

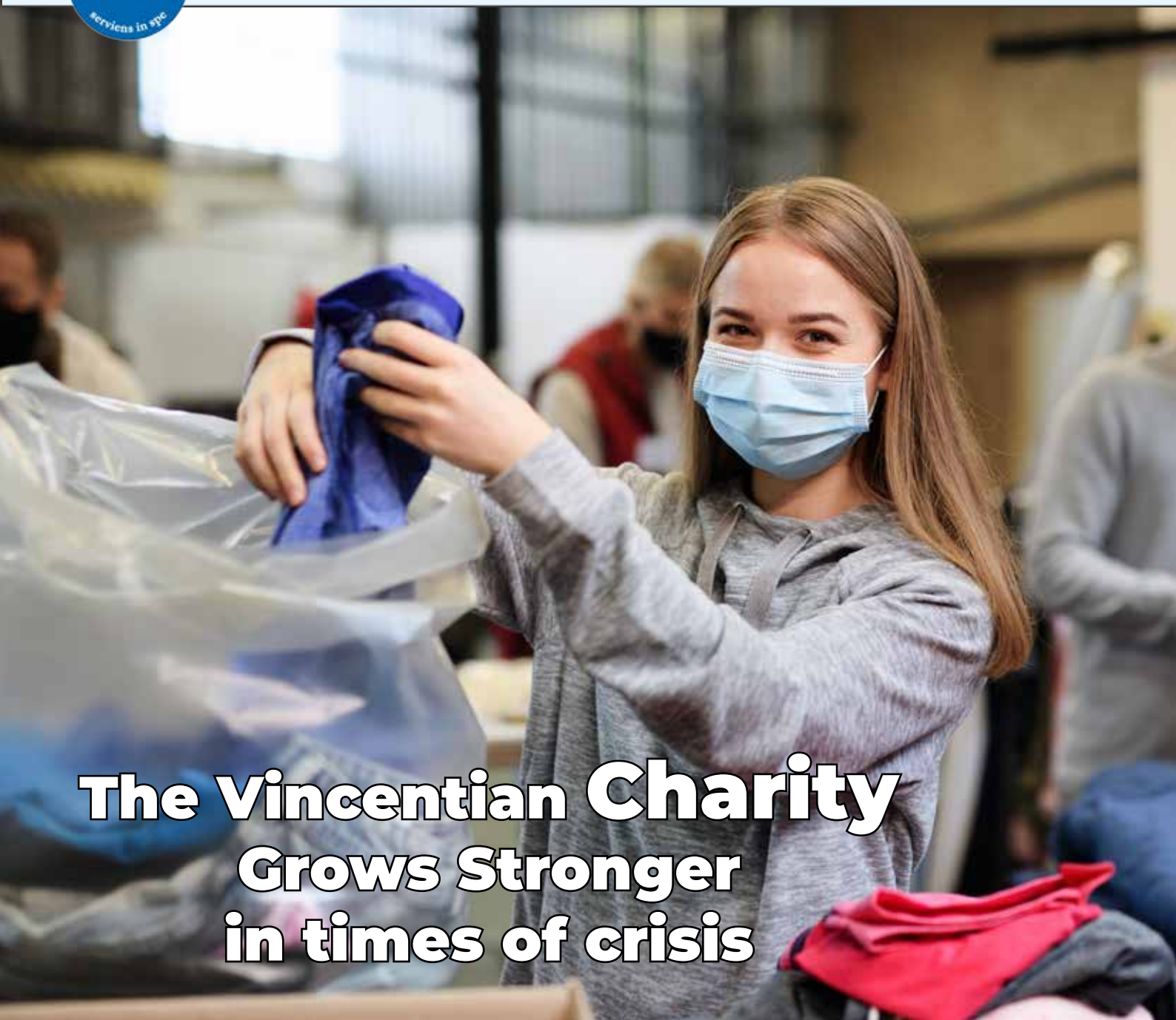


Issue  
1/2021

# OZANAM NETWORK



Council General International - Society of St Vincent de Paul



## The Vincentian Charity Grows Stronger in times of crisis

**2021**  
Themed year of  
Jules Devaux

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**SSVP took part in  
a panel discussion  
on homelessness at  
the United Nations**

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**Syria.  
Winning the War  
with Faith**

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**Kenya.  
Street families**

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# Editorial

## For us as Vincentians, there are no hard times

Brother Renato Lima de Oliveira  
16th President General



Faced with the countless challenges in our daily life, we sometimes feel weak, lost and incapable of changing the current situation. At various times in our lives, we also feel humiliated, despised and subject to the indifference and prejudice of others. Like all people, we are not immune to problems.

But for us as members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, such negative feelings should not affect us. God strengthens us, protects us and keeps us in such a way that we are always assisted by divine Grace. So we are abundantly blessed by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

For us as Vincentians, there are no hard times. God has given us the strength, the will and the confidence to overcome life's setbacks. He has filled us with extra energy, intelligence, audacity, creativity and innovation to be able to defeat problems, find solutions and propose ways out. God really helps us to overcome unemployment, sickness and hopelessness, ever-present in this time of pandemic.

For us as Vincentians, there are no hard times. Within our Society, we can see this same providential force that drives us forward. Our Conferences, special

works and Councils are truly protected by the love of Our Lady, who gives us the encouragement and faith we need so much to find ways to keep on serving in our Vincentian work, especially for those who need it most.

For us as Vincentians, there are no hard times. We can never give up. Faith in Christ is our hope and our joy. Charity is much stronger than we are, redoubling our strength in difficult times. Trials will pass. Tribulations will pass. The shadows will pass. I have no doubt that our Conferences will continue to flourish, because the Lord will not let them weaken.

Therefore, dear fellow members, let us never lose hope, because in this way we will overcome the setbacks of this earthly life, in the light of the Holy Spirit and with the Word of God at our side. Let us also never forget the example given by St. Vincent de Paul and our seven founders, who also faced, in their time, very unfavorable situations.

"That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

*Our Conferences  
will continue to  
flourish, because  
the Lord will not let  
them weaken.*





# CIRCULAR LETTER 2021

President General Renato Lima de Oliveira

[www.ssvpglobal.org](http://www.ssvpglobal.org)



## Tenderness and empathy are the central topics of this year in the Circular Letter of the President-General

For the fifth consecutive year, our brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, publishes his Circular Letter in which he addresses the fellow members of the world, addressing themes for general reflection.

Since 1841, it has been a tradition among the Presidents General to write the Circular Letter. The document is divided into five chapters: 1) Introduction; 2) General Council News; 3) Recommendations to the Vincentians; 4) International Thematic Year on Founder Jules Devaux; 5) Conclusions. This year, the President General has divided the five chapters into several sub-items to make the reading of the Letter easier, and he has included 32 footnotes containing literary and bibliographic references that enrich the content of the document.

In this 2021 edition, our President General offers a message of hope and encouragement, after the challenges experienced by humanity - and obviously by the SSVP and the Vincentian Family - during the pandemic. In addition, he takes stock of the activities carried out by the General Council over the past year, highlighting the progress in the areas of youth, the canonization of Ozanam, administrative management, online training and the interaction among the fellow members.

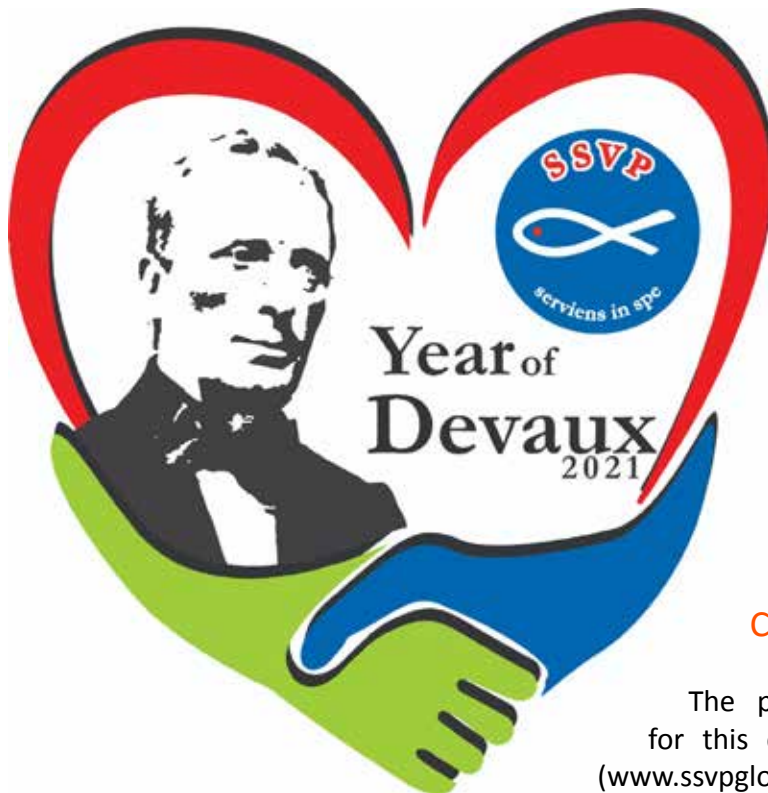
"The Circular Letter is a powerful tool of Vincentian training for the entire Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The President General's writings provide his reflections on the most significant topics of our time and on the challenges faced by the fellow members, the Conferences, the special works and the Councils. The Circular Letter deserves to be read and reflected upon, as it can help Vincentians in their quest for greater efficiency and quality in service. The section of the text dealing with empathy, intelligence and tenderness is a positive message to all of us," stressed the International Vice-President for Training, Marisa Téllez.

Since the Circular Letter is quite long (12 pages), we recommend that it be reflected on section by section during the Conference meetings. We thank the Superior Councils for collaborating with the General Council in the dissemination of it in their countries, publishing it in the official media of the SSVP, in addition to social networks and the Internet, besides discussing it in training courses and Vincentian gatherings.

Suggestions and comments: [cgi.circularletter@gmail.com](mailto:cgi.circularletter@gmail.com). Good reading!

[Click here to read the Circular Letter](#)





## Council General Launches the International Competition for Writings on Jules Devaux

As a way of promoting further the “International Year on the Theme of Jules Devaux”, the Council General of the SSVP hereby opens the International Literary Competition.

The procedures, with the rules and the appendix for this competition, are available on the CGI website ([www.ssvpglobal.org](http://www.ssvpglobal.org)). The written entries must be no more than 20 pages long. Cash prizes will be awarded for the three best entries (1000, 750 and 500 euros, respectively). The SVP Conferences to which the winners belong will also receive a cash award to the same value, to be spent on behalf of the families and individuals they help, or on Vincentian works.

Entries may be submitted in one of five languages: Portuguese, Spanish, English, Italian and French. The closing date for sending in dissertations / studies will be 8th July 2021. The organizing committee will announce the final result on 9 September 2021, and the prizes will be sent to the winners immediately afterwards.

This competition was announced in the 16th President General’s programme for his term of office, which instituted the “themed years” in order to spread knowledge of the life, work and legacy of the founders of the first Vincentian Conference in 1833. Council General hopes that many Vincentians, especially young people, will take part in the Devaux competition,

*The closing date  
for sending in  
dissertations / studies  
will be 8th July 2021*

So come on! Let’s ask Superior Councils to help CGI spread news of this competition to the Conferences and Councils in every country, as well as to Vincentian schools and colleges, and to Catholic universities.

Click here to read [the rules](#) and [annex](#) of the literary contest.

For more information: [cgi.formation@ssvpglobal.org](mailto:cgi.formation@ssvpglobal.org)

## The Council General International Publishes 2020 Activity Report

The Council General International (CGI) of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) is pleased to publish an overview of the activities undertaken by the CGI in 2020.

As shown, there have been a myriad of activities and good deeds in 2020, despite the health crisis that has rocked mankind. With God's grace and the Holy Spirit's power, the CGI has never stopped during these difficult times of pandemic.

We are grateful to God for the blessings granted, which enabled us to achieve all these goals. We express our gratitude to the Superior or National Councils for the support provided to the Council General. We thank Father Andrés Motto for his great work as spiritual counsellor.

We thank the Vincentian Family for their alliances and common projects with us. We thank all the staff making up Paris' general headquarters. Our heartfelt thanks to all the members, brothers and sisters, who minister in any department, commission or division within the International Structure.

We kindly request to share the attached PDF file with all National, Central, Zone Councils, and Vincentian Conferences and Works, and to also submit it to local churches and leaders of the Vincentian Family in each of our territories.



[Descargar](#)







## CGI's International Structure and Organization Chart

The Council General International's new Structure and organization chart is presented for the next biennium of the presidency of Renato Lima de Oliveira.

Following the legacy of Saint Vincent, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP) provides in its charism, the "loving" care, the human warmth and the close relationship with the neighbour, while also ensuring "effectiveness" in its works and service.

The International Structure is comprised of many Vincentians of all nationalities, which reflects the SSVP's spirit of "doing the good well" (Saint Vincent de Paul).

Behind every work of service being carried out by the Council General International (CGI), there is a Vincentian who, with the help of God, is committed to grow this "network of Charity" and to bring hope and love to everyone around the world and especially to those suffering poverty in any of its forms; because, "God who draws the clouds together to scatter the lightning, also

draws souls together to radiate love" (Blessed F. Ozanam).

It is our hope to fulfill this desire of Bl. Frédéric Ozanam, especially in 2021 in the wake of last year's challenging times, arising from the health crisis triggered by Covid-19. May God enlighten the members who are part of the International Structure and every Vincentian of the world, in their mission of faith and commitment to service towards the poorest.

The President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira, declared: "From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank those Vincentians who have taken part in the International Structure during my first four years of term, to whom I express my great gratitude for the services provided. Therefore, I ask all those who remain to continue their ministry with the


same love and loyalty. To those who are joining the International Structure, I want you to be mindful of the privilege and joy of serving the SSVP's CGI."

There are new developments for this new period, some of which are herein listed: The new post of '3rd Vice President General Deputy' has been established, and will be taken over by fellow member Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez (Spain); fellow member Antonio Gianfico (Italy) becomes the new International Vice President for Institutional Relationship; fellow member Alfons ten Velde (Netherlands) becomes the new International Vice President for Governance and Strategic Affairs; fellow member Ralph Middlecamp (USA) has taken over the new International Vice

Presidency for Solidarity and Social Projects; and fellow member Helen O'Shea (England & Wales) will be in charge of the Governance Department. New territorial delegates, area coordinators, commissions and departments were also appointed.

Pursuant to the Rule, the Structure concludes its service upon completion of President General's term of office. All the same, as this is the last stage of the term and in order to prevent discontinuity of services, the Rule wisely provides that members of the Structure may keep on ministering for a further six-month period or until the new President General can make whatever adjustments he deems necessary (Article 3.28 of International Statutes).

