Conference on the Safeguarding of People Assisted by the SSVP

New headquarters of the International General Council

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International General Council
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Editorial

A New International Headquarters: the Council General is paving the way for the generations to come!

New address: 65 rue de la Glacière – 75013 Paris, France

After a cautious real-state negotiation and a democratic process of internal deliberation which lasted almost two years, the Council General International is pleased to announce that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has a new global headquarters in Paris since November 27, 2019, located at 65 rue de la Glacière, 13th arrondissement. The headquarters will be officially inaugurated on September 13th - 2020.

With the sale of the previous headquarters, authorised by the International Executive Committee (IEC), by unanimous vote during the 2019 Plenary Assembly held in Porto (Portugal), the Council General will now have a more functional and welcoming headquarters, in a beautiful and modern building, which boasts an excellent location in the French capital, worthy of an international catholic organisation such as ours.

Having been built in the 90s, the building is relatively new and has a very beautiful façade, with two separate entrances. It is well connected with public transport, being just a few metres from various metro and train stations, as well as public buses. The
13th arrondissement is a Parisian zone which boasts several restaurants, churches and schools. Consequently, the new Council General headquarters has very nice neighbours. Over the last few years, the building hosted the Scout Movement headquarters.

In September, the Council General's Board visited the building facilities and agreed that the new headquarters would have several duly equipped meeting rooms; translation booths and a projection screen; a videoconference room; a large common area; a chapel; environmentally suitable offices for staff and Vincentian leaders; a kitchen; a library; archive rooms; an information centre; and much more.

Being a more modern building, it is adapted for people with disabilities. The "Ozanam Museum", donated by the National Council of France to the Council General International, which already existed in the previous headquarters, will be moved to the new headquarters. This museum houses objects, clothes and furniture used by the Blessed Antoine Frédéric Ozanam, and will become a place of pilgrimage for Vincentians when they come to Paris.

The new international headquarters is 1,400m² (almost double the previous space), and National Councils around the world share its ownership through participation in the new “Amin de Tarazzi Foundation”, established in tribute to our 12th President General, who passed away a few months ago.

There will be an opportunity for the SSVP throughout the world to increase participation in the “Amin de Tarazzi Foundation” in response to an Appeal that is shortly being launched to raise funds to meet the shortfall between the cost of the new headquarters and the net sales proceeds of the former headquarters. This arises as it has been decided not to dispose of part of the ground floor to deal with this shortfall as originally envisaged as it deemed not to be in the long term interest of the SSVP.

The intention remains to retain the first floor (500m²) and rent it out commercially to meet requirements of the Council General and also support social projects of the SSVP throughout the world backed by the International Solidarity Fund (ISF).”

Thanks to all the Vincentians who collaborated with the Council General in the deliberation and subsequent acquisition of the new international headquarters of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. You are all invited to visit us! We await you with open arms!

Renato Lima de Oliveira
16th President General
The CGI Announces the Results of the International Contest for Paul Lamache’s Thematic Year

On the feast day of Blessed Frederic Ozanam, the CGI is pleased to announce the results of the international contest for Paul Lamache’s thematic year, and also that 2020 will be devoted to Félix Clavé.

The President General International, Renato Lima de Oliveira, on behalf of the Council General International, was pleased to announce the results of the third International Literary Contest “the First Conference – International Thematic Year of Paul Lamache”.

1st Prize: Njoku Collins (Port Harcourt, NIGERIA): 1,000€
2nd Prize ex aequo: Elza Alemão (Curvelo, BRAZIL) and Patricia Onhuoa (Okigwe, NIGERIA): 750€
3rd Prize: Dominic Pinto (Bombay, INDIA): 500€
*Special Honorable Mention: Philippe Menet (Paris, France)
*Honorable Mention:
Obinna Ogbu (Aba, NIGERIA)
Luciana Moreira (Limeira, BRAZIL)
Kyrian Njoku (Port Harcourt, NIGERIA)

The SSVP’s Council General International also granted an equivalent amount to the Conference to which the author of the work belongs. The money granted to the Conference will be fully allocated to social work, activities or projects carried out by the Conference, represented by its President.

The Council General has received 19 literary works submitted by members from the following continents: 1 from Europe, 4 from Africa, 3 from Asia and 11 from America.

We congratulate all the participants and all those who have helped to organise this Contest. “The Organising Committee is impressed with the contents and presentation of the works, which are improving year after year. The Council General welcomes the interest aroused within the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in the Thematic Year project, which aims at further delving into the work produced by each of the seven young founders. The key goal is to ensure that the knowledge shared by everyone concerning the emergence of the first Conference and the subsequent development of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has an impact, that the history of the founders is known, that it is spoken about, that it is of value as an example, especially for the young people who are attending Conferences today. The seven founders collectively created our Society. For this reason, with respect and consideration, we remember the legacy bequeathed to us.”, said our President General, Renato Lima

We would like to remind you that the upcoming 2020 International Thematic Year will be devoted to Félix Clavé. Those fellow members who are interested in taking part of the contest, which will be launched on February 8th, 2020, can start preparing their submissions.
On the 9th of September, feast day of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, a small CGI delegation, led by the President General, visited the cemetery of Grenoble, the resting place of Paul Lamache.

This event is enshrined within the thematic year devoted to Paul Lamache, regarded as one of the founding members of the first SSVP Conference.

Members of the CGI visit the tomb of Paul Lamache

Our Nigerian fellow member Njoku Collins, winner of the first prize in the literary contest in the Themed Year of Paul Lamache, celebrating with his family and friends this recognition.
I was overwhelmed to know the results of the Year of Paul Lamache and that I won the 3rd prize in the esteemed international competition conducted by Council General International SSVP. The Council General of the Society of St Vincent de Paul has been promoting the International Literary Competition on “The First Conference”, and this year it was on Paul Lamache.

I had decided to participate and it was quite an enjoyable experience, researching, reading and understanding the life of Paul Lamache. When I began to write, knowing that Paul Lamache was a law student, I assumed he would be a loud, aggressive fighter. However, I was surprised to learn that he was a humble, low profile and focused person, who fought for the rights of many people, slaves, poor and the distressed, in his own amicable way. At one time when the Conferences were closed down due to the pressure of the government, he tried to establish a rapport with the government, cooperating with them and helping them out and thus building the relationship. Paul Lamache was the last living Founder of the 7 Founders and in 1888, was invited to Paris for an anniversary of the founding of the SSVP. However, his humility did not allow him to take centre stage and he did not attend the celebrations. He was brought up with strong catholic values and at all times, he strongly supported and defended the catholic faith.

Paul Lamache has indeed made an indelible impression on me. This concept of researching the Founders was a brilliant idea initiated by our International President General, Bro Renato Lima de Oliveira as it has given Vincentians an avenue to discover the deep insights of how our founders, in their humility, were great persons who made a tangible difference to humanity!
CGI’s Meetings in Paris

Several CGI’s meetings and activities were held from September 8 to 10. It is worth mentioning the International Board Meeting, and that of the International Commission for Aid and Development (CIAD). The agenda was completed with the visit to the tomb of Paul Lamache in his thematic year.

The international Board meeting was held on 8 September in Paris. Early in the morning and prior to the beginning of the scheduled agenda, the Board members visited the premises of the new international headquarters, at 65 rue de la Glacière.

During the visit to the new headquarters, the President General, our fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, stated: “We are paving the way for future generations within the CGI. The new headquarters will be more modern and functional, with larger areas and better equipped to carry out the work of all CGI members.

Hence, we do hope that the CGI will be able to expand more easily, thus providing the Superior Councils and all Vincentians around the world with more services. I would like to congratulate the commission appointed for this mission, and particularly, our fellow member Bertrand Ousset, our Secretary General, who has zealously carried out this work”.

After the visit to the CGI’s new headquarters in Paris, the Board members pursued the scheduled agenda, meeting at the current headquarters at rue de Londres to discuss several items on the agenda, starting with the details regarding the change of headquarters: schedule for office relocation, the opening of the new offices (expected on 25 February 2020), the expansion of Ozanam museum and the implementation of a new space devoted to providing information on the SSVP.

Then, Fr. Andrés Motto CM, CGI’s spiritual advisor, dedicated the spiritual reflection to Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and his origins in Lyon, to the importance of having a family and a place to call home, intertwining
INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

the CGI is actively working on three important meetings, which will be held jointly in Nairobi (Africa) in June 2020: the forthcoming CGI’s annual meeting, ‘All Africa’ meeting gathering all SSVP African countries, and the SSVP’s French-speaking-countries meeting. Joseph Makwinja, the 1st Vice-President General Deputy, was in charge of presenting the progress made with regard to the aforementioned meetings.

