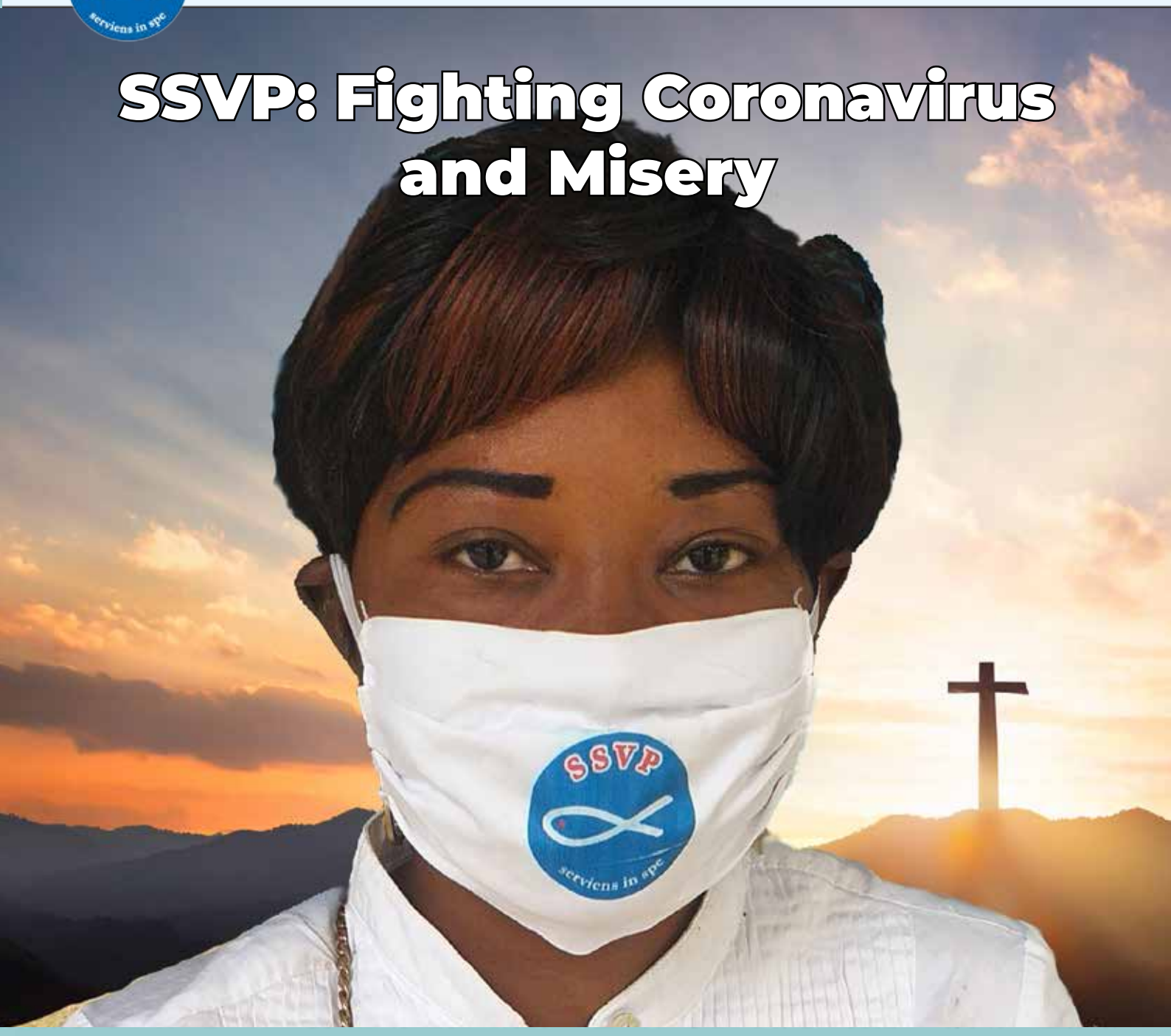
Issue 2/2020

OZANAM NETWORK

Council General International - Society of St Vincent de Paul



SSVP: Fighting Coronavirus and Misery

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Editorial

Renewed Hope

Renato Lima de Oliveira
16th President General

August has come, and it seems we have lived all year long. We are all worn out and saddened by what mankind is going through due to the new Coronavirus and its dire consequences for public health and economy, which exacerbates poverty, exclusion, global unemployment and despair.

Although it is a dramatic scenario, it will never extinguish the light radiating from the hearts of each and every fellow member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. God has blessed us with several gifts and positive feelings, namely patience, hope and endurance, which make us stronger and more mindful of our Vincentian mission.

As stated in our flag, hope is the Vincentian's soul. *Serviens in spe* (to serve in hope) is our motto and purpose, in order to bring eternal life to those around us. A renewed hope that urges us to start afresh, with joy. After the pandemic, our members will be stronger and better prepared. With faith, charity and hope, […] *we will do even greater things* […] (St. John 14, 12).

I pray, above all, that God will continue to bless me and all those who, in some kind of way, carry out their work within the Council General International, both members belonging to the international structure and employees, as we will mark our fourth year in office on September 9. I am very obliged to everyone for the responsibility entrusted to me and I categorically assert that we will always do our best until the very last minute of our term of office.

This Ozanam Network's issue is packed with news from the Council General, resources for formation/ training as well as in-depth coverage regarding actions to fight Covid-19 around the world. Congratulations to Superior Councils for their generous donations to the most needy countries.

We kindly ask you to disseminate the content thereof among SSVP Conferences, special Works and Councils around the world, the Vincentian Family, the Church and our supporters and collaborators. We will keep you posted. Enjoy your reading!

President General's Letter on Covid-19 pandemic, addressed to Presidents of Vincentian Conferences

"We are living in an atypical moment, which requires exceptional measures. Therefore, sensitive to the sufferings of the SSVP members themselves and after praying and asking for divine inspiration, I thought it would be appropriate to publish an Extraordinary Circular Letter, reinforcing the role of the Conference Presidents in this context," declared President Renato Lima.

President General addresses the issue of friendship among Conference members in times of pandemic.

In the document, the President General addresses the issue of friendship among the members of the Conference, the fundamental role of the President of each Conference, the personal situation of each member during the pandemic (unemployment, illness, economic difficulties, etc.) and the need for eventual mutual assistance among the members to overcome adversities. At the end, the President General invites all of us to participate in the celebration of a Holy Mass on 9 September (Ozanam's Feast Day) and offer the Eucharist for all the Vincentians and our friends in need who have died from the disease.

"The Circular Letters of the Presidents General are very useful instruments of formation so that all our members are well informed, updated and connected to the most relevant issues of our institution.

All fellow members are invited to take part in the celebration of a Holy Mass to be held on September 9th.

In this Extraordinary Letter, brother Renato has been truly enlightened by the Divine Holy Spirit in writing such moving words that will touch our hearts, especially the Conference presidents, who have a great responsibility in accompanying the daily life of the other members," considered fellow member Marisa Tellez, International Vice-president of Formation & Training, within the General Council.

All the Superiors or National Councils are kindly asked to make available, through the communication channels they have, the integral content of this "Extraordinary Circular Letter" to all the Presidents of the Conferences, and obviously to all the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the members of the worldwide Vincentian Family in each of the 151 territories where we are present.

The Council General International takes this opportunity to thank all the members who occupy positions of leadership within the SSVP structure, at whatever level or function, for the zeal and dedication with which they care for our Society, our members, the people we visit, the staff of our works, the dear spiritual advisors and all those who help the SSVP to fulfill its original objective: to unite the whole world in a great network of charity and solidarity.

Click here to read the Extraordinary Circular Letter 2020

Prayer Chain with Virgin Mary and blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam

2nd meditation

Our Lady of Kibeho (Rwanda)

Blessed Antoine-Fédérico Ozanam

The Council General requests Vincentians throughout the world to invoke the intercession of Mary just in a very simple prayer which we can say slowly and reverently:

One Hail Mary

And this prayer, dedicated to Vincentians around the world …

Our Lord and Our Father,

As Vincentian we are dedicated to doing your work to help those in need around the world. Please protect all Vincentians from communicable diseases in our home visits and in our many other forms of service which we do in your name. Please protect those that are now afflicted with the Coronavirus and help this global pandemic to pass. For this we humbly pray. Amen

OUR LADY OF KIBEHO (RWANDA)

"You must endeavour to pray, and convert your own hearts. Pray with sincerity and without hypocrisy. [...] Anyone who asks for something must ask humbly, openly and wholeheartedly [...]"

Appearances of Our Lady at Kibeho (Rwanda) between 1981 and 1989.

We entrust especially to you:

- The people whom we are visiting, or whom we meet, especially those living in social housing managed by the SSVP
- The most vulnerable and distressed of our brothers and sisters
- All those who do not have the Faith, those who are afraid or overwhelmed by trouble
- Our Conferences and Councils, our Charitable works, all our members and our volunteers
- The whole Church, our priests, our bishops, our seminarians and our deacons
- All health care professionals
- Our families, friends and work colleagues
- Those who will die today
- Ourselves. That the Lord may give us the grace of a true conversion of heart, and that we may live evermore deeply the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity

LET US MEDITATE WITH BLESSED ANTOINE-FREDERIC OZANAM

"There is no merit in following the well-trodden path of an easy life without stumbling. I will go further; it is dangerous to live an entirely comfortable life; it makes us soft. On the contrary, effort is needed to bear heavy obligations; they keep the soul awake, they gradually instil the generous habits which create true virtues. You know, my love, that life is a school where God teaches Christians: in this school there are some tough, difficult years, with little time for recreation, much weariness, harsh lessons whose meaning is difficult to grasp. But you know too that the Teacher is good, that the lessons are only going to make us better and more perfect creatures."

Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam, letter to his wife Amélie, 27 July 1844

The International General Council asks that this document reach all Conferences, Councils and Vincentian works around the world.

Brief Overview on Félix Clavé

Pierre-Emmanuel-Félix Clavé is said to be the least known of our seven founders

Aged just 20, he settled in Paris in 1831, and there he met Ozanam and Bailly de Surcy. Given the growth and expansion of the first Conference, Clavé became the President of 'St. Philippe du Roule' Conference, in Paris.

He was a highly educated, studious man, who spoke several languages and attended social events where French celebrities and authorities met.

Professionally, being a man of letters and laws, Clavé published several works, including a poetry collection and the book *The Extraordinary History of Pope IX*. He also worked abroad, in Algeria and Mexico.

As far as his personal life is concerned, he married Marie-Louise Sorg in 1847, but the couple had no offspring. His name was unjustly involved in 'Madame Lafarge Case', being object of blackmail and false accusations, which seriously tarnished his reputation. As a result, his mental health was weakened, which contributed to his early death at the age of 42, in the town of Pau, on November 9, 1853.

On 9 September, the festivity of Bl. Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam, the results of the Literary Contest 'The First Conference' will be announced.

With regard to the Themed Year devoted to this founder, on 9th September, the feast day of Bl. Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam, the prizes of the International Literary Contest 'The First Conference' will be announced (the deadline for submitting essays is 24 August).

In December, as is customary in each themed year, a small delegation of the Council General International will visit Félix Clave's grave in Pau to pay tribute to him.

