



Friends of St Vincent de Paul

Issue 20 | Summer 2017



Welcome the Stranger

A Warm Embrace • Messengers of Faith • Speaking to our Patrons

Welcome

Dear Friend,

This year we are spreading the message of 'Welcoming the Stranger' for SVP Awareness Month in September as we celebrate our 400th anniversary.

Our volunteers always work hard to welcome strangers and one another as Christ has welcomed us all. Together they have helped thousands of people overcome grief, loneliness, hunger and homelessness by sharing their problems and reducing the isolation felt all too frequently by those in need.

To recognise the difference our volunteers and supporters have made to our Society we celebrated National Volunteers' Week from 1st – 7th June 2017. Volunteers' Week is a national annual campaign that gives all organisations a chance to say thank you to their volunteers through special events and festivities.

The amount of work our volunteers put in never ceases to amaze us and goes to show the power of acts of kindness, however big or small.

When we are kind we inspire others to be kind, creating a ripple effect that spreads outwards to our volunteers, supporters and you our Friends.

Just giving a smile or a kind word can make all the difference, even if you don't see it. Strangers are often the people most in need of these seemingly small acts, so whilst we celebrate those known to us, we will continue to welcome strangers into our lives whilst remembering the words of our Lord:

'Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it'.

Hebrews 13:1-2

Yours in St Vincent,



Elizabeth Palmer, CEO



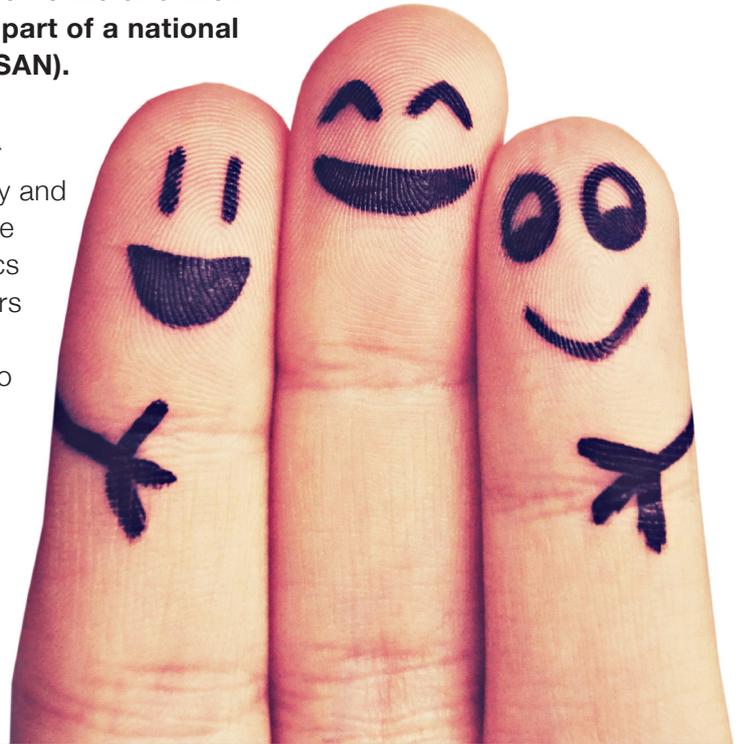
Society News and Events

SVP Social Action – Combatting Isolation

Embrace is a new parish-based initiative of the SVP to respond to the loneliness and isolation of older people including those with dementia and their carers. We are working with four other charities as part of a national pilot delivered by Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN).

Embrace focuses on isolation amongst older people in the following areas: Caritas Diocese of Salford in Greater Manchester; Catholic Care (Diocese of Leeds) in Keighley and Skipton; Father Hudson's Care in Worcestershire, and the SVP in Brighton. Our shared aim is to help more Catholics to live out their faith, by supporting at least 160 volunteers aged over 16 to become more confident in their social action, to be grounded in Catholic social teaching, and to operate safely and with sensitivity. We intend to support parishes in enabling at least 800 older people to have more of the social contacts they want over the next two years, and to sustain these contacts long term.

For further information or to get involved in our Brighton project please contact Thomas Gillespie, Regional Head of South East England at thomasg@svp.org.uk or call **0207 703 3030**.



The Changing Landscape of Advice At CHAS @ St Vincent's in Bradford



Advice and Support Volunteer
at CHAS Bradford

In January 2017 a new contract to deliver Welfare Advice to residents of Bradford South Local Authority came into being; after winning our bid in August 2016 for the new contract and much planning and preparation, the new service opened with a dedicated telephone advice line for residents of Bradford South, through which they can access a range of welfare advice services.

Bradford Metropolitan District Council have radically changed the landscape for advice delivery across the district. The new contract calls for more access to online resources and self-help routes for clients but with outreach venues still available across the district, where clients can have a face-to-face appointment where appropriate.

