



*International Confederation  
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul  
Council General International  
16th President General*

## ***Opening Speech - President General***

***To all participants in this Assembly,  
Welcome, everyone,  
Good afternoon everyone,  
Let's praise our Lord Jesus Christ!***

For the first time in the history of the Council General International, we are holding the Annual Assembly with two new characteristics: it will be online, and on two dates (October 4th and December 13th, 2020). We had to do it this way, as it would not be advisable to hold the event in person because of the health crisis that has impacted the world this year. Many borders are closed and travels by plane have been significantly reduced. So, here we are online, but present. **Thank you very much for your presence!**

Why have we decided to divide the assembly in two moments, October and December? This way we could approve all Resolutions with enough time, considering that, depending on the time zones, holding an 8-hour event would be a difficult task. Therefore, in this first moment, we will discuss more urgent and priority issues, as required by French law, and in December we will present the reports from different departments of the Council General, and from the work committees.

First, I want to thank God for all the goals achieved in this term of the Council General International, of which I have the pleasure of being the 16th President-General. May God bless our families who support us in this mission as Vincentian leaders. I am especially grateful to the entire International Board, the members of the International Structure, the employees of the General Headquarters, and the countries that comprise our Confederation for their prayers and support. **Together, we've had wonderful achievements.**

*Dear confreres and sisters,*

Despite the pandemic, the Council General hasn't stopped its work for a single minute. We have published on our website all administrative actions that have kept the Confederation in operation during this sad period in the history of humanity. We've granted a term extension to several Superior Councils and sent more than 300,000 euros to help 70 countries. I've always been greatly concerned about the physical and mental health of our confreres and sisters, in addition to the harmful effects of this crisis for those in need (particularly children, youth and elderly), and for those without jobs and without hope. **Covid-19 is a terrible disease, but we will overcome it, with God's grace.**

Covid-19 affected not only the planet, but also our beloved Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, causing the death of some people we assisted, of confreres and sisters, of several members of the Vincentian Family and members of the Church, in addition to relatives and friends. We have all suffered a lot; the pain is huge. But hope is in the soul of all Vincentians, as written in the Rule, in our logo and flag: "Serving in hope." Countries have been extremely generous in responding to the Council General's call for donations, so charity has grown across borders. As I said, during the pandemic, **the Council General did not stop working for a single minute!**

Life has changed with the pandemic, and SSVP will also have to adapt to the new times, without ever forgetting its principles. Our regulations, procedures, campaigns and our way of acting have been impacted, forcing us to think of future improvements. Every crisis is an **opportunity for rebirth, renewal and continuous improvement.**

*Dear confreres and sisters,*

Now you will have an opportunity to approve the most important reports from 2019: “Moral Report of the President-General,” “Report of the Treasurer General,” and “Operational Report of the Secretary General.” We will also have the “Child Protection Protocol” and a cooperation agreement with the “International Training Centre.” I hope these documents and all resolutions that we are going to propose today can be approved for the good of our Confederation. The report of the President General describes all actions that have been performed by the Council General. It was sent to the Vatican and other ecclesiastical authorities, the United Nations, and the Vincentian Family.

We have good expectations for 2021, as we will celebrate the “International Year of Jules Devaux,” have the inauguration of our new general headquarters in Paris in April, and our annual assembly in Madrid, Spain, on a date to be informed. We believe that, in Madrid, we will be able to meet in person and hug each other as we, Vincentians, are people of personal contact with everyone around us. We understand the reasons of health authorities, but charity needs everyone’s affection and attention. I will resume international travels to compensate for this lost year, doing twice as much during this period I still have as the President General. Also, with God’s grace, 2021 will be an important year for the canonization of Blessed Ozanam, as the Postulation in Rome will speed up the process with the Vatican.

Finally, I leave a message here to all dear national presidents and other members of the Council General: **never lose hope**. Always remember the seven founding fathers of our Society, who never became discouraged and always gave their best to charity. Our young people have been called to assume important roles of Vincentian youth, filling our Conferences with joy, enthusiasm and compassion.

In these four years, **God has been very kind to us**, giving us strength to overcome the adversities that have affected our way. God protected and strengthened us (Philippians 4:13), allowing all our projects to continue (Proverbs 19, 21). I am the happiest President General in the world, and I count on all Superior Councils to continue on this journey. It is a great privilege, an honour and a huge responsibility to act as the President-General of all confreres and sisters of the world.

I will not always please everyone, but be aware I always do my best for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paulo. I dedicate the results of this term to exemplary confrere Amin Abouhamad de Tarrazi, the 12th President General, who died in January 2019 and who has been a model for Vincentians.

Now we are going to present a video of a beautiful song that represents very well the current moment we experience. May Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam bless and protect us. Amen! Good assembly to everyone!



**Renato Lima de Oliveira**  
**16th President General of SSVP**  
**Paris, October 4th, 2020**  
**Liturgical feast of St. Francis of Assisi**