

# VINCENTIAN NEWS

January 2012

Volume 2 Number 3

## EAST DOWN'S TRIP TO KNOCK



East Down and Kilmegan Area members annual trip to Knock on Saturday 10th September 2011. A very enjoyable day was had by all with a stop at Clancy's on the way down for breakfast and on the way back for dinner.

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# Spiritual Reflections

Fr Perry Gildea C.M



*"The spirit of the Lord is upon me  
He sent me to bring the Good News  
to the Poor!"*

On Fr Perry's request for this edition, in place of the Spiritual Reflection will be a copy of **Baroness Nuala O'Loan's speech** which was given at the Annual Fundraising dance on Saturday 12th November 2011 in the Europa Hotel, Belfast.



Good evening, Reverend Sisters, Reverend Fathers, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to thank the SVP for the opportunity to say a few words to you as you gather to celebrate the work of the SVP. Work which is done in many different places – mostly done very quietly and with great love, and, as the Pope said yesterday speaking to bishops with pastoral responsibility for charitable work, "your commitment is a reason for confidence, since it shows that goodness exists and that it is growing in our midst. ... For Christians, volunteer work is not merely an expression of good will. It is based on a personal experience of Christ" whose "grace helps us to discover within ourselves a human desire for solidarity and a fundamental vocation to love...We also become visible instruments of His love in a world that still profoundly yearns for that love amid the poverty, loneliness, marginalisation and ignorance that we see all around us." Those words apply equally to the bishops to whom they were spoken, and to those who labour in the vineyard – the SVP.

The Pope describes the world as still profoundly yearning for love "amid the poverty, loneliness, marginalisation and ignorance that we see all around us." We know that world don't we? It is growing as we speak. We have huge levels of unemployment. Jobs are still disappearing in a way which would have seemed impossible just five years ago. The latest NI statistics show that our unemployment rate is 7.6% --

some 65,000 people – that is twice the population of Ballymena all unemployed. What is worse, in some ways, is that the unemployment rate for 18-24 year olds is 18.1% - almost 1 in 5. For those people life on benefits is not an option. I know so many bright young people who have secured good degrees and qualifications who quite simply cannot get a job. That is very frightening in a world in which the forecasts are that there will be no immediate easing of the recession, where economic growth is just about forecast at 0.05% and where hope of being able to improve their lot seems to be fading for so many people, at least in the short term.

I wonder what Christmas will be like this year? I was shopping in Ballymena this morning, and yes people are out, but not in the same numbers and not spending in the way in which they did, so even the seasonal jobs are less likely to be there. Despite all the hype about welfare scroungers I do not believe that anyone who had a real choice would choose to live on £67 a week, or £105 a week if they were a couple. When employment first goes it is hard to adjust to a life on benefits, but as the months pass it gets even harder, – shoes wear out, children grow out of their clothes, the oil or gas runs out, the electricity has just gone up 18%, the house needs work done on it and so on. It can be quite terrifying. When you have virtually no money you have

virtually no access to the mobility, the spare cash that enable us to distract ourselves at times when we feel low. It gets worse when you are cold because you cannot afford to heat your house, and it gets even worse when you are hungry because there is not enough money for food and warmth. You feel even more hungry when you are cold. Holidays just don't feature at all. The statutory services cannot respond on many occasions – sometimes they even refer people to the SVP. People begin to lose hope and to feel less and less able to control their own destiny, to make change to what may seem a very desperate situation.

Almost one person a day in NI is committing suicide – more people die to suicide than to road traffic accidents but we don't see the ads for preventing suicide do we? And whilst there can be many causes of suicide, poverty with all its attendant ills is often part of the experience of those who die this way. It is not just the young who commit suicide either. In NI approximately 25 people over 60 commit suicide each year: about 1 person every two weeks. There is nothing to suggest that the lot of those leading lives of quiet desperation, caused by poverty, marginalisation and incapacity will improve in the near future. There is therefore a huge need out there, and that is reflected in the increasing volume of work facing the SVP. The vineyard is huge and the labourers are few and in many cases ageing rapidly.