Panoramic view of Pau (France)

Council General: getting closer to SSVP members from all over the world!

On April 4th, the Council General International (CGI) promoted the third program "Talk Show with President General", an opportunity for members around the world to ask him questions and make comments.

The broadcast was organized by Ozanam TV and took place on social networks (Facebook and YouTube). In total, 3,000 people took part in the live broadcast, and 300 comments were made during the 2-hour program. Renato Lima was in the Council General's office located in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil.

Most of the questions were answered. Due to time constraints, the unanswered questions will be answered by President General directly to the interested parties. Among the Vincentian territories taking part in the program, the largest contingent of comments came from Brazil, followed by India, Lebanon, Latin America and Europe. "I want to thank everyone for their participation. Some people, in certain parts of the world, were connected at dawn, which is a very significant effort. I thank Ozanam TV for the work carried out", said our President.

Many questions were answered by fellow member Renato Lima. The topics were most varied, including: the inauguration of the new headquarters in Paris, Vincentian reference books, Covid-19, innovation and creativity, PGI's trips, Council General's activities, international strategic plan, expansion of the SSVP to new countries, legacy of the seven founders, international Vincentian events and new appointments within the Structure and the board of the Council General. "I was very happy with the questions asked. They were smart and really interesting issues", praised Renato.

Obviously, the fight against the Coronavirus took up most of the program, when the Vincentians wanted to hear encouraging words from President General for the practice of charity. "Charity cannot stop: the poor, the homeless, the unemployed and the refugees are there, waiting for the friendly hand of the SSVP, all over the planet. We have to reinvent ways in which our Conferences, special works and Councils operate, serving in the hope that God will protect us and free us from this pandemic, with faith", Renato explained.

The upcoming program "Talk Show with President General" will, God willing, be broadcast on October 25th, Sunday, at 11 AM (Brasilia's time). Everyone can prepare their questions, suggestions and doubts. President General will be ready to interact with transparency and dialogue with everyone. "The closer the Council General is to the grassroots, the better the CGI will be known, respected, loved and valued", concluded our President Renato.

First video conferencing conducted by the CGI Board

On July 5th, a video conference meeting was conducted for the first time by the Council General International's Board, presided over by the President General.

The Zoom video conferencing, which lasted about 4 hours, was blessed by the General Council's spiritual advisor, Father

On July 5th, a video conference meeting was conducted for the first time by the Council General International's Board, presided over by the President General.

It was meant to be an in-person meeting, but, due to the pandemic, this was not possible. Board members and some guests addressed important issues, and several decisions were made.

The Zoom video conferencing, which lasted about 4 hours, was blessed by the General Council's spiritual advisor, Father Andres Motto (Congregation of the Mission – CM), who led the prayers and proceeded with the spiritual reading Coronavirus, in between Lockdown and Service, an upcoming article to be published on the General Council's website. Attendees observed 1-minute silence for Covid-19 victims around the world, especially for members, families and poor households concerned.

"I think the meeting was a great success. The biggest challenge was to deal with the different time zones, but everything went smoothly. I was very pleased to see that Board members, thank God, were all in

God willing, the next CGI Board video conferencing meeting will be held on October 3rd.

good health, which, of course, is the most important thing.", stated our President Renato Lima. According to the International Rule, the Board must meet on a quarterly basis.

Some of the meeting items addressed were as follows: Council General's 2019 economic report; the 2020 budget; report on beneficiary countries of Covid-19 Funds; review of cases handled by the Ombudsman General; new manuals and forms developed by the Twinning Department; the new headquarters in Paris; enhanced management of headquarters' staff; youth; communication and formation/training updates (new website); institutional missions in new countries ("SSVP Plus" Project); updated information on Ozanam's canonization; Vincentian Family's activities; extended terms of office in some countries; and upcoming assemblies (Paris 2020 and Brasilia 2021).

God willing, the next CGI Board video conferencing meeting will be held on October 3rd. The visit to Félix Clavé's tomb, initially scheduled for October 1st, has been postponed to December. The deadline for submission of essays for the international contest on Félix Clavé has also been postponed to August 24th, 2020.

A year-long commemoration of the Common Home: towards a sustainable development

The Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, commemorating the fifth anniversary of Laudato Si', marks the year dedicated to the Care for our Common Home.

The content of the encyclical Laudato Si' dovetails with the message conveyed by the UN's 17 SDGs, a set of goals adopted to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all.

The challenge is to pave the way for a sustainable model, thus fostering ecological awareness and action, especially with regard to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people: from advocating justice to redress the damage caused to ecosystems by human abuse, which results in devastating effects; to engaging with those affected, particularly those living in insalubrious conditions in the rural world and developing cities.

The content of the encyclical Laudato Si', published in 2015, dovetails with the message conveyed by the UN's 17 SDGs, a set of goals adopted in the same year to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all.

The SSVP pursues these goals by promoting cooperation with the most vulnerable countries. An example thereof is the '13 Houses Campaign', an initiative fostered by Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA), aimed at providing decent sustainable housing while ensuring integral human development (material, cultural, professional and spiritual growth).

On August 14, we celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Amélie Soulacroix Ozanam

On August 14th, we mark the bicentenary of the birth of Amélie Soulacroix Ozanam, beloved wife of Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam and a central person for getting to know both the details of the life of the main founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the first steps of our Society.

The 16th General President, member Renato Lima de Oliveira, takes the opportunity to declare August 14th as the INTERNATIONAL SSVP WOMEN'S DAY.

Here is a brief biographical overview.

Overview

Amélie Soulacroix**,** born in Marseilles (France) on August 14th, 1820, is the eldest child of Jean-Baptiste Soulacroix (1790-1848) and Zélie Magagnos (1798-1882). The couple had three other children after her: Théophile, Charles and Noëmie.

She enjoyed a blissful childhood within a close-knit, Christian and cultivated family: Amélie's father, first professor of mathematics in Marseilles, became rector of the Academy of Lyon, thus being part of the French university community in the first half of the 19th century.

In 1837, Amélie lived in Lyon and was only 17 years old when her brother Théophile began to show the first symptoms of a disease, unknown at that time, probably bone tuberculosis, which led him to progressive paralysis. Amélie devoted herself, along with her parents, to the care of her brother. Marriage was not even considered: it was readily her chosen 'vocation'. In

1840, however, Amélie received two marriage proposals which she turned down. The third one was made by Frédéric Ozanam. The wedding engagement was made official following the success regarding his dissertation for the aggregation of the Arts Faculty in November 1840. Amélie hardly knew him, only by sight and reputation. Frédéric had to go to Paris in December, where he was appointed assistant professor for the chair of foreign literature at the Sorbonne. Despite being apart during their six-month courtship, they know and love each other through the frequent, lengthy correspondence they maintained.

On June 23rd, 1841, they got married in Lyon at Saint-Nizier church. They spent their honeymoon in Italy. On their return in January 1842, the young couple settled in a small apartment in Paris, a capital that Amélie discovered. Their first years of life together were filled with joy, overshadowed, though, by a two-fold sorrow: Amélie's parting from her family, still in Lyon, and Frédéric's and Amélie's forlorn hope of having their home filled with the arrival of a child. Yet, on July 24th, 1845, Amélie gave birth to little Marie Ozanam who brought joy to the family home.

Sixteen months later, on November 18th, 1846, the couple and their little daughter left Paris and France for a long trip to Italy, a research mission Frédéric requested. Since January 1847 in Rome they had the joy of attending a papal audience, at which time Amélie's brother, Théophile, passed away (on March 9th, 1847), a terrible blow for Amélie who could not attend the funeral.

In July 1847, back in Paris, Amélie gradually rebuilt the whole family life in their new apartment. Caring

for Marie and household chores kept Amélie very busy. She also had to fulfill obligations arising from being the wife of an academic; not to mention the myriad charitable activities she undertook, and, certainly, her wholehearted support for Frédéric's university work. The years that followed were not easy for her: in 1848, a series of political unheavals in France, Frédéric's new commitments and the mourning surrounding the passing of her father Jean-Baptiste Soulacroix in July. From 1849 to 1852, the disease gradually became entrenched: despite her persistent cough, it was Frédéric's health that gave cause for concern, to such an extent that he had to give up his lessons.

With Amélie always by his side, Frédéric set off, with her and little Marie, in July 1852, on a long journey, the last one, across Eaux-Bonnes, Biarritz, Spain and Italy looking for a possible cure for Frédéric. She made sure that they returned to Marseilles where, barely a week after their arrival, she made with Frédéric in the shared silence of a common prayer, their 'last sacrifice' upon his passing on September 8th, 1853. It was her who got permission for his burial in the crypt of Saint Joseph des Carmes in Paris.

Amélie, widowed at only 32, had to take care of little Marie who was eight at that time; and it was that way for over forty years. In the shadow, with a humility very similar to that of Frédéric, she devoted this lengthy widowhood, first of all, to her daughter's education, and, above all, to safeguarding her husband's work: she was the cornerstone in the edition of *Œuvres completes*, published in 1855; Lacordaire wrote his biography from his biographical notes (*Notes biographiques sur Frédéric*); in 1865, the first edition of *Lettres de Frédéric* was made at his initiative. Until the very end, her life was entirely dedicated to her friends, to the service of the poorest and most vulnerable, and to the love of God and her family, with special focus on her only grandson, Frédéric Laporte, born in 1868.

Amélie died at 74, after a very short illness on September 26th, 1894, an awaited death in hope, as shown by the excerpt from one of her prayers: "Let me be reunited promptly with my beloved, and let us, O Lord, behold and worship you together for all eternity."

May Frédéric's and Amélie's example of love and devotion to the needy be, for us, a motivation to work for a more just and humane society.

In a few weeks, we will be presenting a more comprehensive biography of Amélie.

Francisco Javier Fernández Chento,
Consultant at the International Commission for Historical Research of SSVP

The First Vincentians and the Pandemics

The world is suffering the effects of a pandemic caused by Covid-19. Pandemics are nothing new in the history of humanity. They are unfortunately all too common: we have experienced several during the 21st century[1].

Saint Vincent and the plague

Saint Vincent de Paul also lived through a plague pandemic which, in the mid-17th century, blighted France, northern Italy and Poland[2]:

> *The missionaries faced war, hunger and plague, between 1630 and 1645; ten missionaries and many Daughters of Charity went throughout Picardy and the Champagne region; Saint Vincent himself visited and observed the impact and the work being done.* […] *The poor were everywhere, and Vincent and Louisa organised and dealt with the assistance and relief provided*[3].

Epidemics in the 19th century

There were several pandemics in Europe during the 19th century, mainly cholera and typhoid. France was particularly badly hit by the second cholera pandemic (from 1827 to 1835). This, as we note, coincided with the date the first *Conference of Charity* was founded (1833), which shortly afterwards became the *Society of Saint Vincent de Paul* (SSVP). It

1 The world has experienced a number of pandemics or epidemics during the 21st century, which have affected several countries; we might mention SARS (severe, acute respiratory syndrome); HeN1 (avian flu, which spread around the world between 2004 and 2006); and the Ebola epidemic (from 2014 to 2016, which spread across a wide area of the African continent, parts of Europe and the United States).

