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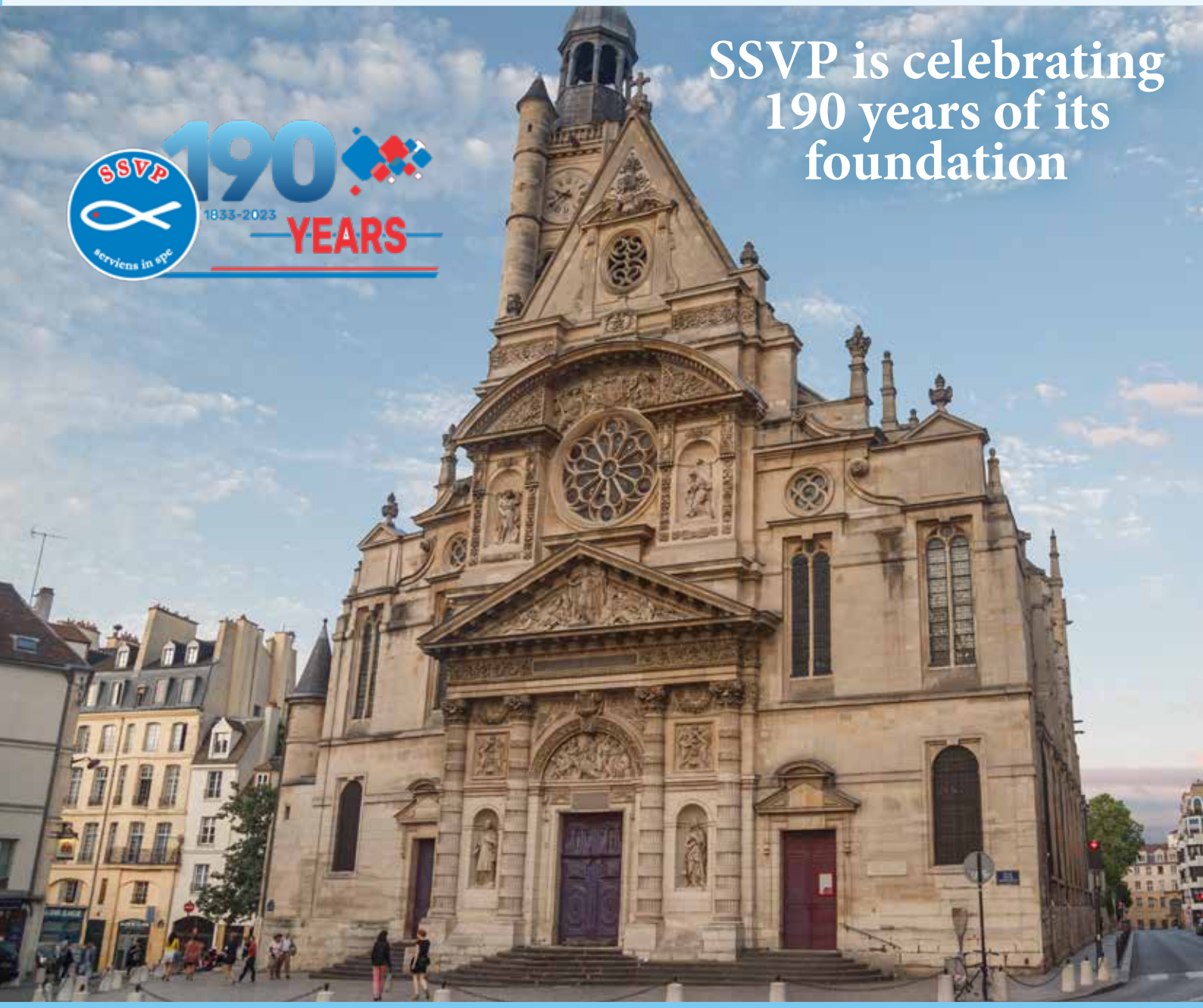
OZANAM NETWORK

International General Council - Society of St. Vincent de Paul



SSVP is celebrating 190 years of its foundation

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Editorial

Brother **Renato Lima de Oliveira-**
16th International President General

Rome awaits us!

We are just a few weeks away from the most significant event of our Confederation: the General Assembly, which takes place every six years. This year, the event will take place in Rome, the beautiful Italian capital, between June 13 and 17. The chosen venue is the Hotel Casa Tra Noi, which is located near the Vatican. All discussions will be broadcasted live in five languages on Ozanam TV.

It will be a glorious week! I have no doubt that the Assembly will be magnificent. The highlight, of course, will be the election of the 17th President General International (June 13), but we will also discuss proposed changes to our Statutes (June 14) with eight amendments that will modernize the bylaws and expand good governance initiatives.

We will take advantage of the presence of all the national presidents to offer them a special formation (June 16 and 17), with lectures on administrative management of the Superior Councils. We will also have a working meeting with the Territorial Vice-presidents (June 12) and a specific meeting for Portuguese-speaking countries (June 18).

As we approach the Assembly, the end of the current mandate is getting closer. I remember as if it was yesterday, that June 5th, 2016, when I was elected President General, the first Brazilian to assume such an honorable ministry in the structure of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

In those seven years, I tried to do my best, dedicating my time entirely to the Council General International. With the support of a fantastic Board and of the staff in Paris, we were able to advance in several items of our strategic planning, such as formation, youth, communication, canonization, Ombudsman, seven founders, institutional relations, Vincentian Family, United Nations, new countries and, above all, the new international headquarters.

These were seven years of hard work and challenges, but also of many conquests and achievements! May Rome come and, with it, a new leadership to give continuity to the projects underway at the General Council. May the Divine Holy Spirit enlighten us all.

Brother **Renato Lima de Oliveira**
16th International President General

2023 -Year dedicated to Jules Gossin, 2nd President General

brothers. He graduated in Law (1809) from the University of Paris and worked as a lawyer and magistrate throughout his professional life,

He married Anne-Henriette Leblanc de Closmussey (1796-1857) in 1813. The couple had eight children. In 1826, Gossin founded the «St. Francis Regis Charitable Society,» to assist in the weddings of those most in need. He worked closely with Sister Rosalie Rendu from whom he received the foundations of the Vincentian charism.

Gossin was one of the first members of the Society. After the breakup of the first Conference into four, he became President of the Saint Sulpice Conference. Gossin was elected 2nd President General on April 23, 1844, succeeding brother Emmanuel-Joseph Bailly de Surcy.

Gossin was a very humble person, of extreme good humor, a great jurist, an advocate of home visiting, concerned about Vincentian leadership and the importance of young people in the SSVP. Jules Gossin's body is buried in the Picpus cemetery (Paris) and will be visited by the CGI Board members in September 2023..

The project of the Thematic Years is entering a new phase, on the great personages of the SSVP

«The Year of Jules Gossin is very special as we are also celebrating the 190th anniversary of the foundation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the 210th anniversary of the birth of Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam», commented President Lima de Oliveira.

Auguste-Sébastien-Jules Gossin was born in the city of Bar-le-Duc (France), 230 km from Paris. He had four

He worked closely with Sister Rosalie Rendu from whom he received the foundations of the Vincentian charism

Council General Launches the International Literary Contest – Historic Vincentian Characters – Jules Gossin

On February 8th, the International Literary Contest "Vincentian Historical Characters – Jules Gossin" is officially opened, similar to the previous years' contest (2016-2022), which focused on the seven founders of the SSVP.