But during 2009, SVP volunteers made 130,000 visits to the needy. They spent £2.7m in direct financial assistance. It is a huge sum. What is more huge though is the number of visits. Since each visit normally involves two members that would take 260,000 occasions on which SVP people left their homes to respond to calls for help. In Ballymena this year those figures – the money given and the visits made - are up 18% on last year. I'm pretty sure that there is similar picture across NI. What an achievement.

You can help people to change how it is for them by the shops from which they can get things they need at a price they can afford, through the educational work which gives them a wider horizon, greater understanding, the schemes like the oil stamp schemes, which have grown so rapidly through which people can save and plan for the cold weather – real initiatives of the SVP working with both the public and the private sector to change the way things are for people for the better. In Ballymena alone the oil stamps scheme is going to turn over in excess of £200,000 this year – all money saved by people so that they can pay for their bills when they need oil.

To those of you here tonight who are members of the SVP I can only say “aren't you wonderful?” and “Thank you”. Being in the SVP is not about responding when you feel like it, it is about responding when someone else needs you. It is about going out when you are tired and it's cold and late but there is some soul who needs your help, and so many of you here present have answered those calls for help on thousands of occasions over the years.

You probably will not know the difference that you have made unless you have had the experience yourself. I know because my family were the recipients of help from the SVP so

many years ago when I was a little girl; whose father had died and whose mother, just 33 years old, was struggling to care for 8 of us in real poverty. The parcels of food – they came in big brown cardboard boxes and were like a treasure trove of tins and packages, sometimes food we had never seen before! They changed the atmosphere in the house. I knew that for my mother one little part of her misery and fear had been alleviated.

I have spoken publicly of the difference the SVP made to my life on many occasions, and I do so with great gratitude, and a sense that each of you should be proud of what you achieve, even though you may think that you can make little difference to people's lives. You may actually make a difference far beyond the impact of the aid which you bring, be it furniture, a cooker, clothes or food. You see when someone is in such a difficult place there is an enhanced sense of loneliness, of isolation, of helplessness. When someone comes into your home greeting you with respect, with warmth and with compassion you are revitalised in a way which goes far beyond the food or whatever it is you bring. You bring yourselves; Christ's hands and feet here on earth. You bring the love and caring of the community. You bring hope.

On her last day in office President Mary McAleese visited a St Vincent de Paul hostel for the homeless. She was casting a light again, as she has done so many times over that marvellous 14 year presidency, on the work which is being done and which remains to be done here to help our brothers and sisters in Christ. She spoke of her early experience as a young girl helping by washing up at SVP functions and she told of the impact of that on her, an impact which can still be seen in the warmth and the empathy which she has for those in need.

The people with whom you deal may have come to their neediness for a huge variety of reasons but they do need your help and in helping them you live out your call to holiness. You are as the Pope says “visible instruments of Christ's love.” The SVP always need volunteers so if there are those of you here who are not in the Society and could give even a little to the cause please think seriously about it and then do something about it. To the younger people here I say especially “we need you. The SVP needs you”.

There will always be people who need help and this organisation with its volunteers, their generosity and magnanimity provides that help. The organizational structures that provide the shops, the furniture stores, the oil stamp schemes, the financial structures which ensure that every penny raised goes to the poor and needy, provide many avenues for you to utilise the skills and talents which God has given you in the service of His people.

In closing may I remind you that the proceeds from tonight are to go to the Clare Lodge holiday home which provides holidays for people who would otherwise never have a holiday, and never experience a different environment. Be generous in this as in everything.

I would like to thank you very much for listening to me, and would like again to thank you, on behalf of the fearful little girl I once was, and on behalf of all the people you help and have helped for your goodness and your kindness, for the hope which you bring, and for the love which inspires you. May God bless you all and the work which you do in His name.

