



Handbook for Conferences

International General Council
Society of St Vincent de Paul

*Our thanks to Joanna Waller,
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Preface

The International Council General (CGI), working closely with the Superior Council of Spain, is delighted to launch this “Brief guide to the everyday work of the Conference”.

It is intended to make a useful contribution to help improve the work of charity undertaken by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul on behalf of people in need.

The guide is a straightforward introduction to everything a Conference needs to know in order to operate effectively, always trying to perfect its Vincentian work. As well-informed Vincentians, we will be even better prepared to carry out our Society of St. Vincent de Paul activities, both social and spiritual.

Preface

In this guide you will find prayers, spiritual readings, information about the history and structure of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and above all, basic guidance about the daily work of the Conferences based on the Rule and Vincentian tradition.

The recommendations and orientations contained in this Handbook, based on the International Rule and the Vincentian tradition, do not revoke the particularities foreseen in the Rules of the Superior or National Councils, previously approved by the Council General International.

This is a magnificent work by Council General's International team for Formation, and I thank them warmly for their efforts in producing it.

Renato Lima de Oliveira
16th President General



Introduction

We offer this brief Guide for Conferences, produced by the International Council General's Vice-President's group for Formation, in order to give every Vincentian the opportunity to know more about the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and serve within it, to fulfil its two fundamental purposes: the holiness of its members and service of our brothers and sisters in need, knowing that we all have our needs, and so it is this second network of charity, which we weave among ourselves, of which our President General wishes to remind us. So this book gives us an outline of what a Conference should be, how it should proceed and develop.

Also contained within this guide are prayers which are said at every Conference meeting, all around the world, wherever the Society is established. There are

also further prayers which every follower of Saint Vincent and Frédéric Ozanam should have to hand any time of the day, a list of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul feastdays and the Briefs and Indulgences granted by the Popes. These create spiritual bonds among all Vincentians, helping us to feel as though we are members of one great Conference which covers the whole world.

This Vice-president's group, inspired by the instruction to "be the last of all and the servant of all", the motto of the CGI, humbly wishes to offer this brief Guide, in the hope it will contribute to the formation and training of all Vincentian members.

Marisa Téllez

International Vice-President for training



1

History and background

The Conference is the basic cell of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Frédéric Ozanam and some of his friends, students at the Sorbonne in Paris, used to take part in discussion groups they called Conferences of History, supported by Emmanuel Bailly. These young Catholics were challenged by a follower of Saint-Simon, who said that their faith was more about books than about works. At this, Ozanam and Le Taillandier decided “Let us go to the poor!”. In order to do this, they formed a group which they called the “Conference of Charity”, echoing the original name by which they were known.

It was Bailly, at that time editor of “La Tribune Catholique”, who allowed them to use the newspaper’s

offices for their meeting, and agreed, as an older man, to lead the new group. The first Conference was formed on 23rd April 1833. Shortly afterwards, at Bailly's invitation, Sister Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity, guided the young Frédéric Ozanam and his companions to serve Christ among the poor inhabitants of the Mouffetard district of Paris.

A year later, in 1834, they dedicated themselves to Saint Vincent de Paul and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In 1835, the first Rule was produced, and in 1839 the International Council General was formed.

Today, Conferences all over the world uphold the legacy of this first group, and form groups who meet for prayer and action, creating bonds of friendship among members, and reaching out in charity to those most in need.



2

The Conference, a community of prayer and action

Conferences are true communities of faith and love, of prayer and action. Members of the Society traditionally form communities called Conferences, which meet regularly and often.

It is essential that there is a spiritual and family bond among the members, who seek personal holiness and together carry out their common mission, to follow Christ through service in hope to the poor, sick, lonely and marginalised, helping them in spiritual, moral, social and practical ways. The identifying mark of this help is the calling for personal contact with Christ in those in need.



3

Structure of the Conference

Council General recommends that the minimum number of members to form a conference is seven, in honour of our seven co-founders.

- President
- Vice-president and Deputy
- Treasurer and Deputy
- Secretary and Deputy
- Spiritual Adviser
- Other members (any number)

President

The President represents the Conference. She or he has the task of ensuring it fulfils its role and functions, and chairs the meetings. The President reconciles the various opinions of the members. The president appoints the Vice-president, Treasurer and Secretary, together forming the Board.

She or he has the casting vote if necessary, although decisions should always be taken by consensus whenever possible.

The President is elected by the Conference members in a secret ballot. It is recommended that, on the date of the election, the nominee for President should be under 70, and the term of office should not exceed 6 years.

Vice-president

Collaborates with the President, and takes over the role in the latter's absence. Calls and organises elections.

There can be a Deputy Vice-president

Treasurer

Responsible for handling the Conferences assets, keeping the accounts and preparing the budget. Will send the title of the Conference income from "collections and other activities" to the Council to which it belongs.

There can be a Deputy Treasurer.

Secretary

Responsible for keeping the minutes and holding the records, and keeping up to date the list of members and auxiliaries, and sending out documentation for meetings.

The Secretary must submit an annual report of the conference activities to the Council to which it belongs.

There can be a Deputy Secretary.

Spiritual Adviser

Chosen by the President, it is appropriate for this responsibility to be given to a priest or religious sister or brother, although it can also be given to a suitably-trained member.

All other members

These provide the Conference with their views and contributions, example, expertise and resources.

Prayer and reflection

In accordance with the Society's tradition, the Conference meeting starts and ends with prayer. A spiritual reading or reflection, which may lead to a brief discussion, is given by one of the members present, particularly by the Spiritual Adviser if he or she is there.