The procedures, with the rules and the appendix for this competition, are available on the CGI website (www.ssvpglobal.org). The written entries must be no more than 20 pages long. Cash prizes will be awarded for the three best entries (1000, 750 and 500 euros, respectively). The SSVP Conferences to which the winners belong will also receive a cash award to the same value, to be spent on behalf of the families and individuals they help, or on Vincentian works.

Entries may be submitted in one of five languages: Portuguese, Spanish, English, Italian and French. The closing date for sending in dissertations / studies will be 8th July 2023. The organizing committee will announce the final result on 9 September 2023, and the prizes will be sent to the winners immediately afterwards.

Council General hopes that many Vincentians, especially young people, will take part in the competition,

So come on! Let's ask Superior Councils to help CGI spread news of this competition to the Conferences and Councils in every country, as well as to Vincentian schools and colleges, and to Catholic universities.

Click here to read the rules and annex of the literary contest.

For more information: cgi.formation@ssvpglobal.org

Information on candidates for the 17th President General

To: PRESIDENTS OF SUPERIOR (NATIONAL), ASSIMILATED AND ASSOCIATED COUNCILS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In accordance with the procedures set out in the Statutes of the International Confederation of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the Electoral Board has reviewed the candidates nominated and has deemed that the following three members have satisfied the requirements cited in the Statutes and are eligible to stand for election for the 17th President General:

Eduardo MARQUES ALMEIDA (Brazil)

Juan Manuel BUERGO GÓMEZ (Spain)

María del Carmen GUZMÁN SOTO (Guatemala)

I am sending to all members eligible to vote and publishing simultaneously on the Society's website, the following summary information which each of the candidates has submitted:

VINCENTIAN «Curriculum vitae»

- Eduardo MARQUES ALMEIDA
- Juan Manuel BUERGO GÓMEZ
- María del Carmen GUZMÁN SOTO

ACTION PROGRAMME (if elected)

- Eduardo MARQUES ALMEIDA
- Juan Manuel BUERGO GÓMEZ
- María del Carmen GUZMÁN SOTO

VIDEO PRESENTATION OF CV AND ACTION PROGRAMME

To listen to the video in four languages, Spanish, French, Portuguese and English, use the following link:

- Eduardo Marques Almeida
- Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez
- María del Carmen Guzmán Soto

On 13th March, the Electoral Board will send you the ballot papers as well as detailed instructions on the conduct of the election which will take place in the afternoon of the first day of the General Assembly in Rome (13 June 2023). You will find information on the procedures to be followed in the document “Electoral Rules “which was circulated to you in August 2022.

May we draw your attention to the statutory prohibition on canvassing for or against any candidate from the date of this announcement.

Please continue to encourage your Conferences and Councils to pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance for the electors in choosing the best candidate to lead the Society.

Yours Fraternally.

T. Joseph PANDIAN
Chairman Electoral Board
International Vice President General

(PDF) – Notification of the candidates for the election of the XVII President General of the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

SSVP is celebrating 190 years of its foundation

On April 23, a Holy Mass was offered and broadcast live on Ozanam TV for the whole world

On Sunday, April 23rd, at 3:30 pm (Paris time), a Holy Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated for the **190th anniversary of the foundation** of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the **210th anniversary of the birth** of Blessed Antoine-Frederic Ozanam.

The celebration was organized by the Council General International and the National Council of France. The whole event was broadcasted live on FACEBOOK and **Ozanam TV** channels in four languages: French, English, Spanish and Portuguese.

The mass took place in Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, where the first Conference was founded. Today, two Conferences are active in this parish, one of which is composed of youth.

For the Vincentians who were present at the event, before mass, there was a presentation on “Ozanam’s Political Thought” by **Charles Vaugirard**, author of the book of the same title (2021). The writer has degrees in Law and History, and his favorite subjects are Christian democracy and the social doctrine of the Church. There was also a quick pilgrimage to the Church of St. Medard.

After the celebration, there was a visit to **Saint Rosalie Paris** (where the CGI recently inaugurated a plaque and a bust alluding to Ozanam). A visit was also made to the headquarters of the **Council General** to view the “Ozanam Historic Space” and a Vincentian meeting.

These are the OzanmTV links:

- English: https://www.facebook.com/ozanamtven
- French: https://www.facebook.com/ozanamtvfr
- Spanish: https://www.facebook.com/ozanamtves
- Portuguese: https://www.facebook.com/ozanamtv
- President General International – SPEECH – Mass – PARIS – APRIL 23rd, 2023

Come and visit the "Ozanam Historic Space"!

When our dear brothers and sisters visit the international headquarters of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul located on de la Glacière Street (District 13) in Paris (France), they can tour the "Ozanam Historic Space".

The Space is located on the ground floor of the headquarters and is open to visitors from Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm with a lunch break.

The Historic Space is a true museum. It is 120 square meters of pure history and culture. Visitors can find objects, documents and utensils of the Ozanam Family, as well as precious information about the other founders. There are two exhibits in the hallway beside the museum, a permanent one about the canonization of Ozanam (timeline) and a second temporary and dynamic exhibit about the seven years of the current mandate of the Council General. The museum is the only access to the chapel of the international headquarters.

The works of art made by Charles Soulacroix (1825-1899), Ozanam's brother-in-law, are one of the highlights of this Historic Space. The busts of Ozanam and Amélia as well as a painting portraying Ozanam at the age of 28 years old (considered by experts to be the closest drawing to Ozanam's face) are in the museum. Visitors can also view personal objects of the Ozanam couple, such as suitcases, porcelain, furniture, clothing, books and locks of hair of the main founder.

Its walls are covered with paintings that belonged to the Ozanam Family and other drawings and illustrations of the period, many of them executed by Louis Janmot (1814-1892), a famous French painter and poet. There is a large map of Europe showing all the cities and countries that were fortunate enough to host Ozanam and his family. Another highlight is a display case with his Law graduation diploma, clothing, shoes, hats, documents, and bird feathers that Ozanam used to write with (there was no pen as we know it today).

On one of the walls visitors can contemplate panels on the biographies of the other six founders of the SSVP (Bailly de Surcy, Lallier, Lamarche, Devaux, Clavé and Le Taillandier), portraying details of each one of them: date and place of birth, places where they lived, profession, marital status and family, relevant actions, date and place of death, photographs, among other historical data.

The Communication Department of the Council General, with the technological support of the Ozanam TV team, is developing a pilot project of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), to prepare the "Ozanam Historic Space" for virtual visits and meetings in the "Metaverse". This project will be available to the public via the internet at the installation of the new President General in September.

Another innovation is that several "QR CODEs" will be installed next to each painting, object, statue, or panel, explaining in four languages the meaning of each items. This "QR CODE" system allows a person, without a tour guide, to visit the entire site with a cellular phone and be fully informed.

"We thank the National Council of France, the descendants of the Ozanam Family and the National Council of the United States of America for making possible the installation of the Ozanam Historic Space in the premises of the SSVP international headquarters. Thank you very much from the bottom of my heart," said Renato Lima, 16th President General.