Version 2021.4



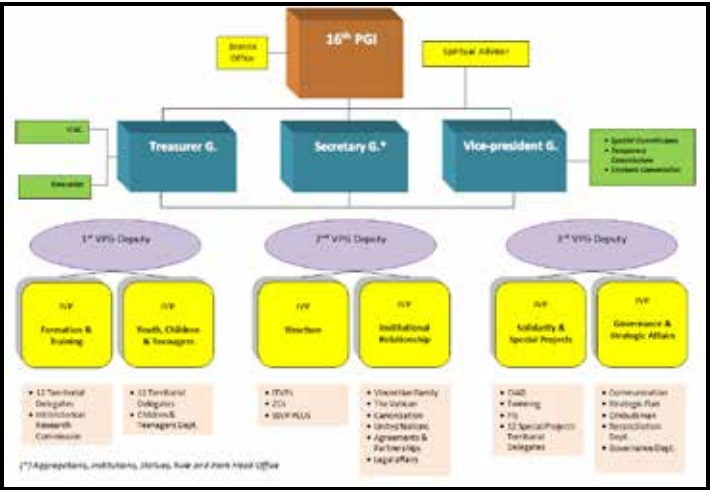
16<sup>th</sup> President General

Paris, France  
January 6<sup>th</sup> 2021.

## TO THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

Dear brothers and sisters, my fellow members, God bless.

According to the Rule and International Statutes approved in the Extraordinary General Assembly, in October 2003 in Rome (Italy), I am pleased to inform all Councils and Conferences, as well as the International Board and International Structure, the names of brothers and sisters appointed to take up international responsibilities between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (Statutes of the Confederation: 3.28), as defined below.



(\*) Appointments, institutions, services, Rule and other special office

**A – BOARD**  
(Statutes of the Confederation: 3.16 to 3.18)

**A 1 – BOARD (according to the Rule)**  
(Statutes of the Confederation: 3.16 to 3.18)

- **16<sup>th</sup> President General International:** Renato Lima de Oliveira (Brazil)
- **Vice-president General International:** Joseph Pandian Thomas (India)
- **Secretary General:** Marie-Françoise Payet-Salesiani (France)
- **Treasurer General:** Larry Tuomey (Ireland)
- **1<sup>st</sup> Vice-president General Deputy:** Joseph Makwinja (Botswana)
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-president General Deputy:** Sebastián Gramajo (Argentina)
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-president General Deputy:** Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez (Spain)
- **International Vice-president for Youth, Children & Teenagers:** Willian Alves (Brazil)
- **Spiritual Adviser:** father Andrés Motto, CM (Argentina)

CGI Structure 2021-2022

Furthermore, upon approval by the International Board, the President General also stated the new non-permanent countries that will be part of the International Executive Committee (IEC) during this two-year period, as provided for in the Confederation's Statutes, which now features two new categories: countries with up to 500 Conferences; and countries with between 501 and 999 Conferences. Thus, transparency and international governance are enhanced. "I am very pleased with the improvements made within the International Structure. I do believe that we will do more and we will do better, with the same economic resources, without any extra cost", guaranteed our President General.

Click here for further information:

[New Structure ENG](#)







### SSVP's Safeguarding Protocol for Children and Vulnerable People

The Council General International (CGI) has always been concerned about the reputation of our Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP) in the eyes of civil society, especially with regard to the people assisted, collaborators (employees), donors, the Holy Church and governments.

After all, it is essential to have credibility and a good image with all our stakeholders if we wish to accomplish our mission in life: to keep on serving the poor to a greater extent.

The CGI's attention was drawn to a very positive initiative which is being carried out in several countries: the safeguarding (protection and security) of people assisted by the SSVP, both in home visits and Special Works (especially nursing houses and child day-care centers). Moreover, it is essential for

the Society to formulate safeguarding measures as a framework to prevent harm or any kind of harassment. In the workplace, it is crucial to avoid deviations, which may give rise to occupational, moral and even legal issues in the future.

To this end, the CGI organized a training day on this issue in October 2019, which gathered experts from England and Australia, as well as Board members and the 12 Territorial Vice Presidents (ITVPs). Later on, in October 2020, the SSVP's Safeguarding Protocol was

approved at the CGI's Annual Meeting, which was held virtually from Paris, with the vote in favor by delegates of all the countries present.

This Protocol comprises a core set of standards to safeguard vulnerable adults, children and young people, as set out in the Apostolic Letter issued by Pope Francis instituting the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, of which the SSVP is part of officially. In 2021, this Protocol will be detailed, including situations and practical examples which may somehow harm the image of the SSVP due to harmful conduct. The regulation will set out ethical recommendations, such as visiting children only in the presence of two or more adults, and never giving donations or aid conditional on any kind of proselytism or religious affiliation.

"It is essential to put in place safeguarding mechanisms that keep ill-intentioned people away and to avoid transgressions, irregularities or deviations of purpose concerning the services intended for those whom the SSVP serves with so much zeal and love. The SSVP's training courses also have to be adapted to this new scenario so that new members are properly trained on this issue", stated the 16th President General, brother Renato Lima.

With the Protocol unanimously approved by the countries at the 2020 CGI Annual Meeting, each National or Superior Council is invited to discuss the issue internally and adapt the Protocol according to each situation.

[Click here to read full Protocol](#)





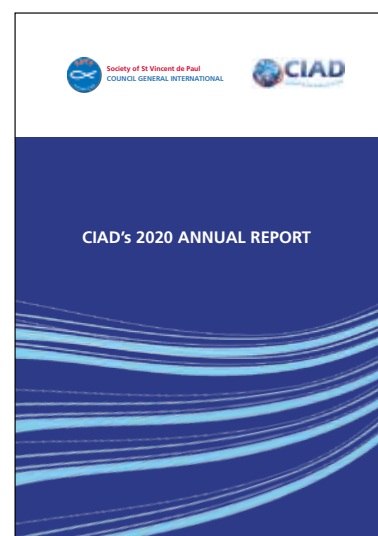


## Commission for International Aid and Development Report 2020

The Commission for International Aid and Development (CIAD) belongs to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul's Council General International. This Commission examines the funding requests regarding projects undertaken worldwide by the Society, focusing on emergency relief in response to humanitarian crisis, disaster recovery, development programmes and projects aimed at expanding and strengthening the SSVP.

It is also responsible for monitoring the allocation of project-related funds around the world.

The CIAD is made up of eight SSVP volunteers from every continent, supported by one staff member. Its action is funded by donations from National/Superior Councils—and rarely by outside donors—, mainly in response to appeals in the aftermath of major catastrophes. The CIAD does not raise funds directly from the general public since this funding source is reserved for National/Superior Councils.



[Download](#)





## SSVP - Council General International - Board Meeting - February 20, 2021



### This Year's First CGI Board Meeting

On February 20th, 2021, at noon (Paris time), the Council General International's Board met virtually for the first time this year, due to existing Covid-19 travel restrictions.

In addition to Board members, Father Giuseppe Guerra (postulator) was invited to join in to elaborate on the canonization process of Bl. Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam. It is worth noting that it was the first meeting to welcome the three new International Vice-presidents appointed by President General: brother Ralph (the United States), brother Gianfco (Italy) and brother Juan Manuel (Spain).

Father Andres Motto, CM, CGI's spiritual advisor, pondered on this year's Circular Letter. The meeting minutes of the previous meeting, held on December 6th, 2020, were presented for consideration and approval by sister Marie-Françoise, Secretary General. The CGI's financial statements were presented by brother Larry Tuomey, Treasurer General.

The meeting agenda was packed with issues addressed by Board members, namely the extension of mandates of several National Councils whose

requests have already been submitted to the CGI; the release of booklets and books on Vincentian formation; Famvin's initiatives worldwide; specifics on the Themed Year of Jules Devaux; updated information on the international strategic planning; the revision of the Reference Terms for each ministry within the CGI; the possible deferral of upcoming international events due to current Covid-19 restrictions; the progress made on "Ozanam Historical Space" (to be inaugurated at the General Headquarters); prospective new international cooperation agreements with key partners; the online meeting gathering International Territorial Vice Presidents (April 25th); special commissions (logo and statutes); and communication.

Another topic addressed was the unfolding global Covid-19 health crisis, and its toll on the economy and mortality, which has brought on poverty and social inequality. Hence, the SSVP must rally to serve the poor more efficiently.



Jean-Noël Cormier  
Chairman Concordat.

### Concordat

The International Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is based in Paris, France and through its various programmes assists Conferences and Councils around the world. Whether it is because of a natural disaster, because members of a Conference or Council have a promising project idea or simply because of the current pandemic, whenever possible, the ICG responds to requests for help.

#### How does the ICG help?

There is the International Commission for Aid and Development (CIAD), the International Solidarity Fund (ISF), SSVP plus, which works for the development of the Society where we are not present, the twinning programme and finally the different training modules developed by the ICG, as well as information on the Society's activities around the world, all of which is available on its website, [www.ssvpglobal.org](http://www.ssvpglobal.org).

In addition, at the Society's head office, a dedicated and competent team of employees is available to manage these various assistance programmes and to support the Conferences and Councils.

In order to keep these programmes active the ICG needs funds and these funds come mainly from the member countries of the Concordat and from a few supporting Superior or National Councils. In order to be a member of

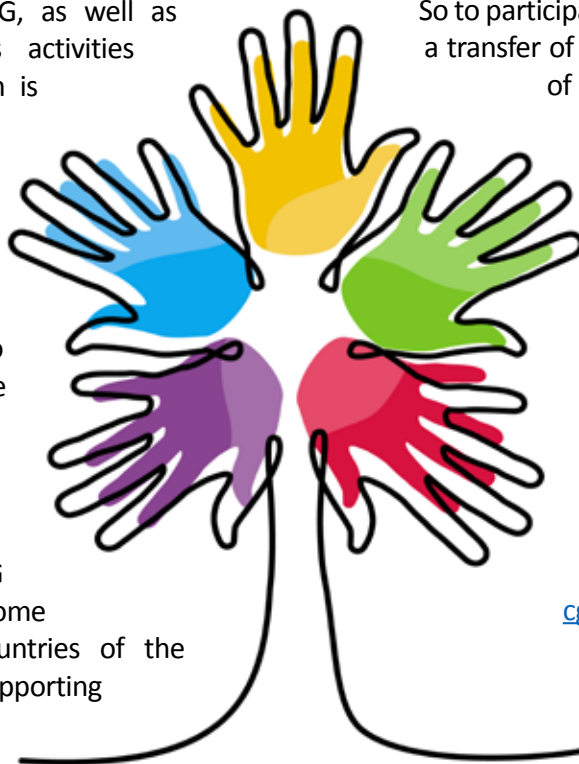
the Concordat the Superior or National Councils have to commit themselves to transfer annually a sum of money defined in advance by them. In this way the Treasurer General knows in advance the funds he has at his disposal for redistribution to the different programmes. The more countries that join this collective effort, the more the ICG will be able to help the Conferences and Councils in need. It is a gesture of solidarity with our Vincentian sisters and brothers around the world. It is recognition that we are all members of the same Society and that our main objective is to help people in need. Sometimes, due to a natural disaster or pandemic, members of the Society locally, do not have the resources to serve people in need in their area. It is important that they do not feel alone and know that the international Society is there to help them. So to participate in the Concordat is more than a transfer of money to the ICG, it is a gesture of solidarity towards Vincentians around the world.

We invite all Superior and National Councils who are not members of the Concordat to take the time to analyse their financial situation to see how they could help. Whether you join the Concordat or not, we invite you to inform the General Treasurer, specifying the amount of your help at the following address:

[cgi.compta@ssvpglobal.org](mailto:cgi.compta@ssvpglobal.org)

All contributions are welcome.

May God bless you.





# Consensus Decision by Superior Councils on Adjourning the General Assembly to 2023

**Desperate times call for desperate measures.**

On March 28th, a decision by consensus on adjourning the General Assembly to 2023 — scheduled for 2022— was taken by the Superior Councils, which make up the International Executive Committee (IEC), at the Extraordinary Assembly, in the light of the severe impact of the pandemic on the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The Councils that make up the Committee, as defined by the Statutes of the Confederation,

took part in the debate: ten of them are “full member countries” (with over 1,000 active and aggregated Conferences) and another 10 countries invited by President General. Altogether, these nations account for 90% of all fellow members worldwide.

Significantly, the Council General had asked the IEC countries to vote on the exceptional adjournment of the General Assembly either to 2023/2024 or to hold it in 2022 (face-to-face, mixed or virtual). After a wide-ranging discussion with Presidents, fellow member Renato Lima, recalling the spirit of the Rule, fraternally called for a decision by consensus. This was followed by a proposal for adjournment to 2023 by fellow member Michel Lanternier, France’s National Council President, which was unanimously agreed.

“The IEC meeting was held in a climate of dialogue and utmost cooperation. All the attendees expressed their concerns about the impacts of the pandemic on the SSVP’s activities. Furthermore, it was agreed that eligible candidates for 2022 would have their full rights duly guaranteed until 2023”, explained President Renato Lima.

The General Assembly is a keynote occasion for the 152 territories making up our Confederation to appoint a new President General, as well as a symbolic time for celebration and renewal. At the forthcoming General Assembly (which thankfully will

be face-to-face, which is much preferable to a virtual meeting when having to deal thoroughly with complex issues), among the topics that require to be addressed are the election and the proposed

amendments to the Confederation’s Statutes, which will have to be voted on article by article.

With the new date set for the upcoming Assembly, it is hoped that the Covid-19 pandemic will be brought under control, with Covid vaccines rolling out around the world, thus reopening international travel. Although the Council General’s Board has not yet decided the venue for the 2023 General Assembly, it will probably be Rome (Italy).



## IEC COUNTRIES

Australia	Netherlands
Brazil	Uruguay
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Tonga
England and Wales	Indonesia
India	Mozambique
Ireland	France
Italy	Canada
USA	Portugal
Nigeria	South Korea
Zambia	Philippines





## Pope Francis appoints the SSVP President General to join a Dicastery of the Holy See

Pope Francis appointed brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, as a member of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

“I received with great emotion the news of the appointment by the Holy Father to represent the SSVP members of the world in this important Dicastery, whose focal point is very close to our Society’s charitable action. It is an immense honour and also a great privilege to be part of this Dicastery, which is one of the most important of the Holy See”, the President said.

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development was created by Pope Francis as a result

of the merger of several pontifical commissions and councils, including the defunct “Cor Unum”, of which the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was part.

According to its statutes, in force since January 1, 2017, the Dicastery works in the areas of justice and peace, migration and refugees, health, charitable works and the care of God’s creation. In the light of the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church, the Dicastery promotes integral human development, with special attention to the

needy, children, the sick and unemployed, including assistance during natural disasters.

The Dicastery is also responsible for promoting solidarity with the most vulnerable, in particular through the celebration of the World Days of Peace (January 1), Migrants (June 20) and The Sick (February 11). In addition, as stated by the Dicastery's statutes, there are three working commissions: "Charity Commission", "Ecology Commission" and "Health Commission".

The Dicastery is chaired by a prefect (Cardinal Peter Turkson), assisted by a secretary (Msgr. Bruno Marie Duff ) and a secretary deputy (Father Augusto

Zampini Davies), as well as four undersecretaries, consultants and experts. The program of activities for 2021, which includes a Plenary Assembly, will be published shortly on the website of the Dicastery ([www.humandevlopment.va](http://www.humandevlopment.va)) in English, Italian and Spanish.