2 The plague caused havoc *"in Bovesinado in 1625, in Digne and Montpellier in 1629, in Moulins in 1630, in Paris in 1631-1633. There was, in fact, not a city or a region of France which did not suffer from terrible epidemics, especially during the reign of Louis XIII. The police applied the most draconian measures, aiming both to calm the population and to stop the contagion. A cross was placed on the front of houses where plague victims lived, to warn people not to enter; the last rites could only be administered at night, with no bell rung. The nobility of the area was forbidden to flee, bells could not be rung, holy water stoups had to be emptied. (...) Monsieur Vincent defied all these instructions"* (André Dodin, "Saint Vincent and the sick", in *Annals of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity*, 1974 edition).

3 Jean-Pierre Renouard, CM, "The plague at the time of Saint Vincent", at https://cmglobal.org/

is not unreasonable to think that this health emergency influenced the foundation of the SSVP. At one of the conferences of history, Ozanam was very much affected by the accusation that the Catholic Church did little or nothing for the needy: some young people criticised the Church for having done little of note in contemporary society, despite the great works it had achieved in the past. This incident, the real seed of the initiative to found the first conference of charity, had a profound effect on Frédéric Ozanam, who was led to exclaim: *"the reproach was well-deserved"*[4]. Living through a total cholera pandemic in Paris was certainly one of the aspects which inspired the initiative to do something for those experiencing need or poverty.

There were several pandemics in Europe during the 19th century, mainly cholera and typhoid.

Frédéric Ozanam first mentions this pandemic in a letter to his mother on 8 April 1832:

> *Cholera has spread horrendously [in Paris]; within a fortnight it has struck 3,075 people, causing the death of 1,200. Yesterday 717 new cases were reported, and carts are seen in the streets loaded with five, ten or twelve coffins. [...] It's horrible. The conference*[5] *I belong to has set aside a small sum of 15 francs, from the collection.*

4 Frederic Ozanam, speech at the Florence conference, 1853

5 Ozanam belonged to a number of discussion groups for university students, known as *conferences* (of law, history).

In a letter on 26 May 1832, he described further the efforts the Parisian students were making to help those affected by cholera:

> *Collections are held everywhere for those suffering from cholera, for orphans, etc. No-one can refuse, in conscience; we join in enthusiastically, without thinking about it, and so the purse empties, but at least this money is not being wasted; it will come back one day.*

At that time, Frédéric was a lodger in the house of André-Marie Ampère, the famous French mathematician and physicist. As so many were dying in just a few days, every evening Ampère said to Frédéric: *"Ozanam, if cholera strikes me down tonight, I will bang on the floor with my stick. Don't come to help me, just go quickly to find my confessor"*[6].

In Paris, at this time, *"cholera seemed to be death and terror. At one point, there were up to 1,300 deaths every day. The epidemic swept away almost the whole of one side of Rue Fossés-Saint-Victor, while Ampère's house on the other side of the street seemed safe at that time. Ozanam wrote to his mother, translating a psalm from the Office of Compline: "A thousand will fall at your left, and ten thousand at your right. But death will not approach you, because you have said: "You, Lord, are my hope"; and you have chosen the Most High for your refuge"*[7] *We no longer have this letter, with its admirable faith and courage; but we are told that Madame Ozanam read it to all her friends, with tears of indescribable tenderness"*[8].

Sr Rosalía Rendu also provided help to those affected by cholera in Paris

Sr Rosalie Rendu, Daughter of Charity, who played such an important role in the early days of the SSVP, also provided help to those affected by cholera in Paris:

> *The premises which [Sr Rosalie] had available were small, but many facilities were provided from them: clinic, pharmacy, clothing store, affordable cooking, school.* […] *The cholera epidemic (1832) revealed the exceptional organisational skills of the Mother Superior. The*

6 Raphaëlle CHEVALIER-MONTARIOL (ed), « Notes biographiques sur Frédéric Ozanam, par Amélie Ozanam-Soulacroix », en Frédéric Ozanam : actes du colloque des 4 et 5 décembre 1998, p. 313.

7 See Ps. 91, 7-10.

8 Mgr. BAUNARD, *Frédéric Ozanam in his correspondence*, chapter 3.

premises gradually become the "heart of the district", a district where, according to her own account, it was "difficult to find a woman who could remember her prayers"[9].

In 1832, Father Lacordaire, a great friend of Ozanam and supporter of the SSVP, also *"had to dress as a layman in order to be able to enter one of the Paris hospitals, to hear the confession of one or two of the dying"*[10], because of the isolation restrictions.

Cholera also approached Lyon, where Ozanam was on 23 September 1835.

Shortly afterwards, Ozanam again mentions the pandemic to his friend Joseph Arthaud, in a letter dated 22 August 1835:

We are in constant danger from cholera here. Already self-sacrifice and flight are both in evidence, the people are crying out in the face of the epidemic. If Our Lady of Fourvière[11] *does not preserve us from the epidemic, we will be very deserving of pity.*

On 21 September 1835, Ozanam wrote to Henri Pessonneaux describing the isolation situation in which he was living, similar to ours because of Covid-19:

The fear of cholera has frozen hearts when we meet; we are isolated and wild; no eating with friends, or walks in the country.

Cholera also approached Lyon, where Ozanam was on 23 September 1835. He wrote to François Lallier:

9 Gérard Cholvy, *Frédéric Ozanam: L'engagement d'un intellectuel catholique au XIXe siècle*. [The commitment of a Catholic intellectual in the 19th century]. Paris: Fayard, 2003, chapter 5.

10 *Ibid*.

11 The Basílica of Our Lady of Fourvière is located at the top of the hill of the same name in Lyon. Devotion to the Virgin Mary of Fourvière or else Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal among other titles, increased enormously because of the pandemic: *"the recent cholera epidemic contributed greatly to the growth in Marian devotion"* (Cholvy, ibid.).

> *Cholera, which has so severely punished the southern provinces, seems to be approaching our doors. The Rhône passes some fifteen leagues from our city, carrying before it a multitude of fugitives who bring us horrifying tales and greater fear than the sickness itself. Our people, warm-hearted and easily touched, are deeply moved. While some coarse and brutish spirits were starting to speak about rumours of poisonings, and preparing to respond to the invasion of the scourge with rioting and violence, a devout crowd of people ascended the hill to Our Lady of Fourvière and knelt in the open air, in the atrium of the church, to sing sorrowful songs; at the same time, many selfless people came to care for the poor when the epidemic arrived; more than fifteen hundred signed up in advance.*

Members of the SSVP were among those who volunteered to help the poor during the pandemic.

It was moving to see those young people who, driven only by the thought of the Saviour's glory, […] went to succour the sick and bury the dead

In the *Bulletin of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul* in 1849, Frédéric Ozanam describes the work the companions did during the epidemic. Over a two-month period, led by Sister Rosalie, some of them worked *"just like the first founders of the Society, fifteen years before"*.[12]

At the same time, and for the same reasons, Frédéric organised a group of young people *"on 22 April 1849, together with his colleagues from the Council General, forming an association of forty brave souls"* [13] to help those who could not be taken to hospital. And as reported at the next general assembly held on 19 June, these first *caregivers* of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul *"had increased from forty to a hundred and twelve*[14].

The atmosphere in the city was grim, as Ozanam described in a letter:

> *Whole streets depopulated in a few nights, but at the same time, a harvest of grace was gathered everywhere.* […] *All wished to die with a priest by their side.* […] *It was moving to see those young people who, driven only by the thought of the Saviour's glory, [...] went to succour the sick and bury the dead.*[15]

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12 *Bulletin de la Société de Saint Vincent de Paul*, vol. 1 (1849), 250-252.

13 Mgr BAUNARD, *op. cit.*, chapter 21.

14 *Ibid*.

15 See Letter to Mme Soulacroix, 6 June 1849.

It was an epidemic also which was the source of the female branch of the SSVP in Italy

It was an epidemic also which was the source of the female branch of the SSVP in Italy[16]. In 1855, the city of Bologna was struck by a serious cholera epidemic. The members did everything possible to help families afflicted by the illness, either at home or in hospital. However, a clause in the SSVP Rule meant that the men could not assist single women, especially if they were young. Some female relatives and friends of the members, led by Celestina Scarabelli and encouraged by Antonio Costa (president of the Conferences in Italy), offered to provide assistance to sick women.

The commitment of these women was highly valued; Antonio, who did not wish to hinder their efforts, suggested to establish a women's conference, along the lines of those of the men. So on 10 January 1856, the first meeting of the female conference was held, and the number of these grew quickly, spreading not only throughout Italy, but also in France, Chile, Peru, the Philippines and many other countries. After some years, they received recognition by Pope Pius IX, who, in a brief of 25 February 1875, granted all the female conferences, "*in the diocese of Bologna and in any other diocese, legitimately established, and to be established, the same indulgences already granted to the male conferences, so that their work should produce plentiful and worthy fruit*"[17].

16 At the start, the SSVP was a male-only organisation.

17 Anonymous, "La Società Femminile di San Vincenzo de Paoli", available at http://www.sanvincenzoitalia.it/chi-siamo/origini/societa-femminile/

The SSVP and the present epidemic

In its Rule, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul states: *"The vocation of the Society's members is to follow Christ, through service to those in need. […] No work of charity is foreign to the Society. […] It includes any form of help that alleviates suffering or deprivation and promotes human dignity and personal integrity in all their dimensions."*[18]

We are presently besieged by a global pandemic, which drives us to redouble our efforts on behalf of those most directly affected by this illness. But not only the sick, who need to be supported and helped both materially and spiritually (always in accordance with the health and safety standards from experts), but also people who are affected by the consequences of the pandemic: unemployment, loss or reduction in their economic resources, increasing poverty which will without doubt get worse as a result of the global economic crisis which is already appearing.

Much can be done to alleviate the needs of millions of human beings who will unfortunately fall into poverty as a result of this pandemic.

The example of Saint Vincent de Paul, our Vincentian brothers and sisters in the past, and other well-known people of faith, is an incentive for us to address these extraordinary challenges with strength and creativity. Much can be done to alleviate the needs of millions of human beings who will unfortunately fall into poverty as a result of this pandemic.

There are already many initiatives underway, within the SSVP and the Vincentian Family, to improve the lives of all those affected.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin and Saint Vincent de Paul, to whom members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have prayed for protection for themselves and all those they help, and all the work they do, will accompany us on this path of charity, the heart of faith and Christian hope.

18 *Rule of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul* (2003), Nos. 1.2 and 1.3. [taken from English text]

Patron Saint in the Fight against the Coronavirus

Infovaticana proposes Jean-Gabriel Perboyre, condemned to death in Wuhan, as the patron saint in the fight against the coronavirus.

Jean-Gabriel Perboyre was born on January 6, 1802, at Le Puech (France) into a family of devout Catholics, and his parents instilled in him a living faith. Jean-Gabriel stood out for his intelligence, his great piety, his love for Jesus Christ and the poor.

Being knowledgeable about the life of Saint Vincent, he strongly felt the call and decided to join the Congregation of the Mission with the hope of spreading the Gospel to the Chinese people. His dream came true and, like Father Paul, he was sent to this great empire which had a law, in effect since 1794, forbidding the Christian religion and sentencing those who practiced it to death.

