

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the new National Council of Canada Newsletter format. Our hope is to provide all conferences and councils with current news and information, thereby assisting all our members, associates and volunteers across the nation. Thank you everyone for your continued dedication and services for the needy, the marginalized, the forgotten and the oppressed during this time of pandemic.

Society seems to be tearing itself apart, much as it was when the first Christians appeared following the Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The landscape today is strangely similar. This was a time when slave population estimates ranged from 25-40% within Rome itself and 2-10% in outlying provinces, a time when slaves, women and children, most notably girls, had no rights except those accorded to them by a loving and compassionate master, husband or father. They were expendable at a whim. The slaves, the needy, the widows, the orphans, the disabled, the disadvantaged and the oppressed were all left to fend for themselves with no one seemingly caring or willing to help. Unbridled sexual excess was rampant, coexisting alongside abortion, infanticide, murder and violence everywhere. Who or what would come to their rescue?

The front line of this rescue mission fell solely on the shoulders of the Christian Church, which formed immediately after the Apostles started preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ risen from the dead. One has only to read the Acts of the Apostles to see how quickly they started changing society. The Christians followed Christ's example of sharing all things in common to the benefit of the whole church. Soon after, they started caring for the slaves, the needy, the widows, the orphans, the disabled, the disadvantaged and the oppressed regardless of race, nationality or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability. Before long, they were building homes for the homeless, hospitals, hospices, schools; the list goes on...

Within a mere 300 years, they managed to completely change society in spite of the high costs inflicted by persecution and martyrdom. The Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity in 313. It became the official religion of the Roman Empire within 10 years thereafter. The foundations of Western Society were basically built and laid down by the Catholic Church.

(How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization by Thomas E. Woods, Jr.)

Today we stand at the crossroads again when everyone and everything appears to be tearing apart the very fabric of our society. As Vincentians, we are being propelled to the front lines, as were the first Christians. With love and compassion, we serve the most marginalized and vulnerable in our society. Reaching out with love and providing care and sustenance, we are living our faith in a tangible and visible manner. We are the "hands and heart" of Jesus ever present to our neighbours during their hour of need. Let us live and serve by following the

example of the first Christians and our founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam. Let us go boldly and prayerfully forward for the benefit of persons in need and society in general.

“Every Christian needs a half-hour of prayer each day, except when he is busy; then he needs an hour.” – St. Francis de Sales

Let us pick up the torch as witnesses to love, service and civility in our communities when so many seem to be so bent on tearing down and destroying all that has served us so well in the past. This is in no way intended to impede genuine progress. Progress is not progress if achieved by simply tearing down the past, which at present is not in vogue with contemporary thought. If we do not heed the lessons of the past, we are bound to repeat them.

“No fear. No worry. No doubt. Jesus is my Security now and always.”

Daily Bible Verse April 30, 2021 @ Seekfirst.blogspot.com

Serviens in Spe,

*Claude Bédard, President
National Council of Canada*