

# Seeing first-hand the SVP's work in the UK

"The beauty of subsidiarity", says **Renato Lima de Oliveira**, "is that every country around the world can have its individual needs met through charity". Renato is International President of the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP), a Catholic charity present in 153 countries across the globe.

With nearly a million members (all volunteers), the Society does an enormous amount of good work addressing the problems linked to poverty in countries as diverse as the UK, India, Norway and China.

The unique structure of the SVP means that rather than being run centrally, the international head office in Paris is there to ensure unity and harmony, but it is the local members on the ground who carry out the everyday work of the charity. They are guided locally by District and Central Councils in their own countries. In this way, the conditions of poverty in each nation can be met in a uniquely tailored approach.

It is the Summer, and Renato is in England to visit the SVP England and Wales where nearly 10,000 members helped 80,000 people last year.

He is here to learn about the SVP's work in the UK, where loneliness is a significant factor. Each week, members visit 100s of lonely and isolated people especially older people who may not have many surviving friends or family, and parents who may be struggling on their own to look after growing children.

Renato reflects on the contrasts



Renato with staff and trustees at St Vincent's Support Centre



Renato with staff and Bishop Marcus Stock

between poverty in Britain, and in his home country, Brazil.

"Here in the UK people suffer the deprivation of loneliness, addiction, and lack of Christ – spiritual poverty," he says. "In Brazil it is hunger, homelessness, material poverty to a much greater extent. These need different resources and

approaches."

However, he is keen to point out that all Vincentians, wherever they are in the world, have something in common that harmonises their work: "Friendship is at the centre of our vocation".

When SVP founder Frédéric Ozanam started the first SVP group

in Paris in 1833, he said he wanted to "embrace the whole world in a network of charity."

Today, Renato is overseeing the continuous expansion of that network. In England and Wales, the SVP has nearly 1000 parish groups, 40 community shops selling affordable, second hand goods, 100 Community Support Projects (CSPs) including Support Centres offering practical help such as debt advice, counselling, educational classes, employment support and food banks, hostels for people who are without accommodation, approved premises to help rehabilitate former prisoners. This all in addition to the 10,000 members making visits every week to the homes of people who are lonely.

This "network of charity" which forms the SVP is also working in schools and Renato is particularly impressed with the group of SVP "Mini Vinnies" he meets. These are children aged 7-11 who focus on charitable acts of goodwill in their classrooms and at home as part of the SVP life journey. These children

can continue on to join the Youth SVP (11-14 year olds), B-Attitude (14-18 year olds), and SVP1833 (18 to 21 years) before becoming adult members.

Renato himself began his Vincentian vocation as a teenager when he himself joined the Young Vincentians in Brazil. This "sowed the seeds" of Vincentian spirituality in his heart, and he went on to continue as an adult member. Renato, together with England and Wales National President Helen O'Shea and Leeds Central Council President Marie Atherton, meet Bishop of Leeds Marcus Stock in his house at Hinsley Hall. Bishop Marcus, himself an educationalist, is keen to hear about the SVP's extensive work shaping and forming young people in the faith.

Renato, Helen, and Marie are all themselves members of the SVP and belong to their own local parish groups in their home towns. Like all members at every level, they are volunteers who still visit and befriend people in need as well as carrying out the duties of their office.

Renato says that this common membership keeps the SVP at all levels "grounded and united" in their vocation as Vincentians.

His plans, over his tenure, are to expand the SVP further around the globe. In a project named SSVP plus, he hopes over his five year term to expand the Society into 20 more countries where there is already either a Vincentian presence to build on, or the presence of the Catholic Church to help found more groups.

With a presence in countries like Syria and China where Christians are very often persecuted, Renato says that "the SVP, through its inclusiveness – treating and helping people of all faiths, cultures, languages and creeds" is a witness to these countries, of the principles of tolerance and unity.

• If you would like to support the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) in its work visiting and befriending people who are sick and lonely and in need in England and Wales, visit [www.svp.org.uk](http://www.svp.org.uk), telephone 0207 703 3030 or email [info@svp.org.uk](mailto:info@svp.org.uk)

## Jamie Oliver

makes no secret of his desire to educate the masses

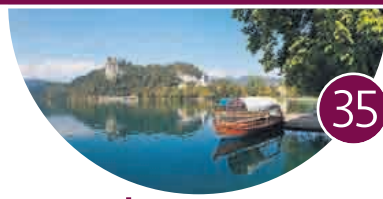
31



## Dahlias

The late summer showstoppers

32



35

## Slovenia

It's holiday heaven

## Wasps

Top tips on how to avoid a painful sting this summer

34



INSIDE: Special four page, World Meeting of Families pull out supplement

Friday 17th August, 2018

# the universe

GIVING THE CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE NEWS AND ISSUES OF THE DAY



£1.30 €1.75

thecatholicuniverse.com

## Government must go further in rough sleeping plan, says charity

The Government is in danger of failing to meet its target to end rough sleeping if gaps in the welfare system are not plugged, a youth homelessness charity has warned.

Depaul UK raised its concerns while broadly welcoming the Government's renewed focus on rough sleeping.