However, Jean-Gabriel's faith made him a prisoner. It is said that a soldier, during one interrogation, asked him: Why did you come to China? Jean-Gabriel replied: "I am European and I came to spread the Catholic religion and to exhort men to flee from evil and do good". It was then that his death sentence was pronounced, and he was martyred by suffocation on September 11, 1840.

His remains were returned from China to France by Bishop Danicourt, where they were entombed in the chapel of the Vincentian Motherhouse in Paris.

On June 2, 1996, Pope John Paul II canonized him. Recognized for his martyrdom and heroic virtues, several miracles were attributed to him, including the healing of two Daughters of Charity.

Let us pray, through the intercession of this saint of the Vincentian Family, for the end of this pandemic that has caused so much harm in the world.

Protecting the Unhoused

International Famvin signs the global statement of solidarity and action to protect the Unhoused from COVID-19.

Over a hundred associations have signed this global statement whose priority measures are the following:

1. Protection of the homeless people: To promote access to safe accommodation (complying with the standards of hygiene), to guarantee primary needs, including access to food and hygiene, and to provide the required risk-reduction equipment (masks, gowns, etc.).

2. Proactive and systematic screening policy: Covid-19 testing is urgently needed in homeless shelters to separate positive users from those who are not, thus controlling the spread of the virus. Hence, it is essential to test caregivers working with these vulnerable groups.

3. Keeping people in housing: It is necessary to put in place structural solutions for access to housing, which has become, more than ever, a public health imperative.

Click here to sign this Call!

Vinflix: A New Communication Tool in the Vincentian Family

vinflix.net is born as a new website of the Vincentian Family that is intended to facilitate sharing videos that creatively explore the Vincentian call to globalize charity.

In continuity with what was experienced during the festival "Finding Vince 400", celebrated in Rome from October 18 to 21, 2018, we hope, on this website, to continue to tell stories that will change our perspective on poverty.

The site is available in five languages: English, Spanish, Italian, French and Portuguese.

In the Vincentian Family we are convinced that artists can bring about positive changes in this world. For this reason, VinFlix emerges as the creative expression of artists who advocate the globalization of charity. It is an integral part of the communications network and the ministry of the members of the Vincentian Family who, together with those who are poor, are engaged in a struggle against poverty of every kind.

Our intention is to support 21st century storytellers and motivate the viewer with movies that change our perspective on poverty in our communities, and to share the charism through creativity inspired by the Vincentian mission to globalize charity.

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

Service to Those in Need, in Times of Coronavirus and Afterwards

My dear brothers and sisters of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul: I begin this article with a memory: I did my Moral Theology degree in the beautiful city of Madrid. This degree covered a great deal of interesting material. Today, I want to mention the Bioethics I and II courses. The Redemptorist Francisco Javier Elizari Basterra gave these courses. From that time up to now, I have been interested in the ethical issues relating to health.

Indeed, we are now all affected by coronavirus, which has led to a fast-spreading pandemic. I have read a great deal about this virus and its origins. At the moment, much of this is unclear and mysterious. The only truth is that it is here among us.

We can recall that Frédéric Ozanam experienced several epidemics. Saint Vincent de Paul lived through even more of them. The Father of the poor, within the limits of the theology of his time (like 90% of believers in the 17th century) thought that plague was a divine punishment. Today, we know that is not so. The pandemic is not an expression of the wrath of God, displeased with the human race. But the important thing is that our beloved Vincent and Frédéric acted on behalf of those suffering, in their own times. Saint Vincent did two things, suggesting sensible precautions for those caring for the sick, and at the same time asking for action on behalf of those who were infected. This balanced charity has always been a mark of the way the Vincentian Family works.

Starting to make changes. Standing in the empty St Peter's Square, on 27 March 2020, but paradoxically watched by thousands of people following him on screen, all over the world, Francis said, while speaking to God: "You are calling us to use this time of trial as a moment of choice. It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: time to choose between what truly matters and what passes, to separate the necessary from the unnecessary." We are trying to make a "judgement", about what kind of world there should be after the coronavirus pandemic.

What should life in the Church be like? For reasons of space, I am going to focus on parish life. The Vatican Council II asks parishes to be community of communities. But the truth is that more than half of them are seeing a decline in membership. Moreover, many people have lost their awareness of the parish, and in many cases, have no relationship with it. I do not believe that this will change radically after the coronavirus, but there are a few steps we can take.

If parishes are going to continue to be meaningful, they have to be the common home of the town or the district. For this, and without having any monopoly, they have to open up more to their social role, as well as the spiritual role. This is the time for Samaritan parishes. As priests and people, let us be like the Samaritan who stopped to help the person in need: took care of him, washed him, carried him somewhere to be looked after, and paid the carers. Solidarity, like a complete circle of charity. The SSVP has a long tradition of collaboration with people in need in parishes, although not exclusively with them. We can add in to this, fraternity, joy and parish collaboration. SSVP members can also contribute similarly as missionaries of charity.

All this will be empowered by a truly synodal Church. That is, where things are discussed by everyone, considered by everyone and carried out by everyone,

Pope John XXIII, known for convening
the Second Vatican Council

beyond the scope of legitimate authorities. The best role for the baptized in the Catholic Church to fulfil, after this pandemic, will be to build a "Synodal Church".

This means going back to the spirit of Vatican Council II (not so much to the letter, which is in some cases out of date). A Council which, thanks to Pope Francis, is being defrosted. This crisis must trigger a profound change of mindset in us. For the time being, we can ask, what is and what will be the role of the SSVP? In baptism, Jesus has made us his companions in his programme of making society more humane, his collaborators in extending the Kingdom of Heaven. He has made us "his salt and his yeast". During this pandemic, thousands of SSVP members have done admirable work together. Either by working directly in SSVP activities, but mostly by doing their own risky work well, turning it into their apostolate. We acknowledge and admire them all.

What should the policy be? Going back to "before" would be a blunder. When the coronavirus pandemic is over, we will not be allowed to return to the madness of before. It would be disrespectful to the thousands of people whom this virus has asphyxiated. The dead for whom God and our hearts weep. It would also be an offense against the thousands and thousands of sick people, and it would show that we have not learned the lesson which this pandemic left us.

In politics, I believe that we could move away from the world hegemony of ruthless capitalism which grows with over-exploitation of the natural world and increasing poverty for the majority of humanity. The hard right looks sympathetically on this partner, which has long been its enemy. We could also distance ourselves from the extreme left, which denies liberty and human rights, publicly condemns capital and then tries desperately to get rich when no-one is looking.

I suggest the possibility to develop more moderate and humane forms of government: liberal-centre, centre-right and eco-socialist. In other words, more democratic and respectful forms of government. One where the rotation of power assists transparency, where the other party is large enough to continue the worthwhile projects started by the previous government.

To empower cooperation, interdependency among all, solidarity and a State with sufficient resources to enable universal treatment for the coronavirus. We have to have a better relationship with Nature, as stewards of Life. We need a "global social contract", since global problems require an international solution, agreed among all countries.

As an international association, the SSVP can collaborate in various ways to ensure there are people and governments who are more sociable, fraternal, collaborative and sharing. The age of competition has to pass, so that the age of cooperation can dawn.

Logically, we cannot imagine that these transformations will happen overnight. It is understandable that policy and production would want to go back to the previous system, but they must undergo a conversion process, in which ecology and social responsibility play a part. Writing this, I pause and look out of the window, giving me a picture of my beloved city of Buenos Aires. Here, in the south of the south, the question troubles me, "Will this change happen successfully?" Being realistic, the most likely thing is that small changes will come first. Inertia is very strong. There is also a worse outcome: after the pandemic, many groups may want to exploit people and nature even more, seeking recompense for the money lost over these months. Which of these trends will predominate? Or will several operate together? The human being

is complex, indecipherable, sometimes moved by kindness, but also by fury.

Poverty. The corona crisis has exacerbated poverty in the world. Much of that is due to unemployment. So we are in a worse state than before. Assisting those whom coronavirus is going to marginalise will have to be one of our tasks. Living out one of the gospel texts which is most applicable to Vincentians: "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat", Matthew 25. As the Gospel says, we will be judged according to our love, not about how many times we have been to Mass.

This crisis will demand that the SSVP does even more to help. In the face of hunger and misery, giving food, clothing, medicines, etc. is the most urgent priority. But in order to fill the gap left by the coronavirus, we have to turn to development. That is, the integral growth and development of those in need. With all kinds of worthwhile activities, from occupational workshops to employment bureaux; from rental guarantees to housing schemes; from teaching the faith to improving the educational standards of our schools. These are only some of the many examples of what we can do.

Service (diakonia) at the heart of the Vincentian mission. In this period, we have seen thousands of SSVP brothers and sisters, with masks, hand gel, soap, coughing into their elbows and keeping social distance, while they bring material and spiritual help to the "body of Christ", in those in need. The SSVP has done this during the crisis, and we must continue to do it until the coronavirus is completely defeated.

This way, following Jesus and serving the poor, the SSVP will be even more of a witness that "he went through the world doing good". And those with whom we are in contact will say once more: "see how they love each other".

Laos SSVP Report

Food delivery to families in need during the pandemic.

When the confinement caused by the pandemic started on April 1, 2020 in Laos, the SSVP received generous donations to support those families that were most affected by this situation and were already burdened by poverty and unemployment.

The SSVP members developed an action plan to gather data from Vientiane families in need of support. They split in groups to distribute bags of rice and other food items.

Some locations were hard to reach due to government restrictions. SSVP members received help from the Church or gathered in small places where they could provide aid in those locations. However, in most cases, help was delivered door to door to comfort the hearts of the poorest and to get to know the actual situation of our brothers and sisters in need.

Food delivery by Laotian Vincentians to needy families

Food distribution began from 19 to 21 April 2020, with the help of the Daughters of Charity, delivering 20 sacks of rice (20 kg per sack) and other food items to 20 families.

The SSVP group provided additional support to families in need from 24 to 27 April 2020.

All recipients were extremely thankful for all the help received and wished all the members of St. Vincent de Paul to stay safe and healthy to keep on providing their service. Many of these vulnerable groups, especially single-parent families, the lonely, the elderly and the disabled acknowledged that SSVP gives them a reason for hope, since SSVP is their main support to cope with the hardships in their life, which is aggravated by the pandemic.

The Vincentians in Laos say: “We can’t change the whole world, but we can do small deeds for others”. This is how 108 families from 24 different villages received help from the SSVP.

On May 14, 2020, the SSVP delivered food to 7 families in Phon Sinuane, Viantiane, who lost their homes to a fire caused by an electric short circuit. Some of these families were able to move in with their cousins or other relatives, but all of them were experiencing an extremely difficult situation.

On May 21, the SSVP team, in cooperation with the village leaders, distributed rice to families in need in Nongda, Nonkeylek and Thongpong in the Sikhouttavong district. Door-to-door deliveries provided the opportunity to talk with the families and get to know their actual situation, so they can be supported whenever they need help or in the near future. Some families were already in much need prior to the confinement and did not have a regular income to cover their basic needs. No one supported them. Other families work occasionally in temples in exchange for food. A total of 91 families in 25 villages received help on this day.