During the information session concerning the different CGI’s Commissions, the topics covered in the meeting were, among others, the following: the progress made on the Cause of Canonisation of Frédéric Ozanam, the different meetings held with the Vatican, the revision of the international statutes, the goals set for SSVP expansion through the setting-up of the Society in new territories and the progress made in international communication and formation. It is worth mentioning the release of the SSVP’s institutional video, the upcoming CGI’s web revamp, the thematic years as well as the literary contest in the thematic year of Paul Lamache. Furthermore, the International Commission for Historical Research is committed to looking into the possibility of recognising Frédéric Ozanam as Doctor of the Church. An initiative approved by both the President General and the rest of the Board members.

This thought with the joint mission undertaken by the Vincentian Family with regard to Famvin Homeless Alliance and its ‘13-Houses Campaign’, aimed at providing the homeless with decent housing.

After the spiritual reflection, the Treasurer General, Larry Tuomey, presented his report and his work regarding next year’s budget, commenting on the need to deliver a report on the Special Collect for Youth 2019, which was held on 4 July, aimed at supporting activities and initiatives undertaken by young people.

The CGI is actively working on three important meetings, which will be held jointly in Nairobi (Africa) in June 2020: the forthcoming CGI’s annual meeting, ‘All Africa’ meeting gathering all SSVP African countries, and the SSVP’s French-speaking-countries meeting.

Visit to the facilities of the new headquarters

International General Council
www.ssvpglobal.org
International General Council

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

At the end of the meeting, and once all the participants presented the activities undertaken in 2019 and those to be carried out in 2020, the following was highlighted: The Board’s representation, the trip of the PGI, Renato Lima, to the UN headquarters in July 2019, and the invitation extended to the PGI by DePaul University in Chicago to discuss about the SSVP and the systemic change (February 2020). Moreover, it was noted that the forthcoming major Famvin meeting will be held next January in Rome, gathering leaders from many branches.

The following day, on the feast day of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, a small CGI delegation, led by the President General, visited the cemetery of Grenoble, the resting place of Paul Lamache. This event is enshrined within the thematic year devoted to Paul Lamache, regarded as one of the founding members of the first SSVP Conference.

The CIAD meeting, which was held on 10 September, concluded the international activities in Paris. The different topics and projects which are being carried out were outlined during the meeting. However, the focus of the meeting was the situation in the Dorian-devastated Bahamas. The CIAD has approved an emergency plan for aid in the face of this natural disaster, with an initial transfer of money to Vincentians who are providing assistance on the ground (there are 9 Conferences in the Bahamas).

“These were days of in-depth meetings and debates. The international Board is striving to make the current CGI’s term of office very positive, expanding democracy and transparency across the decisions made. Successful management is pivotal for any entity; particularly, in institutions like ours. I am delighted with the work in progress, since we are complying with 10-top items set out in the strategic plan which was approved 3 years ago, at the beginning of my term of office.”, stated our President General.
Fourth meeting of the International Board in 2019

The fourth and last 2019 meeting of the SSVP International Board was held on 30th November. This time, it was held near Milan, at the house of the Oblate Fathers in Rho, with the intention of honouring the memory of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, on the 180th anniversary of the Council General International.

The meeting began first thing in the morning. After opening prayers and words of welcome by the President General, Fr Andrés Motto, C.M. gave the spiritual reflection, on the various ways of naming poverty, changing according to contemporary sociological situations, in which a person can be called exploited, marginalised, excluded, a proletarian, a servant, shamefully poor, delinquent, a layabout... leading to the conclusion that Vincentians and the Society as a whole must eliminate and distance themselves from the use of this vocabulary, which marks out, injures and criminalises the poor. Instead, we must offer ways of overcoming this situation through fraternity, and the lived experience of faith in community which leaves no-one behind, includes everyone and fills the world with love.

After this rich spiritual reflection, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved, and the collection took place, just as all Conferences do throughout the world.
At this point, Bertrand Ousset, the Secretary General, spoke to share with the members of the Board the progress in the move to the new international offices, at 65, rue de la Glacière, a much bigger, more suitable office for the needs of our times. The official opening of the new offices is scheduled for September 2020. After this, the Secretary General handed over to the 1st Deputy Vice-President General, Joseph Makwinja, who presented the programme for the 2nd “All Africa Assembly”, which will bring together the 40 SSVP National Presidents in Africa, some days before the events that the Council General is going to hold, God willing, in Nairobi (Kenya): the annual international SSVP meeting (meetings of the “Permanent Section” and the “International Executive Committee”), the triennial meeting of the countries forming the Concordat (20 nations which make fixed annual donations to CGI to ensure the budget for this Council), and the VPTIs’ meeting. There will also be a meeting of French-speaking SSVP countries, a great initiative by the Council General.

Together with these key themes, he also spoke about the progress of the Commission for Development of International Statutes, which will have its next meeting in February 2020, and on the need to strengthen and train the International staff team.

Further important matters included the presentation by the General Treasurer, Larry Tuomey, of the budgets for 2020, which were approved unanimously, and the contribution by the Vice-president general, Joseph Pandian, who spoke among other matters about the good work of the International Commission for Aid and Development (CIAD) and its next meetings in February and September 2020.

The morning ended with a summary of the work carried out by the President General International, who, among other subjects, gave a report on his trip to Hong Kong, Indonesia and the Philippines, spoke about the Talk Show at the end of October 2019 (the next Talk Show will be on 28 March 2020), and about the need to strengthen the presence of the SSVP in the United Nations, where great work is being done already with the Vincentian Family.
In the afternoon session, the first set of presentations were for the strategic department, starting with the Ombudswoman, who is responsible for all internal complaints and possible disputes. After that, the main topics related to communications were addressed, the model for the new international SSVP webpage and the new official video were presented, the latter released in November 2019. There was also a report on the progress of the competition to design a new international logo, which will celebrate its final stage in Nairobi in 2020.

The Vice-president for Training and Formation, Maria Luisa Téllez, also talked about the progress in this area, with new training modules added to the global Vincentian training and formation, strengthening communications with territorial representatives, who are also offered topics for study and training/formation. The aim is to produce videos and presentations which deliver a simple, attractive and powerful training programme for all members, in which spirituality and the charism are given prime importance as the basis for this training/formation.

As regards Ozanam’s canonisation, Sebastián Gramajo, 2nd assistant vice-president general, gave some new information about the work taking place in Rome, producing some very positive results for the Cause. He also spoke about the rewarding experience of the “safeguarding meeting, for people cared for by the SSVP”, which was held at the SSVP offices in Paris, and which set out the basis for an upcoming implementation protocol, to protect the integrity of people cared for by our institution, with special attention given to minors.
The programme of contributions closed with the report from Maurice Yeung, Vice-president for the Structure and Special Projects, who, among other things, spoke about PANASCO 9, the meeting of the SSVP countries in Asia and Oceania. This was going to be held in Hong Kong, but because of the instability in the territory, has been postponed by the end of 2020.

On the following day, after this intense round of meetings, the Board members were able to visit the most iconic places around Milan relating to Frédéric Ozanam, including his place of birth (where there is a plaque in his honour), and the place where he was baptised. A new church now stands on this site, the Basilica of S. Carlo al Corso (dedicated to St Charles Borromeo), which retains the baptismal font from the previous church (Santa Maria dei Servi), in which Blessed Frédéric was certainly baptised.

Notable also were the visits the Board members made to local Vincentians, particularly to the Monza Central Council, where Holy Mass was celebrated, and a special work, a shelter for homeless people. They also met the Central Council of Milan, and visited the Casa di Elena, a home for women in difficulties who are caring for children.

“"The Milan meeting was extremely intense and productive, with great conversations among Council members, who are always seeking the best solutions for the future of the international SSVP. We are experiencing very positive energies in Council General, with the new offices and the challenges appearing for leading the Council General in the best possible way. I wish to thank all the board members for their charity, spirit of conciliation, faithfulness and Christian commitment”, stated our president, Renato Lima.
The General Council presents a beautiful image of the “Seven Founders” of the SSVP

“We suggest that all Conferences, Councils and Vincentian Works print the image with the faces of the seven founders in order to display it in our headquarters or meeting place, next to the Letters of Aggregation, so that all the people who visit us see that we had seven founders”, emphasized the General President, Renato Lima de Oliveira.

The spreading of the memory of the seven founders is a priority in the strategic plan of the current presidency of the General Council, so that all the fellow members worldwide know and value the role of each of the seven founders in the creation and development of the SSVP. This is especially important in this year in which we celebrate the 180th anniversary of the General Council.

Click here to access the official image of the seven founders in the different languages:

Portuguese | Spanish | English | French
New SSVP international logo

All SSVP members are welcome to submit their ideas and take part in this contest for a prospective new logo for the Society.