CHAS @ St Vincent's continues to deliver support services from the premises in Otley Road to those in need. These services include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, immigration drop-in, job club, low cost furniture and household goods, as well as food parcels and fuel top-ups for Bradford residents.

To contact CHAS please email info@svphelpinglocally.org.uk or write to: **CHAS @ St Vincent's, Allenby House, Rees Way, Bradford, BD3 0DZ.**

Society News and Events

Annual Coffee Morning

Every year our SVP members are invited to organise a Coffee Morning in order to raise funds to support our Young Vincentians programme and children's summer camps. In May, our national coffee mornings raised over £3,000.

As well as supporting great causes the Coffee Morning is a great way to develop community spirit, meet people in your local area and tell people about the SVP's work.

You can still join the fun at any time; all you need to do is buy or bake tasty treats and sell them at your workplace, church, local community centre or other appropriate venue.

Any amount raised makes a big difference in helping us continue to support our youth on their spiritual journeys.

Please contact Alex at fundraising@svp.org.uk for more information.



One of our fantastic fashion models at work!

A Passion for Fashion!

Our Camberley shop undertook a mammoth event for National Volunteer week that involved a fashion show, food and fun activities for families on the 3rd June 2017.

Our Regional Head of South East, Thomas Gillespie, said,

“This event shows the energy and dynamism of the community of people who support, work and volunteer in our shop and it’s fantastic to see our people enjoying themselves and celebrating life in such an open inclusive manner.”

Don't forget to check in your local SVP shops for dates of great events they might have.

Messengers of Faith

Bernadette Soubirous

St Bernadette was born in Lourdes, France on 7th January 1844 to a loving but impoverished family as the eldest of eight siblings. Her family was so poor that their only option for accommodation was a single room that previously served as a prison cell.

On 11th February 1858 after Sunday Mass Bernadette went to gather firewood at the grotto of Massabielle. Whilst there a dazzling light and a white figure of a “beautiful lady” came from a dark alcove.

Bernadette felt compelled to return and three days later she made her way back to the grotto where she experienced the vision of the “Lady in White” once again. At the vision’s request she returned each day over the next 12 days.

Bernadette’s reported visions were simple and concentrated on the importance of penance and prayer. On the fourth visit the vision told her “to drink of the water of the spring, to wash in it and to eat the herb that grew there,” as an act of penance. At the time, there was no spring so Bernadette began digging in the mud with her hands, drank a few drops of the water and ate some loose grass.

Hundreds of onlookers who witnessed this believed she had gone mad! However, in the next few days, water began to flow from the spot where Bernadette had dug and people who used the new spring reported miraculous healing experiences. Bernadette told her family “a chapel should be built and a procession formed” on the site. The chapel built was the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, which is now a major Catholic pilgrimage site.