In conclusion, the Vincentians in Laos have learned many lessons during the pandemic. First off, they were on the front line experiencing the harsh realities and the sufferings of those in need. Secondly, their work as SSVP Laos has been strengthened and recognized. Every time they go to distribute aid, they offer their time knowing the risk of contracting the virus, but they still continue serving poor families and those in need of the love of God, believing and trusting that He will protect them and their families. “And the King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)

USA - Arizona

Small but huge donation

Enclosed in a letter to The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was a check and a note.

Among the packages of needed items that arrived one recent day was a letter. The return address was the state prison in Florence (Arizona, USA). Inside was a check and a note on a half-sheet of lined paper: “Please accept this $10 donation. I hope it will help some.” It was signed by John.

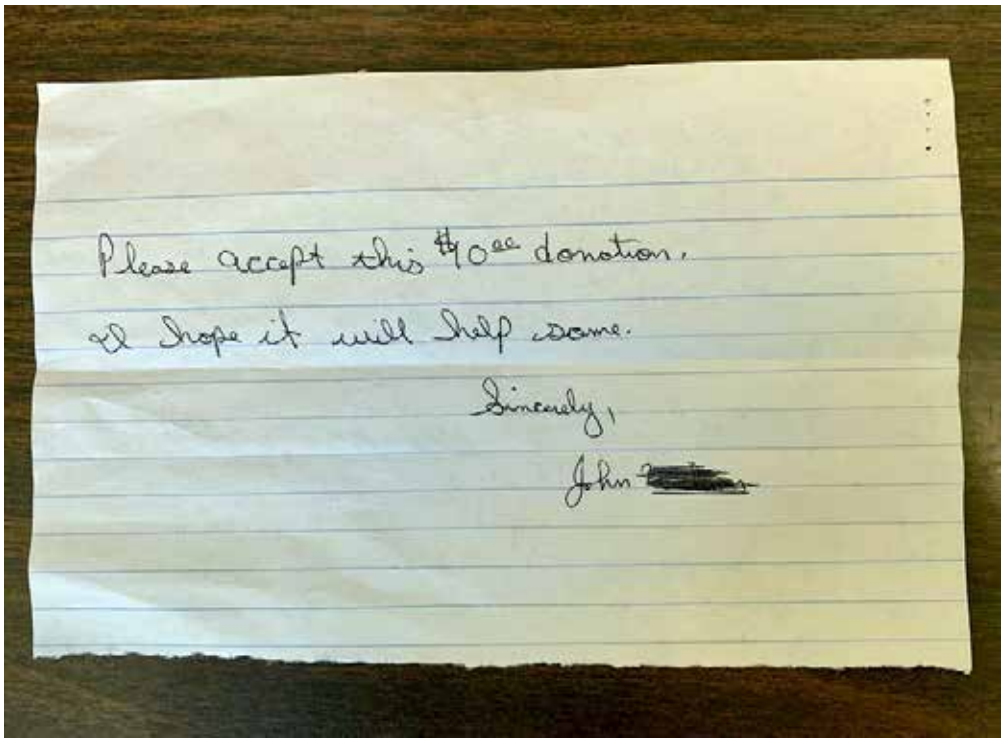
Executive director Steve Zabilski has been at the agency for 23 years. He’s seen substantial donations, but this letter touched him in a different way.

It reminded him of the biblical parable of the widow’s mite, in which Jesus was teaching in Jerusalem and a widow gave two coins among the larger donations. It was all she had. And Jesus told his disciples, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything.”

“$10 donation is a lot of money for someone who’s in that environment. Inmates make 10 cents to $3 an hour. With all of his challenges and all of his troubles, he’s thinking of others […]”, Steve said.

Steve doesn’t know John or what he did. He only knows the kindness he exhibited, and he will write to John and tell him how his donation inspired him and others.

“It just goes to show you that all of us, if we choose, if it is our desire,” Steve said, “we can make the world a better place, no matter our situation.”



Ireland

You are not alone

Concern at the level of anxiety among students prompts uplifting musical video from Young SVP.

Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Young SVP programme in the South East of Ireland were so concerned at the level of stress and anxiety among their peers during the Covid-19 restrictions that they put together a beautiful musical video to drive home the message that young people are not alone.

The video is intended to offer support for those students all over the country who are feeling down, worried or anxious and encourages them to talk about their anxieties and that help is on hand for them.

The project was supported by over 100 Young SVP students from around the country who agreed, without hesitation, to sing together on this video with 'You are not alone' signs.

Young SVP is a youth development programme designed for use in school/ youth groups. The programme focuses on social action within the ethos and mission of SVP. Young people are offered opportunities to learn about SVP, Social Justice and how to engage in social action in a positive meaningful way.

Watch video

The SVP National Youth Development officer Becca Gallagher said that this initiative #youarenotalone is a perfect example of the level of concern for others that is engendered in the Young SVP Programme.

Lebanon

Looking after families and the elderly

The SSVP Lebanon is redoubling its efforts, making all kinds of deliveries of essential supplies and food parcels to the most needy families in the country.

Our institution, which has just marked its 160th anniversary in Lebanon, also works relentlessly in its residential homes, which are still in operation despite all the circumstances, taking all the preventative measures to look after the elderly and keep them safe.

France

Quarantaide, the SSVP Volunteers' Solidarity Journal

Faced with this pandemic, the SSVP France has come up with a new form of solidarity, called 'Quarantaide', the solidarity journal for volunteers.

Every day, this journal features testimonials, pieces of advice and suggestions provided by our volunteers to preserve the bond with the isolated people we accompany (distribution of food parcels, contact by phone or email…).

In addition, the journal provides us with visual resources to be shared in the fight against the coronavirus.

More info on the project

Canada

Elderly Volunteers Continue despite Lockdown

Since the onset of the pandemic, Ellen Schryburt and Jean-Marc Bougie, at age 70+, from their own home, have rolled up their sleeves to help their communities through simple acts of kindness which matter the most.

When the government asked people to stay at home, Saint-Léonard's deprived families suddenly lost access to the services provided by the Society of St Vincent-de-Paul (SSVP). Finding herself confined to her home, Ellen Schryburt, who has been involved in her local community since a very early age and who previously held the role of SSVP National President took matters into her own hands. Within a very few days, the SSVP president of Saint-Léonard completely changed the way in which

the organization operates in order to help those households who are in need. The whole sequence of actions has been rethought in order to continue providing for deprived households ; social distancing measures have been put in place ; lists of people to call upon and delivery routes have been set up.

According to Ellen Schryburt, the face of poverty in her area has many faces : refugees, single mothers, social security recipients, older couples unable to cope etc. The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented health crisis.

«Many people now feel like volunteering because they are not working but perhaps they will continue to do so at the weekend or in the evening. Maybe this experience will make them sympathetic towards people in need» says Ellen Schryburt.

At age 70, Jean-Marc Bougie is known among family and friends for his talents as a chef. Since the start of the Covid-19 crisis, he is no longer busy cooking meals but exerts himself on the phone. He phones people who are socially isolated three or four times a week, in order to ensure that they are well. Despite the fragile situation many of them find themselves in, the septuagenerian says he feels uplifted by the many stories he hears.

« They tell me what is happening, how they feel. There is a lot of empathy in these exchanges, so much is being shared. Some of them have bad eyesight or mobility problems. Others are ill or isolated », says Mr Bougie.

Spain - Melilla

The Virgin of Light Conference Continues to Assist over 400 Families

"We did not want to remain unmoved in the face of the need around us".

When the state of emergency was declared throughout the country, the Virgin of Light conference felt the Vincentian spirit which moves us all, and despite the official lockdown, we did not want to remain unmoved in the face of the need around us, so we immediately began working to try and help as far as we could.

With the elderly

At the SSVP's temporary assistance centre for the elderly, the sanitary measures were put in place, providing those working at the Centre with the equipment they needed to protect themselves and our elderly friends. Fortunately, and thanks to the professionalism, commitment and dedication of the workers, the old people are at the moment free of the virus, so we hope that God will continue to assist us and ensure this situation remains stable.

With those struggling to recover from addiction

The people we are helping through the Hombre project are still being supported through IT resources, so that their follow-up can continue. They are being helped by our psychologists and therapists. We are hoping for a favourable outcome, so they get the support they need in these difficult times, and no-one feels alone.

With families going through hard times

At the Food Warehouse, from the first day of confinement, we went out into the streets to help the most vulnerable families (naturally using all the sanitary measures necessary). We have seen some increase in the families needing help as more people are unemployed and there are problems for many self-employed workers. This has meant a huge increase in requests for essential supplies. Many of the families we help have a large number of children.

Network of charity

We have received great cooperation and unconditional help from the Melilla Food Bank, which has provided us with all the practical resources we need to make our food deliveries, with some 400 needy families being supported at the moment.

From the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, we are taking food to the homes of the families in need, with the support of all the public authorities, who are grateful and recognise the work we have been providing from our food store.

We are proud of the Vincentian work taking place in Melilla. We are taking some risks, which we accept as a form of service to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

New Zealand - New Plymouth

The Covid-19 Epidemic

The Covid-19 epidemic crept up on us from the start of 2020. At first the epidemic seemed sly and stealthy. It was all overseas, happening to people abroad and only vaguely connected to us.

Then the epidemic hit us like a freight train. Health and safety took front and centre stage as we grappled with the realities of staying connected and continuing to help the impoverished in our community.

On a practical level the story went something like this: When the schools went back and our volunteer base was once again available to us, we re-started our weekly Community Meals. Covid-19 was already making headlines in China and other Asian countries. We knew we had to be careful, paying particular attention to Health and Safety with the food preparation and presentation. Gloves, hand washing, soap and clean towels were our first focus and our diners were asked to wash their hands before entering the dining room.

For the first week or two the Whare Kai (our co-operative cooking “classes” with the Mums of young families) things ran as normal. For Mums trying to hold families together on the barest of means an

epidemic in a far way place holds only a modicum of interest.

On the furniture front, our store of furniture was looking bare in February. After a major effort to increase stock, the sheds were looking full again, to the point where we needed to have a "sort out" in order to fit more in to the shed. We were looking forward to some big deliveries in response to requests from our clients. That all changed once the first case arrived in New Zealand.

When you are doing something on a weekly basis, there's not much time to change things when your activity involves 60 or so volunteers, and even more clients. – But change we did – and our clients were grateful for the changes, fully understanding the need to do so and afraid for their own safety and that of their families. With the Community Meals, at first we asked the cooks to supply food as usual. We plated up the food onto biodegradable plates, wrapped the meals and opened the doors, admitting the diners one at a time and giving them a meal to take away. To our surprise the diner numbers had decreased by more than half (from around 40 down to 17). It seemed that already the word was out on the street and people were staying at home. By the next week, the church had banned gatherings and the hall became unavailable. We decided to wrap up meals again and serve them from our van. Before that could happen, we were in lockdown.

With the Whare Kai, we delivered the meal ingredients and the recipes to the Mums, so that they could cook them up in their own houses. That worked well for two weeks. And then came the lock down.

Like many SVdP Conferences, most of our members and volunteers are over 70. This has severely curtailed what we can accomplish. Despite this, we have managed to accomplish some "helping" activities by using members of our volunteer team who are under 70. We've had furniture delivered to people in need. One of our volunteers (a Dad, with the help of his teenage sons) has been able to do this. They are, of course, all in the same bubble. Another under 70 volunteer delivered frozen food from SVdP freezers to our local Foodbank. With the help of Civil Defence, the Foodbank has made food deliveries to people we know, who are in need.