The best logo designs will be presented at the 2020 International Plenary Session, which will be held in Nairobi, for consideration by the attending Superior Councils.

You are not expected to be a professional logo designer. The simplest ideas, or even sketches are most welcome. If required, the winning logo design will be professionally produced. It should be borne in mind that the new logo should be in everyone’s mind across cultural and linguistic borders.

The deadline for submission of ideas, designs and sketches is April 1, 2020. To this end, the Commission set up by the President General, made up of seven countries, will draw up the shortlist. In Nairobi, countries will then vote and decide whether to adopt a new logo or to keep the current one (blue fish).

For more info on this contest for a prospective new logo, click on: https://svdpusa.sharefile.com/share/view/s7437b4304864f7f7b
Conference on the Safeguarding of People Assisted by the SSVP

SPONSORED BY OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL ENGLAND AND WALES, A CONFERENCE ON THE SAFEGUARDING OF PEOPLE ASSISTED BY THE SSVP WAS HELD OCTOBER 25 TO 27 AT THE CGI HEADQUARTERS IN PARIS. THIS CONFERENCE ADDRESSED ISSUES SUCH AS ABUSE OR ILL-TREATMENT, WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON CHILD NEGLECT.

Vincentian officials from the five continents attended this meeting hosted by the CGI; the 2nd Vice-president General Deputy, Sebastián Gramajo; and the Treasurer General, Larry Tuomey who read a PGI’s message as follows:

“The SSVP’s International Confederation shares this concern. For this reason, we are rolling our sleeves up while adopting lines of action and a protocol according to the principles on the protection of minors and vulnerable persons set out in the Apostolic Letter motu proprio issued by the Supreme Pontiff and by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, of which we are members.”

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is mindful of the responsibility it bears since it helps physically, socially and economically disadvantaged people, as well as those individuals suffering from the effects of emotional deprivation or neglect. Hence, they all need our respect and care. For this reason, we must observe the SSVP’s Rule and Statutes and take care of
all these people as they deserve. It is important to implement safety mechanisms that keep predatory people away and prevent wrongdoing towards those whom the SSVP serves with such zeal.

The main outcome in safeguarding the people assisted by the SSVP is that each National Council should address this issue and, as a civil association, abide by the related regulations laid down in each country, duly reporting to the relevant authorities in this regard, always cooperating with the justice system and seeking transparency in defence of the rights of those who are in vulnerable situations, which is ultimately the SSVP’s mission.

There are some good practices and advice for safeguarding the most vulnerable; namely, the protection of the most needy, which begins with the human and Christian qualities of those who are members of the SSVP. Hence, the recruitment of members, volunteers or technical staff is rigorously analysed, to then be properly trained. Furthermore, it is advisable that some activities such as home visits or other sensitive activities are carried out in groups or in pairs, thus avoiding any possible irregular situation.

This event reinforced the SSVP’s commitment towards those assisted, according to the Vincentian motto of ‘Do good while doing well’, seeking to improve the service provided to our neighbour whom we respect as our brother and sister.

In Nairobi, during the forthcoming 2020 CGI’s annual meeting, this issue will be discussed in depth again. In the meantime, a team of Vincentians representing members from all over the world will work on the best way for all SSVP countries to adopt a protocol for safeguarding the people assisted, with special emphasis on minors.
The Second Edition of President General’s Talk Show

On 27th October, Renato Lima, SSVP member and 16th President General of the Society, spoke for more than 1 hr 45 mins, directly to members all over the world, answering all their questions and chatting about the most interesting issues relating to the SSVP.

New technologies can be used to make Blessed Frédéric Ozanam’s dream come true: “I want to embrace the world in a network of charity”. Through social networks, Vincentians from many countries can come together, on the Facebook page of Ozanam TV, to discuss and debate with the President General, in an extended conversation, as if in their own Conference meeting.

One of the main ideas for the production of this Talk Show is described by the President General himself: “Leaders of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have to be close to the base groups, to the members”, so this is why he has made himself available to his friends all over the world, open and approachable, answering questions from them all.

The questions from Vincentians allow him to address his own special interest in everything relating to spirituality. In the first place, the canonisation process for Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, moving forward steadily towards sainthood, and in the second place, the themed years for the founders of the SSVP, which are a significant step forward in the knowledge of the beginnings of the SSVP and its founding spirit. In reference to this, the President General has already announced that 2020 will be the year dedicated to Felix Clavé.

Another important issue addressed was the relationship of the SSVP with the Church. Renato Lima was very clear on this, “as Christians and Vincentians we have to be always close to the Church”, loving and respecting it deeply.
Many other Vincentians were interested in how the President General has managed to balance his work over his three years of leading the SSVP up to now. Renato Lima answered that many of his objectives had been achieved, highlighting his particular interest in communication and training, as well as his concern for transparency in management, and for the development of a spirituality appropriate for our organisation, drawing on the legacy of the founders strengthened in the origins of the SSVP.

Looking ahead to the new year, the President General commented that “in 2020, a landmark event awaits us, the first annual meeting of the Council General International taking place in Africa”. The chosen location is Nairobi (Kenya), which, as well as hosting this international meeting, reflects the African SSVP, already present in 40 of the 45 countries on the continent, growing daily in service to the neighbour and in the charism of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The President General also had something to say to younger people, and to those who would like to see the SSVP grow in their Conferences, “home visiting is the best thing we can do for Our Lord Jesus Christ, bringing young people to the homes of those who are suffering”. This is what hooks people in, because it is the true meaning of charity, involving all. It is not just about providing food or clothing, but how we offer this help, always with a smile, an embrace, listening and understanding.

The Talk Show ended with the President General’s response to Vincentians about the role of the SSVP in today’s world. Renato Lima assures us our aim is “to be united, to be an example of fraternity, with faith, and to serve to build a better world. To offer a hope-filled alternative to the failing models of society today.”

A very special thanks to the Ozanam TV team. To Érika Azara, the moderator, and to Denilson Sá, Fátima Silva, Amauri Lopes and Vitória Lopes who were responsible for ensuring the broadcast went perfectly.

The next edition of the President General’s Talk Show will be, God willing, on 28 March 2020.
The President General’s New Circular Letter will be published on January 31, 2020

For the fourth year in a row, our fellow member, Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, will publish the Circular Letter, which will be addressed to all fellow members of the world, giving food for thought. The letter will be translated in seven languages.

Since 1841, the Circular Letter has become a tradition for Presidents General. The document is divided into five sections: 1) Introduction; 2) Council General’s News; 3) Recommendation for Vincentians; 4) International themed year dedicated to the founder Félix Clavé; and 5) Conclusions. In 2020’s issue, our President Renato Lima emphasizes, to name a few, the actions related to youth, the United Nations, communication, the SSVP’s expansion to new territories, the red-tape issue, the decisions made in the Councils, the value of the systemic change, the importance of social media, the prayer and fraternal correction.

“The Circular Letter is a great tool for Vincentian formation and training within the Society of Saint Vincent the Paul. The pieces of writing produced by the President General convey his thoughts on current major topics and the challenges faced by fellow members in the Conferences, Special Works and Councils. In the main, the Circular Letter is worth reading and reflecting upon, since it could help when Vincentians seek to achieve greater standards of efficiency and quality in the projects they undertake.”, stated Marisa Téllez, International Vice-president for Formation and Training.

Given that the Circular Letter is rather lengthy (15 pages), our recommendation is to read it in parts during Conference meetings. We would like to thank the Superior Councils for collaborating with the Council General in the dissemination of the Circular Letter in their respective countries, publishing it on the Internet and discussing about it in formation/training courses and meetings. For any comment or suggestion: cgi.circular-letter@gmail.com. Enjoy your reading!
“Christmas Message of 2019”

In a 2-minute video, the President General highlights the importance of the Holy Family — which is the most significant symbol of Christmas — in the life of Vincentians. Speaking of the Holy Family, the President General points out the central role of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the plan of salvation, while encouraging us to promote and practice family values.

In addition, in this year’s Christmas Message, our President General invites Vincentians to holiness. “The world is already very bitter, hard and unfair. We need holy hearts that can transform such harsh realities. Today, more than ever, the vibrant testimony of Vincentians to the poor is a visible sign of the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the heart of humanity”, stressed brother Renato Lima.

And the President General concluded: “Thus, the arrival of Jesus Christ is the hope that should guide our purpose and inspire our actions in favor of those who most need some Vincentian help, especially with those who suffer more”.

At the end of the video, while wishing a Happy New Year to the entire Vincentian community, the President General announces that 2020 will be declared as “International Year of Felix Clavé”, one of the seven founders inspired by God for the creation of the SSVP.