CGI prepares a booklet for the rejuvenation of our Conferences

The document will be launched at the 2023 Assembly in Rome

How many times have we heard phrases like these: “My Conference is getting old” or “Young people are not participating in our Conferences as in the past”. To face this problem, which is a reality in many nations, the Council General is preparing a **PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR THE REJUVENATION OF VINCENTIAN CONFERENCES**. The booklet will be launched at the General Assembly to be held in Rome in June 2023.

The idea of the Guide was announced by the 16th President General International, brother Renato Lima, during his opening speech at the CGI Annual Meeting in 2022 in Paris. At that time, the President said: “Our Conferences, Councils and Special Works have been greatly affected by the changes in humanity in recent years. This requires us to be very creative and innovative to overcome all these challenges. We cannot allow our Conferences to close their doors because many people depend on us. Each Conference that closes its activities is a little bit of the SSVP that dies”.

Due to the improvement of social indicators, the life expectancy of the human being has increased; however, at the same time, we notice a decrease of the participation of young people in the Church and in the institutions formed by volunteers: this combination has been causing a great aging (without renewal) within the Vincentian Conferences and religious congregations.

A committee of experts, under the leadership of brother Júlio César Marques de Lima (ITVP America 3), has initiated internal discussions about this subject and, the writing of a draft document is at an advanced stage. “I accepted the challenging invitation from brother Renato

to coordinate the work of the committee, and I believe that the booklet will be very useful for the whole Society. The focus of the document is to propose creative solutions to this issue. We want to help Conference presidents to face this reality", clarified Júlio César.

The **PRACTICAL GUIDE** should present the following chapters: 1) Diagnosis of the problem: lack of renewal in the Conferences in many parts of the world; 2) The situation of the Church and the SSVP today; 3) The issue of young people and civil society today (challenges, characteristics, dilemmas); 4) Diagnosis of the issue of aging of humanity and increasing life expectancy; 5) How other entities (religious or not) have faced such a situation; 6) Recommendations to National Councils; 7) Ideas, suggestions and tips to attract youth and young adults.

"The aging of Vincentian Conferences is a worldwide reality, making it a complex and broad issue. The Council General, as a promoter of growth within our Society, needs to offer its contribution on this matter. There are countries that since the 1980s have not presented new requests for aggregation of Conferences, which worry us a lot. At the same time, many Conference presidents, although well-meaning, do not have the technical, managerial, academic or pastoral skills to recruit new members. We need to come up with immediate and effective solutions to address this problem. How to make our Conferences more attractive will be the central objective of this guide," considered brother Renato Lima, 16th President General.

Contributions and ideas on the subject can be sent to the Committee by e-mail: juliocml@uol.com.br.

Le Taillandier: seventh SSVP co-founder receives honors

The visit took place on February 26, in the city of Rouen

The grave of the co-founder Pierre-Auguste Le Taillandier, located in Rouen, France (150 km from Paris) was visited by CGI members on February 26, 2023. The Council General's delegation was made up of International Board members who had met in Paris the day before. The Vincentians of Rouen and the region welcomed the delegation with open arms. Upon arrival in the city, everyone went to the "Monumental Cemetery" where the remains of Le Taillandier are buried. In front of his tomb, prayers were said and everyone was moved to tears. A bouquet of flowers was placed on the tombstone.

Afterwards, the Rouen Vincentians took the international leaders to Saint Godard's Parish, where Le Taillandier founded the Saint Godard Conference in 1841. At this place, there is a stained-glass window with Saint Vincent de Paul as the main figure and two small paintings, one with Ozanam and the other companions (1833) and the other with Le Taillandier at the foundation of the local SSVP Conference in 1841.

Saint Godard's Parish

After the visit to the parish, the Vincentians walked through the historical streets of Rouen and visited the city's Cathedral and places related to Saint Joan of Arc who was burned alive in 1431. On the spot where her tragic death occurred, there is a beautiful parish that bears her name. In the church, the SSVP members had a strong moment of oblation and meditation.

Besides these activities, the members of the Council General visited the Vincentian headquarters, which is located in the Parish of Saint John Baptist de la Salle. There, a welcome cocktail, lunch and afternoon tea were served, followed by a meeting when everyone was able to ask questions to the President General and the other international representatives on the most diverse subjects, such as youth, formation and communication.

"The Council General International thanks, from the bottom of its heart, the French Vincentians of the Rouen (Normandy) region for the general organization and for the affection with which we were received. We have no words to thank them," said the Secretary General, sister Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet.

The project

In 2016, when he took office as 16th President General International, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira launched a project to refresh the memory of the seven founders of the SSVP, composed of several initiatives, including the literary contest, the movies festival, the special song, the logos and festive stamps, in addition to the visit to their graves.

Thus, year by year, the cemeteries were visited: Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam (Paris) in 2016; Bailly de Surcy (Berteaucourt-lès-Thennes) in 2017; François Lallier (Sens) in 2018; Paul Lamarche (Grenoble) in 2019; Félix Clavé (Pau) in 2021; and Jules Devaux (Colombières) in 2022. This year, it is Le Taillandier's turn. The next Vincentian figure to be visited will be the 2nd President General, brother Jules Gossin, on September 10, 2023, whose remains rest in Paris in the Picpus Cemetery.

Le Taillandier

Pierre-Auguste Le Taillandier (1811-1886) was a native of Rouen (France). His family moved to Paris where he was able to complete his studies in Law. He joined Ozanam in the "Conferences of History". In 1833, he was very active in founding the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. He gave religious instructions to prisoners and also to apprentices during home visits. Initially, Le Taillandier was against the first dismemberment of the "Conference of Charity", because he thought that entity would end. He is remembered for crying during the debate on the issue in December 1835. In 1837, he went to Le Mans, then returned to his hometown of Rouen.

Pierre-Auguste was the first of the young founders to receive the sacrament of marriage. He married Marie Baudry on August 7, 1838. The couple had four children, three girls and one boy. In Rouen, he was director of an insurance company and a hospital. There he founded the St. Godard Conference in 1841 and became its president. He was very dear to the confreres of the Conference. As a sign of gratitude to him, the members of his Conference gave him a so special gift: a stained-glass window with his portrait, which is in the Cathedral. He passed away at the age of 75.

Visit of the President General to Monaco

Visits were made in Monaco to people in need and homeless people living in the area municipalities.

The Principality of Monaco is a country located in southern France, a tourist region called the “French Riviera”, and has a population of just over 36,000 inhabitants. It is the second smallest country in the world after the Vatican. Catholicism is the religion of about 80% of its population. Monaco is known for being a cosmopolitan country where almost 120 nationalities live together.

Its international reputation is linked to its quality of life, its economic dynamism, its casino, and its prestigious Formula 1 Grand Prix. But the Monegasque population has always been sensitive to the difficulties and misfortunes of others. Their generosity and solidarity are expressed through their large network of associations and the government’s policy of international cooperation.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, founded in 1876, is the oldest association in Monaco. It is composed of a Superior Council which supervises three Conferences (Saint Nicholas, Immaculate Conception, and Saint Charles), with a total of 70 members. Its activities are varied, both at the international and local level, especially in neighboring municipalities.

Brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General, and sister Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet, Secretary General, made an official visit to Monaco from February 28 to March 1, 2023, after attending a Council General’s Board meeting in Paris. On the first day, they were welcomed by the National President, sister Stéphanie Tomatis, at the national headquarters in Grimaldi Street.

At this headquarters, SSVP activities take place each week in the service of the most disadvantaged people, in particular migrants, refugees, the elderly and homeless: solidarity grocery, recreational and educational activities, support for the elderly, kermesses, etc. To help in its task, the Superior Council has a part-time employee who provides administrative support. After being received at the headquarters, the Council General delegation visited a second-hand clothing warehouse (thrift store) run by the SSVP, which serves 20 people on Tuesday afternoons.

The members of the St. Charles Conference (founded in 1927) welcomed the international leaders in the parish hall, in the presence of the two oblate priests of St. Francis de Sales: Father Alcide Kragbe and Father Marc Gheradi. A cocktail was served, followed by lunch. Brother Renato presented President Stephanie with some items (books, flags, key chains and a relic of Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam) which were greatly appreciated by all. After a quick visit to the parish, a meeting was held with the priests.

In the early evening, Renato and Marie-Françoise accompanied members of the Saint Nicholas Conference (founded in 2010) in a very pleasant activity: a "Vincentian night round" on the outskirts of Monaco, using a van bearing our Society's logo. Food and basic necessities, which members prepare in the morning, were distributed to about 40 friends in need and homeless people living in the region of Menton and Roquebrune, two area French municipalities. In addition to the Vincentians, three university students came to help and were impressed by the charity service provided by the SSVP.

The following day (March 1), the Archbishop of Monaco, Monsignor David Dominique-Marie, in office since January 2020, received the representatives of the Council General at the Diocesan House for a fraternal audience, during which the President General thanked the Holy Church for its support to the SSVP and asked that new Conferences be created in the country. For his part, Monsignor David expressed his wish to see the creation of new conferences, particularly involving young people, so that the SSVP could be renewed in Monaco.

After the audience, a Holy Mass was celebrated by the Archbishop in the presence of several local SSVP leaders, including the heads of the Superior Council and active members of the three existing conferences. Father Joseph Di Leo and Deacon Marc Duwelz, SSVP spiritual advisors in Monaco, also attended the celebration. After mass, a welcome cocktail was served.

This celebration was followed by a brief presentation in the auditorium on the achievements of the Council General during the past seven years. The event was conducted in French through sister Marie-Françoise. The closing speech was given by brother Renato Lima who thanked the Vincentians of Monaco for their generosity to the SSVP International and other countries through donations and twinning.

National President, sister Stephanie Tomatis, thanked the international leaders on behalf of all SSVP members in Monaco for their visit and expressed her gratitude for their participation in the various local activities. This is the first time in the history of SSVP Monaco, since 1876, that a President General has visited this beautiful country. “We hope that you have enjoyed our Principality, Vincentian life in Monaco and the activities carried out throughout the year. Thank you very much for your visit and for the many gifts offered to the SSVP, especially the relic of Ozanam, a priceless souvenir,” commented the National President.

“We are truly happy that we were able to meet the SSVP members from Monaco. It is a very active Superior Council that can be followed on social media, and we saw a great potential for growth. Of the eight parishes in the country, we are present in three of them, so there is still room to grow, especially with young people. We have the support of the Holy Church and an excellent relationship with the government authorities,” said President Lima de Oliveira.

Nepal: SSVP grows and gets stronger

First visit of a President General to Nepal

From January 12 to 14, 2023, the 16th International President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira, made an institutional visit to Nepal, the first visit by a President General in the history of this country. All the activities took place in the city of Kathmandu (the capital).

During the missionary trip, the President General was accompanied by the Vice-president general Asia 1, brother Johnson Varghese, and the Territorial Delegate for Special Projects, brother Gabriel Mondal.

The SSVP was founded in Nepal in 2010, and currently has 15 Conferences, three in the capital and 12 in the interior. In 2015, in close collaboration with Caritas, the SSVP set up a project to build 300 houses for the victims of an earthquake that claimed the lives of 8,000 peoples. As Catholics are a tiny minority, it is really difficult to bring the Society everywhere. However, the number of needy people reaches 80% of the population, therefore, the presence of the SSVP is very necessary.

Nepal does not yet have a Superior Council, which is in the process of constitution and legal registration. Faced with this reality, the General Council has set up a "National Coordination Committee" chaired by brother Arnold D'Souza, who is assisted by four other members. "Nepal is a developing country with enormous social and economic challenges. But it is a land of very warm, caring and hospitable people. I know that SSVP will grow and flourish in the coming years, and we will soon see the fruits of this expansion. You can count on us," President Lima de Oliveira assured the Nepalese Vincentians.

Below is a brief summary of the Vincentian activities that took place:

• Vincentian Gathering at St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish

About 80 Vincentians from all over the country gathered at St. Ignatius Loyola Parish to welcome the President General and the delegation of the General Council. Between speeches there were cultural presentations with folkloric music. President Lima de Oliveira told the story of his life and his Vincentian trajectory, pointing out that the most important thing is to be a member of a Conference and to visit those most in need. Renato Lima presented the SSVP Nepal with a photo of the seven founders, the official flag, the activity report and a relic of Blessed Ozanam. The event ended with delicious refreshments.

• Visit to Archbishop Paul Simick

Archbishop Paul Simick, Archbishop of Kathmandu, was very pleased with the visit by of the delegates

and during the meeting he contacted by telephone a few priests belonging to branches of the Vincentian Family present in Nepal, so that the SSVP could better known. One of the big problems in Nepal is the sending of resources that the government controls; perhaps, through the Vincentian Family, it will be possible to expand the solidarity actions of the SSVP worldwide. The President General humbly asked the Archbishop to help the SSVP in the foundation of new conferences in the parishes, recommending our work to the priests.

• Working meeting with the National Coordination Committee

The President General encouraged those responsible for Nepal to take the SSVP to all the provinces of the country, offering formation and training materials developed by the General Council. Arnold D'Souza received from the hands of the President General the insignia of the General Council and the Ozanam silver medal. Much was said about the basic guidelines for the functioning of the conferences, the importance of offering assistance to children and the elderly, social and educational projects as well as the financing of the conferences.

• Visit to the Conference of Our Lady of the Assumption

Conference members hosted the Council General delegation. It was a very productive meeting where experiences and ideas were shared. Father Richard, Spiritual advisor, is very enthusiastic about the Vincentian work in the fields of spirituality and charity. "Time is a very precious thing. So thank you for your presence," the priest told the visitors. The Conference currently has 12 members and 15 families are assisted. At the end, a delicious tea was served to the visitors.

NEPAL

- **Location: Asia**
- **Capital: Kathmandu**
- **Independence from Great Britain: 1923**
- **Population: 30 million**
- **Catholics: less than 1%.**
- **Major religions: Hinduism (81%) and Buddhism (9%)**
- **Number of conferences: 15**
- **Number of active members: 300**
- **Foundation of the SSVP: 2010**
- **Economy: tourism, commerce and agriculture**

Visit the Council General's office in Brasilia

The location supports the executive and administrative activities of the President General

The office of the Council General International located in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, was installed in 2016, when brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General, was elected. Brasília is the city where President Renato works and lives with his family (wife Andréa and children Gustavo and Bianca).