4

The Conference, a human group

The Conference is a group of people who meet to live out their Christian commitment in community. This family meeting is the place where the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's charism lives, as members of a great Conference which extends around the world. Conferences are grouped into various levels of Councils.

- **Founding a Conference:** a "Foundation Document" is signed by all the officers, giving their roles, the name of the conference, the date and place.

Points to consider to ensure a group works well:

1. **Punctuality:** Being on time for Conference meetings, where all members participate fully.

2. **Prayer:** Developing a personal and community life of prayer and reflection, shared with our fellow members. Reflecting on the Vincentian experience with those who suffer, which helps to enrich the group.
3. **Harmony:** It is recommended that decisions and agreements are made harmoniously, by consensus. This is a way to set aside one's own views in favour of the community decision.
4. **Frequency:** The meeting must be weekly, or at the very least fortnightly. It is recommended that meetings last no longer than one hour.
5. **Growth:** New members will be brought into the conference, according to the rules established, and they will be given the appropriate training.
6. **Aggregation:** When the Conference has been operating for at least one year, application is made through the Superior Council for it to be registered with the International General Council, and when it is aggregated, it will be fully recognised as belonging to the Society. The process of uniting a Conference with this

universal family of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is known as Aggregation.

The letter of Aggregation, signed by the President General and Secretary General, as well as by the President of the Superior Council, is the visible link of the unity of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and witness to membership of a great, universal Conference.

7. **Bonding:** Being in contact with the Council responsible for the one to which the Conference belongs in order to deepen spiritual life and encourage service and work on behalf of those in need.

8. **Family relationship:** Communication is a vital factor in the group. This close contact must be maintained as much as possible, always in an atmosphere of close friendship and trust among members of the Conference, and protecting confidentiality of cases.



5

Name of the Conference

Once the group is formed, it needs a name. The International Council General recommends it should not be that of Saint Vincent or of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam or the other founders, so that conferences do not all have the same name.

It is advisable to use the name of a saint or a person who is in the process of being beatified or canonised, or else a Marian title. The Conference name is often that of the parish in which it meets.



6

Number of members. Those who can be members

Council General recommends that the minimum number of members to form a conference is seven. When the Conference has more than fifteen/twenty members, it would be good to consider forming two groups, thus two Conferences.

The Conference can have various categories of member. Full members, known as active members, are those who choose to live, as a group, a life of prayer and action in the Conference through attendance at meetings and through personal contact with those in need. The Internal Statutes of National Councils may establish other categories of members who share the life of the Conferences and service to the poor.

The employees of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for its special works cannot be elected or appointed for any position of responsible service within the Society. However, they may be members and serve within a Conference, as long as it is not the one which manages the work in which they are employed.

The same applies to volunteers who are not active members, although they help with some activities on behalf of the families assisted.



7

Meeting place/location. Frequency of meetings

The Conference can meet in a parish room, or else in another appropriate place, such as a school, community centre, house, etc. When the Conference is responsible for a special work or social service, the Conference should meet in the premises where this work is located.

Weekly meetings are ideal. Sometimes this frequency is not possible for various reasons, however. It would therefore be best for the meeting to be at least fortnightly, since any longer gap is counter-productive for the work of the members and their care for people in need. Let us follow the slogan of our Sisters, the Daughters of Charity: “Charity impels us”.



8

Twining

Conferences help each other, within countries and around the world, in one of the most highly appreciated of the works of the Society and its members. The direct link between two Conferences, involving shared prayer, family relations and material resources, is known as twining or twinnage (UK term). This activity helps to promote peace in the world, understanding and cultural exchange between peoples.



9

Conference meeting procedure

A Conference meeting proceeds with the following steps:

1. **Opening prayers.**

We place ourselves humbly before God, invoking the Holy Spirit with the intercession of our patrons, Saint Vincent de Paul and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

2. **Spiritual Reflection.**

A text will then be read for our spiritual reflection. It may be a passage from the Gospel or other readings, which invite us to reflect and consider our vocation more deeply.

The Conference is free to choose the text. Many Conferences use readings from the Rule

of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and its commentaries, Vincentian books or passages from letters from the International President General.

3. Agenda, minutes and financial report.

The Secretary will have sent us an agenda for the meeting, and will read the minutes of the previous meeting, to help continuity from one meeting to the next. The Treasurer will then report on the Conference finances.

4. Work and service of the Conference.

We continue with our reports of our visits, management of the special work, or cases which the Conference is looking after, whatever the work is being done.

5. Collection.

Each member, according to their resources, contributes to a secret collection, to meet the needs stated.

6. Report.

The president reports on upcoming events, and news from the Council.

7. Closing prayers.

At the end of the meeting, we once more turn to the Lord in prayer, and to our holy patron and the blessed Virgin.

8. The visit.

This is the core work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the meeting in body and spirit with the person in need, following the example of the first founders who began by visiting needy families in the Paris tenements.

These days, it may sometimes be difficult to make these visits, especially in certain countries, but nonetheless what matters to Vincentians is the personal contact with those in need, whether in their homes or elsewhere.



10

Prayer and spiritual growth in the Conferences

10.1 - VINCENTIAN PRAYER

Prayer is the source of all good.

Our present situation is:

Thanks to prayer.

The fruits of our work are:

Thanks to prayer.

The escape from sin is:

Thanks to prayer.

The tree of charity is:

Thanks to prayer.

Our salvation is:

Thanks to prayer.

(Saint Vincent de Paul)

So:

That we owe everything to God through prayer.
So as God denies nothing to prayer,
neither does he grant anything without prayer.