**Baroness Nuala O'Loan**

# Youth

John McDonald

At Loreto Grammar School, Omagh, as part of the Religious Education Programme, the Year 13 pupils are involved in many community outreach programmes. This year the Saint Vincent de Paul group has selected 16 girls to become involved in our school's work with the organisation. Many of us were drawn to the Saint Vincent de Paul group for particular reasons. One girl remarked that **"I was drawn to the group as I admired the ethos behind SVP of reaching out to those in need and I feel that in the current economic situation it is important to remember that charity isn't all about giving money to people but giving your time, concern and attention to people who are normally forgotten"**.

The SVP group in our school is very active and "hands-on" as this year already many of us have taken part in the **Flag Day collection** on the 8<sup>th</sup> October and some of us volunteered to **bag-pack** in local supermarkets. These experiences have opened our eyes to **"the sheer amount of work the SVP volunteers have to do as they are constantly active in the community"** [Shibeal McCullagh Year 13].

As well as these events, every Friday at our SVP session we discuss social justice issues and the role SVP plays in helping to tackle these matters, while also learning about the origins of the Society. Our meetings have **"allowed us to understand more the challenges that our local communities face on a daily basis"** and we were delighted to have met Phil McKenna (President of the Omagh Conference) and Ben Quinn and Pat Tierney.

Our school group also took part in the **SVP Annual Sale of Work** on the 5<sup>th</sup> November in St Joseph's Hall. We were in charge of a teenage stall on the day, so in preparation we were assigned year groups and we spoke at assemblies and went around Form



*Year 13 Loreto Grammar School SVP group with their teenage stall*

Classes raising the school's awareness of the sale and the work of SVP. Meanwhile, we were also encouraging girls to bring in used or unused items in good condition we could sell on our stall, like books, cd's, bath sets etc. Furthermore, closer to the sale, using ICT we each designed posters to advertise the sale that was then displayed throughout the local area.

After lots of campaigning we were delighted with the response and generosity of our fellow pupils and from their donations we could make our stall a success, as our stall raised over £350 for SVP. The total amount raised on the day of the sale was £1,575. For the majority of our members this event has been the highlight of our SVP experience so far. We really enjoyed the fast-paced selling and bartering to help raise money and it gave many of us the opportunity to help and feel useful as we all saw first hand how much people depend on and value SVP's work.

Now leading up to Christmas, which can be an extremely difficult time for many people especially since the recession, we are all preparing Christmas hampers which the class groups in Loreto SVP make every year. The hampers are allocated to be given to individuals and families who need extra support during the Christmas period. In total we make over forty Christmas hampers that include non-perishable food items and other kitchen items. So, every class in our school is responsible

For making one hamper each with students bringing in one/two items each. We are given basic details about who the hamper is for and we all try to personalise the hampers by adding other items such as family crackers or warm socks for single pensioners.

In the new year our group plans to organise a Junior SVP group, aiming to inform the younger students all about the great work of SVP and how they can help the Society and become involved. In Lent we aim to promote a clothing campaign for Vincent's shop, encouraging families to donate all unwanted clothes to SVP.

Over these past few months our SVP group has enabled us all to reach out to many in the community and girls in our group have described their personal SVP experience as **"rewarding", "humbling" and "very enjoyable"**. It has been a refreshing change to have been allowed and trusted to be fully a part of projects like the sale and we are grateful that we have been given a chance to make a difference.

The work we have been involved in has also gave us all a new appreciation for the voluntary organisation and one member described the organisation as **"inspiring"** and has made her want to **"be involved in Saint Vincent de Paul in the future"** [Oonagh Taggart Year 13].

**Marie Loughran**  
**Year 13 Student,**  
**Loreto Grammar**

# Shops

Beni Benstead



## Christmas window Competition

It's that time of year already: the annual Vincent's Christmas window competition is now OPEN! Entries will be judged by visitors to the Regional Office in January 2012. Judges will not be told which shop is which.

