



The month of October celebrates the 150th Anniversary of the establishment of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand. The first conference was formed in 1867 in Christchurch.

The St Vincent de Paul Society was formed in Wanganui in 1910. The first meeting was held in St Mary's Hall on 19 June 1910. The name "St Vincent de Paul" stands for all phases of Charity in the Catholic world. St Vincent de Paul was born in 1576 and died in 1660. He undertook working among the poor and the sick of Paris as well as works of charity. The French Revolution brought to naught much of the good that had been established by Vincent de Paul and it was left to one Frederick Ozanam to establish Charity in an organised form as we know it today, and he adopted as his patron, St Vincent de Paul who had pioneered the effort all those years before. St Paul says "If I should distribute of my goods to feed the poor and not have charity, it profits me nothing". Frederick Ozanam and a group of fellow students formed the first conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society in 1833.

77 years after the establishment of the Society in Paris, it was established here in Wanganui. St Mary's Conference was quickly followed by Aramoho under the patronage of St Lawrence later changed to St Joseph in 1918. Over time more conferences were started covering Wanganui East and Gonville.

SVDP became heavily involved in fund raising with Euchre parties, Socials etc to assist families during the Great War up to 1918 and again during the Flu Epidemic in 1919. The St Mary's conference also sold prepared meals off the streets, priced at 3d. up to 6d. Another source of income was the "secret" collection taken during meetings. This was usually fortnightly. This practise continues to this day as does the custom of referring to members as brothers or sisters. Both these practises are a throw-back to the formative years.

In 1923 a significant step was taken when the Wanganui East conference began building up a wardrobe of used clothing. This was probably a catalyst of today's fine shop. These donated clothes would be sorted washed and ironed before being put on sale at very cheap prices. The Wanganui East conference also provided cooked meals and assistance to those families who were nursing sick family members.

During the depression years of the 1930's greater demands were placed on Social Service organisations. SVDP was seen as a beacon of hope. Many Vincentians who were retired or unemployed spent their days walking the streets of Wanganui seeking donations of virtually anything, so as to help needy people.

So through the 1930's and 1940's the Society was kept busy. The 2ND World War once again put strain on families who had husbands, fathers, sons and daughters once again seeing active service. No family was turned away when help was sort.

The 1960's saw the development of the clothing shops. The very first shop in NZ was opened in 1960 it was called Aladdins Lamp situated in Guyton St. In the late 80's the shop moved to Ingestre St where it traded until the new shop was built and opened in April 1995 in Victoria Ave. Because of

the demand for clothing it was decided an all purpose building would be desirable, especially after receiving a very generous bequest from a Frederick Locke. The shop has continued to grow over the years enabling the Society to carry out many many works of charity.

In 1978 a major exercise in the history of the Society began with the purchase of a house at 1 Koromiko Road. This was to be known as Ozanam Villa. It came about because during Hospital visiting, Society members were seeing patients from out of town, who had been hospitalised for whatever reason. They also learnt that families of patients were walking the corridors at night or sleeping in cars because they could not afford accommodation. It was decided to set the Villa up as a Charitable Trust after receiving donations from various sources, to provide accommodation for visitors from out of town.

The Society in Wanganui has been blessed over the century with hundreds of men and women who have given their time and talents in charitable works, and while we are down to 2 conferences, St Mary's and Holy Family, the work continues, and the wonderful women of the Society continue to sort, wash and iron clothes each day of the week, thereby ensuring that the principal of charity continues.

It was as if acknowledgement was made 20 years ago to the efforts of the vincentians of the past 94 years when a new group was formed called the "Young Vinnies" and the same acknowledgement is made to the present day Vincentians. Our Catholic Primary Schools and the Catholic College with the help of our prayers will provide the base of the next 100 years.

We also remember the words of Jesus at His Anointing :- "You will always have the poor with you".

- We are endeavouring to find new members to assist us with our charitable works so please contact a member of SVDP if you would like to be involved.
- **During the month of October at all Saturday 5.30pm and Sunday Masses a Second Collection will be taken up for the work of the St Vincent de Paul in Wanganui. Please give generously.**