Click here to see and hear the words of our brother Renato Lima de Oliveira on Christmas, on behalf of the entire International Board and the staff of the Paris headquarters.
The concept of poverty is dynamic and comparative, hence its complexity. But… how can we clear up some of this disorder? I herein prompt you to think about some of the terms used to refer to poverty, often linked to the prevailing social culture of the time, which help us to grasp more fully the diverse sufferings of those who endure them:

**Exploited:** This term refers to underpaid persons or groups. In other words, those who are paid less than what they should be paid for their work. On a large scale, the ruling class is the one making profit.

**Marginalised:** It refers to the relegation to the fringes of society due to a lack of access to rights, resources, and opportunities. Marginalised groups live in slums or in highly deprived geographical areas of a country. In other words, they live out in the open, on the fringes. Goods, services and a dignified life are enjoyed by those at the ‘centre’. A song by Atahualpa Yupanqui says as follows: “… the sorrows are ours, the cattle belong to others”.

**Excluded:** Similar to the preceding term but deeper. To put it plainly, these people are no longer in the system. Aside from the barest minimum, they are forced to lead a life of great deprivation. From an economic point of view, they’re not living but surviving. They are those who have been ‘rejected’, those who are not needed, those who are in most respects invisible. Maybe, this issue is raised on a campaign trail.

**Servants:** These people are responsible for performing menial duties; thus, they are regarded as inferior by those who exploit them. Up until recently, domestic workers were called ‘servants’ in numerous households. As a result, they are denied a dignified treatment due to their condition of servants. To make matters worse, most are employed on a casual basis and therefore fall outside state regulatory systems.

**The Proletariat:** Arising from the Marxist theory, it refers to those poor people whose only possession of significant material value is their labour-power and their offspring. They have no access to land for housing. Consequently, their only asset is their offspring.
Shamefaced Poor: These are people belonging to the upper or middle class who have fallen upon hard times and find themselves in helpless situations. They find it difficult or outright impossible to ask for help. This position of insecurity can be transitory or permanent.

Criminals and Layabouts: These two terms criminalise poverty and are the most discriminatory. These terms imply that all the poor are thieves, that their situation is the result of their own making, that they are ill-disciplined, that they want everything to be easy and that they lack an entrepreneurial spirit. These terms don’t differentiate—all poor people are thieves, dangerous, enemies of hard work and bed lovers. Sometimes, this discrimination is intensified due to their skin colour or foreign origin.

We know that labelling is a way of categorisation. As Vincentians, we must go beyond any offensive or criminalising word or term used to refer to poor people. By the same token, as Vincentians, the misery of others must hurt us, forcing us to be better trained in order to find better ways to serve.

Poverty is too complex an issue to be addressed individually. Frédéric Ozanam knew how to surround himself with friends who put wings to his desire to change the world through love and justice. One of these friends was the renown Dominican preacher, Henri Dominique Lacordaire. They met at the end of 1833, and the friendship went on all their lives. And what about us? Our organisation is spread across the world; hence, it would be good to engage in reinforcing not only our own fraternity but that of our brothers and sisters among the poor—to strive for an improvement in our service. Without a doubt, this is the vision of Jesus and of St. Vincent de Paul.
Vincentians from all over World
Rejoice in the Canonisation of ‘Saint Dulce of the Poor’

On 13 October, 2019, in St Peter’s Square, Pope Francis canonised five new saints, among them ‘Dulce of the Poor’, the first saint born in Brazil. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul across the globe rejoices in this piece of news.

‘Saint Dulce of the Poor’ has been an example of holiness and charity. Her life was the proof that holiness comes down to a fully embraced charity. She endeavoured to love God with all her heart and soul and her neighbour as herself. Her exemplary life brought light to the lives of many.

‘Saint Dulce’ was a person sensitive to the suffering of the poor. Despite her frail health, she suffered with the sick, leaving behind her own sufferings, and put the pain of those who came to her asking for help first. God bestowed upon her a courageous heart to engage with private companies and government authorities, seeking to get the resources required to carry out a myriad of social works.

One of her quotes is key for all of us as Vincentians: “There is no greater joy in this world than to surrender oneself wholeheartedly to God, to serve Him in the person of our most needy sufferer”. Her legacy is remarkable and inspire us to forge ahead on the path of Charity.

“Dulce of the Poor” is very much like St. Vincent de Paul when it comes to holiness, charity and love for the poor, sick and neglected children. May many Vincentian Conferences around the world embrace the name of ‘Saint Dulce of the Poor’. The Council General will be more than happy to include Conferences bearing her name”, stated the President General, our fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira.

In addition to ‘Dulce of the Poor’, other figures were canonised in the same ceremony: John Henry Newman (cardinal, founder of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in England); Giuseppina Vannini (founder of the Daughters of Saint Camillus); Maria Teresa Chiramel Mankidiyan (founder of the Congregation of the Holy Family) and Margherita Bays (member of the Third Order of St. Francis).

A brief historical insight...

‘Dulce of the Poor’ (Maria Rita de Souza Brito Lopes Pontes) was born in Salvador de Bahia (Brazil), on 26 May 1914. In 1933, she began her new life with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God in the neighbouring state of Sergipe (Brazil). In the same year, she made her vows and took the name ‘Dulce’ in memory of her mother. In 1935, Sister Dulce began her charitable work with the needy population in Bahia, establishing shelters, hospitals and foster homes, and implemented many other social projects.

Currently, the Social Works created by ‘Santa Dulce of the Poor’ serve about 2,000 people daily. The Brazilian Government and the Kingdom of Sweden recognised her charitable work, and, hence, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988. Sister Dulce died on 13 March 1992, at the age of 77. The Vatican has recognised two miracles needed for the canonisation of Blessed Dulce. Sister Dulce is also known as the ‘Good Angel of Bahia’ or ‘Mother Teresa of Latin America’. Let us pray.
Santiago Masarnau to Be Declared ‘Venerable’

THE FOUNDER AND FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL IN SPAIN WILL BE DECLARED ‘VENERABLE’ IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

Fr. Giuseppe Guerra C.M. has reported to us from Rome that a committee of expert historians and theologians produced a formal brief (positio super Virtutibus) supporting the cause for bestowing the title of ‘Venerable’ to the Servant of God Santiago Masarnau Fernández (1805-1882), the founder and first president of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Spain.

We are now awaiting the forthcoming meeting of cardinals and the formal decree approved by the Holy Father declaring that the heroic virtues of the Servant of God are evident and that he is entitled to be called ‘Venerable’. The cause is awaiting a miracle in order to move forward to proceed to Beatification.

This piece of news, which is great for both the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian Family, was announced on November 11, 2019, the SSVP Spain’s 170th anniversary.
The Visit

María Luisa Téllez
International Vice-president for Formation & Training

It all started with a first visit, that of the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary who, by giving her ‘fiat’, made possible the second and most important visit, the visit of God, in the person of his son, who became flesh and dwelt among us.

He came to redeem us. Hence, we, as Vincentians, must humbly learn from this visit of supreme and generous love when visiting our most needy brothers and sisters; seeing in them Christ and knowing, as St. Vincent and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam said, that “they are our masters and lords” and that our redemption is with the poor.

Since the inception of the Society, the visit has been our flagship, allowing us direct contact with those who suffer. Nowadays, especially in the western world and due to certain circumstances, home visits are hard to undertake. However, we should not overlook our contact with the poor: street beggars, drug addicts, those who suffer from social isolation and loneliness… We should have always comforting words for them and pay them a visit wherever they are, empathising with their hardships, paying attention to them, listening to them.

If, however, home or hospital visits are possible, we should pray prior to paying a visit, entrusting ourselves to the Holy Spirit so that our words may be a source of love and hope, without pretension, treating the visitor with utmost respect. It is good that we talk to them about God and how we live our faith without constraint, so that they may gradually immerse themselves in their faith in God.

Listening is very important in all our life for all our neighbours, but it is of utmost importance for them: “Many times, the member gains more benefit himself from what he hears than is produced by what he says” (F. Lallier).

But when paying a visit, you can’t judge a book by its cover. We shouldn’t pre-judge when making decisions as to how to help them. Christ died on the Cross to redeem mankind, unconditionally. Let’s try to be like him.

In a nutshell, when visiting or encountering the poor, we must exercise the Vincentian virtues:

- Join in prayer...
- Be humble. To see the face of Christ in the poor.
- Do not judge them.
- Talk to them about God.
- Exercise patience.
- Focus on giving yourself, not on what you are going to give.

I humbly hope, by means of this piece of writing, that I have ministered to you, Vincentians, and to all those you visit.

