'

On one level, like all authentic prophecy, this message is deeply worrying for humanity and for the planet which is our increasingly ravaged home.

Francis, however, does not stop there. This prophetic utterance is deeply hopeful because it tells us that the only power for progressive social change lies with us; that if the rules are deepening inequality and exploitation then it is up to us, the many, to change them!

To use the Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire's beautiful formulation, *we must prophetically denounce the bad news in order to prophetically announce the good news.*

The good news is that inequality and exploitation are not inevitable.

Some of those who benefit from inequality and exploitation, the individuals Francis refers to, will continue to tell us that we are living with an economic inevitability; that things will eventually get better for the



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / SRSPVL WITCH

many. I do not need to remind you of Pope Francis' devastating critique of the trickle-down theory they espouse as a pathetic attempt to reassure us that highly concentrated wealth is bound to be enjoyed by all as long as we stick with the current rules (the ones that effectively take from those who have least and give to those who have most).

They will also attempt to silence dissent. And to do so they will build more walls; walls that not only keep people out but even try to keep their stories out, silencing their voices and denying the worth of their truth.

But as that other prophetic voice, Dr Martin Luther King, reminds us, 'Our lives begin to end the day we are silent about the things that matter.'

There have been recent reports and suggestions that civil society organisations should refrain from advocacy; that this is 'political campaigning'. A robust democracy has nothing to fear from a strong civil society. Building legislative or regulatory walls to restrict or restrain advocacy is not a sign of strength. It is a sign of weakness. If democracy does not create and protect a space

for voices to be heard from the people who know the meaning of inequality and exploitation in their daily lives, it is indeed, as Pope Francis warns, a sure sign that we are drifting towards plutocracy. This is particularly exemplified in the access to power by those favoured by 'the economic rules that a society chooses to adopt'.

There are those who would much prefer us to be silent. There are those who believe that we should act charitably but not speak truthfully or seek justice. There are those who argue that poverty is a personal choice rather than a structural effect, as Francis describes it. These ardent but deeply misguided arguments would suggest that we are wasting our time. A softer version of this argument would have civil society only speaking when it has something to say that the government of the day wants to hear, perhaps even asking it to do what it already planned to do and then claiming it as a win. This might make a civil society organisation look good in the eyes of some, but is not advocacy.

We never tire of remembering and reminding ourselves of Ozanam's beautiful injunction: 'Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the

wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is the role of justice to prevent the attack.' We have an obligation not only to assist the people who bear the brunt of inequality, poverty and homelessness in prosperous Australia, but also to analyse the structural causes of this situation and to advocate for appropriate legislative change to prevent it. To achieve this we must faithfully and fearlessly speak the truth to power. Otherwise we would be perpetuating the injustice by our silence.

The walls that lock people out or lock them up can be overwhelming in their magnitude and ferocity. But our historic task, as the Honduran poet Roberto Sosa reminds us, is the source of a powerful and tender collective hope:

*Together we can construct
with all our songs
a bridge to dignity
so that one by one
the humiliated of the earth may
pass. ♦*

Dr John Falzon is CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia.

St Vincent de Paul SA responds to family violence

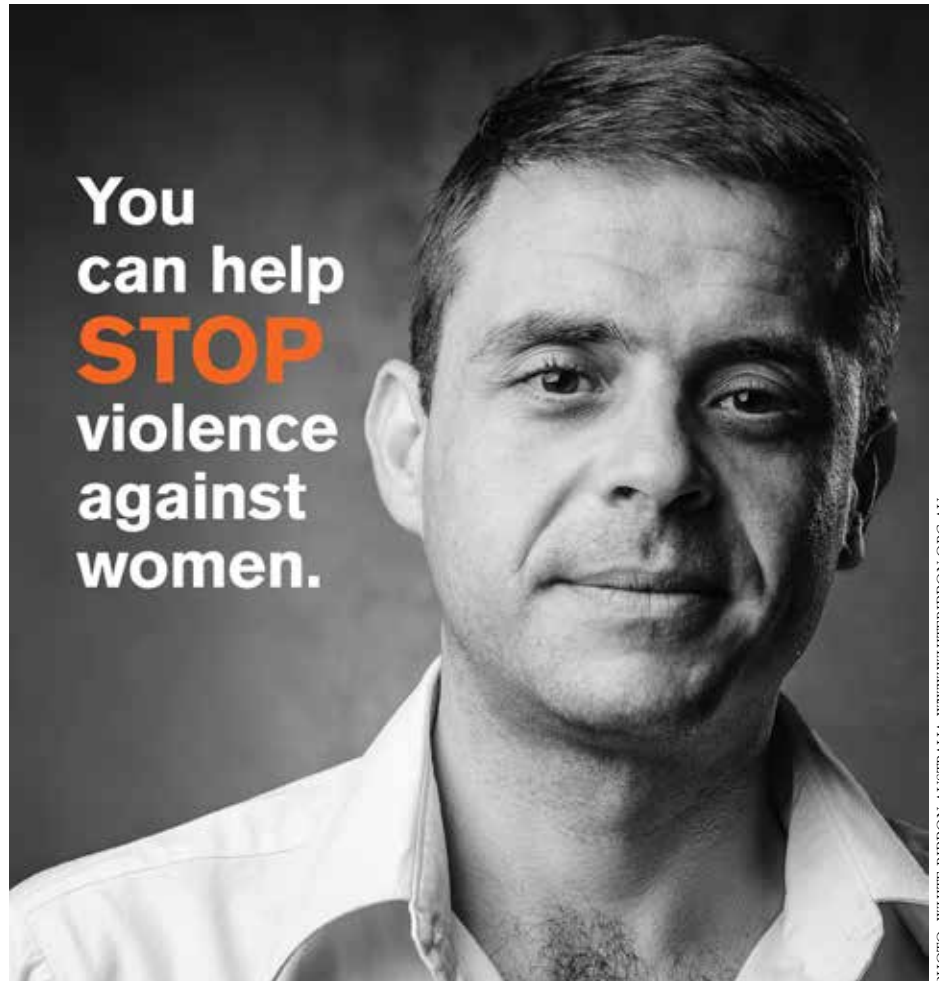
BY TONY ROACH

A hallmark of the St Vincent de Paul Society is its action to address poverty and homelessness. In 1961 the Society in South Australia opened the Vincentian Men's Shelter in response to the increasing number of men living on the street. Over the last 57 years some 900,000 bed nights have been provided.

In the years since 1961 the face of the homeless has changed. Initially it was primarily men that made up the profile of the homeless but increasingly it is women fleeing family violence. Over 105,000 people in Australia are homeless—49,000 men, 38,000 women and 18,000 children. The primary cause of homelessness for children is family violence.

Faced with the growing homelessness issue for women and children, the Society in South Australia has responded by establishing a 24-hour domestic violence crisis centre. The twenty-room facility provides safe, secure accommodation and meals for women and children fleeing domestic violence. Since opening in late November 2017, 84 women and 85 children have been supported by the Vinnies Women's Crisis Centre (VWCC).

The commitment by the Society in South Australia to the establishment of the VWCC is an immediate and effective response to women and children fleeing domestic violence but long-lasting societal change to end violence against women will be achieved through the White Ribbon advocacy campaign.



