

# VINCENTIANS In Partnership



## Enrolment in the Medal

On November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2010, VIP Scotland organised a special enrolment in honour of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in St. Gregory's Church, Wyndford, Glasgow. It was a really uplifting and moving service involving about 50 people. Fr. Ray Armstrong CM kindly led the celebration, blessing and distributing the medal and leaflet to each person. Everyone received a booklet prepared by an SSVP conference member with pictures of Our Lady, St Catherine and the Medal along with the hymn, Novena Prayers, Act of Consecration, Intercessions and the Rite of Blessing and Conferring of Medals



Sr Barbara Smith tells stories of the Medal

I had been asked to share stories about the Medal so I told them about the Sisters who thread them and how they pray for each person who will then receive

them, and how happy people are to know that . . . but it also brings a special blessing to those Sisters who thread them. It is **their** way now of reaching out to people everywhere, and we know we need their help. Then I told them about the Brazilian child who was cured of a brain tumour in the Rue du Bac – the child whose mother told him to sit on the chair which Our Lady had sat on the first time She came to St. Catherine. He didn't sit on the chair, but after a while he put his head on it, and then came back to his mother. When she asked him why he hadn't sat on the chair, he said "The Lady who was sitting there told me to put my head on her lap and I did." I also mentioned the European Flag - the blue flag with the twelve gold stars. When the competition for a design for this flag was announced, a man called at the Rue du Bac to ask permission to use the twelve stars of the Medal. Out of one hundred competitors, he won so Our Lady flies all over Europe! Her stars are now on lorries and car number plates. People don't know this but those you tell are delighted! When the enrolment was over we moved into the parish hall for lovely refreshments, followed by the story of St. Catherine on a DVD .

Sr Barbara Smith DC

### Medal Orders

Sr Rita Whyte DC, Provincial House, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill, London NW7 1RE  
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## Vincentians In Partnership Justice Update



At the start of Poverty & Homelessness Action Week, national leaders from all the UK's largest denominations met at 10 Downing St., accompanied by Kate Green, MP

and representatives of Church Action on Poverty. They handed in a letter to David Cameron, expressing their commitment to Close the Gap between rich and poor, and asking about the Coalition Government's plans to do the same. VIP representative Paul Marriott,



the Chief Executive of DePaul UK, said: "We know that narrowing the gap is not just a matter of fairness but also necessary if we are to promote the common good. This is not just a matter of making life better for those who have less. It's about making our society a better place for all."

The event marks the launch of a major three-year campaign by Church Action on Poverty: Pledge to Close the Gap. We are asking Vincentians to make their own Pledges to Close the Gap. For more information and to make your pledge to 'give, act, pray' to Close the Gap visit [www.church-poverty.org.uk](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk)

### VIP Contact Details

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## Sister Evelyne calls Vincentians to further collaboration

On 25th November 2010, around 60 members, drawn from 14 organisations within the Vincentian Family in Britain, gathered in the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity, Mill Hill, London, for the Annual General Meeting of the VIP. The keynote address was given



Sr Evelyne Franc

by Sister Evelyne Franc, Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity and successor of St Louise de Marillac, who co-founded the Sisters with St Vincent de Paul. Her presentation "A Global Perspective of Vincentian collaboration & the future challenges we face", emphasised the importance of collaboration within the Family.

Historically, it existed in the time of St Vincent and St Louise between the Ladies of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity and it continues today among these traditional groups as well as with all the other Vincentian groups which have started up over the centuries right to this present day.

Sr Evelyne then gave examples of projects and services drawn from the five continents where different groups within the Vincentian Family are working together for some of the poorest and most vulnerable people on the planet. She also spelt out both the riches which come from collaboration as well as the struggles in making it work. Collaboration is a great act of



Mr Paul Marriott,  
Chair of VIP Trustees

communication, sensitivity and trust which needs evaluating to ensure effectiveness.

Following on from her talk, the assembly discussed the potential for collaboration between Vincentian family groups in the UK and what role the VIP has played or could play in this collaboration.

In 2011 the VIP is organising four Spirituality events and three Justice days, to which all members of the Vincentian family are welcome. These are:

### Spirituality Events

16th March 2011

Reflection Day, Mill Hill, London

20th - 22nd March 2011

Weekend Retreat, Foxhill Retreat Centre, Frodsham, Cheshire

9th July 2011

Reflection Day, Evron Centre, Stockport

18th - 20th November 2011

Carmelite Priory, Boars Hill, Oxford

### Justice Days

5th March 2011

St Augustine's Church, Manchester

16th July 2011

Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, Cardiff

5th November 2011

St Vincent's Centre, Carlisle Place, London

Full details are on the VIP website at [www.vip-gb.org](http://www.vip-gb.org)

Perhaps there are ways that you could collaborate with other Vincentian groups. Do you know the names of groups near you? If not, get in touch with the VIP office and we can supply you with contact details.