Besides this Dicastery, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, through its President General, is also part of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life since 2018 ([www.laityfamilylife.va](http://www.laityfamilylife.va)) and is in the process of joining the Dicastery for Communication, at the invitation of the Vatican.

The word "dicastery", unusual in several dictionaries and languages, can be translated as "department of the Roman Curia", and it exercises governmental functions, equivalent to country ministries.



Letter of Appointment, written in Latin, of brother RENATUM LIMA DE OLIVEIRA, signed by Cardinal Peter Turkson on behalf of Pope Francis.

The letter is dated November 11, 2020 and provides a five-year term.



Summary of Encyclical of Pope Francis de Isabella Piro publicado en VaticanNews

## “Fratelli tutti”

The Encyclical aims to promote a universal aspiration toward fraternity and social friendship.

Beginning with our common membership in the human family, from the acknowledgement that we are brothers and sisters because we are the children of one Creator, all in the same boat, and hence we need to be aware that in a globalized and interconnected world, only together can we be saved.

In the background of the Encyclical is the Covid-19 pandemic. The global health emergency has helped demonstrate that “no one can face life in isolation” and that the time has truly come to “dream, then, as a single human family” in which we are “brothers and sisters all”.

### “Dark clouds over a closed world”

In the first chapter the document reflects on the many distortions of the contemporary era: the manipulation and deformation of concepts such as democracy, freedom, justice; the loss of the meaning

of the social community and history; selfishness and indifference toward the common good; the prevalence of a market logic based on profit and the culture of waste; unemployment, racism, poverty; the disparity of rights and its aberrations such as slavery, trafficking, women subjugated and then forced to abort, organ trafficking. It deals with global problems that call for global actions.

### Love builds bridges: the Good Samaritan

The second chapter, “A stranger on the road”, the Pope emphasizes that, in an unhealthy society that turns its back on suffering and that is “illiterate” in caring for the frail and vulnerable, we are all called – just like the Good Samaritan – to become neighbours to others, overcoming prejudices, personal interests, historic and cultural barriers. We all, in fact, are co-responsible in creating a society that is able to include, integrate and lift up those who have fallen or are suffering. Love builds bridges and “we were made for love”, the Pope adds, particularly exhorting Christians to recognize Christ in the face of every excluded person.

### Rights have no borders

A fraternal society, therefore, will be one that promotes educating in dialogue in order to defeat the “virus” of “radical individualism” and to allow everyone to give the best of themselves. Beginning with protection of the family and respect for its “primary and vital mission of education”. There are two ‘tools’ in particular





to achieve this type of society: benevolence, or truly wanting good for the other, and solidarity which cares for fragility and is expressed in service to people and not to ideologies, fighting against poverty and inequality. The right to live with dignity cannot be denied to anyone.

## Migrants: global governance for long-term planning

Meanwhile, part of the second and the entire fourth chapter are dedicated to the theme of migration, the latter, entitled “A heart open to the whole world”. With their lives “at stake”, fleeing from war, persecution, natural catastrophes, unscrupulous trafficking, ripped from their communities of origin, migrants are to be welcomed, protected, supported and integrated. Unnecessary migration needs to be avoided, the Pontiff affirms, by creating concrete opportunities to live with dignity in the countries of origin. But at the same time, we need to respect the right to seek a better life elsewhere.

The Pope also calls for establishing in society the concept of “full citizenship”, and to reject the discriminatory use of the term “minorities”. In this way, countries will be able to think as “human family”.

## Politics: valuable form of charity

The theme of the fifth chapter is “A better kind of politics”, which represents one of the most valuable forms of charity because it is placed at the service of the common good and recognizes the importance of people, understood as an open category, available for discussion and dialogue. The best help to a poor person, the Pontiff explains, is not just money, which is a provisional remedy, but rather allowing him or her to have a dignified life through work. The true anti-poverty strategy does not simply aim to contain or render indigents inoffensive, but to promote them in the perspective of solidarity and subsidiarity. The task of politics, moreover, is to find a solution to all that attacks fundamental human rights.



## The marketplace, by itself, cannot resolve every problem. It requires a reform of the UN

The politics we need, It is a politics centred on human dignity and not subjected to finance because “the marketplace, by itself, cannot resolve every problem”: Another hope present in the Encyclical regards the reform of the UN: in the face of the predominance of the economic dimension which nullifies the power of the individual state, in fact, the task of the United Nations will be to give substance to the concept of a “family of nations” working for the common good, the eradication of indigence and the protection of human rights. Tireless recourse “to negotiation, mediation and arbitration” – the Papal Document states – the UN must promote the force of law rather than the law of force, by favouring multilateral accords that better protect even the weakest states.

## The miracle of kindness

From the sixth chapter, “Dialogue and friendship in society”, further emerges the concept of life as the “art of encounter” with everyone, even with the world’s peripheries and with original peoples, because “each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable”. True dialogue, indeed, is what allows one to respect the point of view of others, their

legitimate interests and, above all, the truth of human dignity.

The art of peace and the importance of forgiveness. The value and promotion of peace is reflected on in the seventh chapter, “Paths of renewed encounter”, in which the Pope underlines that peace is connected to truth, justice and mercy. Far from the desire for vengeance, it is “proactive” and aims at forming a society based on service to others and on the pursuit of reconciliation and mutual development.

### **Never again war, a failure of humanity**

Part of the seventh chapter, then, focuses on war: it is not “a ghost from the past” – Francis emphasizes – “but a constant threat”, and it represents “the negation of all rights”, “a failure of politics and of humanity”, and “a stinging defeat before the forces of evil” which lies in their “abyss”. With the money invested in weapons, the Pope suggests instead the establishment of a global fund for the elimination of hunger.

### **The death penalty inadmissible, to be abolished**

Francis expresses just as clear a position with regard to the death penalty: it is inadmissible and must be

abolished worldwide, because “not even a murderer loses his personal dignity”.

There is emphasis on the necessity to respect “the sacredness of life” where today “some parts of our human family, it appears, can be readily sacrificed”, such as the unborn, the poor, the disabled and the elderly.

### **Guarantee religious freedom**

In the eighth and final chapter, the Pontiff focuses on “Religions at the service of fraternity in our world” and again emphasizes that violence has no basis in religious convictions, but rather in their deformities. Thus, “deplorable” acts, such as acts of terrorism, are not due to religion but to erroneous interpretations of religious texts, as well as “policies linked to hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression”. Terrorism must not be supported with either money or weapons, much less with media coverage, because it is an international crime against security and world peace, and as such must be condemned.

At the same time the Pope underscores that a journey of peace among religions is possible and that it is therefore necessary to guarantee religious freedom, a fundamental human right for all believers.



The last lines of the Document are given to two prayers: one “to the Creator” and the other an “Ecumenical Christian Prayer”, so that the heart of mankind may harbour “a spirit of fraternity”.





Renato Lima de Oliveira  
16º Presidente General



## Miracles and more miracles

ALL SSVP members around the world know that, thanks be to God, the documents relating to a presumed new miracle ascribed to Blessed Frédéric Ozanam are now with the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the Holy See's body in charge of overseeing the process that leads to the beatification and canonisation of future Catholic saints. Many Vincentians, however, do not know all the details of the submission of these documents to Rome. I will explain them herein.

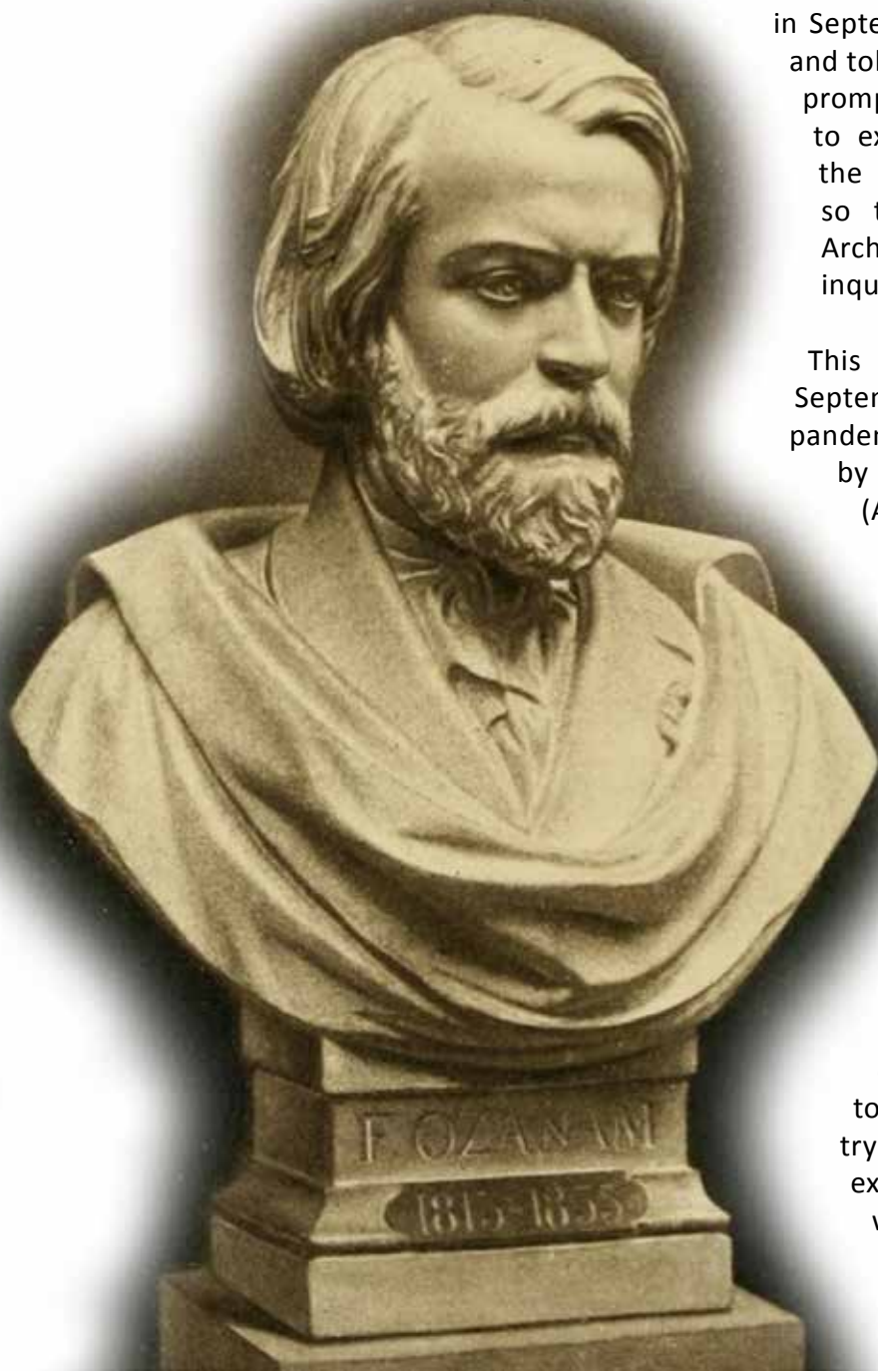
First of all, the inquiry was quickly conducted by the Ecclesiastical Court of Mariana (Brazil) within 11 months, after gathering the statements and medical reports describing the possible extraordinary cure, through Ozanam's intercession, of a baby in the womb, only 13 weeks old, with the outlook declared hopeless by the doctors.

It is worth noting that this miracle occurred in 2014, and the child's mother had tried to publicise the news thereof, but unsuccessfully at that time.

But she did not lose hope! She contacted me in September 2016, through a lengthy email, and told me all about it in great detail, which prompted me to open a special commission to examine the facts. With God's grace, the commission gave positive feedback, so the Council General contacted the Archdiocese of Mariana to start the local inquiry process.

This process was recently concluded, in September last year, amidst the global pandemic. I was pleased to be appointed by Monsignor Airton José dos Santos (Archbishop of Mariana) as the "official courier", personally responsible for taking a 12-kilo package containing some 1,000 pages to the offices of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. But how could I fulfil this task, if the borders of the countries were closed because of the health crisis? How could this be done? Here, God began to do some further "miracles".

I bought the air ticket, and began writing to the embassies or consulates of the countries concerned to obtain the relevant permissions, trying to fit my case into one of the exceptions to the legislation. The flight would start from Brasilia, passing





via Lisbon and Paris, and only then reach Rome. In other words, I had to consult three countries about the possibility for a Brazilian to travel to Europe with all the borders closed. The Apostolic Nunciature in Brasilia also set out to help me.

Many people warned me against traveling to Rome amidst the pandemic with many countries imposing lockdown, lengthy quarantine periods and curfews. Many Vincentians to whom I spoke in different countries, despite their pleasure at the news of a possible second miracle, could not conceal a kind of “hidden optimism”. But I never gave up hope. And I prayed to Ozanam to protect me and take me to Rome, with no delays, hold-ups or trouble (Acts 12, 1-19).

And my prayers were heard! I managed to make all the scheduled flights. I took the legal documents and permits with me, as well as a temporary Portuguese visa. Nothing happened to me in any airport or immigration authority. I entered Italian territory with no obstacles. There were no questions. With negative Covid-19 tests, my passport was duly stamped, and I was filled with emotion when I boarded the first taxi in Rome, to go to the Mother House of the Religious of Saint Vincent de Paul, where I stayed. Several miracles happened at once, and I can say that never have I prayed so much in an aeroplane...

If it is recognised by Rome, this second miracle will be the missing factor in declaring Ozanam’s sanctity. God’s ways are wonderful, because both the first miracle (an 18-month-old child in 1926) and the second one (a 13-week fetus in 2014) demonstrate the power of Ozanam’s intercession for pregnant women, fetuses, babies and children, that is, in defence of life and against abortion. One “miracle” among other miracles.

Before finishing, I would like to thank some of the people who contributed to the process for the

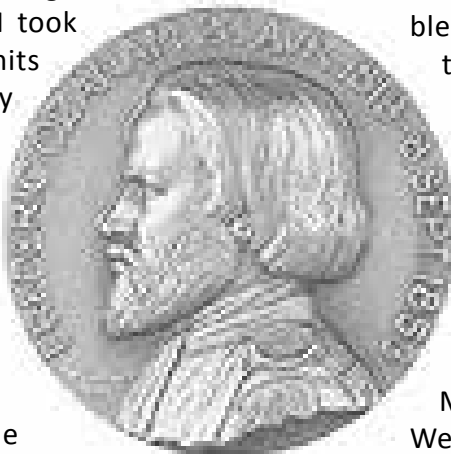
*If it is recognised by Rome, this second miracle will be the missing factor in declaring Ozanam’s sanctity*

probable second miracle: Father Vinícius Teixeira, Father Getúlio Grossi, Father Luiz Botelho, Monsignor Natali Starlino, Monsignor Airton dos Santos and all members of the Canonisation Commission of Council General, in the person of Antonio Gianfico and Sebastián Gramajo, as well as Father Giuseppe Guerra. Special mention should go to the excellent work of the 11th President General, Amin Abouhamad de Terrazi, who achieved the beatification in 1997, with the blessing of Pope John Paul II. Without the dedicated and effective work of these collaborators, nothing would have happened now.