The existence of this office is very important for the quality and efficiency of the President's administrative activities. The office works in a rented 40 square meters room in the "Asa Norte" neighborhood, central area of the capital, and has an antechamber, living room, pantry and bathroom. The building has a garage for cars. All the office expenses are very low.

There is all the appropriate infrastructure in place to perform the executive activities of the President General, such as furniture, computer, printer, and internet. To assist him in his Vincentian service, he has an intern to help him: sister Maria de Fátima, who organizes the schedule of events and flight reservations, as well as other services such as mail and notarial services.

The office also serves as a collection place for the numerous gifts that the President General receives when he visits the countries, and as soon as his mandate is over, these souvenirs will be taken to the international headquarters in Paris, and there they will stay in the "Presidential Showcase", together with gifts and

souvenirs that have been given to other Presidents General, previous to Renato.

The office houses a small library with current and some historical books, among them publications by Clavé and Ozanam. There are also several relics of saints. The President General uses the office to record videos and participate in online events. The titles of citizenship bestowed upon him during his term of office, as well as medals and commendations, are also on display there.

Vincentians who would like to visit the Council General's office in Brasilia can contact sisyer Maria de Fátima at cgi.brasilia@gmail.com nd schedule a time to visit. The President General will be truly happy to receive everyone, and of course, serve a delicious Brazilian coffee to visitors.

A first mass celebrated at the international headquarters

The event took place in Paris after the Board meeting

February 25, 2023 will go down in the history of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul because on this date a first mass was celebrated in the chapel of the headquarters of the Council General International, located at de la Glacière Street in Paris.

The celebration was presided over by Father Andrés Motto, CM, International Spiritual Advisor of the Society. The liturgical ceremony took place right after a meeting of the General Council's Board.

The mass was celebrated in several languages, namely French, English and Spanish, in a collaborative way, i.e. the readings were done by the Board members. The liturgy of the mass was that of Sunday (February 26): 1st reading (Genesis 2, 7-9; 3, 1-7), Psalm 50; 2nd Reading (St. Paul's letter to the Romans 5, 12.17-19) and the Gospel (St. Matthew 4, 1-11), about the temptations of Christ.

The celebrant asked everyone: "What are the temptations that afflict us today in the work of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul?" During the meditation of the "Credo", Father Motto invited those present to pray in a different way, asking everyone: "What do I believe in?" Each member spoke about the beliefs they have, about love for God and love for neighbor.

The chapel at the SSVP international headquarters is a very cozy place holding up to 20 people. It is located inside the Ozanam Historical Space, on the first floor of the building.

Meeting of the International Board

On February 25, the International Board met in Paris, France. The activities took place at the international headquarters of the SSVP, duly prepared for the event, with an auditorium and translation booths.

On the agenda, the following items were highlighted: timetable for the elections of the 17th President General; General Assembly in Rome; 3rd Lusofona Summit; canonization of Ozanam; Mass for the 190th anniversary of the SSVP; World Youth Day (Lisbon 2023); launching of manuals, books; and SSVP Plus.

The following day, February 26, the members of the Council General traveled to the city of Rouen, 150 km from Paris where they visited the places where Pierre-Auguste Le Taillandier (one of the seven founders of the SSVP) lived, worked and is buried.

Since his election as the 16th International President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira has already promoted about thirty meetings of the Board. The Statutes of the General Council establish a minimum of three meetings per year, but in this mandate the average has been one meeting every quarter.

“The members of our Board are very qualified people, from different continents and with complementary visions to each other. This helps me a lot in the decision-making process. Having them with me is an opportunity for great growth, especially in the areas of leadership and management. I would like to publicly acknowledge two of their main virtues: dedication and loyalty,” said President Lima de Oliveira.

Singapore: the lions of charity

Visit of the President General to Singapore - January 2023

After visiting India and Nepal, the 16th President General International, Renato Lima de Oliveira, had the joy of making a missionary trip to Singapore, an island located south of Malaysia. He was accompanied in all the activities by brother Thomas Tan (International Territorial Vice President - Asia 2) and brother James Tay (Territorial Delegate for Formation - Asia 2).

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was founded in Singapore in 1883, with the establishment of a Conference at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, on the initiative of Pauline priests. Currently, the SSVP has 30 Conferences, 5 Zone Councils and a National Council, with a total of 800 members. The Conferences and social projects serve 3,000 people.

The presidential visit took place between January 17 and 20 and included a very busy agenda prepared with great affection by the National Council. The first activity was a meeting of the Council with President Renato Lima, during which Lucy Cher (National President) made an presentation about the functioning of the conferences, social works and the Council itself. At headquarters, three employees support the national strategic planning. One of the most interesting projects is called “SSVP 2.0”, focused on educational programs and new forms of poverty, such as loneliness and mental illness.

The second activity was a visit to the Vincentian store (“SSVP Shop”), located on Geylang Street, which sells

quality products at affordable prices and second-hand items intended for low-income families. In addition to visiting the store and talking to customers and volunteers, President Lima de Oliveira participated in a meeting in which three presentations were made: one about the store, one about the "Milk and Diapers Program" and the third about the community services provided by SSVP. All these initiatives reinforce the work of the conferences and multiply the forms of charity. Afterwards, a visit was made to the warehouse where donations are received and sorted.

Another highlight was the audience with Cardinal William Goh, a great friend of the Vincentians. The meeting took place in a very pleasant atmosphere, in which the Cardinal received national and international information about the SSVP, emphasizing the canonization of Ozanam and the parish work. Then, at the Catholic Center, Renato Lima gave a talk on the "Seven years mandate" for the 30 Vincentians participants and more than 200 who joined online. The presentation was followed by a lively question and answer session with the President General. The Spiritual Advisor, Father Eugene Vaz, graced the event with his participation.

The "Hogar San Vicente", which currently houses 20 elderly people, was also visited. The home is the product of a collaboration between SSVP and Catholic Welfare Services (CWS), an institution maintained by the Catholic Church. The place is not an ordinary residence as the elderly are independent, they can go out and lead a normal life, but they must return before 9 pm. Three meals a day are served and workshops are offered such as painting, drawing and origami. While at the Hogar, Renato Lima met brother Michael Thio, 15th President General, and they had a good time together. Michael is the current President of the CWS.

As part of the activities, two home visits to beneficiaries of the St. Bernard Conference were planned: to a 90 year old man who lives alone and to an Indian lady with two very sick children. These two families live in a HDB (Housing & Development Board) building built by the Singapore government to provide decent housing for the most needy. Singapore is a world example in improving housing conditions for low-income people.

This was followed by a visit to the "Agape Village", a Caritas building constructed to house associations, services and ministries of the Catholic Church in Singapore. It houses the office of the SSVP National Council where monthly meetings are held. There are several meeting rooms, cafeteria, chapel and all the necessary structures to host events and services to beneficiaries.

At this location, Vice President Thomas Tan held a working meeting with President Renato, presenting an update on the reality of the 16 countries that make up the Asia 2 Vice Presidency. Among the challenges of the region, we can mention communication, the issue of the many languages (translations) and the importance of the service structure offered by the General Council to the countries.