10.2 - PRAYERS SUITABLE FOR THE CONFERENCE MEETING

■ Opening prayers

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful,
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and new life will be created,
and the whole face of the earth will be renewed.

Oh God who has enlightened the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us by the same Spirit to be truly wise and ever enjoy his holy consolation. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

Sacred Heart of Jesus,
have mercy on us.

Mary, conceived without sin,
pray for us.

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam,
pray for us.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

■ Closing prayers

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Mary, conceived without sin,
pray for us who have recourse to thee.

Saint Joseph,
pray for us.

Saint Vincent de Paul,
pray for us.

Saint Louise de Marillac,
pray for us.

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam,
pray for us.

Blessed Sister Rosalie Rendu,
pray for us.

Lord Jesus Christ, who raised up Saint Vincent de Paul as an apostle of your most ardent charity, fire us with the same call to Love, and through love of you, may we share our goods with those most in need and consecrate ourselves to their service. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever, Amen.

■ **For our benefactors**

O most loving Jesus, you promised a hundredfold and a heavenly kingdom to those who do works of mercy in your name. Grant we beseech you, your grace to the benefactors of the poor. Amen.

■ **For our deceased brothers and sisters**

Welcome into the light of your presence those who have died, and grant that one day our friends and relatives, those we visit and our Vincentian brothers

and sisters may all come together before you in the perfection of love. Amen.

We shelter under your protection, Holy Mother of God: despise not our petitions in our needs, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and Blessed Virgin. Amen.



10.3 - OTHER CONFERENCE PRAYERS

■ Before a visit

Lord, bless us to do good in your name, since on our own we can do nothing. Put prudence on our lips, truth and thoughtfulness in our words, sensitivity in our conversations, patience in our work; may your grace enlighten our brothers and sisters in need when we speak to them of you. Bless our efforts since we know that, although we can do nothing without You, nothing is impossible if you help us. Amen.

■ Before visiting the sick

Lord Jesus, when visiting the sick, I make this prayer to you: Live in me, Lord Jesus, make me open to your presence and teach me to be the smile of your goodness, because in the end it is You they want

to find through me. Inspire me constantly with the right attitude, the words I have to say and the silences I must keep. Then I will be for them a path that leads to You. Amen.

■ **To be witnesses to the love of Christ**

Grant us wisdom and strength to persevere when we are disheartened and discouraged. Joined in prayer and action, we are visible signs of Christ and witnesses of love. Amen

■ **For those in need**

Lord, care for your children, especially your favourites, those in need, who suffer injustice, hunger and cold, lack of love and understanding and who are rejected.

Pour out your mercy and grace on them, and help us to serve them in humility, charity and justice. Amen

■ **For members of the Vincentian Family**

We pray for all who work for the poor, especially all members of the Vincentian family. Bless us Lord, so that following Christ we may be faithful to his commandment of evangelisation and bear witness to his love. Amen.

■ For the Pope

For our Holy Father the Pope, so that, enlightened and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, with wisdom and care he leads the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.



10.4 - PRAYERS AND LITURGIES FOR THE LIFE OF THE VINCENTIAN COMMUNITY

a) Renewal of the Vincentian promise

(Members will each year renew their Vincentian Promise of service to each other and to those in need, which deepens the spiritual dimension of their vocation..)

Reader:

Lord we are in your presence to renew with joy our commitment to serve in hope as active members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. For this, we promise:

To spread Christ's commandment of love among all women and men, practising works of mercy.

We promise (all)

To take love and charity as our fundamental rule of

life, and through this come to holiness, with prayer and the sacraments, following the example of Saint Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam.

We promise (all)

To visit the suffering Christ in the sick and in the forgotten members of our society, listening to them with respect, helping them to recover their dignity, responding to their needs, both spiritual and material.

we promise (all)

To help the Society flourish and grow, in order to extend the network of charity and social justice to embrace the whole world.

we promise (all)

To take part in the Society's activities and attend Conference meetings as communities of faith and love.

we promise (all)

Mary Immaculate, we consecrate ourselves to you and ask you to grant us faith and strength to remain faithful to our promise of service which we have renewed here for our Vincentian vocation.

Amen. (*all*)

**b) Blessing on office holders
(Conference / Council)**

Presider:

Let the Vincentians come forward who are asking for the blessing of God and the Church to undertake the duties for which they have been appointed in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in (country).

Those appointed are called by name and office, and each one replies:

I am here.

And they approach the priest, standing around in a semi-circle.

Then the presider continues: Father, these brothers and sisters here today with the Vincentian community gathered around the altar, have been chosen to exercise the ministry of charity as President and members of the Board (of the Conference/Council) of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in (country) and ask for the blessing of the Church so that they can better fulfil their mission, with God's grace.

Priest:

Do you know that the requirements have been fulfilled?

Presider:

As the election has been carried out in accordance with our Rule, in the judgement of their fellow members who elected them, the requirements are met, and I confirm that.

Priest:

Let us bless the Lord.

All:

Thanks be to God.

The priest continues:

Brothers and sisters: Practising the ministry of charity is a commitment for all followers of Jesus Christ, who have to find the Lord present in all those who suffer injustice or are in need of any kind of help. Christ himself gives us an example of the depth and generosity of love, and asks us to “be compassionate as your Heavenly Father is compassionate” (Lk 6, 36). Vincentians make this commitment their own in a special way, following the spirit of Saint Vincent

de Paul and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam.