We have arranged transport to hospital for a person who needed urgent treatment. We also text all those we have helped to check that they are OK and offer advice were help can be provided. We had our monthly meeting via Zoom, and have our next Area meeting planned using the same technology. When all this over it will have changed the world, and many of those changes will have been for good. We have to "go with the change", welcome it even.

The history and longevity of St Vincent de Paul as an organisation should inspire us with hope. We are one of the longer lived social agencies. Let's pray for inspiration, courage and resilience as we face whatever comes next in this unfolding drama.

Chile

Home-Schooling: Another Challenge during the Pandemic

Due to the sudden suspension of face-to-face classes for all schools in the country, the educational network 'Red Educacional San Vicente de Paul' has devised a home-schooling scheme, aimed at ensuring learning for all students.

"One of our core challenges is that all students can progress at their own pace, being aware that the new normality will involve bringing students' academic level on an equal plane and taking into account the hurdles to be faced in the learning path when doing the tasks and activities for the different subjects. We have limited to basic learning, in an effort to keep up with families' resources and actual possibilities."

The curriculum was adapted in order to prioritise subjects such as Maths, Spanish language and History; and digital communication channels were enhanced to provide tutorial sessions to students while monitoring the tasks assigned. Furthermore, school material (notebooks, books, guides and sheets) has been delivered to students in elementary education.

A network of charity

The Covid-19 pandemic has given rise to a growing academic concern within 'Red Educacional', and has caused an economic crisis arising from the health emergency. Since March, the learning division of Red Educacional has been on the frontline in a solidarity campaign by donating hampers with non-perishables to families of the most needy schools.

Kenia

Coping with Disease, Hunger and Unemployment

The SSVP Kenya supports 1,000 vulnerable households providing food and sanitary material, while seeking solutions to the high unemployment rate and the plight of street children.

Due to the Covid-19 health crisis and the attendant economic fallout, the SSVP Kenya is facing a tough situation.

In mid-April, the local Conferences were left with virtually no resources for needy families in an even more vulnerable situation, desperately struggling with hunger and unemployment.

This is when Kenya's Superior Council decided to apply for the Covid-19 relief fund, launched by the SSVP's Council General International and

Vulnerable households are provided with food and sanitary material

to a dedicated trust; thereby obtaining an initial amount of €37,000 to assist 1,000 households all over the country.

This relief fund is administered by Kenya's Superior Council, that has requested all Conferences to shortlist the neediest families in their neighbourhood, and to find shops and food banks using mobile money platforms, which allows to buy the necessary food hampers in a quick and efficient way. Hence, local Vincentians only care about collecting and distributing food hampers to families.

It is worth noting that the Church's support is playing a very important role. As a matter of fact, all the food is blessed by the priests prior to delivery; and parish priests, witnessing the good work of SSVP Conferences, have decided to join in and contribute with their parish funds.

Most households have been provided with a basic food hamper (flour, dried corn, beans, rice and cooking oil) and hygiene products (sanitizers, soap…). It's estimated that these hampers will help households get by for three or four weeks, till the next hamper delivery.

However, the SSVP Kenya's concern goes beyond covering food needs, since it promotes sustainable solutions for reintegration into the labour market and to combat hunger and cold faced by street children during the harsh winter months in the African country.

Source: Covid-19 Emergency Relief Fund Report
Urbanus Muthai
Kenya's National President of the SSVP

Brazil

Network of Charity

Taking care of the one who took care of us!

The Network of Charity is a national campaign aimed at integrating people of good will to take care of and support the 34,000 seniors who live in the residential homes belonging to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP).

The initiative, launched in April of this year, is essential due to the hardship arising from Covid-19. The SSVP homes are temporarily closed to visitors to protect the seniors, the main group at risk. In addition to the social problems resulting from the pandemic, donations have decreased dramatically.

The donations made will be allocated to emergency assistance for the around 600 SSVP residential homes, while ensuring that there is no shortage of food, medicines, basic hygiene items and personal protective equipment.

With regard to this campaign, President General International congratulated Brazil's National Council for its creativity and the crowdfunding tools used to help over 34,000 seniors who are looked after in the around 600 residential homes spread throughout the country.

Quarterly Report on Beneficiary Countries of Covid-19 Funds

Thanks to National Councils' generous response to President General's fundraising appeal in support of the Fund for International Solidarity (FIS). To date, 362,756 euros have been collected.

Appeal Goal: A more forward-looking aid

Support is still needed. We do hope that, thanks to your invaluable help, more donations will be sent, thus reaching the target of 500,000 euros, thereby enabling us to respond, insofar as possible, to the great majority of urgent requests for assistance during this pandemic.

Aid is on its way

Over 191, 900 euros in emergency funds (ranging from €1,000 and €13,000) have been sent to 46 countries and territories: 23 countries in Africa, 12 countries in the Americas and the Caribbean, 4 Asian countries, 6 countries and territories in the Middle East and 1 country in Oceania. Other grants are being processed and will be sent out at the earliest date, while more applications are collected.

The first step: Sanitary medical equipment and food

In this first stage, Vincentians are providing basic personal protection kits (masks, globes and hand sanitizers). However, due to Covid-19 lockdown and attendant restrictions, hunger hotspots have been hit hard, and poverty is on the increase. Hence, food assistance is also a core concern among the actions undertaken by our Vincentians.

In other countries, another basic need is highlighted: education, which has been hit particularly hard by the current crisis (school material for homeschooling, scholarships for poor families…).

Beyond the emergency measures, community development initiatives are emerging, aimed at generating revenue sources to alleviate the long-term economic effects.

All donations are equally valuable, regardless of the amount, since everybody contributes as much as they can.

Covid-19 comes on top of other disasters

Alas, the Covid-19 crisis is, in many places, only an aggravating factor in dire situations. Disasters have not stopped because of the virus. As a matter of fact, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is struggling with the devastating effects of super-cyclone Amphan in Bangladesh and India. Tropical cyclone Harold caused widespread destruction on several islands. The cyclone season has just begun in the Asian/Pacific area.

Another example is the situation in the Middle East, still bitterly suffering the aftermath of the war. Lebanon is still experiencing the worst economic crisis in the country's history. In Southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo or the Central African Republic, civil wars and terrorist attacks have made the work of the Society more vital than ever. In Latin America, Vincentians in Venezuela and Chile are striving to help amidst a dramatic social and economic crisis.

The important thing is that this charitable gesture shows who we really are: a great network of charity and love among people.

Generosity builds up an effective network of charity

The SSVP's 16th President 16º President General, fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, expresses his gratitude to all those who have made donations to Covid-19 Emergency Fund since the beginning of the pandemic, and stresses that "all donations are equally valuable, regardless of the amount, since everybody contributes as much as they can. The important thing is that this charitable gesture shows who we really are: a great network of charity and love among people. My deepest gratitude to all Territorial Vice-Presidents, who have rushed to get resources and requests.".

"Together, we can defeat it"

This appeal motto is the takeaway message resulting from Covid-19, a tragic pandemic in over 188 countries. Your help is vital to defeat it. Be part of this great crusade against coronavirus!

Click here to sign the call

Covid-19
Young People Sharing Charity and Hope

The International Youth Committee will be reporting on the different initiatives undertaken by Vincentian Youth in response to the question: What is SSVP Youth doing to counter the effects of Covid-19?

This is our first posting, starting with the initiative taken by the Youth commission of the Central Council of San Lucas, from the Metropolitan Council of Belo Horizonte, which belongs to the National Council of Brazil, and is represented by Müller Coelho de Macedo, a member and current coordinator for this Youth commission.

Initiative:
Vincentian action for homeless people
Target group:
Rough sleepers
Responsible:
Youth commission of the Central Council of San Lucas, Brazil

Let me tell you about how this initiative started, and what happened when the Covid-19 pandemic arrived:

The Youth Commission of the Central Council of San Lucas, aware of the situation of homeless people in the city of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, and wishing to promote the strengthening and reinvigoration of the Vincentian charism, joined in with the idea from the youth conference of San Juan Pablo II, and developed the action known as “Vincentinar”.

As Müller Coelho, the youth commission coordinator, says, since they could not immediately relieve “our lords and masters” living on the streets, they tried to do their best to soften the impact of social neglect.

Central Council's Youth Commission of São Lucas

For these young people, the "Vincentinar" plan adds action to the Vincentian charism. There is something they can do, and they do it. They started by delivering 70 hot meals to people living on the streets. Even before the pandemic, they managed to provide 200 meals a month.

Müller Coelho tells us that he sees this action as a way of inviting more young people to join the conferences, because so many people have been inspired by the attitude of the Vincentians, and want to see how we work close at hand.

As well as involving the young people in the work of the Central Council, Müller has help from local Vincentians and other branches of the Vincentian Family to prepare the meals. In fact, the food is cooked in the homes of the members and volunteers, and donations come from many people helping with collections made in the neighbourhood and in churches.

When the pandemic arrived, the young people were faced with an even greater challenge: to keep up the work while respecting health and safety rules and social isolation, as well as the instructions from the Vincentian officers.

Many people might have seen this as a reason to suspend the work, but for these young people it was another boost to making our Charism real. They decided to continue, because they knew that many more people needed these meals and that solidarity would overcome the pandemic.

Due to Covid-19 outbreak, the work is now happening once a week instead of once a month, so they are doing even more, up from 200 meals to 550 a month. This involves 50 Vincentian members, most of them young.

Bearing in mind the instructions from public health bodies and the guidance of their Vincentian leaders, the young people go out into the city with protective masks, gloves and sanitizer, to deliver hot meals, thus reducing the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable people.

The Youth Commission currently has 5 young members, each of whom has a job to do. The committee is responsible for incorporating the work of the youth Conferences in their Council.

"Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil onto the wounds of the person attacked on the road". The young Vincentian meets God in the person of the poor, with practical action and guided by Saint Vincent de Paul, who asks us to "love God with the sweat of our brow and the strength of our arms". With such strong conviction, the Youth Commission of the Central Council of San Lucas shares charity and hope, and responds in effective, practical ways to the effects of the pandemic.

The SSVP's International Youth Day

On July 4th, the SSVP youth from all over the world celebrated the SSVP's International Youth Day.

Without youth, our rules die out, our procedures become stale, our energy diminishes, our joy fades away, our charity gets mechanized.

This year, due to Covid-19 pandemic, many young people felt called to take part in this virtual commemoration, using social media and different online communication tools.

The theme chosen for this issue was: 'Young Vincentians: Sharing Hope and Charity'. In this regard, fellow member Willian Alves, international Vice-President of Youth, Children and Adolescents, highlighted the following message in the letter he addressed to all young Vincentians: "The SSVP youth must be the channels for Hope and Charity in these times of uncertainty, taking on their leading role without ever leaving the poor behind, since they are the ones who most need youth action during this pandemic.".

Renato Lima, the 16th President General, also wrote an affectionate letter, addressed to the Vincentian youth, underscoring the following: "Without youth, our rules die out, our procedures become stale, our energy diminishes, our joy fades away, our charity gets mechanized. The presence of young Vincentians among us is essential for the survival of our institution.".