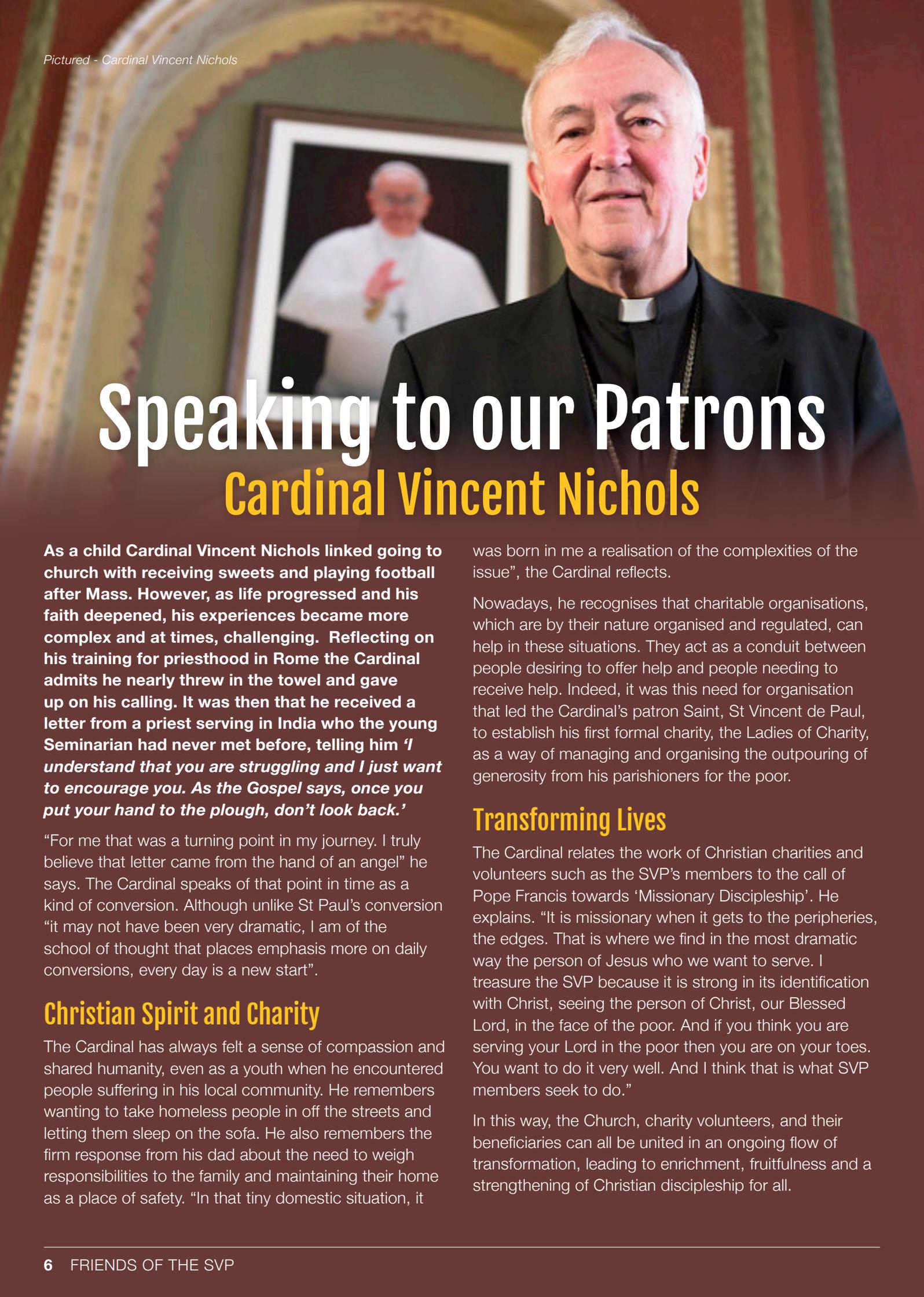
After the series of visions, Bernadette wished to live a quiet life and chose to attend the hospice school run by the Sisters of Nevers where she learned basic literacy. She then settled as a nun at the motherhouse in Nevers.

Unfortunately, due to constant ill health she died in the Sainte Croix (Holy Cross) Infirmary of the Convent of Saint-Gildard at the age of 35 on April 16th 1879, while praying the holy rosary.

She received Beatification in 1925 and Canonization in 1933 under Pope Pius XI, not so much for her visions, but rather for her life of simplicity and holiness. We remember her feast day on 16th April.



Pictured - St Bernadette Soubirous



Speaking to our Patrons

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

As a child Cardinal Vincent Nichols linked going to church with receiving sweets and playing football after Mass. However, as life progressed and his faith deepened, his experiences became more complex and at times, challenging. Reflecting on his training for priesthood in Rome the Cardinal admits he nearly threw in the towel and gave up on his calling. It was then that he received a letter from a priest serving in India who the young Seminarian had never met before, telling him ‘I understand that you are struggling and I just want to encourage you. As the Gospel says, once you put your hand to the plough, don’t look back.’

“For me that was a turning point in my journey. I truly believe that letter came from the hand of an angel” he says. The Cardinal speaks of that point in time as a kind of conversion. Although unlike St Paul’s conversion “it may not have been very dramatic, I am of the school of thought that places emphasis more on daily conversions, every day is a new start”.

Christian Spirit and Charity

The Cardinal has always felt a sense of compassion and shared humanity, even as a youth when he encountered people suffering in his local community. He remembers wanting to take homeless people in off the streets and letting them sleep on the sofa. He also remembers the firm response from his dad about the need to weigh responsibilities to the family and maintaining their home as a place of safety. “In that tiny domestic situation, it

was born in me a realisation of the complexities of the issue”, the Cardinal reflects.

Nowadays, he recognises that charitable organisations, which are by their nature organised and regulated, can help in these situations. They act as a conduit between people desiring to offer help and people needing to receive help. Indeed, it was this need for organisation that led the Cardinal’s patron Saint, St Vincent de Paul, to establish his first formal charity, the Ladies of Charity, as a way of managing and organising the outpouring of generosity from his parishioners for the poor.

Transforming Lives

The Cardinal relates the work of Christian charities and volunteers such as the SVP’s members to the call of Pope Francis towards ‘Missionary Discipleship’. He explains. “It is missionary when it gets to the peripheries, the edges. That is where we find in the most dramatic way the person of Jesus who we want to serve. I treasure the SVP because it is strong in its identification with Christ, seeing the person of Christ, our Blessed Lord, in the face of the poor. And if you think you are serving your Lord in the poor then you are on your toes. You want to do it very well. And I think that is what SVP members seek to do.”

