



Valedictory Address in the Webinar for National Youth on the International SSVP Day of Youth

My dear young friends, I thank you all for the opportunity given to me to talk to you on the occasion of international youth day. I am happy to convey my good wishes to all of you on this very special occasion.

In any organization, the youth are considered to be the future of that organization. Even every nation considers its youth as its future pillars. This concept is wrong, at least in the context of SSVP. In SSVP, the youth are not its future, but, you are the Present, the now, the life, the being and the purpose of SSVP. Here I would like to bring to your memory the words of Pope Francis on January 27, 2019 at the world youth day in Panama. He said "Dear young people, you are not the future but the now of God". Yes, you are the now of our Society. It has been the case with SSVP all along, right from the first conference. The first conference is the perfect model for you. Every idea came from the youth though they all had their regard for the experience and wisdom of the elder member, President Emmanuel Bailley. On this special day, I call upon you to take up the leadership wherever you are, at the Conference, Council, Regional, National or International level. By leadership, I don't mean the position or post of a President, Vice President, Secretary etc. These are all only decorations and ornaments. You are the real leaders and only from you new and novel ideas relevant to today can come up. Only you can execute your ideas perfectly. And that is leadership. Whoever may be the president, but the youth should lead the Society at all levels. Just remind you what Bl. Frederic wrote in 1847. He said, 'It is essential for the Society to recruit its members among the young.' Remember, when he wrote this, he was just 34. Even at 34, he realized the importance of younger people. Not that he valued the elders less but the youth more. So, recruit more young friends and take up the leadership all levels of the Society.

Another point, I wanted to raise with you, is the relevance of our Society today, in this changing world and in the changing scenario. Are we relevant? Let me quote Bl. Frederic's reflection on the Parable of Good Samaritan. He says, "Charity is the Good Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller. Justice's role is to have prevented the attack'. This reflection on the Parable by Ozanam gives us some insights on the way we ought to perceive and act when a crisis of social injustice is prevalent all over the world. For Ozanam, Charity and Justice are complementary to each other. There is no charity without justice. Our natural response is charity to assist the Poor. Is that the only way we can respond? What about the other side of the coin- Justice? We

will not rebel or revolt or raise our arms. But at least we should raise our voice to create awareness among people.

Today and now I call upon you, young Vincentians to take up leadership at levels of our Society and commit yourselves to ensure social justice in your own environments.

Thank you,

T. Joseph Pandian