

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Toronto Central Council

Annual General Meeting

Held at Blessed Sacrament Parish September 29, 2018

Keynote Address:

The Most Reverend, Bishop Robert Kasun, Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto

Following is a summary of the Keynote Address delivered by Bishop Kasun.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is the crowning glory of every parish as we are called by our faith to service. Quoting from the Gospel of Mathew 25: 34 – 41; we will be judged by how we put our faith into action. In preparation for this address, Monsignor Samuel Bianco posed the following 5 questions to the Bishop:

1. What does the Archdiocese expect of the Society?
2. Do we fit in the overall pastoral plan of the Archdiocese?
3. How do we respond to the many parishes that don't want us?
4. What changes do we need to make?
5. In no one knows about our work, is that a sign of weakness on our part?

Bishop Kasun took these questions to the Episcopal Board who offered considerable commentary. The most important point that was asked of Bishop Kasun to communicate is an expression of sincere praise and gratitude for the efforts of the members, along with the awareness that praise and gratitude are not offered enough. The Episcopal Board consists of the four regions of the Archdiocese, with Bishop Kasun representing the Central Region where Toronto Central Council is located.

The following responses were offered:

1. What does the Archdiocese expect of the Society?
 - Continue to take care of the needs of persons who are poor and vulnerable to the best of our ability with the human and financial resources that we have.
 - hold our meetings in context of prayer and Vincentian spirituality
2. Do we fit in the overall pastoral plan of the Archdiocese?
 - In 2013, the Archdiocese of Toronto created a pastoral plan with evangelization being the overarching goal; encompassing five Core Directions:
 - a. Renewal of parish life in all its expressions
 - b. Fostering of vocations; with a focus on religious vocations
 - c. Catholic outreach of justice and love; to the poor and vulnerable
 - d. Evangelization of society
 - e. The renewal of the Cathedral as a sign of our mission

The Society and its works embodies particularly the first four elements of the pastoral plan, and most particularly (c). Fostering of vocations is all vocations; pastoral, parish ministries and Vincentian outreach.

3. How do we respond to the many parishes that don't want us?

- The Bishop's reaction was one of surprise that there are pastors who would chose to not allow the Society to form a conference.
- Perhaps the single biggest challenge is poor communication with financial resources being the central problem. Vincentians must keep pastors informed of their activities and outreach; this often elicits increased support and a stronger connection with the parish.
- If the reasons for not being allowed to form a conference are poor, the Bishop will review the matter.
- Transparency in communications is a way of evangelizing the parish by communicating how we are answering the call of the gospel.

4. What changes do we need to make?

- Improved communication with the pastor and parish regarding finances, particularly if funds are used from outside the parish to meet the needs within the parish community.
- Describe in writing the roles and responsibilities of the Society conference, the pastor and the parish community so expectations are clear.

5. If no one knows about our work, is that a sign of weakness on our part?

- The Vincentian ethos of humility and service is both beautiful and weak.
- The Vincentian spirituality embraces quiet service however, the pastor must be aware of what the conference is doing and he needs to use that information for the evangelization of the parish.
- Additionally, it is very important to know what is happening in the event that additional assistance is needed to meet the needs of persons who are poor in the community.

The Bishop concluded his talk with a question to the membership: "What can the Archdiocese do for the Society"? A brief question and answer period followed. At the conclusion, Bro. Rob Greenaway was asked to consider speaking at a Regional meeting of the Bishops on behalf of Toronto Central Council to identify possible solutions to any challenges and to share successes.