In this way, the Church, charity volunteers, and their beneficiaries can all be united in an ongoing flow of transformation, leading to enrichment, fruitfulness and a strengthening of Christian discipleship for all.

Become the Eyes and Ears of our Society

Friends are, by definition, supporters of the St Vincent de Paul Society but you could play a more active role by being the eyes and ears of the SVP, according to our Membership Support & Development Manager, Kieran Knights.

Friends can look out for people who need help. There may be people you know who for example are lonely or housebound and might benefit from befriending by SVP members or practical assistance such as help with shopping or a lift to Mass on a Sunday.

Friends may also be aware of people who have gone into hospital or have moved into a care home who would appreciate regular visits.

Sometimes, individuals or families go through crises in their lives – illness, unemployment, bereavement, for example – and they need help to get them through it. Again, the SVP can step in – but only if they know about someone's particular problem.

“This is where a Friend of the Society can play an important role in keeping an eye out for people who might be in need of support and suggesting to them that their local SVP group could give them assistance,” Kieran says.

“In a similar way, Friends can also look out for potential new SVP members,” he points out.

The Society always needs more members – the more we have the more people we can help – and if you know of someone you think would make a good SVP member why not suggest it to them.

“The point is that SVP Friends are often active members of their local church community and know many of your fellow parishioners,” Kieran adds. “This means they are in a good position to know when people need help, or when someone would be suitable to be a giver of help through the SVP.

“It would be great if all Friends kept a look out in this way and became the eyes and ears of the Society.”

If you are interested in joining the SVP as a member, please contact the SVP National Office on: 0207 703 3030 or email: kierank@svp.org.uk

Or contact your local parish church to see if there is an existing SVP group you can join.

New Friend appeal

Invite one of your Friends to become our Friend

SVP FRIEND APPLICATION FORM:

Please ensure all sections are filled out and the form signed before returning it to us.

1. YOUR DETAILS

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Other

Full Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

2. I WISH TO MAKE A DONATION BY DIRECT DEBIT

Frequency (please tick) Monthly Yearly

Amount £

Commencement date (1st/15th) / /

Branch Sort Code

Account Number

3. GIFT AID MY DONATION

The SVP can boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate.

Yes, I would like the St Vincent de Paul Society to claim Gift Aid on the direct debit detailed on this form. I am a UK tax-payer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Signature

Date / /

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DATA PROTECTION STATEMENT

Your personal details will be used to process your donation and will not be passed on to any third party except for the sole purpose of facilitating this payment. From time to time we may wish to contact you to update you on our work and activities.

Please indicate your preferred method of contact:

Email Post Phone

I would like to receive:

- Friends Newsletter
 Information about SVP or SVP events
 Information about leaving a gift to the SVP in my Will.

A final word from the SVP President



Dear Friends,

As my term in office as the 18th National President of the Society in England & Wales ends, I would like to offer you a personal account of what I have experienced over these last five years, looking at the goals I have pursued and hopefully achieved.

When I first took office I had many grand ideas and plans for the SVP. However, when I was confronted with the challenges of heading an organisation that supports such a vast spectrum of people in need these plans evolved quite drastically!

I began to realise that the position of National President is not a stand-alone role; rather I am a part of a body of people who have invested their time and energy to focus on supporting impoverished people by providing assistance and compassion.

During my presidency, I have seen the SVP grow from strength to strength, amongst the highlights I include my visit to India, where I saw at first hand the great work being done there in Christ's name. The SVP ethos fits easily into Indian culture and this must be the main reason why the Society there has grown dramatically and is the second largest National Council after Brazil, with 65,000 members. The Society in England & Wales has supported many of these Indian Conferences through the Twinnage scheme, but even I was overwhelmed by the kindness and hospitality shown by our brothers and sisters in India.

I was highly honoured to be present in Rome last year for the six yearly International Plenary meetings, which

included seeing Pope Francis in St Peter's Square and receiving his blessing to all Vincentians. I am also immensely proud of the expansion of our community shop programme, the integration of CHAS (Bradford) and the massive growth in our Young Vincentian programme, (especially Mini Vinnies) has been inspiring.

“There have been so many changes in the Society in the last five years but one thing that remains unwavering is the unstinting help we have received from our benefactors, enabling us to take on new projects and continue others that without your support would have been impossible, or at best difficult.”

I thank you for your thoughts, your financial help but most of all, your prayers. I would also like to thank you for all the support you have given me and the SVP during my term. It has been a pleasure and an honour to serve as your President.

Adrian Abel, SVP National President

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