May the Peace of Lord be with you.
Working meeting of the SSVP President General with Fr Tomaž Mavrič

On 21 September, our fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General International of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP), had a working meeting with Fr Tomaž Mavrič, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission (CM) and the Daughters of Charity (DC), as well as being the successor to Saint Vincent de Paul. The meeting took place at the headquarters of the southern Province of the Congregation of the Mission in Brazil, in Curitiba, Paraná State.

They shared ideas and suggestions about the future of the Vincentian Family and the many possible ways for cooperation and common projects among the various branches of the Family. “We have carried out a survey and we believe there are 160 branches of the Vincentian Family around the world. I think we can work even closer together to strengthen the Family and spread the Vincentian charism wider”, said Fr Tomaž Mavrič.

President Renato Lima suggested that, from 2020, the Vincentian Family could take a more active part in events related to the “World Day of the Poor”, which is held on the third Sunday of November each year: “It is a unique opportunity for us, as Vincentians, not only to reflect on the theme of poverty, but above all, to undertake concrete actions, at parish level, to relieve suffering among those who need a friendly, supportive hand.”, emphasised Renato Lima.

The President General took the opportunity to present the Superior General of the CM and the Daughters of Charity with a copy of the “Three-year Report (2016/2019)” of the SSVP’s Council General International, and the book “Passionate for charity and justice”, spiritual readings for Vincentian Conferences (in Spanish). Other topics were also discussed during the meeting, such as news about the canonisation process for Frédéric Ozanam, progress in Vincentian communications, the Vincentian Family meeting in Rome (January 2020) and initiatives for homeless people (“13 Houses” project).

At the end, our fellow member Renato Lima expressed his gratitude for the continuing cooperation between SSVP and the Congregation of the Mission, from the time of our seven founders, the focus of which has intensified in recent years. As it shows, point 5 in the international strategic plan of the SSVP deals precisely with the institutional relationship of the SSVP with the Vincentian Family: ‘permanent, close collaboration’.

The President used the occasion to praise the work of Fr Andrés Motto (CM) as the spiritual adviser to the SSVP’s Council General International. At the close of the session, Fr Tomaž Mavrič blessed the President General, and extended his blessing to all members of the international Board of the Council General.
8-12 JANUARY 2020

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INTERNATIONAL LEADERS MEETING OF 150 BRANCHES
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World Day Of The Poor


On 17 November 2019 (33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time), the Church invites us to reflect on the World Day of the Poor. So on behalf of the Council General International of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP), our 16th President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira, invites all members in Vincentian Conferences throughout the world, to meditate on this profound truth which motivates our charism.

In the message of the Supreme Pontiff this year, the word “poor” occurs 64 times. The Pope compares the situation of the poor person in the Old Testament, with the current reality, observing that little has changed: “The condition of the rich and the poor crosses the centuries, but remains unchanged, as if the experience of history teaches nothing. So the psalmist’s words do not refer to the past, but to our present, subject to the judgement of God,” emphasises the Pope.

Pope Francis also mentions “the many new forms of slavery to which millions of men, women, young people and children” are exposed, people who are also offered Vincentian help, as well as families forced to abandon their own country; orphans who have lost their parents; young people seeking professional fulfilment; victims of so many forms of violence, such as prostitution and drugs; not to mention the millions of migrants. The Pope speaks also of the fringes of our cities, full of people wandering the streets in search of food.
“They themselves become part of a human garbage bin; they are treated as refuse, without the slightest sense of guilt on the part of those who are complicit in this scandal. Frequently judged parasites on society, the poor are not even forgiven their poverty. Judgement is always around the corner. They are not allowed to be timid or discouraged; they are seen as a threat or simply useless, just because they are poor,” he laments. “The inequitable distribution of wealth created a significant number of poor people, whose condition appeared all the more dramatic in comparison with the wealth attained by a privileged few,” he says.

Francis reminds us that the promotion of the welfare of the poor, including those discarded by society, is not a commitment which excludes the proclamation of the Gospel; on the contrary, it demonstrates the reality of Christian faith and its historical validity. In his message, the Pontiff remembers to praise the work of the countless volunteers around the world, but he reminds us that the poor do not need just “hot soup or a sandwich”. “The poor need our hands, to be lifted up; our hearts, to feel anew the warmth of affection; our presence, to overcome loneliness. In a word, they need love,” asserts the Pope.

As we can see when reading the Pope’s message, the Church’s invitation is not limited to a reflection on the topic, but above all, it motivates us to the need for practical actions to help those in need to escape from their condition of material, spiritual, emotional and psychological poverty.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, working for over 186 years to promote the welfare of those in need, also contributes to the reflection on this theme, condemning situations of exclusion, social vulnerability and abandonment of those most in need, serving in hope, particularly as regards new forms of poverty. Our seven founders, men of sincere faith and defenders of the Church’s Social Teaching, motivate us in this way, always acting with the inspiration of the Gospel, enlightened by the cry of God for those most in need.

As a lay organisation within the Church, our efforts must focus on the subject of poverty and personal holiness. In our spiritual dimension, moved by prayer and the Eucharist, we seek greater strength to show our faith, our love and our action. We act according to the will of God who is always ready to listen, respond, protect, defend, rescue and save the poor.
The Council General International invites all brothers and sisters, members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, to look at the poor with “the eyes of God”, eyes of compassion, mercy and unconditional love. It is necessary to work even more effectively and affectively in our Vincentian Conferences and in our work of assisting the most needy in the world, strengthening the “network of charity” with more service and effectiveness in the fight against the appearance of new forms of poverty. As members of Vincentian Conferences, let us be true ambassadors of the Lord to those most in need, remembering that “God is not indifferent to the poor”.

I would also like to announce that from 2020, SSVP will take a more active role in celebrating the World Day of the Poor (more details in due course). For now, we ask all Vincentian Conferences around the world to include the following intention in the Prayers of the Faithful, at Mass on 17 November 2019 (adapted as necessary):

“For the poor throughout the world, and especially those helped by the Vincentians in our parish. On this WORLD DAY OF THE POOR may they have the courage and faith to overcome their difficulties in life, finding strength in Jesus Christ, and may their hope in the Lord never perish. Let us pray to the Lord”.

We also recommend that during the week of 17 to 23 November 2019, as a spiritual reading at meetings, Vincentian Conferences read, reflect and discuss the Message of Pope Francis for the 3rd World Day of the Poor. Enjoy your reading!!

The Society of St. Vincent De Paul (SSVP) Nairobi Area youth have been committed to the Spirit and passion of the Society of Saint Vincent De Paul as it was witnessed at Kamulu, St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Parish on 14th September 2019. It is indeed through service to the needy and Vincentian Spirituality that the young people have found hope and pleasure in serving. In Kenya, and specifically at Kamulu St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Church, we always mark the Day of the Aged every year. During the day, there are a lot of activities and services being rendered to our masters. This year was no different as the church marked the day with a lot of excitement and celebrations.
This year, the event was marked with a lot of joy as we saw an increase of the beneficiaries as compared to the previous years. There were 240 people during the event in different categories:

- 200 – Aged people
- 20 – Disabled persons and
- 20 – Needy people

**ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES**

The day started at 7AM and ended at 5PM in the evening where the church members and the young Vincentians worked together in order to make the day a success. The day was made special by the presence of three Priests from the local parish. The Young Vincentians were drawn from Nairobi Area Conference.

There were several activities during the material day which included praying, cooking, shaving, medical treatment, massage sessions, chats with the aged among others. Everybody participated in cooking and food preparations for the aged. It is quite impressive to note that we had well-wishers from the Komarock Hospital who offered medical attention to the aged.

**LOGISTICS**

Due to the nature of our beneficiaries who are aged and sick, the church donated some school buses to ferry the people from their home places to the church. In addition, some schools and church members also offered their vehicles to be used for transport.

Yours in St. Vincent and Bl. Frederic Ozanam,
Mathew Ndeti - National Youth Representative
Blessed Frederic Mosaic to be installed in Major USA Basilica

A beautiful mosaic of Blessed Frederic Ozanam, principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, will be installed later this year in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, USA.

The Basilica is the largest Catholic church in the United States and North America. The Basilica has featured for many years a Vincentian Chapel, including statues dedicated to the Miraculous Medal, St. Vincent de Paul and Saint Louis de Marillac and other artworks. When President General Renato Lima de Oliveira toured the Basilica last year with US National Council CEO Dave Barringer, he asked if Blessed Frederic could also be considered for recognition in this chapel. Brother Barringer first secured the blessing of the Chapel’s original founders, the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, and then
worked with two Basilica committees and its board of directors to obtain approval for a Blessed Frederic glass tile mosaic. Society members throughout the United States have raised funds for the mosaic’s creation and installation.