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize - £250
- 2<sup>nd</sup> prize - £150
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prize - £100

I have a couple of shops in mind that always have *fantastic* windows and would be certain to be picked by the judges - but they never enter! As the saying goes, you have to be in it to win it ...

## Training

The year has been a good one for getting many of our shop teams qualified in manual handling and health & safety. Very well done to everyone who completed these courses! Next year I'll be looking at first aid and fire marshal courses. Bear in mind that you'll usually need to commit to having 12-18 people who can attend if you want the trainer to come to you. I'm also trying to source a level 2 health &

safety course as many of you said you found it difficult to commit to the four days for the level 3 course. Another course you might find helpful is '*IT for the terrified*' – a bare basics course for people who don't know one end of a mouse from the other. It can be City & Guilds accredited if you want to take the exam or can be non-accredited if you want the training but not the exam qualification. As more and more of our shops get themselves online, we're seeing a demand emerge for this type of training.

If you'd like to express an interest in any of the above courses, or if you'd like to suggest a course that would be helpful, please let me know.

## Textile recycling

With more and more of our shops feeling the pinch as these 'cash for clothing' merchants continue to lure our regular donors with their textiles price per kilo, there has perhaps never been a more important time to ensure we make the most of the stock we have. We are currently piloting shipping stock from Omagh shop to Strabane, Enniskillen and

Lisnaskea shops with some success. It's early days but we've already learned a lot about systems and processes that we could replicate in other areas. If you would be interested in swapping stock with your neighbouring shops and want a hand coordinating this, let me know.

I would also like to hear from you if you know of a shop, petrol station, chapel or other prime location that doesn't have a SVP textile recycling bank and you think it would be easy to get permission.

The planet does seem to have been on fast forward for the past few months and I can't believe I'm saying this *already* ... I would like to wish you all the very best for a peaceful and joyful festive break. Thank you for all your hard work in our Vincent's shops and for all the much-needed funds you have raised for your local conferences and area.

**Beni Benstead**  
**Regional Shops' Coordinator**

Beni can be contacted on 07540 687441 or [beni.benstead@svpni.co.uk](mailto:beni.benstead@svpni.co.uk)

## CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS FOR IRISH OPEN STREET COLLECTION

The Clare Lodge Rebuild Campaign is well underway and we have been extremely fortunate in securing a day of street collections in Portrush on **Wednesday 27 June 2012** – the day before the Irish Open!! We will need as many volunteers as possible for that day and we would like to appeal to Vincentians to sign up to help. Please contact the Clare Lodge Fundraising Department on 02890 446349 as soon as possible! The world will be in Portrush that week, so this is a wonderful opportunity for the SVP as a whole! **Thanks so much!!**

# Regional Round-up

## Harvest Joy!!



A very fruitful harvest collected by the students from Drumragh Integrated College, Omagh. From Left to Right: Meghann Ward, India Fahy, Reverend Herron, Phil McKenna (SVP St Columba Conference, Omagh), Joel Conlon, Cole Reynolds and Aimee McGoldrick



## GRAND PRIZE DRAW 2011

The draw for our Annual Grand Prize Draw Raffle took place on Thursday 1st December in the Regional Office with all proceeds going towards the Clare Lodge rebuild appeal. Our Regional President, Cormac Wilson, accompanied by two students from St Gemma's Secondary School, North Belfast, helped conduct the draw. Three lucky winners scooped the prizes of a fridge freezer, a dishwasher and a Lladro figurine!!