"Singapore is a culturally and linguistically diverse country. It is a nation formed by immigrants, influenced by the Portuguese Catholic missions. In the past it was a very poor country and today it is a developed

powerhouse. This could only happen because the great wealth of the country is its people, its history and its commitment to the future", underlined Renato Lima. The President concluded his official visit to Singapore on the Chinese New Year (year of the rabbit), and the entire population, regardless of religion, participates in the festivities. The streets are illuminated and tourists throng the avenues.

In addition to the Vincentian agenda, brother Renato was taken by the Singapore brothers to Catholic places such as St. Joseph's Church (erected by the Portuguese priests who were in Macau) and the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, where the first Conference was established. In the cathedral there is a nice museum with artifacts of saints, popes and Catholic pioneers. Before ending the day, a quick visit was made to the waterfront area of the city, where a light and music show was performed.

The symbol of Singapore is the lion. Therefore, the General Council is pleased to declare that, given the strength of the Vincentian work being carried out there, fellow members of Singapore are true "lions of charity". May God keep the SSVP Singapore in good hands with responsible leaders and, above all, Vincentians committed and dedicated to the service of our brothers and sisters most in need.

SINGAPORE

- Population: 6 million
- Religion: Buddhism (33%), Islam (18%), Taoism (11%) and Christianity (8%).

Talk Show with the President General

A look at the day-to-day workings of the Council General International

The last Talk Show of President General Renato Lima de Oliveira was held on February 5th, 2023. His term of office is coming to an end and members asked many questions about his experience and resumé of these years, and others about his future within the SSVP.

The President General was emphatic, affirming that service positions should be assumed as they come, that they should not be sought or desired but accepted with Christian joy, placing yourself in God's hands and in the trust placed in you by members.

Renato Lima said that as soon as he finishes his mandate he will write a book about his experience because he believes it is important to record everything that it means to assume the responsibility of the general presidency of the SSVP and thus help, with his testimony and availability, those who will take over from him.

Members from all over the world also asked questions about a wide range and interesting topics. For example, Renato Lima answered questions about the importance of formation and the General Council's commitment to structuring universal Formation Themes that help us understand the service and values that sustain the Conferences throughout the world.

Members also asked about the Thematic Years initiative and the International Literary Contest to learn more about the founders of the SSVP and other important figures in the history of our beloved institution. The President General replied by reaffirming the need to know the origins and the foundations on which our mission in the world was founded, a mission of charity towards the poorest through fraternal life and the deepening of the members' faith.

The President General also spoke about our responsibilities, stating that when conferences decrease in number or charitable activities cease, we have to look, first of all ourselves and ask if we had enough zeal and concern for this not to happen, commenting that there can always be excuses to justify a failure as important as the closure of a Conference, but that the real cause must be sought within ourselves.

The Circular Letter was also discussed, a document that the President General published in each year of his term of office. Renato Lima sees it as an intimate and personal writing in which he offers to each member his thoughts, concerns and learnings. It is a means of direct communication with the grassroots of the Society from which "we must never dissociate ourselves". In this sense, he also spoke of the importance of being present in the different territories in which the Vincentians carry out their work, and touch the reality that our conferences live throughout the world.

When conferences decrease in number or charitable activities cease, we have to look, first of all ourselves and ask if we had enough zeal and concern for this not to happen

There were questions about the current socio-political situation and the response of the SSVP to various tragedies, specifically the war in Ukraine and the phenomena that trigger Vincentian emergency aid and the medium and long term work of the conferences.

The President General reported on the process of Ozanam's canonization and the progress made in recent years, as well as on the upcoming General Assembly in Rome, to be held in June, which will culminate with the election of the next President General.

Renato Lima said goodbye to all the participants of the Talk Show, assuring that he will spare no effort to fulfill his mission until the last moment, to respond with his service to the trust placed in him and for which he will be eternally grateful.

WWW

You can enjoy the talk show again by clicking here.

Ukraine: a mission of peace and charity

"Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34, 14)

While humanity is torn between omission and indifference, or seeking entertainment at soccer matches, one country is suffering the horrors of war: Ukraine. The failure of diplomacy and democratic institutions shows that this conflict can still last a long time. Governments are incapable of proposing a truce and, through dialogue, ending this senseless war. The media, it seems, has got used to the misfortune of others and no longer broaches the subject as at the beginning of the invasion. The few initiatives to seek peace are risky. And the disastrous effects of this war, such as inflation, the energy crisis, and the increase in poverty, affect all nations.

In the meantime, the Ukrainian people are suffering as never before. In the past, there was a thriving nation, producing food, with strong tourism and a people proud of its history, tradition and possibilities for the future. Today, only sadness and difficulty. Despite everything, even though the country is devastated, the population remains united and hopeful (Psalm 29, 11). Millions migrated to neighboring countries, but the majority remained in Ukraine. The men have been called to battle, and the women stay behind, looking after their families and the few goods they still have left.

In the face of this desolate scenario, there are still committed people, fighting for their own subsistence and for the survival of others. It is charity that shines in the midst of chaos: it is Jesus who presents himself as true consolation and protection. In Ukraine, the Society of St Vincent de Paul has some Conferences which, despite the immense difficulties, insist on taking the friendly Vincentian hand to those in need. Besides the SSVP, the Vincentian Family is present, and so together we try to offer some hope to those most in need (John 16, 33), while the politicians are slow to find a solution to this shameful conflict.

The Council General International, on behalf of the whole Confederation, has signed a "Memorandum of Understanding" with *Depaul International* to provide

200 meals a day to poor Ukrainians in the city of Kharkiv. Our Conferences, with few resources, also do what they can, distributing food, clothes, medicine and other material goods. The more the winter intensifies, the more the problems are magnified, since the generation of electricity, to heat homes, only exists for a few hours a day. The worst affected are the elderly, the disabled and children.

On 7 and 8 December, on neutral ground (Hungary), the Council General International received a delegation of four Ukrainian SSVP ladies. Brother Adrian Abel (England), president of CIAD (Commission for International Aid & Development), accompanied me on this journey. The original idea was that I could travel to Ukraine, but for security reasons this solution was chosen (meeting in Hungary), which brought many challenges for the four Vincentian ladies. As the airspace is blocked because of the war, there are no flights in the Ukraine, so the delegation travelled by train and car to meet us.

To preserve our Vincentians from any situation, we will keep all of them anonymous. Their journey was not easy. For example, one of the four participants managed to arrive at the meeting point in Hungary 32 hours after leaving home, very tired. We cannot thank these brave consecrated women enough for their immense gesture of charity.

After they have spent four hours waiting to cross the border into Hungary, we met in a hotel (we will keep the location confidential) where our meetings took place. Several testimonies of life, faith and overcoming left me speechless. One of them moved me a lot: one sister confided the joy of being able to have a “hot and dignified” bath, because she hadn’t had that in Ukraine for a long time. Another sister recounted the “simple things

in life", like going to a coffee shop, accessing the internet or going for a walk in a shopping mall, things that are quite rare today in Ukraine. The moments we enjoyed together in Hungary were moments, for them, of "a quick return to normal life", at least for the duration of our meeting. We enjoyed meals together and prayed as a family.