## AIC Visit to the Ukraine: Collaboration in Action

A very good example of the Vincentian Family working closely together can be found in the Ukraine in Kharkiv, where Vincentian priests, Daughters of Charity, AIC volunteers and De Paul International work side by side in the Parish of St Vincent de Paul, where there is a wonderful Parish Centre. Christine Crump, Joanna Switalska and Marlene Burt went there during the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of AIC Ukraine. In the Ukraine there is widespread alcoholism (a litre of vodka only costs 2 euros – about £1.60). Because of their parents' alcoholism and often ensuing violence, there are many street children who have run away from home, or are in state orphanages. The original project to help the street children in Kharkiv was started by Fr Vitaliy, the Vincentian Parish priest there, who is an amazing, dynamic man, and Anka, who is now the President of AIC in the Ukraine, used to help him on the nightly minibus run to give food to the street children. De Paul Kharkiv has now taken over responsibility for this project and



in the evenings they go in their converted minibus to visit 5 different points in the city. AIC volunteers and Daughters of Charity also help De Paul in this wonderful project. The children aged 7 to 20 wait excitedly for the De Paul minibus and enjoy not only the hot food but also the chat and banter afterwards. Each visit to the five different points lasts at least half an hour - it's not just a question of giving them the food. Then the children return to wherever they are living – in Winter when it is freezing they go down manholes to sleep near the heating pipes down below. In the Parish Centre itself, De Paul provides other services for the children – they can have a shower, they can sleep for a while, there is a laundry for their clothes, and there even is a psychologist to help them. AIC itself now runs an 'After-School Club' for the children in the local area who are living in really deplorable conditions with no running water or bathrooms or toilets in the buildings where they are housed. This club takes place in the St Vincent de Paul Parish Centre. There, the children are helped

with some lessons, and given a hot meal which they would not get at home and the children can play and learn dances and songs – just a few of the activities



- and in the Summer they are taken on trips. This helps the children involved to 'bear' their life at home. The Staff who are paid to cook the food for the De Paul minibus for the street children give of their time afterwards as volunteers without

payment to cook for the children in the AIC project, and a Daughter of Charity and a part-time teacher and AIC volunteers work together, in close cooperation. In addition Daughters of Charity regularly go to visit elderly people in the local area who live in two blocks of low rise flats which are in a terrible state, without running water etc. The Sisters try to make their lives more bearable. One elderly lady in a wheelchair whom we visited during our trip spends her days knitting socks for the children who are being helped by the two projects – so there really is a 'family feel' to the whole thing, with different branches of the Vincentian Family working so closely together – the Vincentian Family in action. St Vincent would be very proud of them.



## VMP Reflection Day in Pimlico

In October around thirty members of the Vincentian Family gathered in the parish hall of Holy Apostles Catholic Church Pimlico, London to reflect on the theme, "Who do you think you are?"

Input was given by Marlene Burt AIC, Sr. Maureen Tinkler DC and Sr. Brenda Matterson DC focusing on the elements which make up our "DNA": Family, Place of birth, Schooling,

Christian Faith and Vincentian tradition.

In the afternoon Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac helped us to look at prayer as *the* way of keeping in touch with God, ourselves and our "Vincentian Roots". We also had the opportunity to spend time in quiet prayer and share our faith.



## AIC: Kumi Newsletter from Uganda by Elspeth Robinson

Elspeth Robinson is an AIC member from Darlington who works for several months each year in Kumi, Uganda, on a variety of projects. This is her account of her work in 2010: "No natural disasters this year, but worse, a man-made one which has seriously damaged the hospital. The staff are unpaid for 5 months, the children fail to be treated or operated on and there is no Community Based Rehabilitation work. Other departments are working as normal but fewer patients are coming as word has got round that the hospital is closed. So, there's a challenge for me! I am very fortunate to have been given a generous sum for my expenses by a Trust, the remainder being for my project and so I am able to get things going for a short while at least with a clear conscience. I can fuel the Land Cruiser and motor bike and help the staff with subs. Fuel prices have rocketed and much of my expenses money will go on this. I work best with 2 CBR workers, Martin and Amos, and we have been visiting families and groups out in the field. So far, 6 cows have been bought as well as many goats and chickens, 2 mud huts and a tricycle repaired, 6 month's rent paid for 3 orphans who were about to be evicted, epilepsy drugs for 3 months for the hospital bought, groups formed to start off orange tree projects and many others. One of my favourite achievements was finding a cerebral palsy hemiplegic boy, Ogulu, sitting on the ground as he has done for many a year and being able to show the parents how to get him on his feet and walking. Also it's to be the year of the parallel bars made out of local materials so that the children can learn to walk with their parents' supervision. The tricycle repair programme started last year has been very successful and more supplies are required to top up the stock. The school text book library has yet to be evaluated until I visit the schools. I am planning tuition in energy saving stoves production at local schools. Lots more ideas keep me awake at night as well as the heat. I try to keep my diary up to date on [www.elspethrobinson.co.uk](http://www.elspethrobinson.co.uk) Many thanks to everyone back home for the support I have been given."

## North East SVP meets the VIP

In December members of the SVP Tynemouth District Council gathered in St Mary's Parish Hall, Cullercoats, Tyne & Wear to hear Sister Maureen Tinkler DC and Emily Casson speak about the origins and work of the VMP. The topics covered included:

1. Naming the 14 organisations within the Vincentian Family in Britain
2. How and why the VMP came into being
3. Fostering Communication & Networking between Vincentian Groups
4. Deepening the Spirituality of Vincentian Family members
5. Formation in Vincentian Values for Vincentian Services and Projects
6. Collaboration in Justice and lobbying work

7. Co-supporting Vincentian projects for vulnerable people.