As you take up the role of President of the Board (*of the Conference/Council*), accept this commitment as a prime responsibility: Serving your brothers and sisters in the Society, inspiring them in their vocation, coordinating the work of the Conference(s) and the members, encouraging a family spirit of the Gospel among them and bringing together the efforts of all to ensure that those in need are evangelised by love. We are going to ask God to bless you, so that you receive his grace to assist you in your work. First of all, the President will make his/her promise, and afterwards all of you who form the Board will renew your commitment also.

President:

I, (*name*), promise before God to fulfil the responsibility of President faithfully for the (*Conference/District or Central Council*), for (*give the period of service*), in accordance with the rules of the Church and with our Rule. May God help me with his grace, which I ask through the intercession of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam.

Priest:

To all those whom the President has called to form the Board, I ask you: Do you undertake to fulfil your responsibilities in a spirit of service and love for your brothers and sisters?

Each one:

Yes, I promise.

Priest:

Are you ready to observe the Rule of the Society and to live in accordance with its spirit?

Each one:

Yes, I am ready.

Priest:

God who began his good work in you will bring it to completion.

Then all stand up, and the priest says the prayer of blessing.

Let us pray.

Oh God, who pours the gift of charity into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit, bless these brothers

and sisters of ours who, through the (*Conference/Council*) practising the works of charity and justice, help to make your Church present to the world as a sacrament of unity and salvation.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(All return to their places in the congregation)

c) Grace before meals

Lord, thank you for the food which we receive from you today. Help us to be worthy of your goodness, and remember everyday our brothers and sisters in need. Through Christ our Lord. Amen



10.5 - PRAYER FOR THE CANONISATION OF BLESSED FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM

With the hope of a miracle

Lord, you made Blessed Frédéric Ozanam a witness of the Gospel, astounded at the mystery of the Church.

You inspired his struggle against poverty and injustice, and gave him tireless generosity in the

service of all who suffer.

In his family, he was an exceptional son, brother, husband and father.

In the world, his burning passion for truth illuminated his thinking his teaching and his writings.

Within our Society, which he founded as a universal network of charity, he instilled the spirit of love, courage and humility, inherited from Saint Vincent de Paul.

His short life was marked throughout by his prophetic vision of society, together with his many virtues.

For these many reasons, we thank you Lord, and if it is your will, grant the grace of a miracle, through the intercession of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam.

May the Church proclaim his sanctity, so providential for the present times!

We ask you this through Our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

10.6 - LITURGICAL PRAYER FOR BLESSED FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM

O Lord, you raised up Blessed Frederic, as someone blazing with the spirit of your love, so that he could encourage a group of lay people in helping the poor. Help us, following his example, to carry out your commandments of love, and become like yeast in the mixture of the human race.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.



10.7 - PRAYER TO SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

Universal patron of works of charity.

Glorious St. Vincent, patron of all charitable associations and brother of those who suffer and all those who came to you during your lifetime asking for your help, look on our distress and come to our assistance. Obtain from Our Lord help for the poor, relief for the infirm, consolation for the afflicted,

protection for the abandoned, a spirit of generosity for the rich, grace of conversion for sinners, zeal for priests, peace for the Church, tranquillity and order for all nations, and salvation for them all. May all feel your compassion, intercession and help, in the sorrows of this life and may we be united in the life to come, where there is no sorrow, tears or pain, but only joy, gladness, and everlasting happiness. Amen

(Prayer approved by Pope Leo XIII, with an indulgence granted)



10.8 - PRAYERS TO THE VIRGIN MARY

a) Miraculous Medal Prayer

Sweet Mary, I come to your mother's heart today to seek light, consolation and peace. I place myself in your power. I trust in your goodness and wisdom.

O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you.

In your hands I place my prayers, present them to Jesus, with your Mother's love and queenly power.

O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you.

I rely on your help, I trust in your power, I give myself to your will. I am sure of your mercy, Mother of God. Mother mine, pray for me.

O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you.



b) Angelus

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,
And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.
Hail Mary.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
Be it done unto me according to Your Word.
Hail Mary.

And the Word was made flesh.
And dwelt among us.
Hail Mary.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech You, O Lord,
Your Grace into our hearts;
that as we have known the incarnation of Christ,
your Son by the message of an angel,
so by His passion and cross
we may be brought to the glory of His Resurrection.
Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.



c) Regina Coeli

(It is recited in place of the Angelus during the Easter Season, from after the Easter Vigil until mid-day on the Saturday before Pentecost (Whit Saturday))

Queen of Heaven, rejoice. Alleluia.
For He, whom thou wast worthy to bear. Alleluia.

Has risen as He said. Alleluia.
Pray for us to God. Alleluia.

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary. Alleluia.
R. Because the Lord is truly risen, Alleluia.

Let us pray:

Oh God, Who by the Resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, hast been pleased to give joy to the whole world, grant we beseech Thee, that through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, His Mother, we may attain the joys of eternal life. Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.



10.9 - FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

a) **Signs of Vincentian identity**

A Vincentian is a man or woman:

- Of faith. Of committed faith.
- Of private and communal prayer.
- Committed to evangelisation in his/her environment, through word and action.
- Who loves and aspires to social justice. Who fights for a fairer world, the Kingdom of God.
- Who lives out action for others, leaving space for God to speak.

- Who lives in harmony with the times and with the Christian message.
- Respectful of all, regardless of ideology and belief, race and barrier.
- Always ready to help and to understand. “Do not judge, be available”.
- Sensitive to the suffering of the neighbour, whatever that suffering might be, and whoever is suffering.
- Practising the virtue of austerity, in all aspects of life, as a consequence of his or her Vincentian identity, and from a sense of justice to those who have nothing.
- Optimistic, joyful, loving and open. Holding out a hand, ever ready with a smile.
- Believing in continual, integral personal development, working for it as a source of enrichment and promoting human and Christian growth.

b) A Vincentian plan for life

On rising in the morning, we thank God for the joy of the new day he has given us. And we ask his help to fill this day with good works.

