

**A Profile of a Saint Vincent de Paul School Conference - Holy Child School, Killiney, Co. Dublin.**

By Emily Massey, President  
Kia Hayes, Vice - President  
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The SVP School Conference in Holy Child School, Killiney, is named after our Foundress, Cornelia Connelly (1809-1879). Our school motto is 'Actions not Words', and our school is a member of the Le Chéile Trust. We have been supporting local SVP Conferences for over 30 years; in 2008 we established an official School Conference, mentored by our Chaplain, Mrs Ellen Moisselle, and helped by Ms Paula Cluskey.

Cornelia Connelly SVP Conference has a Leadership Team of 15 Fifth Year students. Alongside this team each class nominates a SVP Representative who attends meetings, and co-ordinates the activities within her class. All 33 SVP Student Representatives are proud to wear the Holy Child Killiney SVP badge which has the logo of the Society encircled with the words 'Cornelia Connelly Conference'.

The volunteers in the Leadership Team are interviewed for their roles of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, P.R., Education officer and class mentors.

We have a lunchtime meeting each Tuesday. This begins and ends with a prayer; we light our SVP candle, discuss and plan our activities and events. The Conference Fifth Year Leadership Team co-ordinate these meetings, and, if we are planning an event or activity, the Class Representatives from each year also attend - this means that the whole school is involved in the work of SVP.

Mrs Moisselle attends the Area Meeting each month; she shares news with us about National Campaigns or new initiatives. We are proud that the Area President, Ann Cuffe Fitzgerald, is a past student of Holy Child.

Our Conference has very strong links with 4 local Conferences- Killiney, Shankill, Loughlinstown and Sallynoggin- and also with the National Rehabilitation Hospital Conference. This year we supported these Conferences by delivering Christmas Appeal letters, donating 27 food hampers, sponsoring gifts for 18 families, fundraising for 22 hospital bags for long-stay patients, and providing entertainment at local SVP Coffee mornings. We invite a local Conference President to address the school community at our Christmas Assembly and we were delighted to welcome Terry O' Regan who gave us an inspiring talk on the work of her Conference in Killiney.

Each term we organise an Afternoon Tea Gathering for older people in the locality. Students bake lovely food for up to 35 guests, and we have excellent musical performances from girls who unselfishly give of their time and talents; we really enjoy chatting and getting to know our guests.

Each year the Fifth Year Team Leaders also plan a Peer-Teaching class for Third Years focusing on the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul as a *Community of Faith*, a topic in their Junior Certificate Religious Education Exam. This is a big challenge: we prepare the class by researching the content for a PowerPoint and planning activities; a career in teaching seems daunting after seeing the amount of preparation for one 40 minute class period! At the end of the class we give the Third Years a treat of a 'Freddo' chocolate bar - this helps remember the name of Blessed Frederic Ozanam, founder of the SVP !

Our 33 Conference members also had the opportunity to visit the Daughters of Charity of Vincent de Paul House, Dunardagh, in Blackrock. We received a wonderful welcome from Sr Ann Neylon; we visited their Heritage Room, learning about different Vincentian groups who work with Prisoners, Immigrants and in disadvantaged areas encouraging people to vote. There were displays about their work with older people and people with an intellectual disability - it is an interesting and inspirational exhibition. We finished in the Chapel with a Blessing Ceremony, and were commissioned as Young Vincentians. We read Scripture readings about justice, reflected on some words of Frederic Ozanam, prayed a litany in honour of the Vincentian Founders- St Vincent de Paul, St Louise, Blessed Frederic and Blessed Rosalie- and were presented with lovely Certificates.

Finally, 6 lucky Fifth Year girls from Holy Child are chosen each year as volunteers for Kerdiffstown house, helping with the older people from our area who are on holiday. Jennifer Cuffe, also a past student, is our adult mentor in Kerdiffstown, and she puts the girls through their paces! It is really hard work, but such fun, and that's a story for another article!

The SVP Conference in Holy Child is a very important aspect of our Gospel-inspired social justice school commitment. We are privileged to be involved, and really enjoy the different activities. Our Principal even bought us a microwave (nicknamed Fred !) so that we would never be late for lunchtime meetings. We highly recommend joining the SVP, in your school, your College or your local Community.