Ozanam’s canonisation is a priority for the Council General International. There are other miracles being considered at the moment, but this last one, in Mariana, seems very significant. We continue to pray and hope for the Church’s decision, with faith. This President General assures you that everything possible is being done for the canonisation of Ozanam to become a reality in the coming months.

To my fellow Vincentians I say: keep praying for Ozanam’s canonisation, because it is VERY near. Very near!

The Council General requests all members around the world to INTENSIFY their prayers for Ozanam’s canonization, to be more DEVOTED and to submit any NEW CASE involving our main founder’s intercession to the Council General.





## Fasting: Council General Launches Campaign for Canonisation of Bl. Frédéric Ozanam

Every month, on the 23rd, SSVP members are urged to fast until his canonisation reaches a successful conclusion.

On April 23rd, we commemorate two key dates for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul: the birth of Bl. Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam (1813) and the founding of the first “Conference of Charity” (1833). Hence, it’s a very special day for all of us, fellow members, especially in times of pandemic.

To mark these dates, the Council General International (CGI) is launching a Spiritual Campaign for the canonisation of Frédéric Ozanam. As suggested by our President General, fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, this campaign is about all SSVP members fasting on the 23rd of each month, in honour of Frédéric Ozanam’s canonization (“fasting” as set out by the precepts of the Catholic Church, discreetly and as is customary in each region).

“Fasting, prayer and charity help us in the process of conversion. Hence, while praying to God for Frédéric Ozanam, we are also purifying ourselves. Fasting should be offered to God, praying for Ozanam’s prompt canonisation. This is the noble purpose suggested by the President General.”, explained Father Andrés Motto, CGI’s spiritual advisor.

But why was the 23rd of each month set as the fasting date? 23 is a significant number in the Vincentian life. Ozanam was born on April 23rd, 1813. He was married on June 23rd, 1841. He founded with his colleagues the Conference of Charity on April, 23rd, 1833. He drew up his will on April 23rd, 1853. He used to give his beloved wife a bouquet of flowers on the 23rd of each month. In other words, 23 is a symbolic number in each fellow member’s life.



There are many examples about fasting in the Holy Scriptures. “God spared Nineveh from destruction, since the Ninevites proclaimed a fast (Jonah 3: 5). Esther asked all the Jews to fast, so that God would spare them from the genocide of Persians (Esther 4: 16). Jesus told the disciples that demons do not go out except by prayer and fasting (Matthew 17: 21). Jesus himself was tempted by the devil for forty days and nights in the desert. He ate nothing at all during that time. (Luke 4:2).

“Fasting is a very powerful spiritual tool. Hence, everyone is invited to join in this Spiritual Campaign, on the 23rd of each month, until the Holy Church officially proclaims Ozanam’s canonization, which will certainly come up soon. Let’s pray”, said our President Renato Lima.



# In the Footsteps of our Patron Saint and Founders

Paris, France, is the ancestral home of all Vincentians; the ground our Saints and Blesseds walked, the homes where they lived, the churches where they worshipped and preached, and the streets in which they served Christ's poor.

"Never have I prayed so well," Bl. Rosalie once said, "as in the streets."

As Vincentians from the United States plan a pilgrimage to explore our heritage in Paris later this year, U.S. National Council President Ralph Middlecamp prepared a virtual tour to share the sights and stories of our heritage in a Zoom session during our Midyear Meeting.

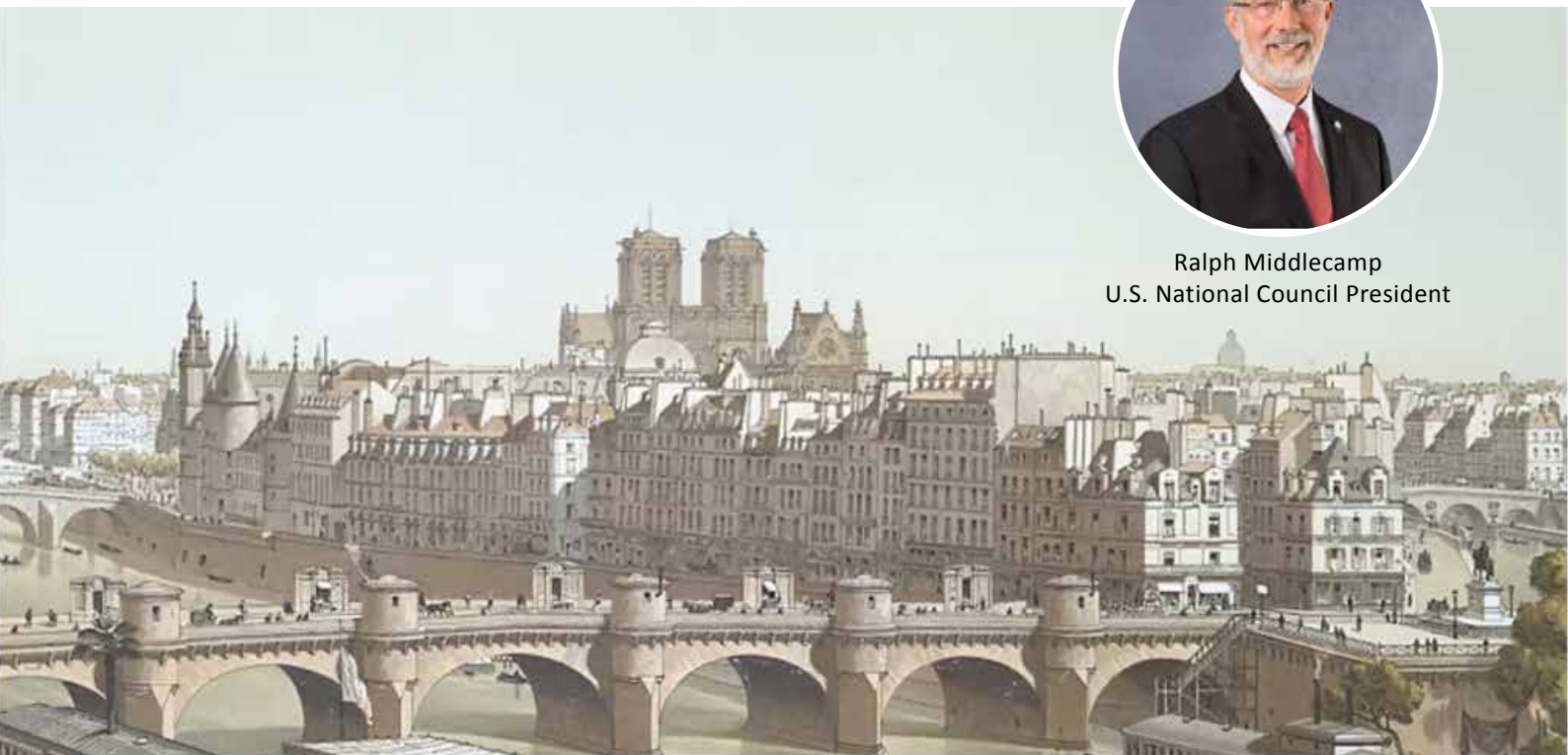
We invite our Vincentian brothers and sisters from around the world watch this recording. Most of us may never get the chance to visit Paris in person, but these pictures, along with Ralph's historical knowledge, will bring to life for you the Paris of Vincent and Louise, of Frédéric and Rosalie – the Paris we share in our Vincentian Heritage.

"I had the opportunity to attend the beautiful presentation given by brother Ralph Middlecamp on the most significant Vincentian landmarks in Paris at the time of St. Vincent, St. Louise and Bl. Ozanam and his companions. I learned a lot from him as he spoke about topics often not too familiar, such as the campaign launched by the General Council for the construction of the Sacred Heart Church in Paris. Ralph Middlecamp is one of the greatest experts on historical facts of the SSVP and the Vincentian Family, and we thank God for this great blessing.", said brother Renato Lima, 16th President General.

<https://vimeo.com/521126741>



Ralph Middlecamp  
U.S. National Council President







## “Committed to Loving Care”: The Vincentian Family of Portugal on the Legalization of Euthanasia

### THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY OF PORTUGAL ISSUES A COMMUNIQUÉ AFTER THE APPROVAL OF A BILL DECRIMINALIZING EUTHANASIA

The Vincentian Family is composed of religious congregations and lay Catholic movements inspired by the charism of Saint Vincent de Paul.

In Portugal, the Vincentian Family is made up of the following branches: the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Vincentian Marian Youth, the International Association of Charities, the Association of the Miraculous Medal and Collaborators in the Vincentian Mission.

In our country, thousands of members continue the work begun by Saint Vincent de Paul in 1617, dedicating themselves directly to the service of their sisters and brothers who are in the most diverse situations of poverty.

On Friday, January 29, 2021, the deputies of the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic approved a bill that allows medically assisted death by decision of the person, thus, decriminalizing the practice of euthanasia in Portugal. In view of this approval, the Vincentian Family of Portugal issues the following COMMUNIQUÉ:

*The whole world, and Portugal in particular, is currently experiencing a health crisis caused by contagion resulting from the spread of Covid-19. The Portuguese society is focused on saving the greatest number of human lives, trying to avoid the death of the brothers and sisters who unfortunately suffer firsthand from the wounds caused by this virus;*

*At this time, in which the pandemic has united everyone in the fight for the preservation of human*

*life, dissonantly the majority of the deputies of the Assembly of the Republic, against the opinions of professionals in the health sector and the National Ethics Council for Life Sciences, approved the decriminalization of euthanasia, allowing individuals to end their life;*

*As a Vincentian Family, our mission for hundreds of years has been to care for the life of all men and women, to support our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, including those affected by disease and to attempt to comfort them physically and spiritually in their homes, in hospitals, in nursing homes, in palliative care units;*

*We, members of the Vincentian Family, believe that everyone's life is a gift and are also convinced that all lives matter and therefore believes that the decriminalization of euthanasia raises a legitimate question about the true reasons for this precipitation and represents a clear setback of civilization and an unacceptable abandonment of the life of our brothers and sisters weakened by disease.*

*We vehemently repudiate the approved bill, insofar as it expresses a position of the State that prefers to abandon human life to the detriment of guaranteeing the right to health protection, as stated in the Code of Rights, Freedoms and Guarantees of the Constitution*

*of the Portuguese Republic ... the State opens the door to the culture of death instead of reaffirming the culture of life;*

*Despite this setback, the Vincentian Family reaffirms that it will always continue to defend life in all its forms and stages, and we will never abandon our brothers and sisters who are in a situation of illness. Rather we will do everything possible so that they can reap the benefits of bodily and spiritual care and also maintain their dignity*

*Finally, we make a special appeal to the President of the Republic, to do everything in his power to prevent the now approved bill from taking effect, specifically by requesting the review of its constitutionality by the Constitutional Court, in order to stop the decriminalization of euthanasia in our country.*

*Lisboa, 30 de enero de 2021.*

*Provincia Portuguesa de la Congregación de la  
Misión  
Provincia Portuguesa de las Hijas de la Caridad  
Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl  
Juventud Mariana Vicentina  
Asociación Internacional de Caridades  
Asociación de la Medalla Milagrosa  
Colaboradores de la Misión Vicentina*





## The Vincentian Family Fully Supports the Canonization of Bl. Frédéric Ozanam

It's so good to be with your family! It's so good to live as a family! And even more, it's so good to be fully supported by your family! This is how SSVP members feel about the VINCENTIAN FAMILY, which has recently embraced such a generous and meaningful gesture.

The Vincentian Family Executive Committee (VFEC), bringing together world's top leaders in a virtual meeting, approved a motion fully endorsing the cause of canonization of Bl. Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam, one of the seven founders of the SSVP, in the light of an alleged new miracle that is being examined by the Vatican.

In the official press release, the VFEC highlights Ozanam's remarkable biography, as well as the virtues of this holy man and the importance of his eventual canonization for the SSVP, for the Vincentian Family, for the Church and for mankind. "We ask all members of the worldwide Vincentian Family to intensify their prayer for this noble cause", concludes the note signed by Vincentian leaders.

*In the official press release, the VFEC highlights Ozanam's remarkable biography, as well as the virtues of this holy man and the importance of his eventual canonization for the SSVP, for the Vincentian Family, for the Church and for mankind*

"On behalf of all SSVP members worldwide, I would like to thank the leaders of the Vincentian Family who have endorsed this resolution, fully supporting the cause. This commitment is essential to further disseminate Ozanam's devotion, who was a role model following in the footsteps of St. Vincent, and to enhance the role of the family in society", stressed brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, the 16th President General.

In brother Ricardo Tavares's words, Famvin Coordinator within the structure of the Council General, "...being part of the Family is a true gift from God and a great source of pride. The liaison between members of the SSVP and the Vincentian Family yields mutual benefits. It is a win-win situation. This defines the wealth of belonging to the Family, especially in the spiritual dimension", stated brother Ricardo.

[Click here to read the Vincentian Family's resolution supporting Ozanam's cause of canonization.](#)





## SSVP took part in a panel discussion on homelessness at the United Nations

The guests shared ideas and projects that reduce poverty and homelessness around the world.



Last February 9, the 16th President General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, took part in the panel discussion titled “Digital Technology at the Service of Ending Homelessness”, together with other experts on the subject. The number of interested people who attended the virtual meeting, held online by the Zoom platform, reached around 120 people.

The initiative for the event came from the Vincentian Family, whose branches work together at the United Nations in New York (USA). The webinar is considered a “side event” to the 59th Session of the UN Commission for Social Development, which was being held that week. This kind of “side event”, organized by civil society, is very common at the United Nations during the promotion of official sessions and seminars.

Sister Teresa Kotturan, of the Sisters of Charity Federation, served as moderator of the parallel event. She praised the panellists who brought relevant information on how to employ digital technologies to provide more services and resources to reduce homelessness around the world, especially now during the health crisis that has widened inequalities. Her speech is available at the end of this text.

The President General began his speech by emphasizing that he was speaking not only on behalf of the SSVP, but above all on behalf of the Vincentian Family, responsible for creating the Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA) and the 13 Houses Campaign, reaching excellent outcomes until now. Renato emphasized that, since the foundation of SSVP, the Conferences have acted to reduce poverty and give decent housing to the most needy people. He cited examples of concrete initiatives of SSVP to reduce homelessness in four places: United States, Brazil, Canada and Nepal. President Renato emphasized that digital exclusion is one of the most harmful forms of social poverty.

The other panellists also contributed to the discussion on the topic. Bill Soward (Shelter Tech) defended that connectivity is a basic human right, publicizing a free Wi-Fi project in homeless shelters in the United States. Maheshwari Balan (Don Bosco Forum) stressed the importance of technology in getting children and young people off the streets, who live at serious social risk.