In the morning or afternoon, if possible, attend Mass. Or else pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. At midday, pray the Angelus.

At lunch or dinner, remember those who suffer physical hunger and the Christian undertaking of community.

At night, review the day. For the day just passed:

- For what I failed to do
- For what I have not done
- For the things that have been useful

“Gracious Lord. Pardon for my mistakes. Help me to improve.”

■ A Vincentian's brief guide

- 1. Regularly attend the Conference meeting**, unless prevented by a serious reason, since our faith is lived within the community

of the Conference.

2. **If we miss a meeting**, we feel it as a personal loss and impoverishment. And we always tell the Conference if we have to be absent.
3. **Making direct**, personal contact with people in need. Visit at home, in hospital, in prison, in the street, and so on.
4. **Treat the person in need as if he/she is Jesus himself**. So make contact with the person, without hurrying, with affection and maximum respect. Respect their freedom and dignity, without demands, being concerned for their material and spiritual needs. Example and prayer are essential for this.
5. **Try to find out about the person you are helping, with respect and sensitivity**. About their human and spiritual situation, to help improve it, having recourse to prayer and fraternity above all.
6. **Infuse trust in God and his mercy in those we help**, so that they can always glimpse the image

of God the Father and his loving Providence, despite all their difficulties.

7. **Offer prayers and Masses for the deceased**, both those in need, or for our fellow members, inviting friends and families to attend, as well as Vincentians.
8. **Treat material goods merely as a tool, to be shared** with those we help, and not as the only means to relieve their needs.
9. **Try to ensure that the person in need collaborates in improving their own situation**, in accordance with their human dignity.
10. **Establish the subject of social justice as a duty, together with that of charity.** And share goods of all kinds: economic, time, feelings, human values.
11. **Remain open to every kind of poverty or need.** Be imaginative.
12. **Do not seek personal prominence.** The

Vincentian must cultivate the virtue of humility, and exercise it in the Conference and in his/her relations with those in need.

13. Undertake spiritual and human formation in order to provide better service to our brothers and sisters.

14. Endeavour to be well-prepared in order to fulfil our mission and meet the needs of the poor. In other words, try to:

- Know about social and welfare legislation and protection of rights.
- Be familiar with issues relating to: immigration, multi-culturalism, religion, ecumenism, when these affect us.
- Know what resources are available, to guide and help people in need as the basis for their overall as well as Christian development.
- Be ready to assist them, if they are unable to handle paperwork. And when necessary, act as a mediator and peace-maker.

- Try to transform the initial relationship of sympathy into one of family feeling.
- Evangelize.

15. Treat the person in need as the brother or sister who they are. Material and spiritual help and dignity are what we have to find for them.

It is not always possible for a Vincentian working alone to provide all those services, so for this we have the Conference.

It is difficult to remember and apply all these suggestions every time someone needs them, but with the help of the Lord, with patience, collaboration and common sacrifice, together we will succeed in serving those in need, according to the teachings of Saint Vincent and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, for the greater glory of the Lord.



11

Feast days of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

“Vincentian feasts” refer to the liturgical celebrations considered particularly important for Vincentians.

- First Sunday of Advent
- First Sunday of Lent

Official feast days

- 23 April
Birthday of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and anniversary of the foundation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul
- 4 July
Liturgical feast of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. International Day of Vincentian Youth

- 9 September

Liturgical feast day of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

- 27 September

Liturgical feast of Saint Vincent de Paul

- 8 December

The Immaculate Conception, because Mary is our Patron.

Other feast days

- 7 February

Liturgical feast of Blessed Rosalie Rendu.



12

Liturgical celebration of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

Introduction

Entrance antiphon, Matt. 25, 34, 36. 40

“Come, blessed of my Father, says the Lord, I was sick and you visited me. I promise you that whenever you did this to one of my little ones, you did it to me”.

Entrance song

Greeting from Celebrant

Prayer

O Lord, you raised up Blessed Frederic, as someone blazing with the spirit of your love, so that he could encourage a group of lay people in helping the poor. Help us, following his example, to carry out your

commandments of love, and become like yeast in the mixture of the human race.

We make this prayer through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING

A reading from the Book of Sirach de Ben Sirá 3, 29-30; 4, 1-10

The mind of the intelligent man will ponder a parable, and an attentive ear is the wise man's desire. Water extinguishes a blazing fire: so almsgiving atones for sin.

Whoever requites favors gives thought to the future; at the moment of his falling he will find support.

My son, deprive not the poor of his living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting. Do not grieve the one who is hungry, nor anger a man in want. Do not add to the troubles of an angry mind, nor delay your gift to a beggar. Do not reject an afflicted suppliant, nor turn your face away from the poor. Do not avert your eye from the needy, nor give a man occasion to curse you; for if in bitterness of soul he calls down a curse upon you, his Creator will hear his prayer.

Make yourself beloved in the congregation; bow

your head low to a great man. Incline your ear to the poor, and answer him peaceably and gently. Deliver him who is wronged from the hand of the wrongdoer; and do not be fainthearted in judging a case. Be like a father to orphans, and like a father to orphans, and like a husband to their mother; you will then be like a son of the Most High, and he will love you more than does a mother.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 71) (72)

The response is: R/ Listen, Lord, to the poor one who cries to you.

Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.

May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.
May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor.