White Ribbon accreditation

In 1991 a male-led group formed a movement known as White Ribbon in response to a Montreal student who massacred 14 female students on 6 December 1989. Their aim was to raise awareness amongst men that violence against women must not be tolerated. Since 1991 the White Ribbon campaign has gathered momentum across the globe and is bringing about real change in workplaces and more broadly across society.

The Society in South Australia received White Ribbon workplace accreditation in March 2018. White Ribbon workplace accreditation requires a whole of organisation

commitment. The process to achieve accreditation is similar to quality assurance and involves workplace surveys at the beginning and end of the 12-month accreditation process; workplace awareness campaigns; extensive training; external promotion of respectful relationships; family violence resources; HR policies; cultural change and specific response procedures that align with supporting workers impacted by domestic and family violence.

In late 2016 the State Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in South Australia endorsed the goal to achieve White Ribbon accreditation. The first step was to undertake a baseline survey with the 3000 strong workforce.



This was a huge task for a volunteer-based organisation with many challenges such as the requirement that all surveys be submitted online. To overcome this obstacle hundreds of members completed paper survey forms that were then transcribed to online surveys.

Response to the survey was very strong, with over 700 completed forms. The key question was *'How likely are respondents to identify violence against women?'* which included rape, sexual assault, physical assault, domestic abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, financial abuse, verbal abuse, cyber abuse, sexual harassment, bullying and harassment and stalking. Over 75 per cent of respondents were very likely to understand sexual, physical, domestic and emotional abuse but less certain of the other categories, with responses ranging from 63 per cent for financial abuse to 72 per cent for sexual harassment. Disappointingly, of the completed forms only 26 per cent were from men.

The result of the survey has seen a significant improvement across the Society in awareness and understanding by our staff, volunteers

and members of what constitutes and how to respond to violence against women in the workplace as a consequence of the accreditation. When sending through our follow-up survey results, White Ribbon Australia highlighted that the outcomes demonstrated the great internal communication and training that resulted in an organisation of our size achieving a response rate in excess of 30 per cent and the percentage improvement in the various questions.

The results form the foundation and springboard for ongoing cultural growth in the elimination of domestic violence in the workplace and wider community over the next three years.

The White Ribbon surveys are just one small part of the accreditation process. There are 15 categories to address in the application including leadership, internal and external communication, staff training, contractor standards, response to perpetrators and communication of policies and procedures.

A domestic violence policy is a key requirement of White Ribbon accreditation. Unlike a bullying and harassment policy, the DV policy has a number of special conditions.

For example, there is a strong emphasis on training. St Vincent de Paul Society leaders including Shop Managers, Warehouse Managers and Special Works Managers attended a one-day training course to better understand domestic violence and ways to address it in the workplace. This group became White Ribbon Champions tasked with guiding first responses to family violence and changing the workplace culture. Over the next three years training will be provided to all of the Society's staff and volunteers in South Australia.

While training is essential there is a need to provide practical support to both victims and perpetrators. Workers who have been victims of domestic violence are able to access flexible workplace arrangements including an additional two weeks paid special leave.

Support is not confined to the victims but also extends to perpetrators. Unlike victims they do not have access to additional leave but can use annual leave to attend specialist services including the Employee Assistance Counselling Program (EAP) because it is important to address the root causes of a perpetrator's domestic violence.

The Society is taking a stand against domestic violence, whether it occurs inside or outside the organisation. We are committed to supporting employees and volunteers suffering from domestic violence, as well as those colleagues who identify with and respond to disclosures. We aim to assist victims/survivors to maintain their work with us by providing a workplace that upholds everyone's safety and right to be free of violence. The leadership shown by SVDP SA can be a model for the Society nationally. We must no longer tolerate violence against women. ♦

Tony Roach is Homeless Services Manager at the St Vincent de Paul Society South Australia's Vinnies Men's Crisis Centre.

Inequality on the rise

DR HELEN SZOKE

As an organisation dedicated to tackling poverty for more than 60 years, Oxfam Australia is deeply concerned that levels of inequality continue to grow.

Oxfam Australia was born out of a merger between two leading Australian international development agencies: Community Aid Abroad and the Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign. Today, Oxfam continues its mission to empower communities to build better lives and to tackle the many drivers of poverty in the modern world.

But right now, growing inequality is making Oxfam's work harder. Extreme inequality entrenches poverty and it blocks the path to opportunities for people around the globe. And while economic development and globalisation have helped to lift millions out of poverty, there are also many who have fallen through the cracks. The global poverty rate has halved since 1990, but progress is unevenly spread across countries. Much of the reduction in extreme poverty occurred in East Asia—but even here, large pockets of poverty remain. Sub-Saharan Africa has seen much less improvement, with half of the world's extreme poor calling the region home. As a result, while the picture of poverty may have improved for some, there are many who have been left behind. Inequality within countries has also been on the rise, and Australia is no exception.

One of the starkest ways to really understand where and how poverty persists is to look at people's living conditions. Until it was dismantled, the 'tent city' protest by the homeless in Sydney was a constant reminder of the growing inequality divide in Australia,



Twenty-year-old Fatima makes a mere 43 cents per hour sewing clothes that are bound for sale in Australia.

PHOTO: GMB AKASH/PANOS/OXFAM/USA

lying right in the centre of Martin Place—a location that is usually seen as core to the engine of Australia's economic growth. Organisations like Vinnies do a much-needed job in addressing Australia's homelessness crisis every day.

At Oxfam, we get to understand what living conditions are like for people the world over. At the same time that Australia has been facing a crisis in homelessness, women across South Asia have been facing a crisis of working poverty. Women like Fatima, who work up to twelve hours a day sewing clothes bound for sale in Melbourne, Sydney and around Australia, remain so poor that they cannot afford a bed, enough food and decent housing—let alone having any spare money for medical costs. Twenty-year-old Fatima makes a mere 43 cents per hour, while one of the highest paid CEOs of a leading Australian clothing brand earns up to \$2,500 an hour.

These extremes of inequality should not exist in Australia—or around the globe.

For the past few years Oxfam has released annual reports on inequality, timed to coincide with the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. The Davos event has traditionally been a meeting of the world's most rich and powerful, and has been a key moment for Oxfam to compel governments and the 'haves' to commit to doing more to help the 'have-nots' by tackling inequality.

Why do we focus on inequality? Countries that are more unequal have worse social outcomes in terms of health, life expectancy, mental illness and imprisonment rates. Inequality hinders social mobility and makes it harder to break the poverty cycle. Poor families have less ability to invest in their children's education, which would help to open up economic opportunities; people are less able to stay healthy and can easily slip further into poverty if they fall sick. Inequality also means policies can be influenced to preference those with power and wealth, which

undermines economic prosperity, fuels corruption and limits the provision of public services that communities around the world rely on.

Oxfam's reports on inequality this year (*Growing gulf between work and wealth*, and *Reward work, not wealth*) continue to challenge the notion that growing the economic pie for the wealthiest will trickle down to benefit everyone. We have observed the richest people and firms accumulate record levels of wealth, while ordinary people, who are often at the bottom of business supply chains, are paid barely enough to get by. Last year, globally over 80 per cent of new wealth went to the wealthiest one percent, while the poorest half of humanity saw no increase in wealth at all—absolutely zero. We also saw the biggest rise in the number of billionaires in history—their increase in wealth was enough to end extreme poverty seven times over.