Lydia Stazen (Institute of Global Homelessness) spoke about the importance of talking institutionally about homelessness in international and governmental forums, and presented recent statistics on the subject. Finally, Rajarshi Sircar (Loreto Rainbow Homes) emphasized other problems related to homelessness, such as depression and drugs, constituting an additional challenge to social organizations fighting against this sad situation.



**Digital Technology at the Service of Ending Homelessness**

**Tuesday, February 9**  
**1:15 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**SPEAKERS**

**BILL SOWARD**, Executive Director, Shelter Tech  
**MAHESHWARI BALAN**, Researcher and Psychologist, Don Bosco National Forum for the Young at Risk, India  
**RENATO LIMA**, International President, International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul  
**LYDIA STAZEN**, Executive Director, Institute of Global Homelessness  
**RAJARSHI SIRCAR**, Resource Mobilizer, Loreto Rainbow Homes  
**MODERATOR: TERESA KOTTURAN**, SCN, Sisters of Charity Federation

[Click here to see the lecture of brother Renato Lima, in PDF format](#)



[Click here to watch the panel. The participation of brother Renato goes from minute 34 to minute 47.](#)



[Click here to read the opening speech of Sister Teresa Kotturan, mediator's side event.](#)





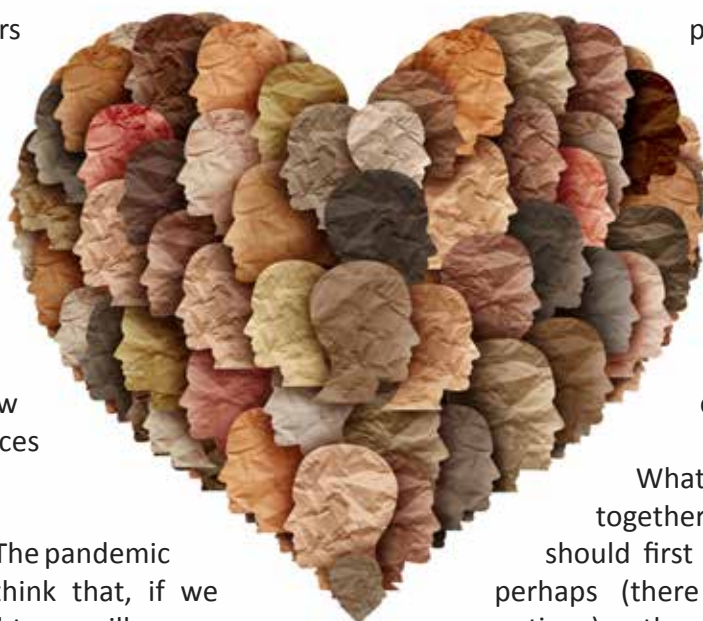
**Andrés R. M. Motto, CM.**  
SSVP International Spiritual Advisor

## We vincentians desire to grow in fraternity and service to those in need

My dear brothers and sisters in the SSVP, I send you my most sincere greetings. I am writing to you from Paris, in my home in the Lazarist mother house. It is a cold winter's night. I am writing while I sip some maté tea. Writing for me is a way of expressing how life surprises and embraces us.

Well, we are now in 2021. The pandemic is still going on! But I think that, if we continue to do things right, we will overcome the coronavirus all the sooner. In this meditation, I am using some ideas from the Circular letter for 2021 from our President Renato Lima de Oliveira. A year in which we are hopeful it will be a time for rebuilding and new beginnings. I suggest here that fraternity lives among the sisters and brothers of the Society. For the poor, our beloved, we are invited to be with them through our tenderness and courage. Like a "bridge" uniting the members of the society with the poor, a way of living in empathy with everyone. This inspires me to speak of two topics.

**First point.** Coexistence is a vast topic, but I will speak of just one aspect. It is certain that coexistence is hard. In work, in the family... in the SSVP. As it is also hard for us to be normal. I think that one of the essentials for coexistence is to give others what they need. Moreover, this is what good



people do. The surprising thing is that acting in this way, generally other people will help us in turn, or will give us the affection we need so much. This is one of the keys to living together, managing and doing things together, etc.

What is the agenda for living together? As far as possible, one should first give way to others: then, perhaps (there are, of course, always exceptions), others give in return. But we often do the exact opposite. Let us consider these phrases, for a while: "the day they treat me well, I will treat them well"; "the day they agree with me in a meeting, I will agree with them"; "the day that one changes the angry pit bull terrier face, I will offer a friendly face to him...". As you see, we almost always hope that the change will begin with the other person. Sometimes we act through pride, or because of the way we learned to live together, or because, if we take the "first step", we think it will make others see us as weak, fearful, losers or self-serving. Our minds can be a maze of ideas. But the truth is that generally, the real, profound changes in how we live together start when we first give others what they need. Then, like a mirror, they will open up to a better way of living together. That's what Jesus said, 'treat others as you would like them to treat you', Luke 6, 31.



3) Housing-related poverty. Street homelessness. This is a reality today in almost every city. We see people on their own, or in small groups, living in this way. Sometimes there are families. And in some countries, children on their own with no adults. Some sociologists call these “Street Kids”. For those of you who love the third art (painting) I invite you to google some pictures associated with the character Juanito Laguna. The painter was Antonio Berni, a social realist artist. Many of his works are constructed from scrap materials. His

Until my next meditation.

## Colombia

# The 130-year history of a children's home for girls

San José children's home for girls [Hogar de Niñas de San José] in Bucaramanga began its journey in 1885, when businessman Felipe French Araque crystallized the ideas of Frédéric Ozanam by establishing the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in the town of Bucaramanga, devastated during the 19th century.

At these early meetings, held at the colonial chapel [Capilla de los Dolores], the concern emerged for orphaned children, the innocent victims of the civil war in Gran Santander, and the need for a response to the situation at the time. In harmony with the commitments made by those promising to "place their faith under the care of charity", they founded Saint Joseph Refuge [Asilo de San José].

On 23 April 1889, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul turned its apostolic work into bricks and mortar at a house, opening its doors with the blessing of the diocesan bishop Monsignor Ignacio Antonio Parra. The Bethlehem Sisters' community provided the administration of the home. The requests for places increased, needs grew and resources remained scarce, so the house could not meet every demand, and in 1901, the



*Hogar de  
Niñas  
San José*





founders moved somewhere else. Arrangements were made to increase the budget, relying on contributions from the local authority, the constant generosity of the local people and steady funding from the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The Vincentians moved with the times, and wanted to provide the girls with the means to prepare them to enter society, with classes in reading, writing, arithmetic, religion and manual work.

The project, now called San José children's home for girls, continued to expand, and more girls were able to benefit from it. The welcoming and long-remembered large house fulfilled its task, and the time came to relocate the home.

At this point, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul took over all the costs of the work, with 70 children, following their primary level education from year 1 to 5, and also receiving classes in weaving, dressmaking, embroidery, housework, so that they could com-

plete their training. Many of them would later have the opportunity to follow technical and/or university studies, with the support from a group of individuals who sponsor them.

San José Children's Home for girls continues to be a very important special work of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in the city of Bucaramanga. Currently, the Institution receives girls with scarce financial resources, who may be extremely vulnerable, and with serious family and social problems.

Since the outset it has kept its Catholic spirituality, with the guidance of the Congregation of Dominican Daughters of Our Lady of Nazareth and the Daughters of Charity, which is now run along with an interdisciplinary team of professionals. It also has a support committee consisting of three Vincentians who work as volunteers, to find resources and take part in the processes, strategies and activities to ensure the execution and achievement of the institutional mission.





## SSVP Brazil, supporting Life-Changing Social Projects

Income-generating programmes and vocational skills help to alleviate poverty.

Since 2011, the SSVP Brazil has given priority to investments in social projects presented by the country's conferences. The social projects undertaken by the SSVP Brazil are initiatives focused on structural changes, thus effectively promoting the empowerment of people in achieving sustainable development, social integration and poverty eradication by means of income-generating programmes and the acquisition of vocational skills.

The projects are examined by a committee of the National Council and, if approved, the corresponding budget is granted for execution. Then, these projects are shortlisted by the Central and Metropolitan Councils on a yearly basis. In the last 3 years, there has been an increasing number of projects, with a growing involvement of conferences. For this period, 104 projects were approved, with a total investment of 828,000 Reais (approximately USD 208,000).



'Rainbow project' was one of the projects approved, in Porto Seguro, located in the State of Bahia (Brazil): a learning environment offering free vocational education and training courses, school support and English lessons. The resources provided to the project were used to rehabilitate the premises, where the aforementioned courses and lessons were taught.

The social projects launched by the SSVP Brazil foster personal development, entrepreneurship and the economic independence of families assisted by the Vincentian Conferences. This is the case of another project, in Juiz de Fora, a city in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, where a conference received funds for the purchase of a popcorn cart and other equipment

for a person supported by the conference to sell popcorn in the streets of the city.

In the view of the SSVP Brazil's National President, Cristian Reis da Luz, social projects have helped Vincentian conferences accomplish the mission of changing lives: "Social projects help us respond to and fulfill the dream of the families we support. The hundreds of projects already undertaken in Brazil are an opportunity for these people to build a better future for themselves by means of their own work", he said.

2021's project shortlisting has already kicked off, and Vincentian conferences are preparing the proposals to be submitted to the National Council.







Fiji

## Grappling with Cyclone Yasa

Emergency relief was provided by Vincentians in the aftermath of a natural disaster which has caused widespread destruction: severely damaged roads and houses, disruption in water supply and power outages.

Tropical Cyclone Yasa tore through Fiji, leaving a devastating path of destruction and poverty in its wake, with the area of Vanua Levu being badly affected. Roads around the city of Labasa and other regions were destroyed, and electricity and fresh water supply were shut off.

Having only driven a couple of kilometres in Labasa, Vincentians could witness the devastation on homes, farms and roads. Very strong winds, which lasted over four long hours, uprooted trees and tore down the roofs of many thousands of houses. The weather cleared up; however, evacuation centres are still crowded with suffering families. Other victims are seeking a temporary shelter while their house is rebuilt or fixed.







The National Council of Fiji assisted with the provision of tarpaulins for those living in a temporary shelter while they try to rebuild their houses, and purchased 40-litre drums for drinking water storage. Other Conferences in Fiji assisted with 44 bags of second-hand clothes, household items and financial support. The support from Australian Vincentians and the Commission for International Aid and Development (CIAD) was also instrumental in helping the victims.

A small team was able to travel to Savusavu and loaded food rations onto rented trucks to reach the affected areas. They even spent the night with the affected families, sharing with them their plight and bringing them love and hope.

After consultations with the village heads and family members, which are assisted by our fellow members, the SSVP decided to purchase the following: 64 corrugated roofing iron for six households, 200 litres of premix chainsaw fuel (this fuel is necessary

to assist families to remove fallen native-hardwood trees for building their temporary homes), a hired truck for delivery of materials to the badly affected families, once the road network is restored.

Many Fijians families who earn a living from crops and have lost everything are facing a dire situation, as they have no savings to afford food or schooling for their kids. Hence, the SSVP is allocating relief funds for this purpose. As a matter of fact, school supplies and clothing have already been delivered to affected families in Labasa.

As of late January, house rebuilding and the delivery of essential supplies were still underway. Bags of second-hand clothes were delivered to the coastal areas of Napuka and Macuata (with cases reported of typhoid fever) and medical supplies were distributed to remote, hard-to-reach areas. Moreover, Vincentians are visiting young, under-resourced moms in Labasa's hospital to support them with their newborn babies.

## Uruguay

### Getting used to the “New Normal”

#### The SSVP Uruguay: New Ways to Help those Most in Need amidst the Pandemic

The SSVP National Board has organized teams which are taking over senior Vincentians.

Visiting needy people has been one of the hurdles faced by Vincentians amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Many senior Vincentians or groups at risk of contracting severe Covid-19 were immediately prevented from making visits and taking part in other SSVP activities.

The SSVP Uruguay has also confronted this problem: most Conference members in the country are at risk due to their age, so social isolation is highly recommended. Notwithstanding the situation, the members of the SSVP National Board have come up with other ways to help poverty-stricken families.





In Montevideo, the capital of the country, the National President, sister Estrella Prendez, organised a group of volunteers made up of young Vincentians and friends who took care of the senior members, visited and helped the needy families of the conferences.

“A great effort, financially and logistically, was made to keep on helping needy families. Furthermore, those Vincentians and volunteers who cannot go out on the streets during the pandemic are making face masks to be distributed to the people we visit”,

said Estrella. “We know that this pandemic will last a little longer than expected; that’s why, we are looking for new ways to bring our help to those most in need”, she said.

The SSVP Uruguay currently has 10 conferences and 3 active social projects: one night shelter and two nursing homes for seniors. Fellow member Estrella Prendez was re-elected as the SSVP National President in the Oriental Republic of Uruguay for another term at the 2020 National Assembly, held on December 5th.







Spain

## Venerable Santiago Masarnau

Founder and first President of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Spain.

On 21 January 2021, Pope Francis promulgated the Decree of Heroic Virtues of Santiago Masarnau (Madrid, 1805-1882), by which he is recognised as Venerable.

Masarnau was a well-known pianist, composer and music critic. A man of great versatility, he travelled to London and Paris to complete his stud-



ies, becoming a friend of Johann Cramer, a composer of German extraction and a leading pianist in Europe. One of his teachers was Monsigny. Among others, he became a firm friend of Frédéric Chopin. Masarnau introduced the most intimate style of romantic piano to Spain.

In Paris, he attended some of the Lenten talks given at the Cathedral of Notre Dame by Abbé Lacordaire, a friend of Frédéric Ozanam, in preparation for his general confession. This took place on 19 May 1839, at the parish of Notre Dame de Lorette, where he took communion, the day that changed his life. Subsequently, he came into contact with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, acting as treasurer for four years in the Conference of Saint Louis d'Antin in Paris, until he returned to Madrid in 1843.

With three others, he formed the first Conference in Spain, called San Sebastián, on 11 November 1849. It was not easy to establish a lay organisation devoted to charity, and coming from France.

Santiago gave up his music career, and his own property, devoting his life to those most in need. He made every sacrifice for the love of God, from handing over his coat to a poor man, to shouldering the body of a pauper whom he used to visit, and whom the undertakers did not wish to attend to the grave.

Santiago died surrounded by holy women, including Daughters of Charity, friends and poor people whom he had helped.

His remains lie in the National Shrine of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Madrid.

For more information, visit the website of the SSVP in Spain [www.ssvp.es](http://www.ssvp.es) or the following links:

<http://www.causesanti.va/it/notizie/notizie-2021/promulgazione-nuovi-decreti-21-gennaio-2021.html>

<http://www.causesanti.va/it/archivio-della-congregazione-cause-santi/promulgazione-di-decreti/decreti-pubblicati-nel-2021.html>





### Aleppo, Syria

# Winning the War with Faith

The Saint Vincent de Paul Society in Aleppo was founded in 1898, and the involvement and commitment of its members has always been exceptional.

