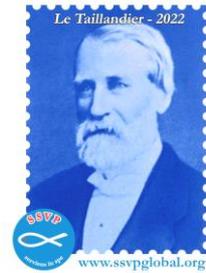




**SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION
Council General International
Annual Meeting - 14 & 15 June 2022
Centre Spiritain de Chevilly-Larue**



Opening speech by the 16th President General International Bro. Renato Lima de Oliveira (2016-2023)

Dear friends, welcome to you all. My special greetings to the new National Presidents who join us today for the first time.

Once again, during this mandate, we are gathered in the Vincentian capital of the world, Paris, to promote the annual statutory meetings of our Confederation, in compliance with the Statutes and French legislation.

Over these two days, we will have the opportunity to approve several resolutions that will further increase **transparency** and improve the **decision-making processes** within our International Confederation. I am asking you all to approve the resolutions that will be presented during these days.

Dear friends, humanity is living through very difficult times. The serious socio-economic consequences caused by the pandemic, the lack of vaccines in a large part of the world and the crisis in Ukraine are visible signs of challenging times for all of us.

These will be times that will keep on imposing **strong restrictions** on all of us, and especially on the neediest. The number of poor people continues to grow, misery is increasing in many places on the planet, inflation has returned, the terror of war has reappeared, and, lamentably, Christ's message remains unknown to a large part of humanity. This is a challenging scenario that demands **concrete answers** from our Society!

Our Conferences, Councils and social works have also been strongly impacted by the changes of the last two years, and, therefore, will demand from us **creativity and innovation to** overcome so many challenges, disappointments and obstacles. God expects a lot from us. Thousands of people depend on our solidarity. Therefore:

- We cannot allow our Conferences to close their doors.
- We cannot allow our fellow members to leave our Society.
- We cannot accept that our social works should cease their activities.
- We cannot conceive of charity being interrupted.

This 2022 plenary meeting of the Council General is intended to address these questions, and to outline to you how the Council General has adapted to so many new situations. Despite everything, the Council General has not stopped for a single minute.

I would like to mention here some of the achievements that, with the grace of God, and with the support of all of you, we have been able to accomplish.

For example, we have moved forward in the areas of formation, communication, finances, global solidarity, youth, recovery of the legacy of the seven founders, administrative management, strengthening of the Structure, valuation of the patrimony (with the new international headquarters), expansion into new territories, relations with the Vatican and the United Nations, strong collaboration with the Vincentian Family, the canonization of Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam, among many other accomplishments that fill us with pride and satisfaction of "duty done".

We also have, for 2022 and 2023, new initiatives, such as **Project Strategy-25**, the expansion of the SSVP to **Scandinavia** and the launch of the **Vincentian Rejuvenation Project**, to revitalise our Conferences, which are in line with the sharing of best practices observed in the countries that make up the Confederation.

But I want to highlight other aspects, which are very important to me, namely the **democratic spirit** that guides the decisions within the Council General, as well as the real obsession we have with **consensus**, moderation in conflict resolution, and charitable mediation in unwanted situations.

This is how I want to be remembered in the future: as **the President General of conciliation, of democracy, of good internal governance**. Every good example that the Council General sets has an immediate impact on the countries that form part of the Confederation, spreading good ideas, good projects and good initiatives.

The Council General must be the "beacon of hope" that keeps the Society united, vigilant and always high-spirited. We hope that everything that we have implemented will be useful and put to good use by the Superior Councils, resulting in better services for the neediest that we assist in our Conferences and Social Works.

As a highlight, the **RISK MANAGEMENT** proposal and the **GOOD GOVERNANCE PROTOCOL** are some of the institutional advances that I am happy to share with you all, and I take this opportunity to thank all those who helped us prepare and approve these regulations.

This year, dear brothers and sisters, we enter the sixth year of our mandate. From August onwards, all eyes will be set on the electoral process we are about to begin to elect our successor. Even so, I will remain active until the last day of our mandate, honouring the noble mission that the Holy Spirit and all of you have entrusted to me in 2016 in Rome.

After my election, I received a bouquet of flowers, very beautiful, which I gave to my dear wife, who was accompanying me at that time. Soon after, we went to a chapel and we placed the bouquet at the feet of Our Lady, and there I dedicated my mandate to **OUR LADY OF GRACES**, asking her to take care of me, covering me with her protective mantle, freeing me from the traps of evil and making me a true instrument of God, to lead the SSVP in the best possible way.

I am a devotee of **Our Lady of Graces** and I know that she accompanies me at all times of my life, both in situations of joy and in difficulties. Her sacred mantle

protects me daily, polishes my imperfections, corrects my mistakes and calms my heart.

Dear friends, I can only thank you all for your **commitment, loyalty, cooperation** and **friendship**. I especially thank the members of the Board, the staff and the International Structure. Without you, it would be impossible to lead this army of charity made up of 800,000 members in 153 territories.

I conclude my speech here, wishing that we have a **very productive meeting**, with invigorating debates and with the most accurate decisions possible, for the success of our Society, for the unity of our Confederation, for the good of the neediest and for the greater glory of God.

A hug to all the brothers, a kiss to all the sisters, and praised be Our Lord Jesus Christ!

Brother **Renato Lima de Oliveira**
16th President General International