- **1st Prize :** Mr McCloskey, Greysteel, Co Derry
- **2nd Prize:** Mrs Montague, Fintona, Co Tyrone
- **3rd Prize :** Me Brown, Faughanvale, Co Derry

*Regional President, Cormac Wilson, with Bronagh & Claire*

**CONGRATULATIONS!!!**

## Joint SVP/BCM Giving Tree Launch

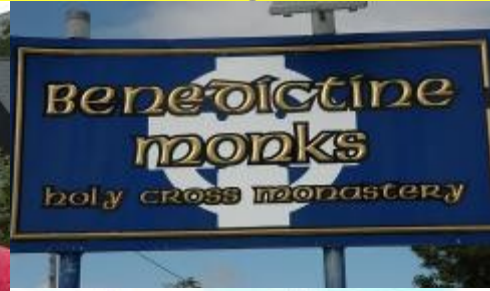


Santa is joined by representatives from Marks and Spencer, Donegall Place in Belfast, to help launch the SVP and BCM (Belfast Central Mission) Giving Tree. This marks this 12th year that M&S have supported this cross community seasonal venture. Gifts donated will be distributed to families across Belfast referred to by both charities in time for Christmas Day.



# Out and about in the Northern Region

## Dunsford's trip to Benedictine Monastery



Twenty two parishioners took part in our first summer outing for many years. Leaving Dunsford at 9.30am on Sunday morning we drove to the heart of the Mourne Mountains to the Benedictine Monastery for morning mass. I would recommend to anyone to visit this beautiful place. Set in the heart of the Mournes, it oozes peace and tranquility. The Mass was said by five different Monks. Afterwards we were able to purchase hand made candles and oils made by the Monks from the gift shop. We then got back onto the bus and headed to Warrenpoint where we had Sunday lunch. After lunch we made the journey home through the Mountains; the scenery was truly spectacular. We have had a fantastic response from all who took part and expect to have a lot more participants next year.

Paul Logue, Dunsford SVP

## Omagh's SVP Annual Sale

Some photos from our Omagh Conference members at the SVP Annual Sale held in St Joseph's Hall, Omagh, on 5th November 2011. Stalls included home made crafts, fancy goods, bric-a-brac, and a bakery stall but to mention a few!!



L-R: Betty Baxer, May Mullan, Phil McKenna, Marcella Canavan, Roseleen Connolly, Carmel Coyle



Mary McBride & Eileen Maguire



Joanna Gallagher & Kathleen Fox



May Mullan

# FROM LITTLE ACORNS MIGHTY OAKS DO GROW

## Malachy's Centre Success!!

The Malachy's centre in Armagh, home to St Patrick's conference, finds itself a fitting place for continuing with the work, and, for following in the footsteps of Saint Vincent de Paul and Blessed Fredric Ozanam. As the reputed birthplace of St Malachy, patron saint and scholar of Armagh, no place is more desirable for bridging the historical past with contemporary time and need. The centre previously having seen minimal use has, because of changing times and an increasingly interconnected world, been provided with momentum and a catapult for entrepreneurialism among some of its SVP members.

With the expansion of the European Union in 2004 the St Patrick's Conference, through the inspiration and leadership of Kathy Donnelly, felt ideally positioned to establish what it calls the Lifeline Education and Help Initiative for migrant workers. Initially this venture aimed to overcome language barriers and provide assistance and employment opportunities for newly arrived migrant families. The centres potential was recognised so much that it was permitted a natural form of progression and has moved from strength to strength. Now in its seventh year one bare classroom has flourished to become a state of the art fully furnished ICT suite comprising of thirteen computers, two laser printers and an overhead projector.

## Malachy's Centre rolling with the times for National Database Training.



*Una Owens facilitator for database training putting some Northern region members in the picture.*

The Malachy's ICT suite is immeasurable for incorporating and encouraging engagement between the SVP conference and local communities. Local people join with the centre for a variety of reasons, not least of which is gaining valuable qualifications for employment purposes. The Malachy's centre, in partnership with the Southern Regional College, provides accredited courses from OCN (Open College Network) for beginners through to ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) and Essential Skills levels 1 and 2. The centre has remained a hive of social activity with organisations such as BT promoting its Silver Surfers (internet surfing) for senior citizens and 'Access 2 Benefits' training SVP volunteers to help create awareness of shortfall in benefits for senior citizens. A Bulgarian and Lithuanian parents and children's group also operate within the centre.