In 1984, they decided to build a residence which would welcome 40 elderly persons. The five-storey home was built and furnished with much love. Residents lived there in a family-like atmosphere, receiving adequate health care in clean conditions.

The deadly war which broke out in Syria in 2011 greatly affected Aleppo. Then, in 2015, it was our residence's turn to be bombarded and demolished. Vincentians rushed to rescue their loved ones just in time, on a dark night, under bombs raining overhead. For them, these lives were precious. They relocated them to a convent in a region somewhat "spared" from the fighting, took care of them and gave them the love they needed.

Nights and days went by, even years, and the war continued unabated!





But one idea kept rolling around in our heads, one that could be achieved only with faith and perseverance!

Did not Jesus tell us to trust in God. "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them." (Mark 11:23)

Our faith in God is great! Our faith allowed us to rebuild this home and our belief and Vincentian mission was in our blood. With patience, we will continue to give witness to our faith through this home.

Thanks to the generosity of benefactors, construction began in 2018, and little by little with a great deal of love, the home was ready again to receive 75 residents.

Our Vincentian mission never stops. We thank God for giving us the opportunity to serve Him through the poor!





## Kenya Street families

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, many vulnerable families have been harshly hit, being dependent on businesses, most of which are closed down, for left-over meals. With visible signs of malnutrition, hunger and poor hygiene, they sleep in the cold and have been negatively affected by the pandemic.

Although Kenya is the most advanced economy in East and Central Africa, it has a wealthy urban minority. With a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.519, it ranks the 145th out of 186 in the world.

St Mary Conference is located in Mukuru slum (Nairobi), with a rural-urban migration leading to an increased population in the slum, since people come to search for jobs in the city and live in the cheapest shared housing: a slum.

Youth unemployment is very high, around 90%, and has increased during Covid-19 pandemic. There is also an increase in the number of street children who search or beg for food. In this slum, families are trying to







cope with sickly or elderly members and job losses. The burden of poverty is magnified by lack of income and resources to ensure a sustainable livelihood, good nutrition, good health and increased access to education and other basic services.

For over five years, St. Mary Conference has been visiting the sick, providing food and helping vulnerable elderly people get government support in an attempt to lighten some of the extreme burdens.

Recently, the Conference started serving street families faced with many challenges, especially during Covid-19 pandemic. Most of these families, including children under 18, are dependent on town restaurants

and businesses for left-over meals or beg money to buy food.

Since the closure of many businesses due to the pandemic, many children have developed visible signs of malnutrition and hunger. They lack food and sleep in the cold, with no access to basic health services. The Conference, duly led by the local Chief, has spotted these street children and supports them to alleviate their pitiful situation.

Our fellow members' goal is to provide nutritional support, warm clothing, blankets and advice for street families in Mukuru slum in Nairobi. May God protect them.





## Guatemala Supporting the Agriculture

Guatemala's National Council asked the Council General International (CGI) to financially support the agricultural consortiums the Conference members are part of, since most of them are farm workers (coffee farms), who are going through serious difficulties, and are hit by labour shortages and the pandemic.

Thanks for CGI's support and the service provided by our members in Guatemala. 85 families have been helped in the coffee-farm region.







## Ireland Charity shops, an essential service

SVP Shops are the driving force supporting local Conferences and social projects of the SSVP Ireland.

The SSVP Ireland has 234 charity shops across the country which, due to the lockdown, have been virtually closed since Christmas. This has led to a fall in the SSVP's income of over 16 million euros.

The SSVP has requested the government to regard charity shops as an essential service, since they provide major assistance to the people most in need in their country. Moreover, opening up, it is believed, would reduce traffic movement, since the majority of their customer base is in a catchment area of 5km, mainly in areas of social deprivation and rural isolation.



Since the second wave, the charity shops were operating on the Click & Collect system: customers requesting items on-line and picking them up at the shop. Nonetheless, on-line purchases are not an option for many customers, without access to debit/credit cards, or the technology needed to place orders. Moreover, the recent change from “Click and Collect” to “Click and Delivery” prevents these shops from offering any kind of on-line service, since local volunteer organisations cannot opt for sophisticated

e-commerce solutions on which conventional retail business relies.

The Irish Vincentians are launching a social awareness-raising campaign, thus reiterating their request that charity shops should be included as an essential service, and strengthening the support they offer in these difficult times.

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/shoes-are-an-essential-item-for-the-man-without-any-39876509.html>







## The Vincentian youth exchange programme is moving forward in 2021

In 2021, the International Committee Youth, Children and Adolescents is relaunching the Vincentian Youth Exchange Programme in order to move forward and encourage a greater number of countries to participate in it.

Launched in 2018, this programme has adapted to the new virtual reality due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, the Committee is expecting at least 15 new countries to exchange experience, training, and information about the progress of projects led by young Vincentians.

### Main Goals

- Greater integration among SSVP's National Youth Committees and young Vincentians from different countries;
- Close bonds of friendship among National Youth Committees by exchanging common experiences and projects.
- Opportunity to work on shared formation/training, work techniques and charitable action among member countries.
- If circumstances allow, a chance for one or more young people to travel to a host country to learn about the work of the National Council and their Youth Committee in situ to then bring the good practices they learned to their region.
- A link strengthening the spirituality within the group, following the strong points of the Vincentian charism: prayer, sharing, charity, holiness and service.

## How to join in

If SSVP countries are interested in taking part in this programme, they may contact the International Youth Committee, which connects youth to National Committees and ensures communication, training and information exchange on the projects.

Territorial Coordinators are also responsible for promoting interactions between the National Committees in their region and other committees.

National Committees and Youth Committees around the world may join in and obtain further information by emailing [cgi.ivp-youth@ssvpglobal.org](mailto:cgi.ivp-youth@ssvpglobal.org).



## Duration

The minimum duration for the programme is one year.

## Proposed activities

- Online meetings will be held to learn about the needs of countries taking part in this project, as well as training sessions on a variety of subjects.
- Information sharing on the role of the SSVP in member countries, and presentation of ongoing social projects.
- Sessions to share experiences on inviting young Vincentians to join in, and to discuss the prospective establishment of new youth conferences.
- Meetings are also suggested to learn about the culture, special features and historical facts about the countries.

## Organizing exchange trips

Countries can organise travel for their representatives who wish to learn about the work of SSVP in their own countries. Financial support can be obtained from their National Councils or from sponsors.

Travel is restricted or suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet travel is optional in the framework of the programme: the exchange can be done 100% online. For this purpose, the International Committee has provided a full-time Zoom.

Fellow member, Willian Alves, International Vice President for Youth, underscored the importance of the exchange: “We, the young people, would like to discover new realities, meet new friends, travel, experience the joy of learning about other cultures, learn new things, especially about the SSVP. The goal of the programme is to enable young people to have new cultural and Vincentian experiences around the world. The Council General International hopes to offer this experience to many young people. The Vincentian Youth Exchange Programme provides an opportunity for excellent learning, for expanding Vincentian thinking, and for deepening a commitment always to help the poor, wherever they are.”





## The SSVP's International Youth Committee holds its first online meeting in 2021

On January 17th, 2021, the members of the International Committee for Youth, Children and Adolescents of the Council General International (CGI) held their first online meeting of the year.

Those present were: William Alves, President of the Committee, and nine territorial coordinators (Kat - America 1, Edgardo - America 2, Leo - Asia 1, Gabriel - Asia 2, Orlando - Europe 1, Joseph - Africa 1, Boipelo - Africa 2, Luke - Oceania, representing Brother Tamer, and Abdoo – Middle East. Another three coordinators justified their absence in the meeting.

Special guests present were: the 16th President General, fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, Spiritual Advisor to the Council General, Fr. Andrés Motto, and Vice President General Deputy, fellow member Joseph Makwinja.

The President General gave a welcome message in which he highlighted the importance of young people for the General Council and for the whole of the SSVP, pointing out that the importance of the service and mission of young people has been present in all his Circular Letters. Renato Lima also acknowledged the dedication of this committee and congratulated them on all the activities which they have developed during his term of office.

Fr. Andrés Motto, C.M. shared a spiritual reflection, followed by a brief formation session on the importance of young people in the Vincentian Charism and in these times of pandemic.

Joseph Makwinja, International Vice-President Deputy (responsible for youth and training), highlighted in his message the importance of the SSVP's Committee for Youth and how he has observed that the Vincentian Youth from all over the world are very well represented at international level, emphasising how young people can change the situation of poverty when they commit to the mission inherited from Frédéric Ozanam and the other founders.

Fellow member, William Alves, conducted the meeting and thanked all his friends, the Territorial Coordinators, for carrying out their mission to foster the SSVP Youth and be their voice at the Council General International. He remarked on the commitment of all involved and reinforced the importance of the Committee in all the Council General's meetings. Moreover, he underscored the full support of the President General and the CGI's structure to carry out his duties.

Then, each territorial coordinator presented the positive items and those to be developed in their region, as well as a summary of the activities undertaken in 2020.

The Committee discussed and analysed the projects and programmes undertaken in 2020 as well as the commitments for 2021.

- 1) The creation of a department specifically for Children and Teenagers, aimed at strengthening this work and promoting the founding of Youth Conferences.
- 2) The SSVP participation in YOUTH FAMVIN group (a collaboration made up of those responsible for the youth movements within the Vincentian Family).
- 3) In 2023, full support of the SSVP at the International Youth Meeting and the World Youth Day (Lisbon).
- 4) Launch of the University Conferences Guide
- 5) Conclusion of the activities by the working commission preparing The International Handbook of the Commission for Youth (to be launched by the end of 2021)

## 6) Presentation of the partial data of the SSVP's Youth Census 2019-2020

61 countries have replied to date (40% of 152) (385,807)

20% Young people aged 18 -35 (75,989)

7% Children aged 0 -11 (27,287)

5% Teenagers aged 12-17 (17,611)

7) Definition of the age groups for children, teenagers and young people within the SSVP (based on analysis by the UN, WHO, the Vincentian Territories, Vincentian Schools and the situation of various SSVP countries as well as other branches of the Vincentian Family):

0-11 years- CHILD

years-TEENAGER

18-25 years YOUNG PERSON

years-YOUNG ADULT

8) An online meeting will be held with the participants of the "International Friendship Network" project.

9) The SSVP's International Youth Day, 4th July, will take place in hybrid form (face-to-face and online). Support materials for the event will be announced in April as well as the date of the International Videoconference.

10) Progress of the Vincentian Youth Exchange Programme 2021 with the inclusion of new countries.

11) Regional training of young people –The territorial coordinators will develop bi-annual training for the national committees as well as supporting regional meetings.

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This Committee meeting lasted 4 hours and concluded with a prayer.

Fellow member William Aves commented that, "it was an excellent meeting and the team is very involved and committed to developing projects and programmes to strengthen the National Committees for Youth.







## Liberia United in charity

If you have never been to the West Coast of Africa and haven't been to Liberia, you were just taking a walk on the African mainland.

Liberia is a developing nation faced with numerous challenges in all of its priority sectors. However, there is still liveliness, humanity, and importantly hope among the people. Liberians are some of the warmest, open, and kind hearted people you may ever experience; hence we are tagged 'sweet land of liberty'. Such is the case with SSVP youth Liberia. As young people who practically lived and may be experiencing the degrading plagues of poverty, we do not see ours or the nation's condition as an impediment to extend a hand of kindness.

The young vincentians of Liberia adopted the title Ozanam Youth. We work in the areas of advocacy and fundraising, highlighting civil rights and gender issues and also serve as foot soldiers and support arm for the senior council.



Delvin A. Tucker  
National Youth Coordinator  
SSVP Liberia





Our activities are in the capital, and with support we can instill this meaningful charism in our friends in other parts of the country. In a country where poverty is prevalent, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul creates an opportunity for the manifestation of exemplary Christianity and a platform for self-realization and development as young people. A dollar in my pocket can help only but few, pulling our resources together can help beyond the margins. This is our pride but also our core value; what the world is trying to do for us, we too are doing for others.







# When I Realised How Great it is to Be a SSVP Member

My story at the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) began when I was eleven. As time goes by, I have lived through various experiences which brought me to see Christ in the face of the poor. Nonetheless, I am writing these lines to share one intense experience, which I never thought I would see, which began at the end of 2019 and continued on into 2020, when the SSVP came lovingly into my life, and I understood totally Ozanam's zeal for serving the poor.

Up to this period, I had been studying for about ten months in Madrid, Spain. Far from home, in a place I hardly knew, I felt the need for a fraternal embrace, and at the same time, I longed in my heart to serve and deepen my faith experience through the service of those most in need.



Allan Ribeiro





In my first months, an unbelievable opportunity came along. I began to help in an SSVP food bank once a week, helping to put together the deliveries for the families. Moreover, I also took part in the Translators' Club project, an initiative launched by our dear President, brother Renato Lima, a Brazilian like me; and helped the Council General's international media & communications department translate news from Spanish to Portuguese.

But in the midst of these times of happiness with everything that was happening to me, along came one of my greatest fears: a virus. Just over 10 years ago, in Latin America, we experienced a serious epidemic, and I was afraid that, alone and far from home, a similar situation might arise. So it was, as after 4 months, Spain was badly affected by the coronavirus. The country experienced difficult times, since it was one of the first to suffer the pandemic. Everything was uncertain. It was an unprecedented situation, very frightening.

I faced many problems which I never thought I would experience. I was alone amidst a health crisis, without knowing how things would turn out.

I did not know whether to return home, or how to stay legally in the country; and then the SSVP approached me. I now found myself on the other side, as the one being helped. Of course, it was a long way from the situations of brothers and sisters experiencing far worse realities, because I knew that it was temporary, and that when I returned to Brazil, I would have the comfort of my own home. But the SSVP became my family. I had the support I needed so that, if I had to stay in the country for longer because there were no flights to Brazil, I would be helped. My Vincentian friends also offered me temporary accommodation in the face of these problems.

But more than just material help, these people offered me love, opened their hearts to help me in every way they could. In this way, the idea of the Vincentian Family has become much clearer to me. Without setting up barriers, the SSVP is ready to serve, to help and to be Church. On my way back to Brazil, the feeling that stays with me is gratitude, and the desire to do the same, to proclaim that the SSVP is indeed this great network of charity of which Ozanam dreamed.





## Appeal of the Month

### A New Way to Help

Each month, the CGI's Commission for International Aid and Development (CIAD) selects a particularly worthwhile Society project which is badly in need of funds, and invites the Society throughout the world to support it directly.

Normally, the CIAD would help such needy projects

itself, but with COVID-19 and other demands on its limited funds, the CIAD cannot assist all worthwhile projects presented. We are, therefore, providing an opportunity for selected projects to appeal for the support of the international community of the Society through the medium of the CGI's website with the CIAD's full endorsement.

### **Appeal for January. Model farm in Cameroon: income generation, job creation, combating food insecurity.**

The goal is to develop an organic market garden to promote sustainability practices without the use of artificial fertilizers and to encourage crop diversity such as bananas, fruit trees, corn, groundnuts and soybeans. Raising livestock (chickens, sheep, rabbits, pigs...) will also be another small-scale farming activity.