During those days I could see that freedom is one of the most important values for humanity

During these work meetings, we were able to learn about the actions being carried out by the SSVP of Ukraine in some places, which despite the constant bombardments, are alleviating the suffering of the most needy. After hearing all this report, we presented the Ukrainian Conferences with a board containing the relic of Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam. With strong emotion, I said that "Ozanam will end this war, and this will be one more miracle of his". The picture with the relic is to go on pilgrimage through the country. We also gave books and formation material produced by the Council General.

One of the younger lady members, a professional photographer, showed us pictures of the horrors of war, especially buildings hit by missiles, vehicles destroyed by gunfire and whole towns destroyed. She herself risked losing her life while making these photographic records. Another sister said that she is with her husband serving in the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and she lives a constant tension without knowing if her husband will return home. Others sisters are unemployed and also suffer severe restrictions. The impoverishment of the country is total, and many Vincentians are also in a state of penury. It is urgent that we achieve peace: we need peacemakers (Matthew 5, 9).

During those days I could see that freedom is one of the most important values for humanity, if not the greatest. Without freedom, life is incomplete. Imagine life without religious freedom, without political freedom, without freedom of speech, without freedom of thought. In the case of the people of Ukraine, imagine life without the freedom to come and go, without the freedom to enjoy the most basic human rights, such as the right to life, property, education, health, work and opportunities in the future. One sister stressed herself thus: "We will overcome these adversities. Nothing and nobody can stop us".

These and other stories will remain in my memory. As President General, I have expressed the solidarity of SSVP worldwide with the Ukrainian people. We urgently plead for this purposeless war to end immediately. We urge Presidents Putin and Zelenskyy to sit down at a negotiating table to establish for peace, so necessary, so urgent, not only for the people of Ukraine and above all for all humanity (James 3, 18).

Finally, I would like to ask that in this Advent season the Vincentian Conferences pray the **Holy Rosary for Ukraine**, asking God that this conflict will end urgently, that the political authorities will be touched by the mantle of Our Lady, and that all those involved will seek a solution to this war. May Our Lady Queen of Peace protect us!!

Brother Renato Lima de Oliveira
16th President General International

India: land of love, peace and charity

For the second time of his mandate, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General International, had the honor and privilege of visiting India, where our Society of Saint Vincent de Paul carries out phenomenal charity work. His first visit was in 2018 in the southern regions of Goa and Kerala.

The trip to India took place in two stages: New Delhi (January 9-12) and Kolkata (January 14-15). In both cities, the President General was accompanied by Joseph Pandian (Vice President General International), Johnson Varghese (Vice President Territorial International - Asia 1) and Jude Mangalraj (National President). In New Delhi, brother Stanly Michael (Commission for International Aid and Development - CIAD) was present, as well as in Kolkata, brother Gabriel Mondal (Territorial Delegate for Special Projects - Asia 1).

The SSVP in India develops great works of charity, a model to be followed by the other territories that form our Confederation. India is a nation with many languages and cultures, facing many social, economic and political challenges as in other developing countries. But the work achieved by Vincentians has been given excellent results, through the creative and transforming work done by the 70,000 members present in the 7,000 Conferences spread throughout India.

New Delhi

In the thriving Indian capital, the President General met with Archbishop, Msgr. Anil Couto, who was born in Goa, therefore, both spoke in Portuguese during the audience. On the occasion, brother Renato reaffirmed what he always says to the representatives of the clergy: “Although we have autonomy and independence in electing our leaders, establishing our rules and managing our patrimony, we work in close collaboration with the Holy Church, in order to provide a better service to our suffering brothers’’.

Afterwards, there was a visit to the Sacred Heart Cathedral, where a Vincentian Conference is present. A meeting of the Board of directors of the Central Council of Delhi took place in an auditorium in the presence of local leaders and the presidents of particular councils (called in India "Area Councils"). The Central Council has 45 Conferences and five Area Councils, developing many activities with a focus on educational projects and on the strengthening of the sacramental life of the people assisted.

The meeting with those responsible for the Central Council was very interesting. The presidents of the Area Councils exposed in detail the ongoing actions and the growth plans of the SSVP in each region of the city. The youth representative also spoke and expressed his joy of being a Vincentian, wishing that this experience may inspire other young people to join the Society, as did our founders.

The Spiritual Advisor of the Central Council (who is a diocesan priest) spoke very well about charity and the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Father Susai Sebastian said: "The Vincentian charisma is very similar to Mother Theresa's thinking. Both felt the real presence of Christ in the face of the poor. And, through the Eucharist, we become better people because Christ transforms our lives". Brother Renato concluded: "Father, you are not a Vincentian priest, but you carry Saint Vincent de Paul in your heart. Then the spiritual director invited the delegation of the Council General to a fraternal lunch.

Afterwards, an assembly, open to all the members of New Delhi and the metropolitan area, was held where brother Renato was warmly welcomed by 60 members. After speeches by the local, national and international officers present, a very beautiful folkloric presentation followed. Finally, President Lima de Oliveira offered a few gifts to brother Jude: reports, books, picture of the seven founders, medals, flag, and an authentic relic of Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam.

In his speech, brother Renato thanked his hosts for the invitation and declared his unconditional love for India: "Here, you work very well. The conferences are very well organized and the poor receive a dignified and motivating care. The Vincentians of India have much to teach to the Vincentians of the rest of the world. May God keep you this way".

Drawing smiles and applauses from the audience, brother Renato declared: "Part of my heart is Brazilian, and the other part is Indian. So I can consider myself the first President General with Indian roots. Thank you very much for the unconditional support that India gives to the Council General, not only in financial terms ("Concordat"), but especially the institutional support". After the event, a delicious tea with local delicacies were served. People in need, especially the homeless gathered around the Cathedral, were invited to share this moment.

Renato Lima is the second President General to visit New Delhi. In 1996, the 13th President General, César Augusto Nunes Viana, paid a visit to the city, and even today the oldest Vincentians remember his visit. While in the city, Renato visited the tomb of the "Father of the Fatherland", Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), whose life story we all know. Gandhi was an ardent defender of peace, freedom of opinion and respect for human rights, principles that are also defended by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. At Gandhi's tomb, brother Renato said a prayer, asking for the end of wars and for peace in the world.

On their way to Agra, the Vincentian delegation passed by the Taj Mahal, a beautiful sight considered one of the seven wonders of the world and declared a "World Heritage Site" by UNESCO. The palace was built between 1632 and 1653 by about 20,000 men during the reign of Emperor Shan Jahan in honor of his wife, Aryumand Banu Begam. It is, therefore, a monument dedicated to love. In this place, brother Renato contemplated the architectural beauty and dedicated some moments of prayer for those assisted and for the Vincentians.

Kolkata

The second stage of the trip took place in Kolkata, the land of St. Mother Teresa. The agenda in Kolkata began with the celebration of the Holy Mass at Saint Anthony Parish by the Archbishop Dom Thomas D'Souza. His sermón underlined the importance of being Christian and the identity of the Vincentian. "The SSVP is the best place to be servants of Christ, illuminating the nations

and witness of the love of God. That is your legacy of service. Good works are for the glory of God. Live this legacy intensely, growing in holiness and prayer", emphasized the celebrant.