This stark picture of inequality sadly also extends to Australia. The share of wealth concentrated in the hands of the top one per cent of Australians has grown to 23 per cent in 2017—more wealth than the bottom 70 per cent of Australians combined. The gulf between the wealth shares held by the top one per cent and bottom 50 per cent in Australia is now the greatest at any point over the past two decades; and, over this period, the wealth share held by the top one per cent has grown almost continuously, while the wealth share held by

the poorest 50 per cent has fallen almost continuously. The number of Australian billionaires has also more than doubled over the past ten years, from 14 in 2008 to 33 in 2017, with a corresponding increase in total wealth of almost 140 per cent to \$115.4 billion. Yet over the same time, the average wages of ordinary Australians have increased by just 36 per cent and average household wealth grew by just 12 per cent.

Ordinary Australians' wages have not grown to match their contribution to the economy: except for the top 20 per cent household income group, income shares for all income groups in Australia have fallen over the decade to 2015.

What do all these numbers tell us? There's clearly something going wrong when the differences are so stark. The widening gap between the rich and poor suggests that simply focussing on growing the economic pie, especially at the top, is not enough. This alone does not benefit the community as a whole.

Oxfam believes extreme inequality is not inevitable, but is an outcome of policy decisions. Businesses and governments can make decisions that will ensure the community receives a fair share of benefits of economic growth and can commit to taking steps to closing the inequality divide.

Companies can commit to ensuring a living wage for workers at home and in their global supply chains. Governments can hold these firms to account by legislating for businesses to report on their human

rights due diligence, including paying living wages. Oxfam is calling on the biggest clothing retail chains in Australia to ensure their garment workers, such as those in Bangladesh and Vietnam, are paid a living wage.

At the other end of the economic divide, big businesses must ensure they pay a fair share of taxes in the countries where they operate, as well as here in Australia. Government can play a role too, by introducing tax transparency measures which allow the public to hold businesses (and governments) to account over tax arrangements. We already know that one in three large Australian firms reported on by the ATO paid no tax in Australia in 2015–2016. The Government can mandate that Australian-based companies also reveal the taxes they pay around the world, giving us a global picture of who pays the right amount of tax and where. We need continued reform towards a fairer tax system, including ending the tax competition between governments that leads to a race to the bottom on corporate tax rates—where everyone loses out.

Inequality has been growing, but it does not need to continue this way. It's time for action to end this trend, in Australia and around the world.

Oxfam's recent reports on inequality can be found here: <https://www.oxfam.org.au/what-we-do/inequality/> ♦

Dr Helen Szoke is Chief Executive of Oxfam Australia.

Do you expect a return on your compassion?

BY BRAD CHILCOTT

In 2014, two Vietnamese high school students were suddenly taken from my local community and put into a detention facility. They'd received a letter from the Department of Immigration stating that their presence in the community 'was no longer in the public interest'.

These boys were 16 years old and living in Australia as unaccompanied children seeking refuge from religious and political persecution. A week after the letter, immigration officers and federal police showed up at their house—just after they got home from school, while still in their uniforms—told them to put their belongings in a black plastic bag and took them to Inverbrackie detention centre just outside of Adelaide.

At 3am the next morning, the two children were again suddenly removed, placed on separate planes—each accompanied by four guards—and flown via different cities to arrive the next day in Darwin, 2600 kilometres away. They were then taken to Wickham Point detention centre.

Over a dozen other children who knew they could be next immediately went into hiding.

Supporters protesting this outrage organised a rally at Parliament House in Adelaide and I was one of the speakers. Some students at risk of deportation had come to the rally. They wanted to show solidarity with their friends, but also to hide their identities. Some wore masks and others stood behind the pillars of Parliament House to make sure they were safe.



Brad Chilcott

Consider this for a moment—children in Australia, here without their parents, were scared of what would happen to them if our authorities could identify their faces. I'll never forget looking back and seeing them in tears as I took to the stage to soliloquise on the injustice and unnecessary cruelty of our asylum seeker system.

I remember thinking, 'I get to go home after this. I'll drive home, pick up my kids and take them to a playground. I'll make plans with my wife about what we'll do tomorrow, next week, in a few years.'

I realised that for all my fine rhetoric and passionate campaigning, I get to move on with my comfortable life. I don't live the nightmare. Yet, we often use the nightmarish experiences of people living with the reality of injustice to sell a very different story to people of privilege like me: become an advocate, a donor, a volunteer, or join this campaign and you'll feel fulfilled and know you're making a difference. You'll have wonderful, diverse experiences with like-minded people.

You'll know you're a good person. Do it long enough and well enough and there'll be accolades, awards and a career. You'll have influence and a great reputation. You'll leave a legacy and be remembered for all you did to serve others.

There'll be a return on your compassion.

We build charities, organisations, coalitions and movements around shared values and a vision for achieving measurable change for others. Our organisations and the broader movements they sit within—whether it's the refugee movement, the union movement or the broader progressive movement—develop a common language, ideology and methodology for change.

Our activist groups and organisations develop their own cultural norms, rituals and rites of passage. We begin to recognise 'our people' by their adherence to accepted opinions, behaviours and relationships.

This is how the return on your compassion is apportioned.

I received my first death threat after I put out a statement, in my role as a local church pastor, in support of Halal certification for milk products. It came from another Christian, who said, 'I am going to come to your church and pull your tongue from your body to prevent your blaspheming'.

You can imagine the response when the church I lead made the decision to accept LGBTIQ people into the leadership of our congregation.

So, what happens when the expectation that you'll personally benefit from your involvement in making the world a better place is not met? What if the outcomes that you signed up to fight for could only be achieved at great personal or organisational cost?



What if saying or doing the right thing for the people for whom you advocate came at the expense of your sense of belonging, your financial security, your reputation or your status in the movement? What if the actions required to achieve better outcomes for others resulted in poorer outcomes for you and your family?

What if making the right decision for achieving real change in the lives of vulnerable people was different to making the right decision for the cash flow, mailing list and social media networks of the organisation you've spent so long building?

When you find yourself at the intersection of self-interest and transformational change, who wins?

As a pastor, I recognise that involvement in activist movements provides many of the same benefits as religion—ideological certainty, a framework for making sense of the world and cultural norms that convey a sense of belonging. These movements have their own list of righteous acts and evil sins. Purity is rewarded with regular affirmation.

As an activist, I've learned that

breaking the rules is punishable by losing these benefits. Rather than losing your salvation, you lose your status as a righteous comrade.

Sometimes the words your movement wants to hear are not the same as the ones that will lead to the outcomes your movement exists to achieve. Sometimes the actions your supporters demand of you are not the actions that will change lives or society for the better.

When activism is practised like a religion, it becomes more important to be seen saying the right things, at the right time, with the right amount of vitriol than to be achieving outcomes for people. Despite our initially pure motivation, we can fall into the trap of elevating the importance of our ideology, our reputation or our brand over the importance of change for those who need change most.