### **Appeal for February. Survival of Homeless Shelter for Elderly in Bogotá (Columbia)**

The SSVP in Bogotá, Columbia runs a residential home for homeless elderly people. There are currently 45 residents over the age of 65 who receive shelter, support and health services as well as companionship and friendship in the Vincentian tradition.



The future of the Home is at risk. The structure has deteriorated and does not now comply with building and other standards of the local authority.

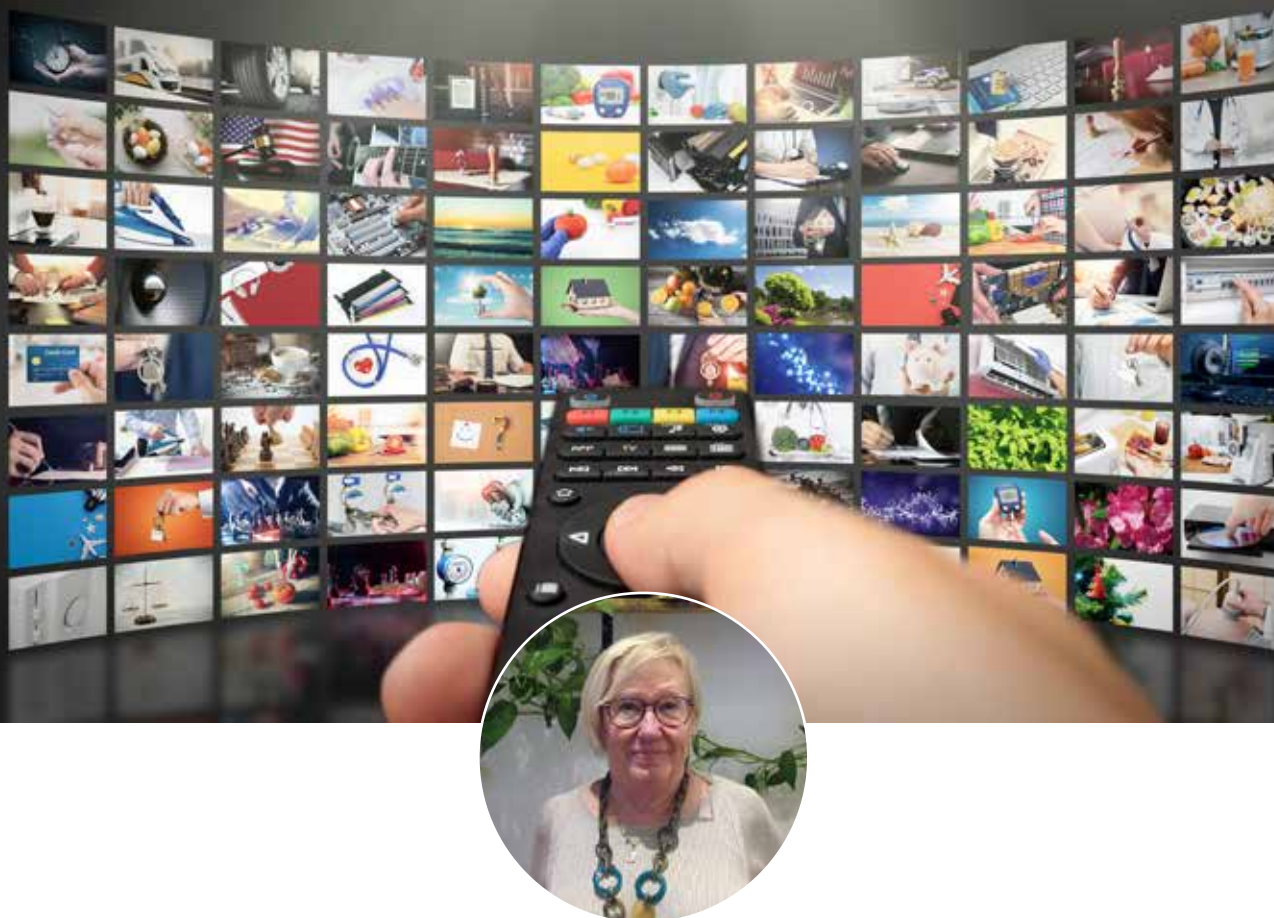
### **Appeal for March. Daily breakfast for pre-primary school children in Grenada**

This project seeks to provide a daily breakfast to 31 children between the ages of 3-4+ years at the New Hampshire Pre-Primary school, in Grenada (Caribbean island).



For details on how to donate ( or for further information) please email : [cgi.ciad@ssvpglobal.org](mailto:cgi.ciad@ssvpglobal.org)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY**



**María Luisa Téllez**

International Vice-President for Formation and Training

## Times of Too Much Information and Too Little Listening

I would like to briefly delve into two ideas revolving around communication that I believe are worth pondering: Information overload and poor listening habits.

As for the former, there has always been too much, but information overload during the current Covid-19 pandemic has overwhelmed the society, which has resulted in uncertainty, one of the undesired states we can go through, and in an outpouring of ever-changing information with many different views and outlooks on subject matters: disparities in the figures provided and denialism giving rise to a total chaos. In this regard, I do believe, and I apply it to myself as if it were a vaccine, in two thoughts: critical thinking, which rigorously question ideas and assumptions rather than accepting them, and common sense, which is much more positive and is our natural ability to make good judgments about the boutades we may

hear. In a nutshell: critical thinking, common sense and good judgment.

The latter refers to poor listening habits. Listening is not a passive physical act; it requires some effort, a positive attitude and an open-mind will towards the subject or the person speaking. Barriers to effective listening include personal biases, inattentiveness and noise. In a communication process, noise refers to anything interfering with the message between a speaker and a listener. Sometimes, our mind is somewhere else or wandering, and we are not listening. That's why, prejudices should be avoided, since they may lead us to block messages or speakers out; as well as distractions which may bring us to our own personal issues. The ability to deal with uncomfortable silences is also very challenging, since they are more difficult than handling words.





## Formation through faith: The Role of SSVP Women

Excerpt from the write-up by Patricia Oluchi Onuoha, Vice Chairperson of the SSVP Global Report Commission and National Youth Secretary at the SSVP Nigeria (2013-2020), at the virtual forum of the 65th session of the UN commission on the status of women, anchored by the National Board of Catholic Women.



Patricia Oluchi Onuoha

The role of women in the history of the SSVP cannot be complete without the distinctive mention of great and noble personalities whose practical commitment rekindled a glowing flame and thus became a passage for today's women to the Society's formation.

Going forward, women have been incorporated and shown full support in decision-making at all levels: from the conference through the international council: This is evident in the life of Sister Rosalie Rendu [1786-1856], DC, who played an essential role in the Society uplift, assisting and training the founders in the Vincentian Charism, following the teachings of St. Vincent de Paul, who, on the other hand, was assisted by Sister Louise de Marillac.

Thereafter, in 1834, the founders dedicated themselves to the Blessed Virgin Mary - Immaculate Conception as Patroness of the SSVP [and whose Feast Day is December 8th]. It is now a tradition that women are part of the decision-making policy and contribute their quota to the growth of the SSVP in general. As a matter of fact, in honour of Amélie Ozanam's selfless service and dedication, August 14th, which is also the birth date of this noble figure, was declared "the International SSVP Women's Day".

The SSVP treats all members fairly, recognizes individual talents, encourages all people [including women] to turn these gifts and talents to the expansion of our dear Society via meetings, training sessions, seminars/retreats; literary contests on the Founders, etc., and does its best to ensure that everyone find his/her rightful place in the institution.

We should also recall Pope Francis' message at the Vatican on November 8th, 2020, with the *Motu proprio Spiritus Domini* [The Spirit of the Lord], which formally expands women's roles in the Catholic Church. The decree allows women to serve as readers and altar servers, as well as to assist priests during service or in administering Holy Communion. It officially updates the Code of Canon Law to reflect that "lay persons... can be admitted on a stable basis through the prescribed rite to the ministries of lector and acolyte," instead of the previous version "lay men". This also reminds us of the importance of having more women engaged in the expansion of the Society. There is a saying that SSVP inculcates the virtues of humility, simplicity, gentleness, zeal and self-control. The Vincentian charism is characterized with empathy, listening, love, acceptability, exposure, transparency, kindness, dedication, and evangelization, values that build a path to holiness for which both men and women are called.

All through these formative years, I have been very grateful to the SSVP for guiding me to live a

*The SSVP treats all members fairly, recognizes individual talents, encourages all people [including women] to turn these gifts and talents to the expansion of our dear Society*



*To sum up, it can be said that prayer and faith in action pulled me through to always recognize God's presence upon my life and all I am doing*

to Philippians 4:13 and I quote "I CAN do all things through Christ who strengthens me". I stand by the maxim "I can" because it has brought many successes beyond my imagination and I am still standing strong amidst my male counterparts.

Let every woman know her worth, develop a prayerful lifestyle with passion, positivity, perseverance, proactive and productivity as her daily growth and employ "I can" regardless of the circumstances.

life of remarkable distinction in today's society. All I have achieved through the Society was largely the result of the great inspiration drawn from the aforementioned women that have impacted positively in the sustainability and expansion of the Society. The confidence the Society reposed on me, gives me a chance to make an imprint. This rare opportunity acts as an encouragement to many young women and young girls that greatness is attainable if you choose the right track of formation and groom your spirituality to God. This strengthens your relationship with one another and renews your commitment to the service of the most vulnerable.

To sum up, it can be said that prayer and faith in action pulled me through to always recognize God's presence upon my life and all I am doing. Each time I try to give up I am reminded of St. Paul's writing

I choose to "celebrate every woman's achievement" for I know what it feels like not to be appreciated and I also take off my cap to all women leading examples to great strides while encouraging young women and girls out there to never give up but always strive and thrive, no matter the environment. Including women in decision-making is of paramount importance to nation-building, and celebrating their achievements should be normal.

I use this medium to remind parents, teachers, guardians to live up to their obligations in girl formation as well. They should guide and encourage every child to fulfil his/her dreams in the ways of God: the time for advocacy is now for a lot of people who have wandered off the track. So, if I CAN, you CAN, she CAN and everyone CAN make that unique difference in the Society and to the generations to come.





Frank Brassil  
International Territorial Vice President for Oceania

## Ideal Foundations to Become a Good SSVP Member

The Society of St Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic multinational organisation whose members live their faith through service to the most vulnerable, marginalised and excluded. Founded in the 1830s by a group of French university students led by Frederic Ozanam and mentored by Emmanuel Bailly and Sr Rosalie Rendu DC, the organisation is present in over 150 countries and is one of the most recognised and respected volunteer social welfare organisations in the world.

What does it mean to be Vincentian? I want to examine what makes the Society unique and has sustained it and enabled it to grow and survive for nearly 200 years. I also want to examine some of the challenges that arise from the way the Society functions so that we can recognise those challenges and respond appropriately.

It seems to me that there are four unique features of the Society.

### 1. The Conference Structure.

The idea of the Conference is the genius of the Society. A Conference is a group of people in a village, town, parish or any other area or social grouping, who come together to live their faith through service to those in their community who need help, using the resources available from their community. The Society is owned by its members and membership exists primarily through membership of a Conference.

Conferences have wide latitude and autonomy to adapt to their context and make decisions about the support they give. Moreover, accountability for the way people are helped and for use of the Society's resources by the Conference and is done within the Conference. Conference meetings are key both to the practice of being Vincentian and to ensuring accountability for the service we give.



A democratic character is central to being Vincentian. We link Conferences through a Council structure that goes all the way to the International Council General, but the process of determining who forms our Councils is 'bottom up'. Conferences elect their Presidents, who form Regional or Area Councils. These Councils elect a President who takes part in a Diocesan, Central or National Council. This way of forming higher Councils is democratic and reflects the interests of Conference members. Those in positions on higher Councils cannot control who is elected at the various levels and the elected members are always in the majority on a Council.

The Council structure binds Conferences into the world wide organisation that is the Society of St Vincent de Paul and thus makes each Conference a part of the Society. The Council structure exists to support, sustain and extend the work of Conferences. One can rightly describe the structure of the Society as a "chain of support", not a "chain of command".

In the Society the President of a Conference or Council has a special role and the position of President is given great respect and trust. A President has two distinct responsibilities:

Leadership of the Conference or Council. In this role, the President is called on to make decisions to ensure the continuing effective operation of the Conference or Council. Presidents must be sensitive to the participation of Conference or Council members in making decisions and must at all times respect the rights of members to be informed and to participate in decisions. There is a balance to be found so that decisions are made democratically and with participation, but not so that sensible governance is hampered.

Participation in the next higher Council. This participation is not simply to represent the Conference or Council from which the President is elected. It is a full engagement with and responsibility

for the governance of the Society at the scale of the higher Council. As a member of a Council one has full responsibility for making appropriate decisions in the best interests of the Society within the scope of that Council and, when necessary, transferring decisions to a higher Council.

At a certain level, matters of legal corporate governance become essential to conducting the business of the Council and the responsibilities of Council members are broadened to encompass accountability under legislation, including but not limited to Corporations Law, Charities and Not for Profit law and laws relating to safeguarding and protection of vulnerable people. These laws vary greatly between countries, but at the appropriate level the responsibility for public accountability and transparency is an important function.

At all levels being Vincentian requires that there be no honour or status attached to holding any office – it is merely an opportunity for service. The Society requires of its senior office holders a deep humility in carrying out their role and a willingness to let go once the term is fulfilled. Any sense of entitlement or ownership of any role or service is inconsistent with being Vincentian. Equally, a Council member has to accept the decisions of his or her own Council and all higher Councils and work for their implementation even if the decision was not the preferred decision of the Council member.

## 2. A Lay Catholic Organisation

The Society's founders, especially in the writings of Frederic Ozanam which preceded and informed the Encyclicals that are now called Catholic Social Teaching, were dedicated to a Catholic foundation of the Society. The political context of the time was not friendly to the Church and it took considerable courage to construct the Society as they did. Ozanam was a noted Catholic apologist but he was careful to







### *In the Society we maintain the autonomy of Conferences as an exercise of subsidiarity*

establish the Society as a lay controlled organisation, respectful of the clergy and the hierarchy, but never ceding control to them. Most Vincentians think this has served us well.

Key elements of Catholic Social Teaching that are deeply held in the Society are: human dignity, subsidiarity, solidarity and the common good.

These are bound together by our Catholic faith which we express through Vincentian spirituality.

Catholic Social Teaching recognises of the intrinsic human dignity of every person. Others may hold similar values, some may not, but as a Catholic organisation we must at the most fundamental level recognise each person regardless of any characteristic they may have, as a human being with the same God given dignity as any other. We do not help people because we are privileged and kind hearted or because it makes us feel good. We help people because their intrinsic value as humans cries out for justice and equality and we cannot ignore it.

Subsidiarity means that decisions should be made at the level of their greatest effect but as close to the point of effect as possible. In the Society we maintain the autonomy of Conferences as an exercise of subsidiarity, and we try to ensure that each level of the Council structure exercises its authority consistently with its ability to give effect to its decisions. There will always be debates about what is the appropriate level for decisions to be made, but the debate itself is a sign of vigorous exercise of Subsidiarity.

