

# Why Do Some Conferences Fail To Progress?

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It is always nice to hear the stories of the Conferences that progress, that expand their ministries and constantly seek the promotion of the people in need. It is exciting to know that a Conference created a Special Work, or that they happily completed a visit to a needy family, or perhaps obtained a retirement pension for someone assisted. It is good to see a Conference working well, focused on results, observing the Rule of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and improving the living conditions of those in need.

On the contrary, it is sad to see a Conference stalled, in which the president is complacent and the members have fallen into the routine. It is unfortunate to learn that a certain group no longer has a lively fellowship among the Vincentians, no longer prays the Rosary before the meetings, no longer exchanges experiences with other groups and no longer receives visitors in their long and de-motivating meetings.

What a pity to see that the fraternal union is broken, or that the Vincentian works have ceased to receive the traditional donations that, as in the past, made the Conference and distinguished it from the others for their ability to help. What a shame to see that the collections have dwindled, that they are not in line with the social and even the cultural level

of its members. It is regrettable to observe that the Conference does not participate in training courses. It is regrettable that those Conferences do not keep its faithful members, nor do they strive to obtain new contributors to the Social Works of the entity.

They do not even consider subscribing to newsletters and Vincentian journals! Why? This type of behavior is very disturbing; unfortunately, it is contaminating even Conferences held as models, which were always bastions of our Particular Councils. What's going on? Is there still involvement and commitment, which we have always had? Why are we failing to comply with the Rule, or worse, adapting the Rule to our conveniences, failing to make the weekly visit, not going to spiritual retreats, neglecting economic contributions, etc.?

What can I say about the conflicts between Conferences that are active in the same parish! How to face the lack of charity and intolerance that divide us? How to assess the conflicts between members, the discussions in the meeting room, its area of action, the number of donations received or even the maintenance of the room? What do we do about Vincentians who are impatient with older members?

For this kind of thing, certain Conferences do not progress, but regress, recede. The only remedy for this type of situation is found in "prayer and formation." Only with much prayer and Vincentian training will these groups re-emerge and return to the original spirit that motivated their foundation. It is necessary to "go back to our roots" and re-create each Conference.

Conferences that evolve are those in which peace, accord and charity reign among members; in which all opinions are respected; in which its members are mostly friends, and strive to transform the group into a true community of faith. A growing Conference is one that welcomes young people with courage, and joy is a primary element in meetings, visits, charitable actions and contact with the poor. A Conference that is harmonious, whose members detest vanity and self-promotion, and whose main concern is the integral help to the poor; the rest of the issues are small, petty, unimportant details.

I invite you to respond now: has your Conference progressed or regressed?

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