The presence of young Vincentians among us is essential for the survival of our institution.

Some of the initiatives undertaken by the Vincentian youth on July 4th are listed below:

- Photography contest in India;
- Videos and messages of hope on social media in different countries: Canada, Colombia, Brazil, Italy, Lebanon, Singapore, Venezuela, England and Scotland;
- Latin American Youth Meeting, organized by 20 countries belonging to SSVP regions 'America 2 and 3';
- Youth online exchange, carried out by 5 countries belonging to SSVP regions 'Asia 1 and Africa 3';
- Online youth meetings, organized in Brazil, the United States, Nigeria, Kenya, India, Lebanon and Myanmar;

- Online Eucharistic Adoration, fostered by the youth from Indonesia, Honduras and Portugal;
- Moments of prayer and reflection with the youth from Micronesia and Sri Lanka;
- Letters of support send to health professionals by young people in Guatemala;
- Collection and delivery of food and hygiene supplies by youth people in Ghana, Zambia, Sierra Leone, New Zealand and Australia;
- Clothing manufacturing for fundraising campaign, organized by young people in Sierra Leone.

We are in need of young leaders taking on responsibilities at different Councils and Committees

The essential role of young Vincentians as life-changing agents who build bridges of Hope and Charity became clear in all the initiatives promoted by the different Councils.

Despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the International Youth Committee feels that this year's celebration has been very positive and successful. In this regard, the International Vice-President for Youth stated: "We are in need of young leaders taking on responsibilities at different Councils and Committees, advocating for the poor, taking part in either in-person or online conference meetings on a weekly basis, thus contributing to change the lives of needy families". The SSVP does not need young people who show up once a year, but young people with voice, action, courage, audacity, joy and the commitment to pursue the mission begun by Frédéric Ozanam and his companions. Young people, the SSVP needs you!"

To conclude, four daily tips, given by fellow member Willian Alves to young Vincentians at the end of his letter, are listed below:

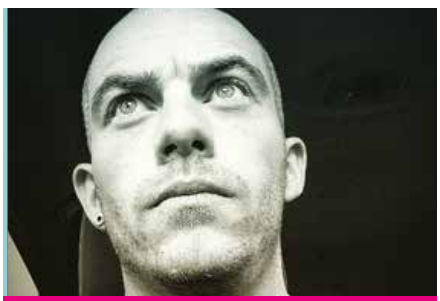
- I. Live the joy of young Christians;
- II. Live the Charity, so needed by the SSVP members;
- III. Live the audacity of Frédéric Ozanam's followers;
- IV. Live the love of Eucharist, of those who have Bl. Frassati as their patron.

Some young people were asked the following question: 'Why is it important for the SSVP to celebrate the International Youth Day?". Here are some of the answers:

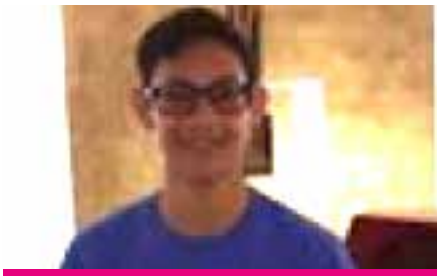
"Young people deserve a day in which they can feel even more proud of this beautiful vocation. Great ideas are not only spawned from experience, but also from minds beginning their journey. Hence, youth is so important to the SSVP". (Demi Margarita - Mexico)

"The importance of the celebration of the SSVP's International Youth Day lies in the basic need to commemorate those who, on many occasions, are the driving force within the institutions in their respective countries; those who, inspired by the seven founders, who were also young, are helping thousands of needy brothers and sisters.". (Alexis Santacruz - Paraguay)

"The SSVP's International Youth Day should be regarded as a token of young people's major role in our Society. Thus, young people are reminded of their role, but are also prompted to join in. There is no future without young people, and the baton thereof must be passed on to them so that the Society can endure over time." (Kizzy Julien - Trinidad and Tobago)



"I think it's important to celebrate the International Youth Day since it raises awareness on the SSVP Youth's role around the world while strengthening it. It also shows solidarity and unity in times of struggle. We are a people united sheltered by the SSVP, with lifelong friendships. We will support and embrace each other openly, without prejudice. Let us surround ourselves with the kind and loving people of the world." (Ruairi - Ireland)



"Celebrating the SSVP's Youth Day means reaffirming the youth's commitment to their community: a self-giving task and a reflection of hope. On this day, we are celebrating the path to self-realization of hundreds of people, who believe they can thrive: we, young people, are the hope." (Aáron Galindo - Honduras)

"The International Youth Day should be celebrated with joy and enthusiasm, because it moves and inspires me. Small things can make someone's day. Small gestures can change the world." (Inma - Spain)

"With the SSVP being in all continents, with the corresponding time zones, the International Youth Day is actually celebrated for 24 hours via good deeds inspired by Frédéric Ozanam. Witnessing this, we can acknowledge that there are many committed young people all over the world, and this impels us to move forward. (Zisse - Ghana)

"The SSVP's International Youth Day is a good moment to reassert the leading role of young Vincentians who, since the inception of the Society, have undertaken effective social initiatives bridging hope and human dignity, thus enabling people assisted by the Conferences to dream and chart new life horizons. We are the heirs of our forerunners, Bl. Frédéric Ozanam, St. Vincent de Paul and Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, who are role models to keep alive the Vincentian charism, the faith and the principle that we must constantly love our neighbor.". (Junia Dabia - Brazil)

Council General Draws Attention to Ethical Recommendations on Social Media during the Coronavirus Pandemic

The Council General approved the "Ethical Protocol for Social Media" in Porto (Portugal).

Currently, we are living in dark times with the pandemic of the "New Coronavirus" (Covid-19), which has been impacting the daily life of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) and sadly affecting humanity, with thousands of deaths, in addition to immeasurable damages to the economy, generating more poverty, suffering and unemployment. The challenges that will follow after the crisis will also be immense for all of us.

In this connection, some attitudes inappropriate for social networks have been observed, with videos and photos of social actions. Of course, the SSVP needs to be known to obtain new members and more donations. However, in pursuit of this mission, our institution can never expose the privacy of vulnerable and sick people. "We are useless servants: such is the testimony of those who unite to serve God and men. Not to show ourselves, but let us to be seen" (Letter of Antoine-Frederic Ozanam to François Lallier, October 5, 1837).

Furthermore, any action focused on personal self-promotion is contrary to the spirit of the Rule, to the Vincentian tradition and to the legacy of the seven founders. The Vincentian is discreet by nature and his/her actions are reserved and silent (Matthew 6, 1-4). Public images of non compliance with these principles give counter testimony to charity and are very harmful to the image of the Society".

The National or Superior Councils, when they identify inappropriate behaviors or attitudes of the members, especially in social media networks, have the moral duty to carry out fraternal correction (Matthew 18, 15-20). "Only with adequate spiritual formation, based on the Vincentian virtues and on the tradition of our Society, will we avoid possible deviations during actions of social solidarity", stressed our president, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General.

We kindly ask for the careful reading of the "Ethical Protocol" and we ask for everyone's support in spreading its content among the members, especially amongst the Vincentian leaders and those responsible for social communication of the SSVP. We will win this crisis, since humanity has already overcome other epidemics and natural disasters.

Click here to read "Ethical Protocol for Social Media"

A loving call to tolerance and peace among people

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul's public statement against racism or any other form of prejudice.

The International Rule of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) is quite clear in stating that our purpose is the service to the poor and marginalized, especially to "those in need regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions" (Article 1.4). Similarly, the Rule defends equality between people, stating that "the Society makes no distinction regarding gender, wealth, occupation, social status or ethnic origin" (Article 3.2).

Based on these basic and irrevocable principles, we can never tolerate any kind of discrimination or prejudice between people, because we are all equally children of God and were created by Him, with all faculties, potential and virtues. "God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created man and woman" (Genesis 1, 7).

Just as the Holy Catholic Church exhorts, we of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul repudiate any kind of segregation or violence against any individual. We defend respect for life at all stages, the dignity of persons and human rights. "Treat everyone with due respect: love your brothers and sisters, fear God" (1 Peter 2, 17).

We need to build societies that are more just and collaborative, more fraternal and supportive, and above all more centered on Gospel values. The world needs love. The reason for the existence of hunger, poverty, violence, indifference and wars is the absence of Christ in the hearts of men and women. "God is love. Everyone who remains in love remains in God, and God in him" (1 John 4, 16).

In Christ, tolerance is transformed into brotherly love, into tenderness, into generosity. We Vincentians have the responsibility and mission to bring these values to the people around us. We pray that any social movement may always happen peacefully, without generating harm to others, as Our Lord Jesus Christ asked of us. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God!" (Matthew 5, 9).

Paris, June 4th, 2020.

Renato Lima de Oliveira
16th President General

Council General Updates its Data on the SSVP's Presence around the World

Preliminary comments

How many countries are there in the world? It's not easy to answer this question. First of all, what does the concept of "country" indicate? Considering this subject in more detail, the Council General noted that there were big differences in the officially-agreed figures. While the UN recognises 193 countries around the world, the International Olympic Committee has 206, while FIFA (for football lovers), lists 211 countries. Some observers consider that the UN list is "artificial", since it does not match specific territorial boundaries, and they estimate that in fact there are 324 countries across the world! So this number varies according to the political or social criteria used by each organisation to define what a "country" or a "nation" is. Views differ in this field. Each of the lists available have benefits and disadvantages. But they are drawn up according to criteria appropriate to each organisation.

Since none of these lists fully satisfies the needs of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (using the UN criteria for instance, several of our territories are simply not recognised), Council General has decided not to follow existing lists of countries, but instead provide its own Vincentian list of countries, in accordance with its original traditions.

Our organisation, therefore, is presence today in all 5 continents, in 151 Vincentian territories (figures for January 2020) and 138 UN countries.

The countries or nations we will call "Vincentian territories", for the purposes of clarity, are those Vincentian areas which have been formed over time for reasons of history, culture and the development of the association in the country concerned. So the "Vincentian territory" does not always match the "national territory".

Updating statistics

There is a second problem as regards our association. Statistics have been somewhat neglected in recent years. The figures provided were approximate, and were not examined in detail.

Our 16th President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira, wished to clarify the situation and review everything.

The full list of "Vincentian territories", as you will see, has therefore been drawn up with great care, based on the latest information provided by our 12 Territorial vice-Presidents on the situation of our organisation on the ground.

Council General undertakes to keep it up to date every year, as the Rule requires of us; in order to maintain "an accurate picture of the true scale of the Society" (article 6.2.2 of the international statutes).

Our organisation, therefore, is presence today in all 5 continents, in 151 Vincentian territories (figures for January 2020) and 138 UN countries. Here are the numbers for each continent:

CONTINENTS	VINCENTIAN TERRITORIES
Africa	40
America	36
Asia	33
Europe	32
Oceania	10
TOTAL	**151**

Click here to see full list

Remarkable growth

Ever since the Holy Spirit inspired our seven founders to establish the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in 1833, our association has grown continually:

YEAR	EVENT	PRESENCE IN THE WORLD
1833	First Conference of Charity	France
1853	Passing of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam	17 territories, including 11 in Europe
1933	Centenary of the SSVP	64 territories
2000	Second millennium	127 territories
2020	Current situation	151 territories

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has only one desire: that the poor and suffering Jesus, hidden in our deprived brothers and sisters around the whole world, should be loved and served even more!