The 20 by 30 inch glass tile mosaic is based on a popular portrait of Blessed Frederic painted by his brother-in-law and used extensively by the Society. This 4000-tile mosaic was made by the Travisanutto Mosaic Company in Spilimbergo, Italy, the company that created the Basilica’s gigantic, mosaic dome ceilings.

On January 26, 2020, a Sunday Mass presided by Bishop Donald Hying, National Episcopal Adviser to the USA National Council SVDP, will be held in the Basilica’s main church to bless the unveiling of the mosaic’s permanent installation. A reception for 500 Vincentians and guests will be held afterward at Catholic University of America, on whose campus the Basilica resides. Hundreds of thousands of Basilica visitors will see Blessed Frederic’s mosaic annually.

The 20 by 30 inch glass tile mosaic is based on a popular portrait of Blessed Frederic painted by his brother-in-law and used extensively by the Society.
The 9th Pan Asian Congress/Conference (PANASCO 9) Postponed Until 2020


From the moment the decision was made about postponing this great Vincentian event, the Organising Team has been working towards the Conference to be launched again in November 2020.

Prior to the postponement of the event, some 400 SSVP members from 32 countries in Asia and Oceania, as well as the President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira, were expected to attend.

For further information and last-minute news about this Vincentian meeting, visit the following website: www.panasco9.net
Ozanam House, the New SSVP Social Project in Italy

Inaugurated on October 18, 2019, Ozanam House is a social project, which consists of six fully-equipped self-contained apartments providing shelter to needy families, one of which has been allocated to the Associazione Missione Autismo Asti (association made up of volunteers seeking to improve the living conditions of autistic people).

The new headquarters of Asti’s Central Council are located there. This place will serve as an office but also as a meeting venue for all those who have been involved in the project, thereby building a network of organisations and associations sharing the purpose of doing good.

“Having a roof over one’s head,” remarked Antonio Gianfico, SSVP Italy’s President, “is commonplace for many. For those going through economic or social hardship, though, it is a basic human need that must be met”.

The SSVP is primarily aimed at helping the most disadvantaged groups and fighting against poverty and social exclusion. It’s not only about material support to alleviate hunger and the most pressing needs. It’s also about paving the way for social reintegration through fraternal accompaniment.

Henceforth, six families will have a new place to call home, a place providing shelter and a life plan for its residents.
The National Council of Sri Lanka organised a leadership workshop for more than a hundred young people, with the aim of confirming in them Vincentian values and strengthening the Society for the future.

The event took place on the 6th and 7th September 2019 in the National Sanctuary of Santa Ana, Talawilla, with a total of 110 young people from different parts of Sri Lanka taking part. This event was also shared with the presence of Leo Levin, Local Youth Coordinator for Asia zone 1.

The program focused on the training of leaders, the SSVP charism, the spirituality and implementation of specific action plans for young people.

The 6th September started with the official inauguration, prayers and welcome speech. Leo Levin, as Local Youth Coordinator, gave an introduction about the objectives of this training workshop, as well as about the importance of youth in society, sharing his experiences in this respect.

After the first training session, there was an adoration to the blessed sacrament, led by the national group of priests which enhanced the proximity of God in all the participants. Then, on behalf of the International Youth Committee, the official youth flag was presented to the National President and the National Youth Coordinator.

After dinner, the young people exhibited their artistic talents, entertaining the attendees with a large variety of shows, ending the day with the assurance that the young people have lots of valuable thoughts inside them.

The second and last day of this training workshop started with a eucharistic celebration, followed by a group photo. The training sessions revolved around Vincentian charism, group dynamics and plans of action. The debates were fruitful and offered a good idea of what it means to be Vincentian.

On this occasion, the event was undertaken in order to educate the National Youth Committee which will work in connection with the National Youth Coordinator. In doing this, the training workshop concluded with the aim of conveying the Vincentian mission and all that was learnt to the respective regions of the attendees.
Service To SSVP Kenya
As A Young Person

Mathew Ndeti
National Youth Representative

My name is Mathew Ndeti, a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Kenyan chapter. I joined the society a few years ago when my friend approached me and explained to me about the society. To me, he was God sent because giving back to the society and helping the needy had been my passion and part of my life. I expressed my interest to join the society as a member. I informed him to let me of their requirements and their next meeting date. On their next meeting, I took the action and joined their meeting at our local parish Our Lady of Visitation (OLV), Makada-ra, Nairobi.

Since the first meeting, I was given a warm reception and my journey of being a member and serving in the society began. I became actively involved in the conference by attending most of the meetings and joining my fellow members in home visitations.

At our conference, we mostly deal with the sick, aged and the neediest in the society. After a while, the conference organized and conducted its elections. To my surprise, I was elected as the Assistant Secretary of OLV Conference. This was more than a surprise since I had never thought of being among the elected leaders in the conference and the society in general.

Being a young person, the Area Council has a Youth Wing which is comprised of elected Youth Representatives from each conference. On their elections, I was elected as the Trustee of the Youth Wing in Nairobi. When I consulted one of the members, he told me that “You have been active in the society and because of your commitment, such positive things are coming your way.”

SSVP Kenya had its Annual General Meeting in 2018 where the society brought together all members from different area councils and conferences together for discussions, general elections and other activities concerning them. After the elections, I was elected as the National Youth Representative for the society. This was a humble step in my life and as a Vincentian too. I took up the position with the understanding that I will be in charge of the entire youth in the country.

Being a member of the society makes me feel so humbled. Since I
As a young SSVP member, I have learnt that Service to Humanity is the greatest thing I can offer. In addition, I have learnt that caring for others, being concerned with others affairs especially the needy and dedicating my time and energy is of great service to humanity. I am looking forward to continue offering my time and energy to the society even in a global setting. Finally, I also learnt to rise above the common mentality that the poor are such because of their own making but instead they serve a greater purpose in our life.

The poor are truly my Masters in my daily life. I am guided by Philippians 2:6 (Serving with humility), Luke 4:18-19 (The Spirit has called and send me to serve the poor), Matthew 25:35-36 (For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you visited me).

God bless and best wishes.

As a young SSVP member, I have learnt that Service to Humanity is the greatest thing I can offer. In addition, I have learnt that caring for others, being concerned with others affairs especially the needy and dedicating my time and energy is of great service to humanity. I am looking forward to continue offering my time and energy to the society even in a global setting. Finally, I also learnt to rise above the common mentality that the poor are such because of their own making but instead they serve a greater purpose in our life.
International Youth Census

We are pleased to invite all the National / Superior Councils of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to take part in the Research Census conducted by the International Youth Committee of the Council General International. The survey will be sent by email from the International General Council.

This Census is aimed at assessing the reality of the presence of youth, children and teenagers in the Vincentian Conferences of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The updated data obtained will enable us to depict a clear picture of the youth presence in our institution.

Deadline for taking part in the Census: 20th January 2020.

I pray to God, through the intercession of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, to bless all the Vincentians, so that we can accomplish the Vincentian mission and vocation with joy, always serving the Poor in Hope.

Yours faithfully,

Willian Alves
Vice-President for Youth, Children and Teenagers
Council General International
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
The youth in Christchurch, New Zealand

The Young Vinnies in Christchurch, New Zealand, is an active group of youth who are leading the Society into the future. Our youth serve those in need through service and social justice opportunities. Each term we have a new focus such as; compassion, service, helping those in need, and the environment. As part of the focus we hold an initiative that gets our students involved and active in the Society.

On the 11th of October we hosted part of a Street Retreat for a group of secondary students. They came into one of our opportunity shops in Christchurch and volunteered their time cleaning, making food parcels and sorting items. It is inspiring to see engagement of our youth and their passion for helping others. I look forward to the rest of the year and our continual engagement with the Society and its good works.

Olivia Shimasaki
SSVP youth coordinator for Christchurch

During term 3 we focused on the environment. As part of this focus we made reusable shopping bags and held a sustainable fashion show promoting our opportunity shops.

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In September we held a Faith in Action Day where our students were involved with: visiting a rest home, cooking for families of sick children, handing out homeless parcels, dropping off cards and care packages to the hospital, promotion of the Society, and random acts of kindness across our city. It was a beautiful day that showed our youth the positive impacts that their actions can have. I hope that these encounters will stay with our youth and remind them of the change they can make in the world.
A young Nigerian woman shares her experience of participating in an exchange program in Spain

Brief Excerpt from the report produced by Patricia Oluchi, National Secretary for SSVP Nigeria’s Youth. She spent one month in an exchange program in Spain where she ministered in a social project for homeless people.

The Vincentian Volunteer Exchange Program is a time during which one leaves one’s homeland in order to devote oneself to service in another place. We are familiar with the famous saying that states: the greatest gift that a person can give to another is his/her time because when you do so, you are sharing a part of your life. To share one’s time is an essential element of the ministry of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, which calls for commitment, compassion, courage, dedication, love, openness, passion, patience, respect, sacrifice, a willingness to help wherever needed and a positive attitude toward the more vulnerable members of society. I can say that my experience was rooted in three primary dimensions: spirituality, formation and mission.