## Financially sound

The Malachy's centre through its promotion of education and good community relations is recognised by various statutory and voluntary agencies as a centre of educational excellence for BME groups, migrants and locals alike. Such is the recognition accorded to the centre that it has become self-regenerating with statutory bodies willing to pay an hourly fee for its use thus making it financially viable.

## Children's activity club a great success



*Enjoying the computer experience with Elizabeth Devlin and Kathy Donnelly.*

Children and education continue

to remain a focal point within the Malachy's centre as their long established children's activity club provides a computer experience in a multicultural setting. Young people aged 8-14 years meet weekly to engage in learning through ICT. Here the computer experience operates through the medium of fun in an out of school setting. Assistance with homework is provided and a variety of projects have been undertaken including a children's DVD and photographic project of 'My Armagh' which was showcased by Armagh City and District Council in the launch of their Good Relations Programme 2010. Drama and creative arts and crafts have also been showcased within the Malachy's centre which draws families into a multicultural setting therefore promoting good relations across the community divide.



*Migrant children reading for fun.*

The long-lived success of the 'Lifeline Education and Help Initiative' plus the children's activity club shows that with will, determination and dedication, conference members can provide opportunities and avenues only dreamed of for some people especially young people from difficult family settings. Aspirations can be set and new heights achieved. It is a true saying that "from little acorns (or small ideas) mighty oaks do grow". We in St Patrick's conference, Armagh, and all other conferences North and South have an opportunity to create positive and lasting change for so many individuals especially our children. If we are willing to grasp hold of the plough and sow the 'ideas', God's providence, and saints such as Vincent de Paul, Malachy and Blessed Fredric Ozanam will help us do the rest.

# IN TRIBUTE

## Linda Savage

The Society of St Vincent de Paul in the Northern Region has been plunged into mourning at the news of the untimely and sudden death, after a short illness, of a life-long much esteemed member, Linda Savage.

Linda was known far and beyond the Northern Region as a much travelled and highly respected trainer, and indeed held the post of Chair of Training and Development in the Northern Region and was the designated Regional Person for Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults. Linda was a most valued member of the Northern Ireland Regional Council and Board, and was currently the Area President in West Belfast. Linda was instrumental in establishing the Mountainview Project, that is a breakfast club, an after schools club, and in more recent times, a crèche facility.



Linda worked tirelessly to promote and sustain the West Belfast projects against all odds. Linda's favourite Vincentian prayer was, "*We gave of our time, our possessions and ourselves*", and she dedicated her life to

this as she had become a daily fulltime volunteer. Her passing has left a void which will be most difficult to fill. May she Rest in Peace.

**Cormac Wilson**  
**Regional President**

## Jim Loughrey 1922 - 2011

Jim Loughrey died on 17<sup>th</sup> August at his home on Roemill Road in Limavady, in the same way he had lived his life; quietly, with no fuss, in the company of his wife Sally.

'A blessed man with a blessed nature because he was evidently at peace with himself and all around him, at peace with God. He radiated a deep sense of joy and contentment. He didn't have to go beyond the boundaries of his family or his native town to find this deep sense of fulfilment.' The words spoken by Monsignor Bryan McCanny at the celebration of a 'life of preparation' of our Vincentian brother Jim. He joined our Conference, St. Canice's, on

the 7<sup>th</sup> of March, 1941 at the age of 18. He immersed himself in the service of those in need in our community, working tirelessly, never passing judgement and with unshakeable dedication. In 2006 he received the 'Benemerenti' medal from Pope Benedict for his devoted, lifelong service to his faith community. We Vincentians basked in the reflected glow of this rare honour.