What if the only thing we were dogmatic about was achieving real change for people, communities and our society? Would this make our organisations and activist communities safe places to discuss strategy, narrative, achievable goals and even solutions that might put us out of

business but would definitely make life better for others?

My friend Jarrod McKenna says that 'Some of us are so addicted to being right we get in the way of the world being made right'.

Let's remember that it's not an ideological position or brand we're fighting for, where victory can be measured by trending on Twitter, shaming the opposition or scoring points in a debate. Winning isn't about being the most pure or the most righteous, and it isn't about getting the most likes or having the biggest mailing list or market share. It's about making meaningful change that is experienced by real people.

Can we avoid the seductive promise of 'being someone' or 'building something', and be willing to give it all up for the sake of improving the lives of others?

The question I had to ask myself after that day at Parliament House—and every time I'm confronted by the reality of other people's nightmares—is 'Do I want something in return for my solidarity?' Do I need a return on my compassion?

Do you? ♦

Brad Chilcott is the founder of Welcome to Australia the pastor of Activate Church in Adelaide.

Student poverty: a wall on the bridge of higher education

BY LEN BAGLOW

As a parent, one of the bridges to a better life for our children that we try to build is the 'good education' bridge. We know that a good education has many benefits. It exposes the child to the wider, wonderful world beyond our immediate circle. It builds social, intellectual and practical skills beyond what we could teach in the family. Importantly, it also increases the chances of our child being able to find work that is personally and financially rewarding.

Many readers of *The Record* will remember a time when the last tier of education, a university education, was reserved only for the rich. Poor and middle-income families simply could not afford to pay university fees and scholarships were only available to the few. This changed in 1974 when university fees were abolished. While fees have since been reintroduced, there is now a low interest loan system, so fees do not have to be paid upfront. As a result, today many more students from middle and lower-income families can access higher education.

However, the system is still biased in favour of students from well-off families, and this bias has been increasing over the last 20 years. For the last 10 years, enrolments of students from low-income families have been about 60 per cent of what you would expect if access to university was truly fair. Four-year completion rates for students from



low-income families declined from 45 per cent to 41 per cent between 2005 and 2014.

If students don't have to pay upfront fees, what are the walls that are preventing them from enrolling in and achieving at university? The major wall is that students simply do not receive enough money to live on for four years while completing a course. This is compounded by the fact that many poorer students can't live at home with parents because of family disruption, or the need to be nearer the university or because they are older. Right now, the major income support payments for students are about 55 per cent of the aged pension. It is difficult enough living on the aged pension—imagine trying to survive on half that amount for four years!

The consequences for many students for their lives and studies are devastating. A Universities Australia study found that some 18 per cent of undergraduate students claimed to regularly go without necessities such as food. My own research in

2015 with 2320 social work students has convinced me of the profound effects poverty is having on students' lives.* Around a third of the students had at various times insufficient money to pay for food, clothing, transport or medication, and over half had insufficient to pay for education resources.

Many of the students gave eloquent descriptions of their situation:

In the past when I worked part-time and received Austudy/Youth Allowance I had very little money and was rarely able to purchase textbooks or readers. I also have a chronic disease which requires a large amount of medication, which I have had to stop taking due to having insufficient money.

I have struggled financially throughout my entire degree. Several times I have missed out on certain things or not bought certain things due to finances. At times I have been incredibly ill and have not been able to afford a doctor's appointment or medication, and have still been required to work to sustain an income.



Strangely, this poverty has largely been ignored. There are several powerful reasons for this. First, there is the widespread perception that university is still only for the rich and therefore poverty experienced by students isn't real poverty, but rich students complaining about a temporary inconvenience.

Secondly, the corporatisation of universities has over time meant their interest has turned to profitability rather than ensuring all students are well educated. Peter Shergold, the chancellor of Western Sydney University, claimed recently that there is no crisis in the university sector because the completion rate for students of 66 per cent has been constant for many years. Certainly, from the universities' economic perspective this is probably correct. They can function quite well, especially if they top-up with fees from foreign students. But what of the 34 per cent of students that don't complete? For students who have struggled to get to university in the first place, having to drop out or defer when they don't want to is indeed

a crisis. Shergold argues that the decision to withdraw from study is largely a matter of personal judgement and one of the reasons he gives is 'an inability to overcome financial pressures'. Not having enough money to live on is not a personal judgement; it reflects a structural problem—that student payments are simply too low. Universities evade their responsibility to campaign on behalf of students for higher levels of student payments by turning the poverty of students into a personal matter for students to overcome.

Finally, the poverty among the most affected students is making it difficult for them to organise for change. While trying to keep up with the hours of study required, they are working long hours in paid employment just to stay afloat financially. Student political bodies have focussed on increases in the HECs debt, which, while a problem, is not as significant a problem as low levels of student payments for poor students trying to survive. Also, for many students there is a stigma attached to being poor. For students entering a new environment,

there is often a desperate need to fit in, and so poverty is not mentioned. Even if students do mention it, there is little that can effectively be done to help. Counselling and mentoring can only help so much if you don't have enough money for food, medicine or your accommodation.

While there have been some St Vincent de Paul Society conferences and agencies who have worked with students experiencing poverty, it has not been a strong focus. I would like to challenge all readers to ask themselves, 'Is there more that we could be doing?' Together, how can we tear down the walls that prevent poor students successfully crossing the bridge of higher education? ♦

*This research was part of a joint project between the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) and James Cook University. A summary can be viewed on the AASW website at <https://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/8772>.

Len Baglow is Policy and Media Advisor, St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia.

Policy updates from the National Council office

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia is working to shape a more just and compassionate community by being a voice for the voiceless. In its role of advocating for the rights of marginalised groups in the community, the Society's National Council office regularly makes written submissions, or reports, to government inquiries, independent commissioners, government agencies and human rights bodies. The following is a summary of the key advocacy areas the Society has been working on in recent months led by National Council CEO Dr John Falzon, Director of Policy and Research Corinne Dobson, and Policy and Media Advisor Len Baglow.

Civil society groups welcome Australia's ratification of torture prevention treaty

The Society joined an alliance of civil society groups in welcoming the Commonwealth Attorney General's announcement that Australia had ratified an international human rights treaty known as the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) on 15 December 2017.

The treaty will apply to all places of detention including prisons, police cells, immigration detention and secure mental health, and aged care



and disability facilities. By ratifying OPCAT, Australia will commit to establishing a 'national preventative mechanism' to visit places of detention, make recommendations and report publicly on its findings and views.

Corinne Dobson, co-founder of the Australia OPCAT Network and Director of Policy and Research at the St Vincent de Paul Society, said: 'From the abuse of children at Don Dale, to the degrading treatment of older residents at the Oakden mental health facility, we've seen how things can go tragically wrong. OPCAT provides a unique opportunity to prevent such instances of abuse and neglect—not just reacting after abuses occur.'

The OPCAT network noted that while ratification was a crucial and symbolic first step, much work remained to be done to make the treaty operational. Australia has elected under the terms of the treaty to postpone its substantive obligations for three years in order to get the domestic

monitoring framework up and running.

'While ratification of OPCAT provides an opportunity to prevent abuse and neglect in places of detention, this opportunity will amount to nothing unless it's grasped by government and the necessary legislative, funding and operational changes are made,' said Ms Dobson.