For he will deliver the needy who cry out,
the afflicted who have no one to help.
He will take pity on the weak and the needy
and save the needy from death.

May his name endure forever;
may it continue as long as the sun.
Then all nations will be blessed through him,
and they will call him blessed

SECOND READING

A reading from the First Letter of St John
1 John, Chapter 4, 7-16

My dear friends, let us love one another, since love is from God and everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever fails to love does not know God, because God is love. This is the revelation of God's love for us, that God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him. Love consists in this: it is not we who loved God, but God loved us and sent his Son to expiate our sins.

My dear friends, if God loved us so much, we too should love one another. No one has ever seen God, but as long as we love one another God remains in us

and his love comes to its perfection in us. This is the proof that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us a share in his Spirit. We ourselves have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as Saviour of the world. Anyone who acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. We have recognised for ourselves, and put our faith in, the love God has for us.

God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.

Alleluia (John 13, 34)

I give you a new commandment, says the Lord, love one another as I have loved you.

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Saint Luke, 10, 25-37

And now a lawyer stood up and, to test him, asked, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?'

He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.'

Jesus said to him, 'You have answered right, do this and life is yours.' But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

In answer Jesus said, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead.'

Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by

on the other side.

In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him.

Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, “Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have.”

Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits’ hands?’

He replied, ‘The one who showed pity towards him.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go, and do the same yourself.’

HOMILY

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

As we celebrate the feast of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, remembering his love for the poor, let us make our prayers in trust, to God our merciful Father.

We beseech his intercession by remembering some of Blessed Frédéric's own witness:

1.- "I have known the concerns of this century, but I have been convinced all my life that there is no rest for the spirit and the heart but in the faith of the Church and under its authority" (Blessed Frédéric Ozanam).

Let us remember before God, our holy Mother church, the truth, our Pope, bishops and all pastors, so that they can help young people and adults disturbed by mental anxiety to find the signposts they need to guide their life and help them grow.

We pray to the Lord. Lord hear us.

2.- "Charity must never look back, but always ahead so that the good works we do always seem small,

and we are always ready to relieve present and future suffering which is never-ending” (Blessed Frédéric Ozanam).

Let us remember before God people who find any self-development difficult, through exploitation in other countries, people who are damaged by discord, racial hatred and war, and help them to achieve an effective fight against poverty and live in peace.

We pray to the Lord. Lord hear us.

3.- “The question which is agitating the world today is not one of people, nor of political structures, it is a social one. It is a struggle between those who have nothing and those who have too much. It is a violent clash of opulence and poverty which is shaking the ground under our feet. Our duty as Christians is to throw ourselves between these two camps in order to accomplish by love what justice alone cannot do” (Blessed Frédéric Ozanam).

Let us remember before God those with political and social responsibilities so that they strive for a society in which the dispossessed, the vulnerable and marginalised can be restored to human dignity.

We pray to the Lord. Lord hear us.

4.- “The basis of true friendship is charity, and charity cannot exist in the hearts of many without radiating into the hearts of others” (Blessed Frédéric Ozanam).

Let us remember before God the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, their families and friends, and all those belonging to the Vincentian Family so that the love of God reigns in our homes and that we can spread it widely as messengers of joy and hope.

We pray to the Lord. Lord hear us.

Let us pray:

God our Father, who poured out your gifts on Blessed Frédéric Ozanam so that he became a faithful witness to your justice and love for our times, through his prayers and merits, let us live with the same spirit in the service of our brothers and sisters. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OFFERTORY

Prayer over the gifts

Lord, we have brought our gifts to your altar as a token of our worship as we honour Blessed Frédéric. Accept our offerings and free us from the false enticements of this world, so that finding our treasure in you, we may bring your love to the poor for whom you showed preferential love.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

PREFACE

It is right and just, our duty and our salvation to give you thanks, always and everywhere, our Lord and Father, all powerful and eternal God. You renew the strength of your church through faith, as your saints give witnesses, showing us your love. Today, we thank you for the example of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam our brother who encourages us and through his prayers helps us to work so that your Kingdom may come. So with all the angels and saints we proclaim your glory, saying/singing ...

COMMUNION ANTIPHON Jn. 13, 35

“They will know you are my disciples by your love for one another, says the Lord.”

Prayer after communion

Nourished by these holy mysteries, we ask you Lord to help us to follow the example of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, who never wearied in his devotion to you, and served your people constantly with loving care. May we one day share in your glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

BLESSING

Final song

LITANY IN HONOUR OF BLESSED FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM

Frédéric Ozanam,

Defender of the faith

pray for us

Promoter of hope

pray for us

Apostle of Charity

pray for us

Exemplary husband and father,

pray for us

Advocate of human dignity

pray for us

Pioneer of the Church's social teaching

pray for us

Servant of truth

pray for us

Model for Catholic teachers and professors
pray for us

Example for writers and journalists
pray for us

Mediator for Catholic lawyers
pray for us

Lay missionary
pray for us

Faithful son of the Church
pray for us

Activist in charity organisations
pray for us

Model of brave commitment
pray for us

Outstanding figure of Catholic socialism
pray for us

Example of holiness
pray for us

Founder of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
pray for us

Disciple of Saint Vincent de Paul
pray for us

Our intercessor before the throne of God
pray for us

SHORT FACTS ABOUT THE FOUNDERS

FREDERIC OZANAM (1813-1853)

Principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He married Amélie Soulacroix, and they had one daughter.

Outstanding thinker and extremely influential man of action, he was considered an apostle of charity and of reconciliation. He wrote several literary works and was a Doctor of Law and of Literature, a professor at the Sorbonne, altogether an extraordinary member of the Catholic laity in the 19th century.