Morning Mass at St. Mary's will just never be the same, not to see Jim standing, head bowed, saying hello to Mary at the Grotto, ambling up the centre isle nodding to us all, waiting afterwards for a wee chat. For 70 years he stood at the gates at all the weekend Masses – Monsignor McCanny warned the hushed congregation '..when you



die make sure you bring some loose change with you because Jim is more than likely to be standing at the Pearly Gates with the Red Box!'

To Sally and all the Loughrey family we offer our heartfelt condolences and our prayers. God rest him. Ní bheidh a leithéid arís ann.

# Long Service Rewards



The Members' Mass for Belfast Vincentians and their families was held in St Peter's Cathedral, Falls Road, Belfast, on the Feast of St Vincent de Paul, Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2011 at 7:30pm. The mass was celebrated by Bishop Noel Treanor, after which long service medals were presented to the well deserving members. The medals were presented by Regional President, Cormac Wilson. Congratulations to all members on receiving their reward. All demonstrated commitment and compassion.



## ANNUAL STREET COLLECTION



*L-R: Rev Richard Johnston (BCM), Aileen Coney and Dr Alasdair McDonnell (SDLP)*

The City Centre Street Collection raised over £9,000 for the bursar scheme at Queen's University in Belfast. The Society wishes to extend its thanks to the citizens of Belfast who kindly contributed to our annual Street Collection held on Saturday 10th December 2011. Over 100 Society volunteers, young and old, braved the elements throughout the day supported by members from Belfast Central Mission, Young SDLP, and others. Collections also took place on the Boucher Road, Lisburn Road, Forestside, Yorkgate and other shopping malls throughout the day. Collection buckets were introduced this year to maximise donations and visibility. Proceeds will go to the innovative bursar scheme run by St Anthony's Conference QUB which is aimed at helping students attending the university who require assistance with books and other academic materials.

**\*\*THANK YOU\*\***

# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## SVP HELPLINES

Armagh	07733-482-604
Ballycastle Mobile	07933-309-469
Ballycastle	028-2076-9922
Ballymoney	07860-455-549
Ballymena	028-2565-0417
Ballynahinch	07742-590-027
Castlewellan	07933-288-753
Coleraine	028-7034-2573
Cookstown	028-8676-2900
Crumlin	028-9442-3759
Derry	028-7126-5489
Downpatrick	028-4461-6557
Enniskillen	028-6634-7788
Harryville	028-2563-1611
Holy Rosary Belfast	07512-605-759
Keady	07543-901-862
Kilkeel	07542-534-420
Kilrea	07597-955-305
Kircubbin	07895-835-215
Limavady	07512-360-388
Lisnaskea	07761-237-457
Maghera	07752-111-032
Magherafelt	028-7930-0819
Newry	028-3025-2968
Newcastle	07889-780-330
N'Ards & Comber	07749-439-131
North Down	028-9127-2467
Omagh	028-8224-4488
Portadown	028-3833-9639
Portaferry	07599-599-857
Randalstown	028-9447-3777
Rostrevor	07881-656-496
Strabane	028-7138-4488
Swatragh	07927-790-030
Warrenpoint	028-4175-3355
West Belfast	028-9060-1899

## Thinking of going abroad?

### **Disability Rights: Bookings, Airports and Flights**

If you have a disability, are less mobile or have a condition which makes air travel difficult – even if it is temporary – European law gives you the right to assistance when booking flights, arriving at the airport, checking in and getting on and off the aircraft. The Consumer Council provides advice and guidance and can investigate complaints from passengers flying to or from Northern Ireland.

The Consumer Council's Access to Air Travel guide provides information on the rights of people with disabilities and less mobile passengers when travelling by air. The guide is available from [www.consumercouncil.org](http://www.consumercouncil.org) or by telephoning 0800 121 6022.