The OPCAT network called on governments at both Commonwealth and state/territory levels to engage with civil society groups when designing the oversight framework. To view the 22 members of the civil society alliance group, visit www.vinnies.org.au/opcat.

Cashless debit card developments

The Society continues to campaign against compulsory income management and has raised many concerns about the continuation of the cashless debit card, including the lack

of supporting evidence, significant shortcomings in the evaluation of the trial, the considerable expense involved, and evidence of increased hardship for some individuals and families.

However, the Commonwealth Government is proceeding to trial the cashless debit cards in Kununurra, Western Australia and Ceduna, South Australia for a further 12 months, plus it has added the Kalgoorlie-Boulder region in Western Australia as a trial site. The *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Cashless Debit Card) Bill 2017* was passed in parliament on 13 February 2018. Fortunately, the original recommendation in the Bill, to extend the cashless debit card trials to the Hinkler region in Queensland, has been scrapped.

The Society made a submission to a Senate Inquiry into the Bill and closely followed the subsequent debates in parliament. As expected, the Senate Inquiry report released in late 2017 did not reach a consensus on the card, but rather the recommendations were split along party lines. The Greens, Labor and the Nick Xenophon Team voiced opposition to this Bill, although it was disappointing to see Labor and the Nick Xenophon Team ultimately agree to the extension of the Kununurra and Ceduna trials for a further 12 months.

The Society's National Council CEO, Dr John Falzon, said: 'The cashless debit card is an expensive and ineffective measure that takes choice, control and dignity away from people trying to live off very little. The government has ignored evidence of the detrimental effects of the cashless

welfare card, cherry-picking and misrepresenting the findings of the evaluation to justify a measure that is driven by ideology rather than evidence.'

To find out more about this issue, read the Society's briefing paper on the cashless debit card at: https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/Publications/National/Factsheets_and_policy_briefings/What_s_wrong_with_the_cashless_welfare_card/.

New National Housing and Homelessness Agreement

Housing and homelessness policy in Australia is at a critical juncture. Housing stress has reached historical highs, there is a severe shortage of social housing, and a growing number of low-income households are priced out of the private rental market. Against this backdrop, the federal government is developing a new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), which will replace the existing national agreements that provide funding to state and territory governments for housing and homelessness programs.

On 6 December 2017, the Society made a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the *Treasury Laws Amendment (National Housing and Homelessness Agreement) Bill 2017*, which gives effect to the new national agreement. In its submission, the Society supported the development of a new agreement in principle but argued the current Bill carried many risks and flaws and required significant revision. The submission stated:

In particular, the Bill is not linked to a national housing and homelessness strategy and plan, nor is it supported by the necessary governance and institutional arrangements. Housing is affected by policies at all levels of government, with the federal government carrying responsibility for some of the key drivers (e.g. taxation, social security, infrastructure). Yet this Bill allows the federal government to evade its policy responsibilities, shifting the onus for achieving housing outcomes solely onto the states and territories.

On 6 February 2018 the Senate Inquiry into the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement 2017, chaired by Liberal Senator Jane Hume, handed down its report recommending the establishment of the new NHHA. Labor and Greens Senators objected to the legislation. The Society continues to call on the Commonwealth to develop a comprehensive national strategy to address affordable housing and homelessness. Adequate, indexed and long-term funding should be part of a renewed plan to halve homelessness by 2025—a plan that addresses the drivers of homelessness (including the supply of affordable housing), rapidly rehouses people who are homeless, and provides adequate and flexible support for those needing to sustain housing. Read the Society's submissions on housing and homelessness at: https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/Publications/National/Submissions/Housing_Submissions/Inquiry_into_National_Housing_and_Homelessness_Agreement_Bill_2017/ ♦

New Vinnies CEO says focus on service encompasses all

Susan Rooney is CEO for St Vincent de Paul Society Western Australia. Susan has held senior management and board positions in a range of non-government and government organisations throughout Australia. She is a passionate advocate for people most in need and is working to make a difference.

Susan has had a busy nine months since being appointed the CEO for St Vincent de Paul Society Western Australia, with her focus being to keep the organisation financially strong and ensure it continues to provide services and programs that improve people's lives, restore hope and dignity.

Susan explained that the recently implemented five-year strategic plan articulates how the Society is striving to develop further as a caring, Catholic charity that offers vital support and guidance to people in need, making a real difference to the lives of thousands of Western Australians. To do this, key strategic objectives will focus on the organisation's strengths and how, working in partnership with others, it can deliver a range of effective programs and services to meet the needs of some of the most disadvantaged people in our community.

The numbers speak

The numbers are impressive. Susan explained that the members and volunteers are at the core of the work that the Society does, and last financial year these remarkable people assisted over



St Vincent de Paul Society Western Australia CEO, Susan Rooney.

38,000 Western Australians. Much of the work undertaken by the St Vincent de Paul Society is through local parish-based groups known as 'Conferences'. The wonderful Conference members, or Vincentians, provide practical support including food, clothing, bedding, furniture and assistance with utility bills and rents, as well as advocacy and friendship to the most vulnerable within our community.

Susan explained that in addition to emergency relief support, the Society also has specialised support services and programs, including retail and distribution centre operations, a recovery-focussed mental health service, services to prevent or alleviate homelessness, programs for young people, financial counselling and refugee and migrant services.

Financial services are a growing need

'The need for all our services is growing and no more so than for our financial counselling service,' Susan said.

The Society's financial counsellors provide free, independent financial support and advocacy for people struggling financially. A considerable number of client referrals for financial assistance are made to the counsellors, the majority being from conference members. The counsellors work with their clients to achieve positive financial outcomes, helping them to work their way out of debt and preventing them from ending up in a situation of homelessness.

In 2017 over 6000 counselling sessions were provided by the Society and with its assistance over 1.4 million dollars' worth of debt was waived. In addition, last year the Society was the only WA-based organisation to be recognised in the top 10 by the Financial Ombudsman Service of Australia. The service is partly funded by the Australian Government's Department of Social Services.

'Financial counselling is a trusted, free-of-charge service provided to people in financial difficulty. It provides an essential role in assisting people with their unmanageable debt, limited resources and increasing cost of living,' Susan said. 'The advocacy services include negotiating on behalf of the client to lower payments and interest rates with creditors and helping develop the client's skills and knowledge, so they can make informed and effective decisions with all of their financial resources,' Susan explained.

Causes are complex

Susan further explained that the need for financial counselling can arise from a diverse range of

incidents and events in people's lives, with individuals coming from all areas of the community.

According to St Vincent de Paul Society Senior Financial Counsellor Suzanne Long, financial stress does not discriminate and clients include accountants, teachers, professionals, engineers, migrants, single parents, people with disabilities and the working poor, who have such little disposable income that it may take only a minor event to push them into serious fiscal stress. She explained that many of the clients are good at managing their income but are receiving insufficient remuneration due to the rising cost of living.

Early intervention is key

'Some have an unexpected change in their lives, such as a redundancy or a medical crisis, while others have multifaceted behavioural and social concerns,' Ms Long said. She noted that the consequences of a financial crisis often go beyond the budgetary factors and can lead to

emotional and physical distress and relationship collapse. In these situations, Ms Long said, 'financial counselling is a key early intervention that can help to prevent a crisis escalating'.

