



Dialogue with Cardinal John and Archdiocesan leadership, May 2019 – talking points

Introduction

Members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul follow Christ in action by visiting the poor in their homes or where they happen to be in the community, and by the initiative of the Young Vinnies in all our colleges and some schools, and the Young Adults group.

Vincentians provide personal support, friendship, prayer, transport, food and material assistance to people in the family house, rest home, hospital, prison, and to the homeless and others experiencing hardship, sickness, loneliness, isolation or loss.

We seek dialogue with several archdiocesan leadership groups to share insights, listen to your advice, and explore ways to collaborate in reaching out to people in need at the peripheries of parishes and suburbs.

Our aspirations for the future

We will reach out to and be a voice for the marginalised across the whole of Wellington City through establishing alliances with other faith and welfare groups and through using modern networks and media communications.

We will refine and shape our distinctive role alongside other like-minded not-for-profit and interfaith groups providing similar service in the welfare sector.

The Church will accept the Society as an effective readymade instrument of parish life in reaching out to the peripheries, operating in close collaboration with priests, other parish workers and groups. Strengthening parishioners' outreach to the poor will channel their faith into practical action and build parish life and Mass going.

We will create a more diverse and active membership encompassing youth, young adults and middle age, many more women, and the faithful from the ethnic communities we serve in the region.

Our current challenges

We cannot meet the current demand for visiting and assisting the poor, sick, lonely and marginalised. We need to increase our core membership from 40 members at present, of whom two-thirds are over 60 years of age.

Conferences are currently active in only three of the six parishes of Wellington City, covering only seven of the fifteen Church communities and suburbs. Conferences in Hutt Valley/Wairarapa and Kapi Mana regions face similar challenges and will be sharing in and learning from these initiatives.

Our declining membership has been adversely affected over the past 20 years by

- competition for members from a myriad of welfare service opportunities in suburban and parish communities;
- expansion in the activities of not-for-profit organisations responding to people suffering from hardship;
- changes in historical structures, routines and relationships within parishes have diluted the Society's presence;
- our own failure to respond effectively to the impacts of the changing environment on Conference-life.

We will weigh and balance which suburbs have greater priorities of needs to be met through new or strengthened Conferences and recruitment and formation of new members.

Key questions

- What is the perception by the Church and parishes of the effectiveness and acceptance of Society Conferences?
- What roles and activities does the Church expect of the Society in reaching to the peripheries, and how can the Church and parishes support us in achieving those expectations?
- How best can the Society reach and attract potential new members representing our diverse populations, especially those of ethnic and migrant groups in parishes?
- Will the Church encourage a prayer of renewal across parishes as we conduct our recruitment exercises in 2019?