

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 18TH 2005

AN ADDRESS BY THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT
BRO, ANTHONY WONG DOO

Your Grace, Most Rev. Edward Gilbert, Archbishop of Port of Spain. Ms. Leela Ramdeen, Episcopal Delegate for Social Justice, Srs. and Bros. Of the S.V.P. Good morning and a warm welcome to all.

“Dear Brothers and Sisters, after the great John Paul II, the Cardinals have elected me – a simple, humble worker in the vineyard of the LORD. I entrust myself to your prayers.”

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI – 265th Pontiff.

Pope John Paul II died on April 2nd 2005. The world held its breath; a TITAN had fallen. His love and affection transcended all boundaries; even the atheists seem to have loved him.

If we have the faith to claim certitude, then surely he will rest in peace.

As your National President, it would have been a cardinal sin, if I had failed to acknowledge the passing of a Pope who has been so loved by us as CHURCH and as members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Remember he was a confrere in his earlier years in Poland.

Pope John Paul II beatified our founder Blessed Frederic Ozanam on August 22nd 1997 to coincide with his launch of World Youth Day in Paris: and Blessed Rosalie Rendu of the Daughters of Charity on November 9th 2003: the year he celebrated his silver jubilee in Rome.

Blessed Rosalie Rendu was a mentor of our founders, Blessed Frederic Ozanam and companions at the inception of the formation of our Historic Conference of Charity. She taught them about home visitation and “seeing the face of CHRIST” in every person they encountered and about networking and speaking on behalf of the Poor. Thus, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a Ministry of VISITATION and ADVOCACY for the poor.

Bros. and Srs, this introduction is very deliberate. I have placed before you two principal personages in the formation of the Society to reinforce your focus, since I believe that, at this juncture in the life of our Society, it would

be an exercise of repetition and even futility to espouse solely on structures and processes. At a national, regional and international level we have already identified every conceivable obstacle and threats: what is lacking is inspiration, motivation and zeal to execute our vision. A vehicle started at parked will only burn itself out and stop; you have to put it in gear for it to move. If you find this presentation as a lesson of formation. It is!

SPIRITUALITY and our GOAL

Spirituality is the main reason for the sustainability of members of the SVP. The ethos of the Society, Prayer and Work (Faith and Practice) are fundamentals. Members are called by their Vincentian vocation to be friends and to attain their sanctification through prayer and their devotion to alleviate the suffering of the poor and less fortunate in the Society. Further, members must strive to influence a transformation of the whole society based on the Social Justice Message of the Gospels. Our GOAL is to bring peace and justice to society.

YOUTH

Your engagement is one of the key ingredients in the rejuvenation of the Society and in our pursuit of succession Planning. Let me, with fraternal love, impress upon you that you revisit the think four formula:

- U Faith/ Knowledge
- U Formation
- U Commitment
- U Mission

The National Executive is committed to assist you with all the resources, human and otherwise, that are at our disposal and I sincerely hope that this address will give you a fillip and increase your faith.

Faith is a gift from God, which is only attained from deep prayer and humility. Blessed Frederic Ozanam, with a deep sense of his own inadequacy and need knelt before the Tabernacle in the church of St. Bonaventure in Lyons, and prayed humbly to his Eucharistic Lord. He pledged, in return for the gift of impregnable faith, he would consecrate his life to God's service.

VOLUNTEERISM IN THE SOCIETY

I would like to implore you Bros. and Srs. for a greater level of voluntary contribution especially at the Secretariat and at our sixteen Institutions. I appreciate and I commend you all for the sacrificial efforts at the Conference level for I am profoundly aware of the many challenges you face. Nevertheless, I am appealing to you, who have the time and space, to raise the bar. This is not merely for economic realities but for the preservation of the ethos of the Society at all levels. The unique characteristic of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul must be preserved at all cost.

We cannot outsource our ministry entirely. In my humble opinion this is crucial and urgent; for the comfort we now enjoy might be the comfort of the eye of a storm.

THE EUCHARIST AS THE SOURCE OF OUR APOSTOLATE

Could we truly come to the table of the Lord, if we do not attend to the needs of the Poor? As a Eucharistic people of God, let us all be in communion with our Inspirators and strive to truly be “humble servants in the vineyard of the LORD”

PEACE!