An integrated response

Ms Long explained that in some cases their financial counsellors are part of the integrated response to assist people affected by domestic violence.

Susan shared a recent client's experience: this individual had suffered years of domestic and emotional abuse and was seeking assistance for severe depression and anxiety with another agency. Her support worker suggested she contact the St Vincent de Paul Society for assistance through its financial counselling program. The financial counsellor assessed her situation and was able to help her secure parenting payments from Centrelink. They then negotiated with the bank on her behalf, successfully obtaining a full debt waiver due to severe financial hardship and domestic violence. She is now able to

focus on getting back on her feet financially and is looking for part-time work. The client participated in a budgeting session and was assisted in creating a spending plan to help her with her finances going forward.

Susan also explained how relief from financial pressure can help to support a family's overall wellbeing and that early intervention may alleviate the potential future strain on limited community resources.

St Vincent de Paul Society Western Australia's financial counselling services branches are in the Perth CBD, Canning Vale, Rockingham and Mandurah. All staff are experienced professionals with access to a comprehensive suite of resources. The Society encourages anyone in Western Australia to call on (08) 6323 7500 or info@svdpwa.org.au if they would like assistance.

Susan looks forwards to working with all of the Society's staff, members and volunteers and the broader Catholic community in advocating for a more just and compassionate society for all. ♦

Join the Vinnies Online Community

There is an open invitation for all members of the St Vincent de Paul Society to join the Vinnies Online Community at <https://community.vinnies.org.au>. The Vinnies Online Community is a forum that has been established to share information and plans for the future of the Society following the National Congress 2017, which was held in Adelaide in October 2017. At the congress, Vincentians began the process of devising strategies to pilot for action and they have set deadlines for action and reporting. As the Society moves forward from the congress it will keep members updated on the implementation of these plans for advancement via the new website.

The Society's National Senior Manager, Web & Digital, Vincent Nguyen is the administrator of the Vinnies Online Community website and he encourages members to register.

'When you register to join the website you will receive an email notifying you of your username and password. If you have any questions regarding this website, please do not hesitate to contact the National Council office,' Vincent said. ♦

Reply to Dr Cameron Parsell's article 'Homelessness'

As a wealthy nation Australia is not immune from the problem of homelessness. In his article, Dr Parsell reflects on recent developments in the kinds of responses to homelessness in Australia. Dr Parsell contrasts local responses (showering, washing) with state and national responses (assisted accommodation, affordable housing, subsidised accommodation).

We are concerned that Dr Parsell is advocating greater resource allocation to medium level institutional responses (accommodation, housing) than to acute, crisis responses (personal, food, showering, washing).

We believe that the response to homelessness is required at the levels of both the individual and the community—local, regional, state and national. At the individual level, the St Vincent de Paul Society sees and responds in practical ways to those in need or crisis by listening without judgement, offering food, mediating assistance with utility bills, and discussing responses to changing needs as they present. At an organisational level, the Society advocates and assists in the development of housing solutions.

We do not accept that there should be direct competition for resources. Both responses, working towards the same goal of ameliorating homelessness, are necessary.

The Homeless Person

Homelessness is an indication that the person has effectively lost control of his or her personal circumstances. Difficult, stressful or dangerous circumstances—of one's own making or outside of one's control—can contribute to a person becoming homeless.

We assume that everyone seeks to

maintain control over their personal circumstances, regardless of the difficult, stressful or confrontational nature of those circumstances.

The stress of an unmanageable situation may lead to certain psychological responses: anxiety about the future and what may further exacerbate the situation; resignation or a sense of hopelessness; perhaps clinical depression. These responses can limit opportunities to effectively respond on a personal level and lead to a loss of confidence or resilience.

When the situation persists, there is a cascade of predictable but ineffective responses which individual persons tend to make:

- Denial
- Distance (running away from the problem) and/or distraction (e.g. drugs, alcohol)
- Self-talk (without understanding) or endless chat with anyone who will listen
- Blaming (one's self, parents etc.)
- Recognition that there is a problem beyond one's control that needs action, but the problem is

not well understood, or possible solutions may not be obvious.

Failure to accept, failure to act or failure to understand are not blameworthy responses and should not be judged.

If the downward spiral continues it may lead to a sense of hopelessness, depression, anger or anxiety, and may also present as homelessness. This means that some external assistance is called for to help manage the situation.

External assistance at an institutional, regional or national level may offer a medium-term resolution to a chronic situation; but an acute, short-term response at a personal level is also needed to rebuild a shattered psyche, and to reduce the sense of being out of control by offering a sense of hope.

The Good Samaritan, offering the practical assistance of listening and helping to provide the first step in the long journey back to self-respect, agency and personal control. ♦

Peter Burton
Moss Vale Conference



Results of 40-year-old survey reflects members' changing attitudes



BY MICHAEL MORAN

Here is a question which might offend some readers. Do any of you think that working wives are a threat to the stability of family life?

It might seem an old-fashioned question—certainly not PC and not one you'd ask today when both partners usually work.

In fact it's a question that is only 40 years old and comes from a survey of Conference members in 1977. You may be interested to learn that most Society members did think just that—that working wives were a threat to the family (53 per cent agreed while 33 per cent disagreed).

How attitudes change. 'To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often', said Cardinal

Newman, and in that sense the Society is very perfect! To work in our archives is to see how our members' attitudes have often changed, sometimes in a big way.

Some changes are obvious; for example, attitudes to the membership of women or non-Catholics, or attitudes to the balance of charity and social justice.

But some other changes are less obvious. Take, for example, attitudes to public recognition and Honours. Originally, members of the Society were a bit shy—we preferred anonymity to public recognition. Our very first annual report (1883) put it like this: 'The Society does its work, unostentatiously and without publishing the names of the members more than can be helped'.

In the same vein, members of the Society were reluctant to accept Imperial honours for their work (Imperial honours were phased out in Australia after 1975). No member of the Society appears to have received an honour for their Society work until the mid-1930s when a couple of our leaders were awarded the MBE.

Attitudes changed. Honours were no longer considered a worldly distraction but a means of advancing the Society's profile and therefore its work. The late Ted Bacon, National President in the 1970s and as humble and holy a person as ever graced the Society, was awarded both Imperial and Australian honours.

Our attitudes to government have changed too. In our early days the Society was happy to cooperate

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Youth focus on local renewal and engagement

The Australian Bishops have identified the liturgical year of 2018, beginning on the first Sunday of Advent (3 December 2017), as a national Year of Youth.