One of the proponents of Catholic Social Teaching, which Pope Leo XIII would develop some years later in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Ozanam asserted principles such as the right to form associations; he defended the principle of subsidiarity, proposed a living wage and clearly expressed his concern for “social issues” among other ideas. For Ozanam, justice and charity went hand in hand, excepting only that the latter knew no limits.

His goal in life was his search for personal holiness, through helping the most vulnerable and needy, for he understood that this was the only way to come into direct contact with God. As a layman, Frédéric is the most faithful interpreter of the teachings of Saint Vincent de Paul.

He died on September 8th, 1853, the day of the Nativity of Mary, whom he took as his mother and guide.

He was beatified by Saint Pope John Paul II, on 22 August 1997 in Paris, France, on the occasion of the 12th World Day of Youth. The Gospel reading chosen was the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is depicted on the wall of the crypt where Frédéric Ozanam's remains rest. The Pope marked him out as shining example in life for young Christians.

EMMANUEL J. BAILLY DE SURCY (1791-1861)

With Ozanam, Bailly is the person who contributed most to the foundation of the first Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul. At 42 years old, he became its first President. Later when the conferences spread, he chaired the first Council, and finally acted as

President General of the Society until 1844.

Bailly was married and had six children. In addition to his occupations of journalist, publisher and printer, he kept a rooming house for young students, where he fostered their meetings, so that he could exercise a discreet influence over them. Ozanam experienced this influence, and felt a truly filial affection and sincere gratitude for his mentor. Bailly encouraged the young people to turn to the poor person in the search for true usefulness, believing that only there could they meet Jesus Christ, motivating them to see charity as a means to develop their Christian and moral life. His experience helped him see and show others the path for the Society to follow.

FRANÇOIS LALLIER (1813-1887)

He was one of Ozanam's dearest friends, and godfather to his daughter Marie. He was married, and had three children, who all died young.

Lallier was a member of the Conference of History which met in the Rue de l'Estrapade, with the support of Emmanuel Bailly, and he was one

of those taking an active part in the discussions of this group of young people. Ozanam, Lamache and he formed a kind of committee which prepared the contributions then used to respond to the attacks of the rationalists and the Saint-Simonians against Christ and his Church.

A lawyer by profession, he edited the Rule of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in 1835, with great care and seriousness.

As a founder member of the Archaeological Society of the town of Sens, he received the title of Knight of St Gregory the Great from Pope Pius IX. He was also awarded the Croix de la Légion d'Honneur in 1873 for his years of service in civil society.

PAUL LAMACHE (1810-1892)

He was the longest-lived of the founders, meeting Ozanam in 1832 and with him forming the Conference of History. He studied law, married and had five children.

He wrote articles, mainly for the Revue

Européenne, where Bailly had influence. He was notable for being a great anti-slavery campaigner. He joined Montalembert's movement for freedom of education and always retained his concern for the apostolate.

He was appointed Rector of the Académie Départementale in Côtes-du-Nord, Brittany. Napoleon III recognised his services by awarding him the Croix de la Légion d'Honneur.

AUGUSTE LE TAILLANDIER (1801-1886)

Originally from Rouen (Normandy), he gained a bachelor's degree in Law. He married and had five children. After befriending Ozanam, he joined the Conference of History but did not take part in the passionate discussions enjoyed by his companions, since he did not find them useful, and he encouraged Frédéric to go out to those in need. He took an active part in the work of the first Conference, including other charitable activities such as religious education for apprentices, or visits to prisons.

Auguste Le Taillandier, a member and very active president, showered with honours by his fellow

citizens, was vice-chairman of the Orphanages Commission, and was also decorated as a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. To the end of his life, he remained bound to the Conferences.

JULES DEVAUX (1811-1880)

He studied medicine. He married and had one child. He established relations with Ozanam and his friends in the Conference of History, and was invited to join in their plans. Devaux was delighted to share in their common aim, to defend the faith and put that into practice by doing good for people in need.

He was treasurer of the first Conference of Charity, and his hat was often used for taking the collection. He was one of the delegation who went to Rue de l'Épée-de-Bois to interview Sr Rosalie, renowned at that time for her works of charity. He was also the first treasurer of the Council General.

He left Paris in 1839 after defending and submitting his thesis for Doctor of Medicine. He lived for some time in Germany. He is buried at Colombières

FÉLIX CLAVÉ (1811-1853)

Félix belonged to the utopian-socialist movement, and followed the teachings of the Count of Saint-Simon, but he was won over by the arguments of Ozanam and other Catholics who joined the Conference of History. He married but had no children.

He founded a Conference in his own district of Paris, the first one on the other side of the Seine. He went to Algiers in 1838, and with the help of the local bishop tried to found another Conference, which was later established in 1846. He lived in Mexico.

He was accused of taking part in a criminal offence, but he was acquitted by the court in Paris.

A man of letters, he wrote poetry as well as some books and articles. He wrote for the journal *Los Dos Mundos*, pieces about the Mexican question, the island of Cuba and free trade, and other articles on Pius IX, Father Ventura and also on Abbé Bautain.

BLESSED SISTER ROSALIE RENDU (1786-1856)

Jeanne-Marie Rendu was born in Confort, France. In 1802, she entered the mother house of the Daughters of Charity in Paris, taking the name of Sister Rosalie. She was appointed to visit the Mouffetard district of Paris, a very poor area, with a bad reputation. She became a tireless worker on behalf of those in need.