Each Council is concerned with matters that are best managed at the scale at which the Council functions, but always on behalf of Conference members and always consistent with the best interest of Conferences. For example, Special Works may grow in scale and their management move from a Conferences to higher Council level. This may cause some upset for those with close association with the establishment of the works, but decisions must be made to balance good use of resources and the needs of those being served.

Vincentine solidarity binds us as a worldwide organisation, not just a collection of local groups with a shared name. We serve first the people of our own community, but we do not limit ourselves to that. We share what we have with Vincentians

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The Rule is a thin book. It is not a long list of detailed rules and prescriptions – it is a statement of high level principles and values and contains some specific detail that defines the Society as the Society. It provides considerable flexibility for local contexts but its values and principles define the Society and are binding for Vincentians. It is a great concern when members understate the importance of The Rule. Sometimes it is said that The Rule is “only a guide” or “a framework”. This gravely misunderstands its importance and one is left wondering what fundamental ethos is being sustained, if it is not in The Rule.

To operate as a large organisation in the community, we have to establish legal entities to enable the Society to own property, employ people, manage business risk and meet requirements for accountability and transparency. These can be entities under various national corporations law or law relating to associations and charities. A confusion sometimes arises between the Society and its legal entities. Being a member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul means being a member of that International organisation of charity defined by The Rule. Participation in any legal corporate entity is parallel to the Society and subsidiary to the Rule. All corporate entities, to the maximum extent possible, must include The Rule within their constitutions

and never through the corporate body act in any manner inconsistent with The Rule.

The Society must be scrupulous to fulfil the requirements of national and local laws relating to the proper and transparent conduct of a public charity. The reputation of the Society must never be put at risk by failure to be open and transparent with out legal responsibilities. These requirements are increasing in many countries especially with regard to financial management and safeguarding of vulnerable persons. We should be ahead of not catching up in these matters.

The Rule is a document produced in a given context and it is not perfect. Parts 1 and 2 can be changed, but but only at the highest level of the Society with the participation of National Presidents from around the world. Part 3 can be changed by a National Council but only with the agreement of CGI. This is as it should be and, even though there are parts of it one may wish to see changed, doing so affects members all round the world and the process is should require careful consideration.

By and large The Rule is an excellent document for the Society and should be treasured by any Vincentian. The Rule defines us, it makes us what we are and it is foundational to us as an organisation.

## 4. A Worldwide Network of Charity

Frederic Ozanam spoke of building a “Worldwide Network of Charity” and the international character of the Society is a core part of being Vincentian. The Society is a great exemplar of the adage: “think globally – act locally”.

Conferences are, through the Council structure, part of a multinational organisation that is present in most parts of the world. Unfortunately, members sometimes limit their vision to their local concerns. I have heard people say that they want money raised in their local shop to be spent in their parish / town / district etc. This is not Vincentian. As a Catholic organisation we have a concern for people in need everywhere and there is no basis, when we have resources to do so, to exclude people in other places from our support. Obviously those at hand have the first call on our support, but clearly, Vincentians in wealthier countries have the ability to share with a wider world and we are called on by The Rule, by Catholic Social Teaching and by the Gospels, to do so.

Twinning is Conferences standing in solidarity, linking with and sharing resources with Conferences in other countries. This is a powerful and effective model, but it takes a lot of work and effort to sustain it. The highly decentralised way the Society works means that communications are a great challenge. Failures in communication lead to failures in understanding and failures in trust. Modern technologies are making this easier and we need to become better at using them. It is often easier for a Conference member in a remote country to send a text message than to write a letter. Solidarity between Vincentians should encourage persistence and the willingness to try alternatives when communications are difficult.

Twinning is only a part of the International structure of the Society and we should see over time our

bonds with our Vincentian sisters and brothers strengthening and growing at all levels in the Society. As the world becomes more interconnected and as more diverse possibilities for communication develop, we should enthusiastically form stronger bonds between Vincentians across the globe with the clear intention to improve our Vincentian Solidarity and to spread the message of service in justice to those in our global community who rightly call on our help. We cannot do otherwise.

## Conclusion

Being Vincentian to me is built upon four key pillars:

1. The Conference structure that enables members to live their faith through service to the most vulnerable and excluded in their community;
2. We are an independent lay Catholic organisation informed by Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic spirituality that is totally responsible for itself and it led and operated by its own members.
3. The Rule is our foundation document which defines who we are and the principles and values that govern and guide us.

4. The Society is a Worldwide Network of Charity bringing Ozanam’s vision to reality.

These are what make Being Vincentian unique. As Vincentians we seek to fulfil our mission through service to those who rightly claim our time and resources in justice and charity.

*The Rule is our foundation document and defines our heart and essence as an organisation*







## Join LanClub and Be Part of our Translators' Club

Project managed, coordinated and overseen by the CGI's  
Communications Commission, headquartered in Spain.



Due to the large volume and promptness required for translations of news, documents reports and presentations to be delivered into the four official languages, LanClub, formerly called 'the Translators' Club', is an initiative launched in September 2018 by our fellow member, President General, Renato Lima. It was thought up as an opportunity to allow members and collaborators, who master any language other than their mother tongue, to become online volunteers wherever they were in the world. This Project, led by the Communications Commission of the Council General International, consists of a volunteer language service provider, aimed at creating multilingual content for 152 countries, so that all members can communicate across the globe.

LanClub, made up of volunteer translators and interpreters, aged 20 to 75, has the two-fold goal of both keeping more than 800,000 members, collaborators and volunteers abreast of the ongoing activities and projects undertaken by the Society, and helping, both directly and indirectly, over 30 million people in need all over the world. Global communication must be prompt and effective, and, to this end, our team of volunteer translators, coordinated by the CGI's Communications Commission, helps us achieve this.

If you need further information or wish to join in, contact the CGI's International Communications Commission at [cgi.communication@ssvpglobal.org](mailto:cgi.communication@ssvpglobal.org)

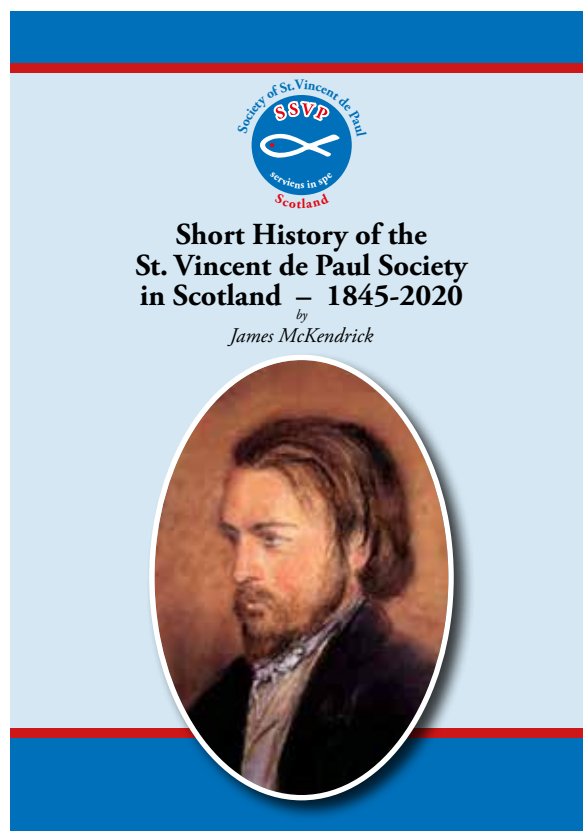


## Short History of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Scotland

Being part of the 175th Anniversary celebrations, the SSVP Scotland has published a book about its historical journey through the passage of time since its foundation.

In the introductory section of this work written by James McKendrick, Danny Collins, the National President, emphasises the progress made and acknowledges the services provided by the SSVP Scotland since its inception, paying his respects to all those SSVP members who have devoted their lives to charity in line with the Vincentian Charism. Yet Danny Collins reminds us that none of this is possible without

the presence of God in the institution's life, and each Vincentian is at the service of Our Lord.



[Click here to read the publication](#)







## Namibia's SSVP President Passes Away



In memoriam: our beloved brother, fellow member Willem  
Edwin Plaath (5th June, 1955 – 10th January, 2021)

The SSVP's Territorial Vice Presidency for Africa 2 informed us about the sad news of our member's passing away. The deceased leaves behind Antonette Plaath, his wife, four children and one sister.



Brother Willie, as he was fondly called, was a devout Catholic and a true servant of God who devoted his time and resources for the sake of the poor. He got along with everyone and always ministered with passion, zeal and joy.

He never let his friends in need go hungry or be without a roof over their heads. He always provided a decent burial for all those who had no resources.

He was appointed Namibia's National President of the SSVP's National Council in 2015 and played an important role in the growth of the Society in his country.

The SSVP's President General, fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, deeply upset on learning the sad news, announced: "On behalf of the Council General, we convey our heartfelt condolences to the family of our beloved fellow member Willem Edwin Plaath. To this end, three days of mourning have been declared by the CGI. We kindly request the Conferences to pray one Hail Mary for Willie's soul at this week's meetings."





Mesa Directiva del Consejo General Internacional

## One Year into Covid-19 Pandemic

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is facing the new enemy of mankind, which has hit the most vulnerable people particularly hard.

Covid-19 has given rise to a global pandemic and a severe economic downturn, with 130 million confirmed cases and a death toll getting close to the staggering number of 3 million deaths, and millions of individuals plunged into abject poverty and destitution.

A year or so ago, the SSVP had to pluck up courage and set out with renewed enthusiasm to accomplish its mission: To fight poverty, regardless of its cause, through faith in Christ and love for our neighbor. In this regard, we, as Vincentians, strived to achieve this amidst the pandemic.

Never before has the need for our mission of support and hope for the world become so real. Never before have we all been so vividly “in the same

boat”. Never before have we empathized with each other’s pain since it is our own pain.

For the aforementioned reasons, this pandemic is, as Pope Francis says, “an opportunity to recall the suffering during the coronavirus crisis, which would be in vain if we failed to build a more just, more equitable, more Christian society”.

One year into this pandemic, we would like to recall each and every one of those who have died, those who are suffering from this disease and the millions of people affected by this virus, with the testimony of those who are offering their help and bringing the light and hope of Christ to the hearts of their brothers and sisters.







Alda Couceiro  
President of the SSVP of Portugal

## Time for an urgent rethink of our lives

The pandemic which has battered us in these last months, and which will certainly continue throughout this year, has created insecurity in us all, and has uncovered many of our weaknesses.

This latest lockdown imposed by the government forces us to stay at home, a place which for many of us lacks the minimum conditions for living, forces us into solitude with our fears and in silence.

We find ourselves having to make radical changes to our behaviour, to rethink our lives and adapt to new ways of living day by day, so we can adjust to this new reality.

We are used to being in charge of our lives, walking about freely, being with family, socialising with neighbours, hugging our friends, and all of a sudden, everything has changed.

It is difficult and tough to live indoors most of the time, leading us to reflect on who we are and what is our role in this insecure world.

We have turned inwards on ourselves, and in silence, have sought refuge in prayer. We need to take care of our inner life, and so we have to receive the voice of God, listen carefully to what he wants to say to us, so we can find the path to this new way of being and living life.

Reflecting on this as he asks us, should lead us to greater trust and even stronger, livelier faith, because although it cannot express itself in visible form, such faith cannot be extinguished, because it guides and leads us ever closer to the Lord.

God is calling us to be signs of his presence in the world, signs of his concern for all humanity.

The economic crisis caused by the pandemic has overwhelmed the world, and our country in particular is in a difficult position; unemployment has increased, and through that, problems for the majority of families. Without their freedom, many of them have also lost personal dignity, with essential goods scarce and suffering and deprivation increasing.

Suffering is certainly the greatest drama in human life, but as believers, we have faith that the Lord will save us and will revive in us hope for better days.

In these difficult times, we tend to focus attention on ourselves, on our problems, on the dangers we face,

*We have turned inwards on ourselves, and in silence, have sought refuge in prayer*





*We must let  
ourselves be  
enwrapped in  
God's love; it will  
transform our lives*

but we should try to look around us and overcome indifference to the suffering of those we meet, understanding their needs so we can help and support them, and ease their pain.

Let us not turn in on ourselves, not give into this temptation, not forget others, and so we pray, we make sacrifices, we look after those who are suffering.

Let us entrust to the Lord our worries, our pain, our despondency, our suffering, because he is mindful of our weaknesses.

Let us also ask him to help us not turn in on ourselves, so that we are ever more attentive to the needs of those who live alongside us.

We are living secluded in our homes, but the Kingdom of God continues to grow, being actively present, because despite such misfortune, tragedy and suffering, men and women are working so hard, fulfilling their vocation and meeting the vital needs of so many families who only have what they are given.

So many of us are making ourselves available, and trying in so many different ways to stay in touch with these families who need material goods but above all, need love and words of encouragement and support which we can give them.

What sacrifices, what self-denial, what devotion there is on the part of those who serve?

God has not withdrawn from our lives, he is always present and active, so that we cannot lose faith or trust although we are often tempted to give up.

We must let ourselves be enwrapped in God's love; it will transform our lives.

At the foot of the Cross, Jesus entrusted us to Mary's motherly care; so let us try to place our problems, our sorrows and fears in her hands, sure that through her intercession, Jesus will listen to us and respond.

Let us offer our prayers to the Lord through his Mother, and learn from her to be near those who, like us, are living in difficult, painful and disheartening circumstances.

With the little shepherds of Fatima, who lived in times similar to ours, let us ask the Virgin to help us not be despondent in the face of such suffering, and through Him, we will be converted, because only thus will we find a new, more balanced and human way of living as sisters and brothers.

Vincentians, let us turn to Mary and ask her help and intercession in all these difficult times in which we live, because she will show us the sure way to meet Jesus.





## MISSION

A NETWORK OF FRIENDS,  
SEEKING HOLINESS VIA THE  
PERSONAL SERVICE TO THE  
POOR AND THE ADVOCACY FOR  
SOCIAL JUSTICE.

## VISION 2023

TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A WORLD  
WIDE ORGANIZATION, WHICH  
PROMOTES THE INTEGRAL  
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OF  
THOSE MOST IN NEED.

## VALUES

- SERVICE
- SPIRITUALITY
- HUMILITY
- CHARITY
- EMPATHY

1

### Formation

Ongoing process for all members

2

### Youth

30% of members under 35 years of age

3

### Twinning

Building a global network of spiritual and material support

4

### Expansion

Presence in all countries

5

### Vincentian Family

Permanent and closed collaboration

6

### Solidarity

International and local partnerships

7

### Global Aid

Revamping fraternal aid and development

8

### Communication

Renew with the use of world-class technology

9

### CGI Structure

Constant search for accountability and efficiency

10

### National Councils

Support to maximize effectiveness



[www.ssvpglobal.org](http://www.ssvpglobal.org)



**Ssvp-Conseil Général International**

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