Inspirational prospects

These positive figures could never satisfy Vincentians, since, as Blessed Frédéric Ozanam reminded them in 1835, "Charity should never look back, but always ahead, because the number of its past good deeds is always small, and the present and future sorrows it must relieve are infinite."

So the task remains huge: so many hearts to be consoled in the world, so many people knowing nothing of the path to holiness offered by Conferences – to serve and meet God by practising works of charity, mercy and evangelisation.

Through the "SSVP PLUS" project, Council General thus continues its mission with enthusiasm, to "develop the Society around the whole world", consolidating existing structures, re-energising the weakest, and introducing the Society to new countries.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has only one desire: that the poor and suffering Jesus, hidden in our deprived brothers and sisters around the whole world, should be loved and served even more!

"Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the Glory!" Psalm 115.

Council General International's New Website

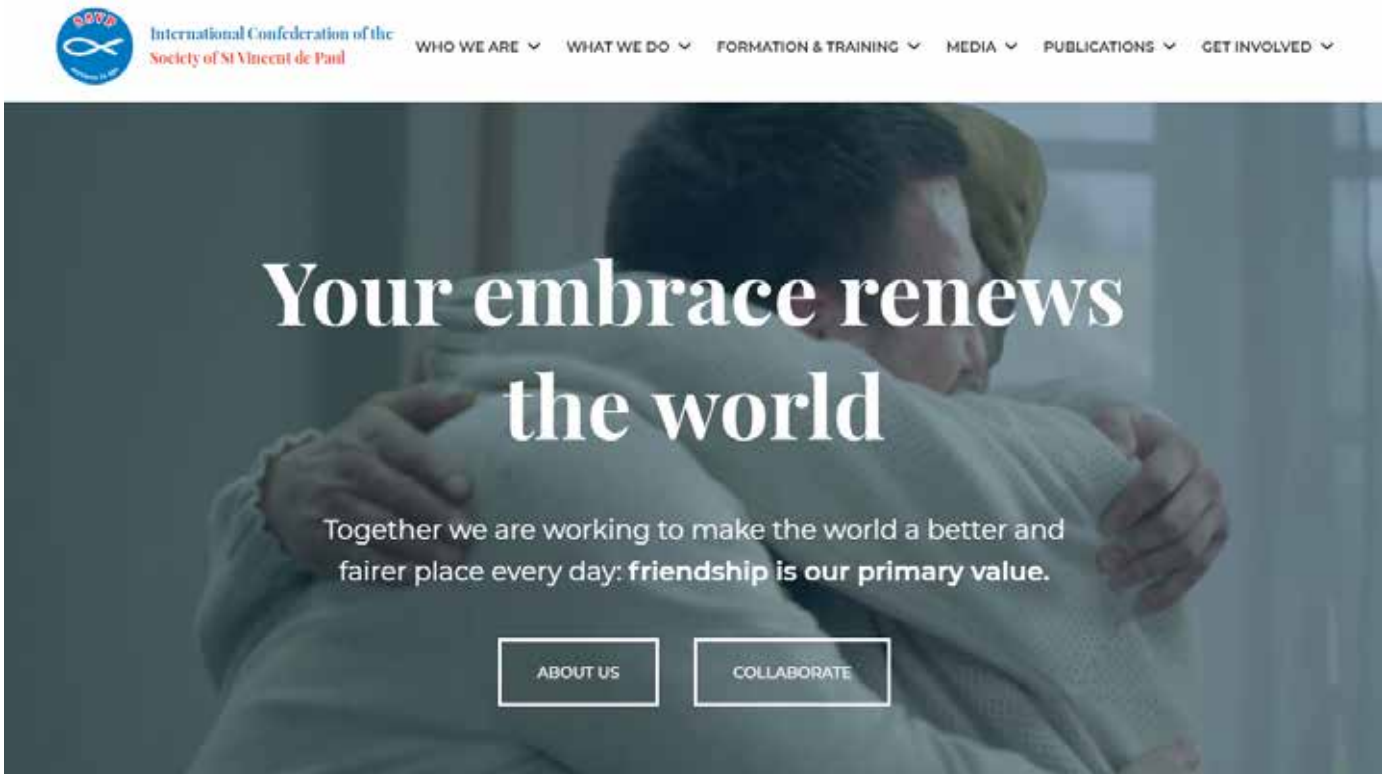
With a modern, dynamic and easy-to-browse layout, this new website is regarded as the best communication tool conveying our values, who we are and what we do, which features integrated social media, all the content, YouTube channel and a mobile app.

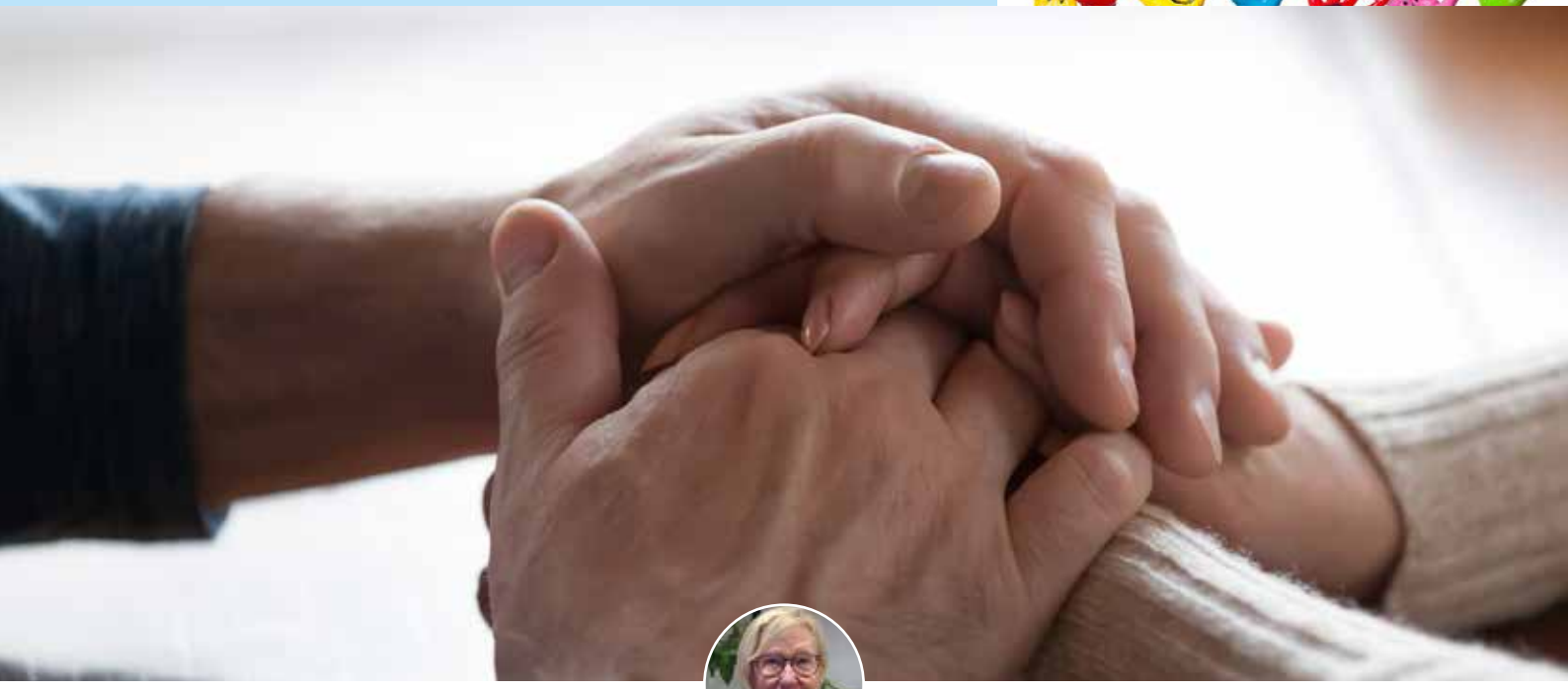
The Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is pleased to officially announce the launch of its newly redesigned website with the same web address: www.ssvpglobal.org

This is an eye-catching website, aimed at becoming the best link of the Confederation, specially designed to be used by any country as a springboard for the setting up of Conferences and fundraising.

"I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Council General's Communications Department, led by fellow member Carlos Lafarga, that has been working on this newly redesigned informative and educational website over the last few months. Moreover, this eye-catching website will undoubtedly be a great success. I am pretty sure that the number of visits will increase, and that the actions undertaken by the SSVP around the world will be widely disseminated.", stressed President General, fellow member Renato Lima.

We invite you to visit our website!
Welcome to your new home!





María Luisa Téllez
International Vice-President for Formation and Training

In Times of Pandemic

For this issue of Ozanam Network magazine, I had intended to focus on "doing well by doing good", but I can't help but write about what this unforeseen disease has meant to everyone, and the impact it is having on our daily lives, which are fraught with shock, fear, pain and isolation.

First and foremost, as good Vincentians, we should exercise compassion for the sufferers voicing the hope of encountering the light and peace in God's mercy. This compassion is also for their relatives, deprived of a final farewell.

Secondly, we should ponder over the impact thereof on our personal lives, bereft of freedom and yet with the gift of having a moment of pause to reflect on our self.

Each individual should draw their own personal lessons learned. Life never stops, but our pace of life has been slowed down, and we have learned many things for which we had no time.

However, hugging and kissing our loved ones are the things we miss the most due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has reshaped our personal relationships. Hence, we have had the need to turn to other means to socially connect with people, like calls or using online communication technologies, since we are social beings, who complement each other and need to reinforce the feeling of self-worth.

This plight has bolstered our patience with each passing day. We have come to the realization that there is much we can do without. Moreover, we have learned to schedule and plan out our uneventful days. We have prayed more, in different ways. We have changed, hopefully, for the better.

The economic pandemic is now hitting us like a landslide. We must be strong and ready to respond with love, since, as always, this situation is particularly striking the poorest (our own). Giving them love and compassion is essential, but also meeting their material needs. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, "This is the meaning of true love, to give until it hurts.".

We Vincentians are an army fighting this viral pandemic; yet we must also be prepared for the battles to come with the economic pandemic.

STRATEGIC GOALS 2016-2022

MISSION

A NETWORK OF FRIENDS, SEEKING HOLINESS VIA 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**

1. **Formation**
   Ongoing process for all members
2. **Youth**
   30% of members under 35 years of age
3. **Twinning**
   Building a global network of spiritual and material support
4. **Expansion**
   Presence in all countries
5. **Vincentian Family**
   Permanent and closed collaboration
6. **Solidarity**
   International and local partnerships
7. **Global Aid**
   Revamping fraternal aid and development
8. **Communication**
   Renew with the use of world-class technology
9. **CGI Structure**
   Constant search for accountability and efficiency
10. **National Councils**
    Support to maximize effectiveness

www.ssvpglobal.org

Ssvp-Conseil Général International

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