Sister Rosalie is the great counsellor to all those who are friends of the poor. When Frédéric Ozanam and his friends formed their Conference of Charity in 1833, they approached Sister Rosalie to ask for her support. It was she who taught these young people “to see Our Lord in the poor, and the marks of his crown of thorns in their foreheads”.

Sister Rosalie started an association for young workers, a nursery for the children of female workers, a home for the elderly and a charitable organization.

This was a place where the highest civil and church authorities could come to ask her advice, and where she also welcomed vagrants who were seeking help.

In 1852, Napoleon III awarded her the Grand Croix de la Legion d'Honneur.

On the day of her funeral, a vast crowd followed the coffin to Montparnasse cemetery. Her tomb is inscribed with the words "To Sister Rosalie from her friends, both rich and poor".

APPENDICE 2

Papal Briefs and indulgences

TYPE OF DOCUMENT	DATE	POPE	TYPE OF INDULGENCE	
<p>Brief</p> <p>In this Brief, the Holy See grants recognition to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.</p>	<p>10 January 1845</p>	<p>Gregory XVI</p>	<p>Plenary</p>	
<p>Brief</p>	<p>12 August 1845</p>	<p>Gregory XVI</p>	<p>Plenary</p>	

Appendice 2 - Papal Briefs and indulgences

<p style="text-align: center;">INDULGENCES GRANTED After going to confession (Reconciliation) and receiving Holy Communion.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DOCUMENT SIGNED BY</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To members of Councils (Council General and all other Councils) and active members - To those admitted to the Society as aspiring members - On the occasion of the 4 annual feast days (Immaculate Conception, 1st Sunday of Lent, the Monday after the second Sunday after Easter, which is the anniversary of the translation of the relics of Saint Vincent, the feast day of Saint Vincent de Paul) - To members and benefactors who are at the point of death - To members who visit those in need - These indulgences apply to Councils and Conferences aggregated by the Council General. They also apply to the souls in Purgatory 	<p>Secretary of State, Cardinal Lambruschini</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Benefactors of the Society - Donors - Fund-raisers 	<p>Secretary of State, Cardinal Lambruschini</p>

Appendice 2 - Papal Briefs and indulgences

TYPE OF DOCUMENT	DATE	POPE	TYPE OF INDULGENCE	
Brief	18 March 1853	Pius IX	Plenary	
Brief	18 March 1854	Pius IX	Plenary	
Brief	13 September 1859	Pius IX	Plenary y partial	
Brief	6 December 1873	Pius IX	Plenary	

Appendice 2 - Papal Briefs and indulgences

<p style="text-align: center;">INDULGENCES GRANTED After going to confession (Reconciliation) and receiving Holy Communion.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DOCUMENT SIGNED BY</p>
<p>- Extension of indulgences on the feast of the Immaculate Conception and the feast of Saint Vincent to each and every member of the Society</p>	<p>Signed on behalf of cardinal Lambruschini, by J-B Brancalleoni Castellani, substitute</p>
<p>- To Conferences whose members take part in a spiritual retreat together</p>	<p>Secretary of State, cardinal Lambruschini</p>
<p>- Indulgences obtained for the feast of the Immaculate Conception are extended until the following Sunday - Indulgences for the 1st Monday of Lent transferred to the 1st Sunday of Lent - For families assisted by the Society - Members of the Society or the families whom they visit benefit from partial indulgences for reciting the prayer of the Society and other prayers</p>	<p>Signed by Monsignor Profili, on behalf of cardinal Paraccioni Clavelli</p>
<p>- To relatives of the members of the Society</p>	<p>Cardinal Asquini, Prefect of the Congregation for indulgences</p>

Appendice 2 - Papal Briefs and indulgences

TYPE OF DOCUMENT	DATE	POPE	TYPE OF INDULGENCE	
Rescript	30 January 1888	Leo XIII	Plenary	
Rescript	15 March 1890	Leo XIII	Plenary	
Rescript	21 May 1892	Leo XIII	Partial	
Rescript	17 July 1913	Pius X	Plenary	

Appendice 2 - Papal Briefs and indulgences

<p style="text-align: center;">INDULGENCES GRANTED After going to confession (Reconciliation) and receiving Holy Communion.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DOCUMENT SIGNED BY</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To members on the occasion of the 4 feast days: indulgences may be granted for 8 days - To spouses of the members of the Society - To sick members, who may gain indulgences by carrying out works of charity recommended by their confessor 	<p>Cardinal Aloisi-Masella, prefect</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To sponsors united with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul 	<p>Cardinal Cristofori, prefect</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To members attending annual or extraordinary general assemblies, on condition that they say a prayer for the Holy Father 	<p>Signed by Cardinal Serafini</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To active or honorary members who attend general assemblies, regional or diocesan meetings 17 July 1913 - Plenary indulgence may also be gained on the feast day of Saint Joseph 	<p>Cardinal Rampolla, secretary of State</p>

SSVP HYMN. The Light

*A light from the sky,
in Paris one day,
enlightened Vincentian
hearts
as friends were to pray.*

*That night from the stars
God showed them the way,
how to share their Chris-
tian life
their love, hope and faith.*

*Seven friends, one family,
and then was born our
Society.
We`ll help our friend
the poor `till the end,
in total humility
love and charity.*

*A light in their eyes
I see every day.*

*A light sent by Jesus-Christ
to show me the way.*

*So bright is that light,
Oh lord when I pray,
I will share my Christian
life
my live, hope and faith.*

*In a true community
of laymen with simplicity,*

*We`ll help our friend
the poor `till the end,
in total humility,
(repeat)
love and charity.*



2022



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