The one-month exchange program in which I participated in Spain was a great opportunity for me to serve others while sharing my time, talents and values as a member of the Society with all the respect, love and humility towards the underprivileged. Working with homeless people offered me an opportunity to continue to serve others, to give back to the community and to live the virtues of our shared Vincentian spirituality. I worked primarily in the kitchen area, preparing meals, bringing food and drinks to the residents, doing the dishes and tidying up the dining room. I was fortunate enough to interact with some of the residents even though there was a language barrier. I always felt at home and that feeling flowed from the fact that people were willing to help me and were also very kind to me.

My experience can be summarised as educational, impactful, motivating, inspiring, informative and endearing. The ability of the members of the Society to put into practice the virtues of simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification and zeal made my stay in Spain a very satisfying experience, even more so if we bear in mind that I lived under the same roof as the homeless people I helped.

I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to offer my services to the Society through learning and discovering new things which, in turn, enabled me to
A young Nigerian woman shares her experience of participating in an exchange program in Spain.

minister in a more effective manner as a Vincentian. Sacrificing myself and leaving my comfort zone to be close to these people gave me the opportunity to feel their pain and be able to help alleviate their suffering. The most interesting part of this service was to spend time with the homeless, without judging them, simply to accompany them and try to put a smile on their face. Through this accompaniment, I found new ways to challenge myself in improving my Vincentian service, in discovering what was inside me and in discerning what I could offer them.

I thank the SSVP Spain’s Council and the Area Council in Cádiz for their charitable activity and dedicated commitment to their various works from which I benefited. Now the National Council in Nigeria will also be a beneficiary since I now commit myself to share my experience with my fellow members.

I am also grateful to our Seven Founders who have offered us this path to holiness, and I offer my fervent prayers for our Lords and Masters, praying that they be gifted with a better, healthier and dignified life ... all for the glory of God. Amen.

On behalf of the National Council in Nigeria and on my own behalf, I give thanks to the Society in Spain for providing me with this opportunity for service.

Patricia Oluchi Onuoha,
National Secretary for Youth - Nigeria
The President General visits three countries in Asia: Hong Kong, Indonesia and the Philippines

Continuing his official visits to places throughout the world where the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is present, our fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General, visited the following countries, from 10 to 16 November 2019: Hong Kong, Indonesia and the Philippines. A brief summary follows of all the events which took place.
In Institutional Visits, the President General visits three countries in Asia: Hong Kong, Indonesia and the Philippines.

In Hong Kong (China), the President General visited Father Dominic Ming (spiritual adviser to the Central Council), Father Lawrence Lee (Chancellor of the diocese) and Bishop Javier Corona (Vatican mission). He also visited the “Christ the Worker” conference, the Ozanam Centre, and the Saint Vincent de Paul nursery, which cares for 112 needy children.

Renato Lima also enjoyed a fellowship meal with the members of the Central Council, at which he gave a presentation about the work of Council General, and delivered a relic of Ozanam. Maurice Yeung (Vice-president of Council General) accompanied Renato Lima on these visits. In Hong Kong, the SSVP has 35 Conferences and 600 members.
In Indonesia, the President General visited the city of Surabaya, one of the largest in the country, and where the National Council has its office. The visit began in the house of the Congregation of the Mission, whose Visitor is Father Manuel Prasetyo. Shortly afterwards, the President General visited three Conferences, speaking with the volunteers and some of the people they help: the “Saint Catherine Labouré” conference (formed of young people from St. Louis College), the “Saint Louise de Marillac” conference (in the Parish of St Mary of Love and Peace) and the “Saint Benoît Labre” conference (in Christ the King parish).

Before ending his trip to Indonesia, there was a fellowship meal with Vincentians from across the whole country, followed by a presentation by the President General about the work of Council General, when he delivered a relic of Ozanam. Our President also visited the head office of the National Council in Surabaya. The SSVP in Indonesia has 400 conferences with 4,000 members.
The President General’s final stop was in the Philippines. The first visit was in the Quezón region, to see the “Vincentian Foundations” (a social housing project), maintained by the local Vincentian Family. He next went to the house of the Congregation of the Mission, whose Visitor is Father Gregg Beñaga. He also visited the Sanctuary of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian Seminary, both maintained by the Congregation. In the Pasig region, Renato Lima attended a meeting, followed by a fellowship meal, of the Pasig Zone Council, with 8 Conferences (one of them formed of hearing-impaired Vincentians), and visited the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, where the “Black Christ” image is displayed, one of the most traditional Catholic devotions in the Philippines.

While in the Philippines, President Renato also visited the National Council office (where he gave a talk, some new Vincentian leaders took up their office, and he delivered a relic of Ozanam), and the Adamson University (run by the Congregation of the Mission), as well as giving a presentation for the Vincentian Family in the Philippines. The SSVP in the Philippines has 7,500 Vincentians in over 550 Conferences. In Indonesia and the Philippines, Renato Lima was accompanied by his fellow member Thomas Tan, Territorial Vice-President for Asia 2.

“I was very positively impressed by the progress made by the SSVP in Hong Kong, Indonesia and the Philippines. The SSVP leaders in these three regions must be congratulated for the various activities undertaken and for their coordination of the work of Conferences and Councils. I am very happy to see there are many young people in this part of the world, and that the SSVP has some good projects. The Vincentian Family is very strong, and their collaboration is most helpful to us. I would like to thank these three countries, which welcomed me with open arms. I will never forget it,” said our President General.

Since Renato Lima took over as President General in September 2016, he has already visited some 40 countries on all five continents. In Asia, the President General has previously visited India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia. In January 2020, God willing, he plans to travel to Lebanon.

“It is very important that the President General is in touch with the grassroots in order to convey the message of peace, unity, love and hope which the Council General preaches to all nations. Although it was a brief visit, the countries were very pleased to see him, because it is an honour to receive the President General. We are very grateful to the three Councils which organised our programme”, emphasised Thomas Tan.
Visit to Vincentians in Sri Lanka

Johnson Varghese, Territorial Vice President of Asia, and Joseph Pandian, General Vice President of the Council General International, visited the Sri Lanka’s Vincentians in late August. Sri Lanka is a country that has been hit by civil war and has more than 360 active Conferences where the Vincentian Youth spearhead new projects.

The visit of the Council General International’s members with the three previous Sri Lankan SSVP National Presidents in Colombo was the first item covered on the agenda. An interview with the former spiritual adviser was next before heading out to Jaffna, a northern region of Sri Lanka significantly impacted by the civil war.

Even though the train was delayed and arrived very late in Jaffna, the Vincentians patiently waited for the members of the international team and extended them a warm welcome. The members of the international team then met with Bishop Bernard Gnanaprakasham, an avid supporter of the Conferences, followed by a visit to a night school project that provides access to education to many children and adolescents who, otherwise, would not have the means or a place to advance academically. This project is carried out by Vincentian Youth, a source of immense joy to the international team members who discovered how active the Conferences are throughout the country.

A very emotional moment of the trip was passing by the St. Sebastian Parish in Negombo, where more than 140 people died on April 21, 2019 during Palm Sunday celebrations, by a terrorist attack led by Islamic fundamentalists. This Church was one of the multiple targets of the string attacks that rocked the country and claimed more than 500 lives in different locations (Negombo, Batticaloa and Colombo).

During the last day of the visit, the members of the international team that participated in the SSVP National Council meeting in Sri Lanka, extended the affectionate greeting that President General, fellow member Renato Lima, addressed to all the Vincentians in the country and announced that Sri Lanka has been appointed as member of the Executive Committee by the International General Council for 2020 and 2021.

Many thanks to the National President, fellow member Cheryl Silva, and the spiritual adviser, P. Roy Clarence, for accompanying and supporting the members of the international structure during their visit.
The President International Visits South Tyrol

THE SOUTH-TYROL COUNCIL IN NORTHERN ITALY HAS BEEN SERVING FOR 142 YEARS AND HAS 77 CONFERENCES. THE PRESIDENT INTERNATIONAL VISITED THE AREA FROM DECEMBER 1 TO 3.

The President International, Renato Lima, along with Laszlo Könczöl, the International Territorial Vice-President for Europe 1; Alfons ten Velde, the Director of Strategic Planning; and Hans-Ueli Gubser, the Group 2 Coordinator for Europe 1, began their visit on the evening of 1 December to the South Tyrol Central Council which is chaired by the fellow member Josef Haspinger.

The international delegation arrived late on the evening of 1 December from Milan, where the meeting of the International Bureau had taken place.