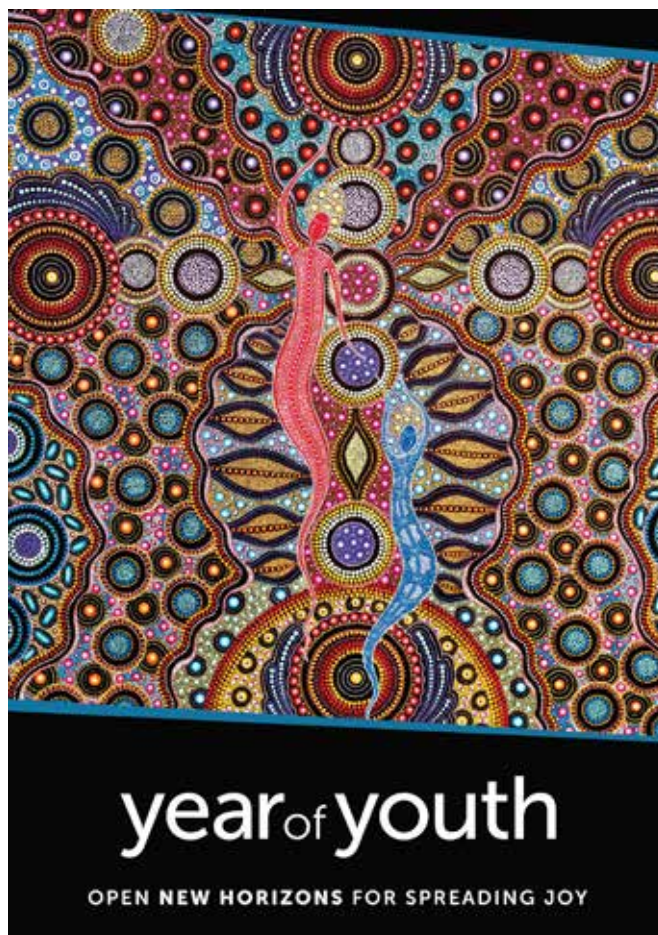
The Year of Youth invites the church into dialogue about the importance and life-giving presence of young people in the church and society. It calls for dialogue and active engagement focussed on the reconnection and renewal of a new generation of young people in the life of the Church.

The St Vincent de Paul Society's national youth team is led by Youth & Young Adults Representative, Cathryn Moore, who sits on National Council. Throughout 2018, the Society's youth team will share updates on their activities in *The Record*, beginning with an overview of what the Year of Youth will entail.

The Year of Youth aims include:

- prayerfully discerning the Australian Bishops' vision for ministry with young people, 'Anointed and Sent'
- authentic and personal engagement by Church leaders in the challenges and successes in young people's lives
- acknowledging the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of young people, and young people acting upon the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church
- upholding the dignity of young people, ensuring a safe environment from physical, emotional and spiritual harm.

The Year of Youth is focussed on local renewal and engagement.



PAINTED BY AMUNDA GOREY. COPYRIGHT: AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE.

Bishops in Rome, announced by Pope Francis as a dialogue on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment. In 2008 we celebrated World Youth Day in Sydney, the pilgrimage around Australia of the Cross of Christ and the Icon of Our Lady. In 2018, we want to engage with youth in new ways and they with us, helping young people to encounter God in Jesus Christ. We seek to awaken love and open your spirit to others so that you find and commit to the meaningful life God intends and so make a difference in the world.

Pastoral announcement

Open new horizons for spreading joy: young people, faith and vocational discernment

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Joy and peace to you. I give thanks for your faith and witness in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

From the Catholic Bishops of Australia, I bring a message of deep joy and hope.

The Church in this land is entering a time of discernment as we move towards the Plenary Council of 2020 when we will chart a course into the future, with young people a crucial part of that journey. During 2018 the Church will contribute to the next Synod of

We invite Catholics in Australia to celebrate a Year of Youth, from the beginning of Advent 2017 (Sunday 3 December 2017) to the end of Ordinary Time in 2018 (Sunday 25 November 2018). Here we will seek to open new horizons for spreading joy for the young Church and our communities. As we prepare with joy for this Year of Youth, we invite all the People of God to join us on this journey. The Year of Youth is a journey for the entire Body of Christ.

Throughout history, it has often been young people who have inspired renewal and change into new opportunities for witness and evangelisation. Many saints, including our own St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, were young adults when they set out on their path to

holiness. Young people have a great capacity to address injustice and create new opportunities for joy and hope. Today, many young people want to serve, and others are willing to take a chance to make the world a better place. Leaders and older members of the Church must continue to listen to and benefit from the many graces of youth, supporting them to discern their vocation and identify their call in the world, within communities where they are safe, nurtured and respected. Working in partnership with young people's passion and energy will help us all become more fully alive as the Body of Christ. But all of us are called to a journey of conversion, which requires an open heart.

As Bishops we invite you, the youth of Australia, to open your hearts to Christ. You are deeply loved by Jesus and the Church. We appreciate your gifts and contributions, and we want to journey with you.

At World Youth Day 2016, Pope Francis called young people and the Church to 'open new horizons for spreading joy':

My friends, Jesus is the Lord of risk, he is the Lord of the eternal 'more'. Jesus is not the Lord of comfort, security and ease. Following Jesus demands a good dose of courage, a readiness to trade in the sofa for a pair of walking shoes and to set out on new and uncharted paths. To blaze trails that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy, the joy that is born of God's love and wells up in your hearts with every act of mercy. To take the path of the 'craziness' of our God, who teaches us to encounter him in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the friend in

trouble, the prisoner, the refugee and the migrant, and our neighbours who feel abandoned. To take the path of our God, who encourages us to be politicians, thinkers, social activists.

Pope Francis, World Youth Day
Vigil with Young People,
30 July 2016

These words of the Holy Father challenge us to welcome new opportunities for sharing the joy and hope of the Risen Christ. You have dreams for your future. Jesus also has dreams for you and your future. We want to accompany you as you discern the path that God has for you.

With Christ as our ever-present companion, we want to work with you to take courageous steps for building a civilisation of love where we can all become what God wants us to be.

In this Year of Youth, we ask you to listen to the deep questions in your life. Do not be afraid to question and to seek understanding. By doing so humbly and prayerfully, you equip yourself to fulfill your baptismal call to become missionary disciples in today's world.

We entrust the Year of Youth in 2018 to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Australia's Patron, Mary Help of Christians. We draw inspiration from St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, whom we ask to pray for us and to join us on the way.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Archbishop Denis Hart

President
Australian Catholic Bishops
Conference ♦

Christ Our Joy

The Year of Youth image is titled *Christ our joy* and was painted by artist Amunda Gorey in Alice Springs.

The image, which will be central to the celebration and prayerful discernment of local Australian communities throughout the Year of Youth, was unveiled at the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in December 2017.

Christ our joy is rich in symbolism, tradition and meaning. It depicts the diversity of young people through the varied use of colour and the dots of different shapes and sizes. Some are gathered in communities, others more isolated. Some are closer to God or the cross, others further away. The central figures are Jesus and Mary against a cross. They point to the Resurrection as the source of our joy. Jesus extends a hand toward his mother Mary, and with her to the Church; with his other hand, he points them all to his Father, God.

'Everyone will see, feel and sense the painting differently. Each is valued as our stories and experiences are different,' Ms Gorey said.

It is hoped that all communities of faith will find inspiration in this image as they respond to the invitation to a Year of Youth. You can learn more about Amunda and her artwork on her Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/amundagoreyart/> ♦

Discipleship and the practice of reverse hospitality

BY ANDREW HAMILTON SJ

As Vinnies we inherit a Christian tradition. The Society began as a movement within the Catholic Church and in its beginnings was inspired by the life of Jesus. His example and his instructions to his disciples guided Frederic Ozanam in his work with people who were poor.

