



GIVE WATER, LIFE AND HOPE

The Story of the Association's Centenary Charity

By Past Grand President Philip Gidman

In the last edition of *Catena*, Cafod Director, Chris Bain, thanked our Association, on behalf of all the Catholic aid agencies involved, for the amazing amount of £250,000 which was raised internationally by the Centenary Charity. He also set out how some of the initial money donated is being used.

The monies raised had been paid over throughout the centenary year so that the agencies could begin their urgent work. However, it was thought appropriate that a particularly high profile Catenian event should be used to register the landmark achievement and this Grand President Joe McNally did at the Centenary and 1200th meeting of London Central No 2 Circle in December 2009. In handing over the symbolic cheque to Chris Bain, Grand President Joe said: 'I'm so pleased to be able to make this donation, because I can think of no better way to celebrate the first hundred years of our Catenian Association.

This is the first time we have united around a single cause and this demonstrates the great positive impact we can make.'

So, how did we, The Catenian Association, come to raise this magnificent sum for a single charity when we do not claim to be a fund raising organisation and many members would argue strongly that we should not be?

In the initial planning for our centenary year no thought had been given to any form of Association-wide charitable activity and the general feeling in those early days, following members' overwhelming approval of a £10 levy to fund our centenary, was that the money raised would be solely to fund internal activities. However, the letter pages of *Catena* in mid-2006 expressed different sentiments and hoped that if the Association was to mark its centenary it

should do so in a way that was not 'purely on wine and dining'. Thus was borne the idea that, whilst it would be most right and proper for the Association to celebrate its centenary, it might also consider the idea of a 'lasting legacy'.

In my address at the Cardiff 2007 conference, I floated the idea that it would be a wonderful gesture if every President in the Centenary Year united by making a Catenian Centenary Appeal his chosen President's charity for that year. By doing this we could create a permanent memorial of our first 100 years and make a real difference to the lives of people less well off than ourselves. In a letter following that

team up with the Catholic charity Caritas International, which has a proven track record in this work. For logistical and administrative reasons the programme would be developed with Cafod, as a member of Caritas, but it would be a truly international appeal (involving Caritas Australia, Sciaf and Trocaire). The Centenary Appeal would be used to provide life-giving and life-changing clean water in Africa - especially in Zimbabwe where there is great need. As a result of discussions with Cafod the appeal was given the title Give Water, Life and Hope.

In my November 2007 letter members were reminded that the over-riding consideration in choosing the beneficiary for the Centenary Charity was that all money raised should be used to make the biggest difference to the greatest number of people. We all know that a reliable supply of clean water (with associated sanitation measures) saves lives and there are other benefits too. If people are not walking miles each day to fetch just survival amounts of water, they can spend that time going to school, working and looking after the sick and elderly. Reliable water supplies

also enable them to grow crops for their own families and provide a small surplus they can sell to raise cash.

Local, reliable, clean water supplies revolutionise the standard of living for the whole community. What greater gift can we give?

In the letter it was recognised that many incoming presidents may already have made promises to other charities and it was not intended that our centenary charity should affect those. However, I asked that where there was an unbreakable commitment to another charity, perhaps a circle could hold at least one fund raising event in the year and encourage individual brothers to support the fund by involving the wider community.

Initial reaction was promising but by no means overwhelming. However, it was



Past Grand President David Taylor, Chris Bain and Lucy Harrison both of CAFOD and Past Grand President Phil Gidman

conference address, sent to all circle and provincial vice presidents, who would be president during the centenary year, I asked firstly, whether they would be prepared to amalgamate their charitable activities with others for the centenary year and secondly, whether they had any suggestions as to what cause or causes they considered would be appropriate for a centenary charity. The replies received supported a joint approach and the majority suggested projects involving clean water. At its meeting in October 2007, members of Grand Council unanimously supported this suggestion.

Grand Council also accepted that, whilst Catenians are well known for being generous, they know little or nothing about providing clean water supplies in Southern Africa. As a result it was agreed that the Association should