On 2 December, Renato Lima met with the conference directors and chairpersons at a meeting of the South Tyrol Central Council. Also in attendance were the Austrian SSVP represented by their national president, Irmgard Groier, as well as the Italian SSVP, represented by their national president, Antonio Gianfico.

The international president then met with the media (RAI Television, the Dolomiten newspaper and Grüne Welle Radio).

As usual, the President International, along with several Vincentians, went to visit the Bishop of the Diocese of Bolzano – Bressanone, Bozen – Brixen, His Excellency Bishop Ivo Muser. The conversation was very friendly and enjoyable. Bishop Muser pointed
out two qualities of Vincentian service, “discretion and presence in helping the poor”. The President International concluded this busy day by visiting two Bolzano Vincentian projects: a charity grocery store and a charity closet. During these two visits, Renato Lima was able to speak with some of the people assisted, several of whom were migrants and refugees who came to Europe for a better life.

On the morning of 3 December, the president international visited one of the projects of the Central Council of Merano (near Bolzano), which has 9 Conferences. He was able to see for himself the visits conducted by the Saint Antoine Conference to a residence for the elderly. He discussed with the fellow members of this Conference the importance of helping people spiritually, and was especially interested
in the great work done by this group of Vincentians who offer their time and faith to others. Alex Huber, director of the residential complex consisting of 178 beds and 35 apartments for the elderly - the Pitsch Foundation - gave high praise for the work done by our fellow Vincentians and emphasised how important is to provide seniors with the things they lack the most, someone who will listen and companionship.

In the afternoon, the president international and a Vincentian delegation ended the trip by visiting Arno Kompatscher, the governor of South Tyrol. During this visit, Renato Lima emphasised the need for collaboration between the public sector and charity groups, and the need to work together to help the most needy people. The governor has committed himself to help the South Tyrol SSVP come up with common actions to assist the most vulnerable people, particularly when laws are being passed that could infringe on their most basic rights.

The work carried out by the South Tyrol Vincentians is impressive, as well as their involvement, and their assistance to others. That is why they have gained the respect of civil society and the church, with whom they work extensively for the good of our brothers and sisters in need.

“I want to congratulate our fellow Vincentian, Central Council President, Joseph Haspinger, the conference president, and all fellow Vincentians of the South Tyrol region for the great charity with which they carry out their work with the poor, not only with those in the region, but also with others outside of the region. As a matter of fact, this council is of great support to the Council General, through donations made for the development of large missions such as, for example, the Society in Bolivia. “May God sustain them as they are, full of humility and charity!” said our dear President, Renato Lima.
Emergency help in the wake of Hurricane Dorian

Vincentians in the Bahamas, with support from the international SSVP, are responding to the needs of those affected with basic food supplies and necessities.

With winds of around 300 km/hr, Hurricane Dorian hit the Bahamas, particularly the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama, destroying everything in its path.

The SSVP’s Council General International, through CIAD (International Commission for Aid and Development), has approved an emergency plan for aid in the face of this natural disaster, with an initial transfer of money, while waiting for local reports about the assistance which Bahaman Vincentians can provide on the ground.

Our institution has 9 Conferences in the Bahamas, seven in Nassau (the capital) and two in Freeport. Vincentians themselves have also been affected by the terrible destruction caused by the hurricane, and have suffered serious damage to their homes, but this has not prevented them from coming to the aid of those most affected, distributing basic food and other supplies needed.

Renato Lima de Oliveira, our President General International, expressed his concern and that of the SSVP as a whole, saying: “We join in solidarity with the Vincentians and those affected in the Bahamas, offering them not only material resources, but also, and more especially, our spiritual support and prayers.”
Angel Garden

RESPECTING EACH INDIVIDUAL LIFE

Human beings’ capabilities are dwarfed in the face of death. Everyone would want a dignified burial for their deceased loved ones. In 2017, a couple who had a miscarriage after the 15th week of pregnancy sought Rev Chan’s assistance to fulfil their only wish to claim the remains of their baby for burial. However, under Hong Kong’s law, the remains of a miscarried foetus under 24 weeks will be disposed as medical waste. Not only did this arrangement fail to respect miscarried babies and did not treat them as a human life. Worse still, parents who had only just lost their baby would also suffer from this secondary trauma. Amendment to the legislation is lengthy and time-consuming, but with his care for the parents and respect for the little one at heart, Rev Chan relentlessly liaised with various government departments in the hopes of finding a plausible solution as soon as possible to alleviate the parents’ suffering.

In the end, the consensus amongst various government departments was reached in merely one month, parents could claim the remains of miscarried foetuses and legally bury them in Chai Wan Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery. The place was christened “Angel Garden”, meaning that miscarried foetuses would become angels and enter the Kingdom of Heaven under the melody of “Song of Joy”.

TIMELY ASSISTANCE TO THE FAMILY OF THE DECEASED

The meaning of life does not depend on its length. Many of the parents with miscarried babies had lost their loved ones before they could bid farewell. Burying these foetuses decently is not only out of respect, but it is also a kind of cure for parents with psychological trauma. During the course of bidding farewell, parents would gradually begin to accept the fact that their baby has passed away, and learn to start afresh.

In recent years, more and more organisations are offering burial services of miscarried foetuses for families of diverse religious backgrounds or even for those without a religious background. Rev Chan envisaged that the “Angel Garden” could raise public awareness concerning the respect of life and the caring for the family of the deceased. He would proactively continue with his work to educate, promote and publicise this issue to gain more support for related services.

Rev Chan, SSVP Hong Kong spiritual advisor, has been devotedly fighting to ensure that babies in the womb are respected in life and death.

This mission has led him to open the “Angel Garden”, a reserved area in the cemetery for those unborn children whose parents wish to give them a dignified burial. In Hong Kong, the remains of a foetus under 24 weeks are disposed as medical waste, so Rev Chan has appealed to the authorities to provide an answer to the suffering of many couples who have experienced the loss of their children.

Rev Chan was honoured by the Hong Kong Red Cross with the “2019 Hong Kong Humanity Award” in recognition of his work. Below is the document that supports his recognition.
A fellow member of the SSVP Spain Awarded Spanish Order of Civil Merit

Maria del Carmen Chaparro, fellow member of the Conference ‘Our Lady of Light’ in Melilla, has been awarded the medal of the Spanish Order of Civil Merit at the behest of their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain, who presided over the ceremony in which different citizens were honoured.

The Conference ‘Our Lady of Light’ in Melilla (Spain), whose president is Maria del Carmen Chaparro, focuses on immigrants, needy families, drug addicts and homeless people. Under her presidency, the group of Vincentians belonging to the Conference ‘Our Lady of Light’ have undertaken a myriad of social projects for these underprivileged groups, always being close and effective and following St. Vincent’s charism.
Corporate SSVP Video

This video, edited in four languages (English, French, Spanish and Portuguese), revolves around the people who make up the Society, their faith and their commitment to helping others.

https://youtu.be/J2aqhCecWbY
In memory of our beloved fellow member
Basile Ondigui Fouda

Following his death, seven days of mourning have been declared by the Council General.

Being an active SSVP member, he was a long-standing member of the Council General’s International Structure.

As a matter of fact, Basile Ondigui Fouda was Vice-President at the International Structure as well as Territorial Vice-President for region Africa 3 for many years, always collaborating in the organisation of the first ‘All Africa’ meeting, which took place in South Africa in 2015. Currently, he was member of the International Statute Revision Commission and Counsellor of the SSVP Plus Project, focused on institutional growth.

In addition to his duties at the SSVP, Basile Ondigui Fouda was Human Rights Officer and Coordinator of Human Rights Division Field Office of MINUSCA in N’Dele via Bangui Central African Republic.

The SSVP’s President General, the fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, very touched by the sad news, announced:

“On behalf of the Council General, we convey our heartfelt condolences to the family of our beloved fellow member Basile Fouda. We are all very sad, but we are aware of and accept God’s plans. May the Lord alleviate the suffering of Basile’s family. By the same token, seven days of mourning have been declared by the Council General. We ask the Conferences to pray a Hail Mary for Basile’s soul at this week’s meetings.”.

Last Friday, December 13th, 2019, at the University Teaching Hospital of Yaoundé (Cameroon), our beloved fellow member Basile Ondigui Fouda passed away after a prolonged illness, which he endured with utmost discretion and Christian resignation.
### MISSION

**A network of friends, seeking holiness through the personal service to the poor and the advocacy for social justice.**

### VISION 2022

**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**

### STRATEGIC GOALS 2016-2022

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<td>30% of members under 35 years of age</td>
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<td><strong>Twinning</strong></td>
<td>Build a global network of spiritual and material support</td>
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<td><strong>Expansion</strong></td>
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