



## **International Association of Charities - Vincentian Family**

### **ACTING TOGETHER – AGAINST ALL FORMS OF POVERTY**

AIC UK is part of the 150,000 strong International group of, primarily, women whose spirituality is rooted in Vincentian tradition. Begun in 1617 by St Vincent De Paul, the Confraternities of lay volunteers help the disadvantaged in society. Groups became the Ladies of Charity – a name that many countries still use today under the AIC umbrella. Groups in ABBEY WOOD, BEXLEY, DARLINGTON, GLASGOW, MILL HILL & PECKHAM.

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FROM OUR SPIRITUAL ADVISOR; SR BERNADETTE RYDER DC.

### **Advent reflection: 'Come! Lord Jesus. Come!'**

Advent is a journey, sometimes a difficult journey. We feel the pressure that there is so much to do in preparation for Christmas, so many distractions. But if we stopped for a moment to think about Christmas and what it really offers us, we would be only too happy to set aside a little time each day to ponder this awesome mystery of the birth of Jesus.



The first reading of Monday of the first week of Advent has the most beautiful imagery of the Lord drawing all the nations together in the peace of God's kingdom. The lines which stand out for me are: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord...that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths...come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.' (*Isaiah 2:1-5*)

In my prayer I saw this mountain – higher than the highest of mountains Isaiah tells us – and arriving at that mountain I saw this wonderful revelation, the light of the Lord, Jesus newly born. It was a moment to treasure, this vision of the new born baby, his mother Mary and Joseph watching over him as he slept.

Then I realised that to get to that light, there is so much to do beforehand. Each day I come out of my house, and I see that the road is narrow. Then I look up and see that the road gradually broadens until I see the high mountain and the light for which I yearn. It appears daunting, but I remember the words of Isaiah, 'Come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord...' and I know that with the grace and help of the Lord, who loves us with a love we cannot fully grasp, I will arrive at this mountain and this light.

It will require moments set aside to ponder and pray, even though there is so much to do: the shopping; gifts to wrap; food to prepare and cook; the family to feed; beds to make. But these are times of grace, although we may not think so. They are the precious moments

which make up our lives. So too is prayer and meditation, no matter how short a time. Just a few precious moments set aside to ponder the coming of our God, Jesus Christ, into our hearts and our lives in a special way at Christmas. When we close our eyes and calm ourselves down, our God will come into our hearts and minds in a way we least expect.

So, although we may think we cannot put aside time to pray, that it is beyond us, let us say to ourselves, “of course I can, anything is possible, especially a few moments with my God which are so precious. I pray quietly and softly - Come Lord Jesus, come. Come into my heart.”

May Advent be a time of longing and yearning to ‘walk in the light of the Lord’, and may ‘the mountain of the Temple of the Lord’ be a beautiful awakening for each of us as we gaze in awe and wonder at the birth of Jesus our Saviour on Christmas morning.

May Mary, the mother of Jesus, warm our hearts with this joy. Let us pray to her for peace, in our hearts, in our homes, and in all nations. Amen.

### AIC MILL HILL – SYRIAN REFUGEE COFFEE CLUB.



The smiling face of this mother hides a horrific experience over the past few years. Giving birth in a refugee camp was just the tip of the iceberg! But she is beginning to feel safe now because she has been welcomed with open arms by a multi-faith community in Barnet, a North London suburb.

The innocuous signs below in English and Arabic disguise 18 months of hard work by a small group of Catholic, Quaker, Jewish and Muslim people of faith. On 27<sup>th</sup> September 2015, our intensive lobbying gained the agreement from our local council. It has been VERY slow to admit the quota of Vulnerable Syrian Refugees – the category used by UNHCR for sending refugees to the UK.



We now have 11 families living among us, and 25<sup>th</sup> November was our first weekly Coffee Club. This simple event, included a clothes and toy bank, English language lessons and many willing volunteers sitting and chatting to the mainly young families. The miracle is that this event took place in a Synagogue!! Mahatma Gandhi said “be the change you want to see in the world”. We all felt it on Friday! Dee

## ABBAY WOODS WORK WITH THE ELDERLY



Abbey Wood continue their successful series of Afternoon Teas with the local elderly.

The Group have worked out a great strategy! They combine plenty of tasty refreshments with opportunities for the local elderly to meet each other, mix with young people and explain their needs to the willing helpers, including the local Daughters of Charity.

4 Members of the Group will represent you in the Assembly in Chatillon 2017



## AIC BEXLEY – WORKING WITH THE HOMELESS



The two photographs tell an Autumn weather story of two halves! Wrapped up against the elements, Saturday Friends entertained some of our homeless brethren at Rochester Castle, while a month earlier, it was all smiles and sunshine in Worth Abbey. This tried and tested project continues to flourish, and is a great model for The Passage Home for Good enrichment programme for newly housed former homeless.

**MENTORING YOUNG PEOPLE -**

We have such a strong charism, our Vincentian values should be passed on. Not only has it stood the passage of 400 years, having St Vincent as the Catholic Church’s patron of all charities and St Louise de Marillac, patron of all social workers, it is entirely relevant today! You only have to think about what Pope Francis is saying about the preferential option for the poor, to recognise that it is entirely Vincentian! I know that some of our Groups work in the catechesis of the young in their parishes, but did you know that we work in collaboration with the St Vincent de Paul Society’s Youth Programmes; Mini Vinnies, Youth SVP and B-Attitudes?



Many countries have Vincentian Marian Youth, based on former Children of Mary – Miraculous Medal. In the UK we have Youth SVP. Here is the Barnet Parish Youth SVP, and I am delighted to report that more than 30 schools have welcomed me as a Youth Development Officer to present their Mini Vinnie programme. Dee represents AIC UK on the Young Vincentians committee.

**MENTORING FORMER HOMELESS YOUTH**  
The Passage Home for Good Project.



Mehrdad and Dee meet for coffee once a week to talk through how his mental health is progressing now he has a home of his own



**More about collaboration in 2017 – our 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of working with others for those in need.**

**Have a blessed Happy Christmas and a purposeful 2017! Dee Mansi  
President, AIC UK**