## SVP ID CARDS

If you or other conference members do not have an ID card, contact your Conference President as it is important that you get one now to protect yourself, those we visit, and the Society.

### **Clare Lodge Event!!**

**Anchor Bar, Newcastle**

Thursday 26 January

Starting at 9.30pm

Cost - £2 per person

There will be sandwiches provided and lots of items

for raffle.

## FREE SVP LITERATURE Available from Regional Office

- Mission Statement
- Annual Regional Reports (previous & current)
- Vincentian News
- Youth Newsletter
- Various Spiritual Reflections
- Attendance sheets
- 20 Questions about SVP
- Donation Receipt books
- Assorted Prayer leaflets
- Clothing Appeal leaflets

## **YOUR CLARE LODGE NEEDS HELP TO RE-BUILD**

**SVP**  
Society of St Vincent de Paul



Clare Lodge is an integral part of Newcastle town.

We provide holiday accommodation for all denominations and each year hundreds of people in need enjoy a weekly break with us.

### **CLARE LODGE - REACHING OUT TO EVERYONE**

Clare Lodge was built over 100 years ago and has been repaired and patched many times.

However, we can patch no more!



We need to re-build and to do this we need to raise £2.5m. If you can give us any help whatsoever, we would be eternally grateful.

Please contact our fundraising department on 02890 446349. Thank you so much in anticipation.



Remember Clare Lodge is your Clare Lodge!

# **NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT**

The National President of the Society of St Vincent de Paul has said that the chasm in the mindset between those in power and those in need whom the Society serves is appalling.

In a New Year message she asks: "What happened to all the concern for those in need, all types of need, so often expressed by the same people during the election campaign less than a year ago?"

"Where is social justice??"

"Imagine the state of mind of those who, in former times, were in a better position economically and socially. People matter in all circumstances. We experience daily the mostly heroic people who week-by-week barely manage without complaint. It is incredible that these same people are affected year-after-year.



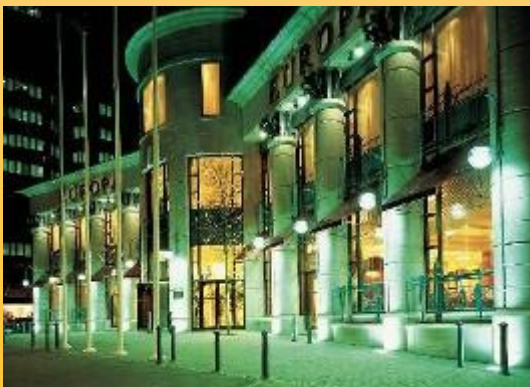
*National President: Mairead Bushnell*

"The perception is, in spite of what some politicians say, is that the poor suffer and many on higher, secure, incomes remain untouched. It is indeed difficult to argue against this widely held perception. We are fully aware of the economic difficulties for the Government, but for those on low incomes, where every 'cent' matters, those people suffer most. We will help them, as the Society of St Vincent de Paul always does."

"The groups which will be most adversely affected are families with school going children, one parent families, families on social welfare, those on low pay and those who are struggling to cope with energy bills. We welcome the fact that basic social welfare rates are being maintained, we also welcome the changes to the universal social charge for low paid and seasonal workers, but there is a big difference between how those in power think about the economic situation and the effects their decisions have on the most vulnerable."

May I wish each and every one of you every good wish for 2012 and trust that we will have health and energy to maintain our commitment and service to all who come to us for assistance.

## **Another Successful Society Fundraiser!!**



*Saturday 12th November 2011 saw the Annual SVP Fundraiser Dinner Dance take place in the Europa Hotel in Belfast. Over 200 guests attended this fun-filled event. Those present were thoroughly entertained by Marty Faye and the Banditos and a delicious dinner was served by the wonderful staff.*

*The Regional Council would like to thank all those who attended, those who raised money and a special thank you to all those who provided gifts and donations for the prize draw and the auction, all of which helped to make the night a special success.*