



Special Message from President General to all SSVP Young Members around the World

“It is a joy for young people to join our modest ranks, being surrounded by truly Christian colleagues engaged with the poor, while tasting the sweetness of a holistic approach stemming from Catholic charity”

(Circular Letter dated July 2nd, 1845, written by the 2nd President General Jules Gossin)

Paris, 4 July 2020

Dear young members of the SSVP's Conferences!

Today, I am very pleased to convey this message to all of you, young members, who take part in our beloved Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP), present in the 151 territories across the globe. We are commemorating the SSVP's **INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY**, under the theme **“Young Vincentians: Sharing Hope and Charity”**. My congratulations to all of you, dear young members!

Established in 1833, in France, by a group of young people aged between 18 and 38, our Society arose from the divine inspiration that brought together these young people who launched an initiative that has provided essential services to mankind. Today, the Society is made up of 800,000 members in 48,000 Conferences. A miracle indeed!

Both then and now, the SSVP's young members are prompted to be the heirs to the legacy of the seven founders, serving the poor with love, empathy, humility and zeal. The poor are precisely the ones who will open the doors of Heaven to us. Hence, the more we practice charity, the closer we will be to God.

The role played by the youth within the Vincentian Conferences is essential for the renewal of the SSVP. **Without youth, our rules die out, our procedures become stale, our energy diminishes, our joy fades away, our charity gets mechanized.** The presence of young Vincentians among us is essential for the survival of our institution.

Within the Council General, there is plenty of room for young people. The international strategic planning has a specific goal for young people, with a Vice-President representing them exclusively, alongside a team of 12 territorial delegates. To this end, several initiatives have been launched: a special collect for the youth is organised on a yearly basis; the SSVP's International Youth Day has been established; International Youth meetings have been held, the second and most recent of which took place in Salamanca in 2018 (Spain); a world census will be conducted; and communication material (brochures, booklets and manuals) will be published mainly aimed at disseminating the Vincentian action in universities. Furthermore, in our annual Circular Letter, many references to the youth are always made. To sum up, great progress has been made within the Council General in the field of youth for the glory of God, and much more is to come...

For all the above reasons, young people need a place within the Vincentian Councils; otherwise, we will never know their potential and we would be hindering the renewal of our entity, which is not advisable. Even if well-intentioned, young people may make mistakes. These failures are human and must be taken for granted. At the SSVP's 1847 General Assembly, Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam

spoke of youth: **"Youth are needed because of their boldness and audacity, even their imprudence. They provide us with new ideas and a new way of doing things that we had never imagined."**

Courageously facing life's challenges and never disregarding God's or family's issues, Ozanam's devotion to work and study has certainly made him a great role model for youth in this day and age. Another beacon of Vincentian youth is Blessed Peter George Frassati, a modern young man who consecrated his life to charity, friendship, fraternal fellowship and the politics of good. Both had much in common: born in Italy, where they lived only a few years, they both loved being Catholics while being unrepentant political activists; they died sick and were declared blessed by the Holy Church; however, their foremost common feature was their love for the Eucharist, family and the poor, as well as the devotion to Mary Most Holy.

May Ozanam and Frassati always be role models for all the young members of the SSVP around the world. Let us try to delve into the biography of our founders so that we, learning about the past, can also celebrate the present and improve the future that lies ahead.

I take this opportunity to embrace all the young members, wishing that they will never give up Vincentian charism. Be strong, especially now in times of pandemic! **We are on the opposite side of the world because of the virtues and values we stand for; that is why, we will surely encounter many hurdles in our journey.**

You can expect a lot from me. I joined the SSVP when I was only 15 years-old. I have no doubt that the Council General International will still yield many good fruits for the member countries of the Confederation and, of course, for the young people of our beloved Conferences. Count on me and pray for me.

Vincentian greetings with Clavé, Ozanam and Frassati.



Renato Lima de Oliveira
16th President General