Earlier this week, Prime Minister Theresa May declared her aim to help homeless people "turn their lives around", as the Government launched its £100 million plan to end rough sleeping in England by 2027.

However, Mike Thiedke, Depaul UK chief executive, said the charity is disappointed that the strategy fails to make a firm commitment to deal with clear shortcomings in the welfare system.

"It merely promises to consider making welfare system changes after 2020, by which time more young people will be sleeping rough because they can't find anywhere they can afford to live," Mr Thiedke told *The Catholic Universe*.

"Depaul UK is calling on the Government to bring housing benefit for young people back in line with the real cost of renting. This would prevent young people ending up on the streets in the first place."

The charity has published its own rough sleeping report, *Life on the Streets*, to coincide with the publication of the Government's strategy.

The Depaul UK report says that in 40 areas in England where Government figures showed that 225 young people slept rough on a single night, only 57 private rented rooms were available to young, single people claiming housing benefit – one room for every four rough sleepers.

Mr Thiedke added: "The number of young people sleeping rough in England has increased by 28 per cent over the past year – in many areas, young people who are out of work and can't live with their parents have no chance of getting a roof over their head."

However, he said: "This strategy offers some measures that can help young people escape sleeping on the streets, by recognising the vital contribution made by volunteer hosts of our emergency accommodation network Nightstop and promising more funding for intensive work with care leavers."

Meanwhile, Dr Phil McCarthy, Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN)'s chief executive, also pointed out that the Government must tackle high rent levels and house prices in order to make properties more affordable.

"It's great that the Government has listened to professional charities on how to improve support to people reduced to living on the streets," Dr McCarthy told *The Catholic Universe*. "But many other people cannot access or remain in accommodation because of high rent levels and house prices. We encourage landlords and vendors to take greater responsibility: by accepting more tenants on benefits and, where practical, making property prices more affordable."

The new strategy, revealed by Communities Secretary James Brokenshire, will offer support with mental health and addictions as well as help with accommodation.

Based on a three-pronged approach of prevention, intervention and recovery, it focuses on efforts to stop people becoming homeless in the first place, with swift, targeted support to get those in crisis off the streets and into long-term housing.

The strategy includes £50 million for homes outside London for people ready to move on from hostels or refuges and £30 million for mental health support for rough sleepers.

Ministers are also expected to review legislation on homelessness and rough sleeping, including the Vagrancy Act, which dates back to 1824 and still makes it illegal to sleep rough or beg in England and Wales.

Continued on page 2



## Kick gambling out of football, CARE urges Premier League

Nick Benson

Christian Action Research & Education (CARE) has called for a "serious public debate" on gambling and urged those in charge of England's Premier League, as well as other footballing authorities, to ensure that football fans are protected from its risks.

With the new Premier League season well and truly under way, CARE has highlighted concerns over the scale of gambling advertising.

The public policy charity has revealed that over half of the teams (60 per cent) in English football's top two leagues have betting company logos adorned across their jerseys.

It has also called for a ban on sport betting adverts being shown on TV prior to the 9pm watershed.

With nine out of 20 (45 per cent) of Premier League teams and 17 out of 24 (71 per cent) of Championship League teams sponsored by gambling companies, Nola Leach, CARE's chief executive, warned that it is more than evident that betting companies are side-stepping the ban on advertising to children by sponsoring football clubs and putting their logos on team shirts.

While gambling companies are not allowed to target children with their

advertisements, Ms Leach warned that allowing their logos to be emblazoned across children's footballing hero's chests without proper context was effectively providing bookmakers with a loophole to get around the ban.

"Sponsoring football shirts is a way that bookmakers can side-step the ban on advertising to children," Ms Leach told *The Catholic Universe*.

Ms Leach warned that the problem is made more acute because under current industry regulations, sport betting ads can be shown around broadcast sporting events before the 9pm watershed.

This was particularly evident in last Saturday's 2-2 draw between Everton and Wolverhampton Wanderers at Molineux, Wolverhampton. Fans who tuned into *BT Sport 1 HD* at 5.30pm to see the game were overwhelmed by gambling advertisements, including on pitchside hoardings and football shirts, as both teams have betting companies stamped across their jerseys, Everton with SportPesa and Wolves with W88.

Speaking about the issue, Ms Leach said: "This problem is only made worse by the fact the 9pm watershed does not apply to sport betting ads when sporting events are broadcast,"

she said.

CARE is now calling for the 9pm watershed to be extended to cover sport betting ads and the charity is also calling for a wider public debate on football's relationship with the gambling industry.

"We have an epidemic of child problem gamblers in Britain and for the sake of protecting them and other problem gamblers surely we have to question whether the Premier League and other footballing authorities are doing enough to raise awareness of the risks associated with gambling," Ms Leach said.

According to Gambling Commission figures there are 430,000 adult problem gamblers in the UK with hundreds of thousands more at risk of the problem.

There are also estimated to be 370,000 11-16 year olds who gamble on a weekly basis with 25,000 of them classed as problem gamblers.

ISSN 0041-8226



33

9 770041 822039