In Mark's Gospel he gives his most detailed instructions when sending out his disciples to preach the Good News:

He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.' (Mark 6:7–11)

The instructions are quite clear. But what is not so clear is why Jesus told the disciples to go out in this way, and what his words mean to us. Many people see it as a story about the formation of the disciples. Their experience is like a boot camp in which they learn their craft and the resilience they will need when they go out on their own. They must live simply and travel light. We can learn those attitudes from the story without worrying too much about the details.



Members of a St Vincent de Paul Society Conference prepare to conduct home visits.

I think that way of looking at the story sells Jesus short. In the Gospels he is always very sharply focussed on what matters. And what mattered most to him were the people whom he met. He would hardly use them as guinea pigs in educating his disciples. We should assume that Jesus gave his disciples such detailed instructions because they were the best way to reach people and to encourage them to reflect on their lives. And if that is the case, we also need to take them seriously and understand what he was getting at.

All of Jesus' instructions are designed to make the disciples depend totally on the people in the villages they visited. They brought no food, no money to buy it or to rent a room, no bag to put gifts in, and no spare clothes against the night cold. They had to ask for food, water and a place to stay. They depended on the hospitality of the people whom they approached.

This meant that they came as receivers and not as givers. Beneath this surprising strategy lies the insight that people are more likely to be open to people to whom they have done a favour. They have built a relationship that they feel good about, they will talk more freely about themselves, and will be more interested in what their guests have to say.

If the preacher came in an air-conditioned Merc, wearing an Armani suit and sporting a gold Rolex, they would be unlikely to listen to him, particularly if he told them how they should live. He would have nothing in common with them. But someone who came with the dust of their streets on his feet begging them for food might get a better hearing.

Jesus' instructions were not simply about commending a simple way of life. They were designed to lock the disciples into relating to people

as beggars, not as benefactors, when they spoke of the Good News. He made sure that they had no other choice.

If we need fancy phrases to describe it we could call Jesus' strategy the path of reverse hospitality. The most effective way of reaching people is not first to offer hospitality but to beg them for it. If they respond by offering us hospitality they will be more ready to accept us and what we have to offer. This is the strategy of the gospel. Jesus' quickly gets a reputation for accepting meal invites from people who were seen as low-life. They then listened eagerly to him. His behaviour echoes the heart of Christian faith: that God loved us enough to enter our world as a baby, totally dependent on the hospitality of others.

What does this have to say about our Vinnies work? In a word, everything. It explains why so many people say they first came to work with Vinnies in order to give but found they received much more than they gave. It explains why the richest encounters on the soup van occur when the person who receives food feels herself to be offering hospitality to the person who comes. The relationships we form with the people whom we serve and the attitude of seeking hospitality we bring to them are more important than what we give.

Jesus' strategy also suggests that the success of our Vinnies' works is not measured by numbers or public esteem but by the quality of relationships. It follows that our generous financial and business advisers who serve us help us shape what we do but may never control it. Our masters are the people whom we are privileged to serve. ♦

Andrew Hamilton SJ is Chaplain to the St Vincent de Paul Society of Victoria's Young Vinnies.

in something like a lord mayor's appeal for a special cause, but no more. Here, for example, is a Queensland politician, TJ Byrnes, addressing a St Vincent de Paul fundraising concert in Brisbane in 1896. He would 'regret to see the day', he said, 'when the Society would stoop to accept government aid; then its soul and life would be gone. State charity could not have the same beneficial effect as that which came from the heart'.

Fifty years later, when the post-war welfare state was emerging in Australia, some of the Society's leaders greeted it reluctantly, for the same reason. Charity should come from the heart, they thought. Government assistance was good but it wasn't personal like the assistance provided by the Society.

Attitudes changed. During the Depression in the 1930s we would not provide the government with personal information about the people we assisted. We now accept government funding and report to government on our work in providing emergency relief.

Perhaps the most striking example of a change in attitude is in the way we view poverty. In the early 1900s many of our members thought that Australia was so prosperous that there wasn't much for Conference members to do. Here is what our National President said in 1905: 'Happily in this young country the amount of local poverty is not unseldom too little to tax the energies of our Brothers'. And the Society in Adelaide reported in 1910 that there was little work for the Society 'owing to the era of prosperity which Almighty God has blessed us with in this state'.

None of us would think like that today. We're very much richer now than we were a hundred years

ago but there is need everywhere. Our predecessors must have seen poverty in much starker terms than we do. For example, in the same year that the National President found too little poverty to tax the Society's energies, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Conference in Randwick NSW reported that its members had great difficulty visiting people in need because most of them lived in humpies in the bush between Randwick and La Perouse, several kilometres away.

So how else might our attitudes have changed since the 40-year-old survey? Here are some of its other findings: 78 per cent were in favour of the Society speaking out more on social issues; 56 per cent agreed that women would sometimes make better Society presidents than men (20 per cent were undecided); 71 per cent agreed that non-Catholics could be good conference members; and 67 per cent felt that the Society should be open to change. 'Moral intervention' by our members was a good thing, according to 44 per cent of respondents, but 51 per cent thought it was a bad idea. Surprisingly, the response to the question of whether poverty was a social injustice was a 50/50 split; 69 per cent felt that 'dole bludger' was an unjustified term (20 per cent were undecided); 60 per cent were in favour of the government spending more; and finally, 67 per cent believed that single parents didn't get a fair deal.

How interesting it would be to repeat that survey today. Would Cardinal Newman's dictum still hold? ♦

Michael Moran is the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia Archivist.

Assist a Student

An education support program aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty.



Where we assist...

Assist a Student is a program of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia.

Donations from Australians are used to provide education support for students across partner countries in Asia and the Pacific.

Throughout partner countries, local St Vincent de Paul Society members select students from families in need to be supported by the program. They receive support for one year and the money donated contributes to their education needs.

The program includes students at all levels—from primary, secondary and post-secondary. Funds are allocated across the countries to ensure fair distribution. One of the program's strongest and most attractive features is that administration costs, funded by the Society, are kept at an absolute minimum.

No administration cost is deducted from your donation. 100% goes towards the students' education needs for one year.

100% of your donation goes to the students' education needs for one year.

It is a common belief that education improves a young person's opportunity of gaining useful employment, thereby increasing their ability to support themselves and their families in the future. It is a means of empowering an individual to break out of the cycle of poverty.

One of the most positive ways of helping families in need throughout Asia and the Pacific to become self sufficient is through education. The Assist a Student program gives you the opportunity to support the education of students in Asia and the Pacific. The students supported by this program may not be able to attend school without this assistance.

In choosing to donate money to the Assist a Student program, you are taking the opportunity to provide education support to overseas students in need throughout their education.

As well as this you will receive:

- A certificate with the student name, country and course of study for each \$70 donation.
- A complimentary copy of *The Record* with an Assist a Student insert will be sent annually.

NB: To protect the privacy and dignity of the student, and in accordance with The Rule of the St Vincent de Paul Society, photographs and addresses of the students are not provided.

Yes, I want to Assist a Student today!

To donate online please visit www.vinnies.org.au/aas

- I am an individual assisting a student; OR
 I am assisting a student on behalf of a group

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\$70 \$140 \$210 OR \$ _____

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