After mass, about 100 brothers and sisters from the Central Council of Calcutta, formed by five Area Councils and 30 Conferences, went to the auditorium of St. Anthony's College, where a Vincentian meeting was held. There, brother Renato Lima spoke about motivation for everyone. Other leaders took turns in giving speeches, talking about the Vincentian service and the joy of being able to serve those in need. On that occasion, the President General gave to brother Ashish Biswas (Central Council President) the Ozanam Silver Medal. Immediately afterwards, members of Our Lady Queen of Peace Conference presented beautiful musical numbers, representing the folklore of different parts of India. Bishop Thomas D'Souza stayed for the entire event and even had lunch with the Vincentians.

Afterwards, the Vincentians of Kolkata took Renato to visit the headquarters of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Charity, founded by Mother Teresa of Calcutta who was elevated to Saint Mother Teresa in 2016 by Pope Francis. There, the Vincentian delegation was welcomed by Sister Constância who showed all the rooms of the Mother House, especially the private room where Mother Teresa slept, the chapel and her tomb. Brother Renato prayed for peace in the world, for the poor, for the destitute children and the abandoned elderly a that moment. There was also a visit to an orphanage run by the sisters (which is supported by the SSVP), where 80 children with special needs are cared for lovingly. There was also a visit to religious sites in the city especially at the St. Paul's Cathedral, the Holy Rosary Parish and the Church of St. Thomas.

The Council General International is grateful to the National Council of India for covering the costs of the food, accommodation and local transport by President General.

INDIA

- Location: Asia
- Capital: New Delhi
- Independence from England: 1947
- Population: 1.4 billion
- Catholic: 3%
- Major religions: Hinduism (80%) and Islam (14%)
- Number of Conferences: 7,000
- Number of active members: 70.000
- SSVP Foundation: 1853
- Economy: tourism, commerce, industry, agriculture

President General visits three countries: Austria, Slovakia and Hungary

The focus of the visit was to learn about initiatives for refugees, migrants and the homeless

Between December 4th and 8th, after attending Board meeting in Paris, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General International, visited three European countries: Austria, Slovakia and Hungary. He was accompanied by brother Adrian Abel, president of the Commission for International Aid and Development (CIAD), in order to identify new solidarity projects, especially for the Ukrainian refugees.

Austria

The first stop was in Vienna, capital of Austria. The President General was received by the National Vice-president, sister Irmgard Groier, representing brother Christoph Wötzer (National President) who was in a family commitment. The first activity was a working meeting in which we received information and statistics about SSVP Austria.

Afterwards, brother Renato visited a Vincentian hostel ("Vinzidorf") for 20 persons (men), run by a local Conference, whose president is brother Kurt Grossauer. Immediately afterwards a visit was made to the social special work "Vito", whose director is brother Christian Haferland, where three meals a day are served to about 50 homeless people. In the same place, a work meeting was held with leaders from Vienna, followed by a dinner (the food served, very tasty, was the same as that served to the homeless). The president of the Area Council, brother Dieter Monitzer, explained in detail the history of the foundation of the SSVP in Austria and the activities underway in Vienna.

Although it was a quick visit, the President General was very happy with the welcome and the information he received. "Our role is to always be close to the countries. The closer we are, the more in tune we will be", emphasised Renato. Austria is an important National Council within our Confederation, with 165 Conferences and over 50 special works, including shelters, elderly homes and Vincentian centres, as well as social projects for the homeless. SSVP was founded in Austria in 1849.

Slovakia

The second stop was at Bratislava, capital of Slovakia. Renato and Adrian were received at the train station by members of the National Council, including sister Libusa Mihalikova, national president. The first activity was a meeting at the Vincentian Headquarters in Bratislava, called "House of Hope", with the

main leaders of the country, coming from different cities. The Conference presidents presented reports, showing, with photos, the work done. Sister Libusa also spoke about the Society's situation in Slovakia.

This meeting was attended by Fr Tomás and Nicolás (Congregation of the Mission) and Sister Monica (Daughter of Charity). Father Tomás, who is the CM's Provincial for Slovakia, stated that the Circular Letters of the President General are important material for formation, and that his dream was that many young people would join the SSVP.

The PGI emphasised that the spirit of fraternity and friendship is the central focus of the Conferences

The President General emphasised that the spirit of fraternity and friendship is the central focus of the Conferences, and that Vincentians must take care of their spiritual life in order to better serve those in need. After the event, everyone went to the Parish of Saint Vincent de Paul, run by the Lazarist Fathers (Congregation of the Mission), on which occasion brother Renato was invited to give a testimony at the end of the Holy Mass.

After the celebration, a visit was made to a hostel for homeless people, maintained by Depaul International (one branch of the Vincentian Family). The SSVP delegation was received by the director Joseph Kákoš who explained about the operation of the place, with emphasis on the meals served and the number of beds available (120) for those without a home.

The following day, the Vincentian delegation drove to Surany, 105 km from Bratislava, where it visited a Vincentian social centre in Kopec, which provides shelter for 40 men, most of them unemployed and without family. Father Nicolas celebrated Holy Mass there, and afterwards a delicious lunch was served, prepared by the shelters themselves. The social centre consists of two buildings where the rooms of our needy brothers are kept, and there is a project of expansion to a new module.

The SSVP in Slovakia was founded in 1867 and currently has 22 Conferences. There is a very good relationship with the Vincentian Family, through a common project called "Fight against hunger". And, thank God, above all, there is a lot of affection and willingness to welcome refugees. On the border with the Ukraine there is a Conference which coordinates various projects for migrants.

Hungary

The final stage of the trip took place in Budapest, the capital of Hungary, where the President General was

Reunión con miembros de la Familia Vicentina

received by sister Katalina Eva Nagy (National President) with great joy and enthusiasm. There was a working meeting in which sister Katalina explained how the SSVP works in Hungary, where the Conferences and social works are located. This was followed by a courtesy visit to Sister Cornelia, Superior of the Daughters of Charity, who agreed to help us when we start to organize a new Conference in Budapest. Lastly, a visit was made to a centre for Ukrainian refugees, maintained by the Hungarian government, which is supported by Caritas.

At the end of the official agenda, brothers Renato and Adrian received on Hungarian soil a delegation of four SSVP sisters, representing some active Conferences in the Ukraine. More details of this meeting will be published in a separate article.

Conclusion

"I was very happy with what I saw in Austria, Slovakia and Hungary. We have some challenges to face, of course. However, there are immense possibilities for expanding the charitable services offered to the most needy. We, as Council General, can contribute a lot with training materials, strategies for expansion, suggestions for rejuvenating our Conferences, among other initiatives. One of our focuses is the strengthening of National Councils, as we know that the SSVP will only be strong if it has an organised, prepared and well managed National Council," said President Lima de Oliveira.

Meeting with the National President of Hungary

The Council General thanks the three National Councils for the organization and logistics of the trip, especially for the expenses they had with fuel, food and translation services. In those countries, the President General presented the national leaders with a flag, the CGI's quinquennial report and some books and materials, especially the "Handbook for Conferences". The National Presidents also received the official badge of our Confederation.

Since taking office in September 2016, the President General has endeavoured, despite his professional and family limitations, to visit as many nations as possible. Since then, 46 National Councils have been visited.

Visit to a Ukrainian refugee centre in Budapest

Nice and Cannes receive the visit of the President General

The Secretary General also participated at the activities

For the first time in the history of the French SSVP, the cities of Nice and Cannes hosted a missionary visit of a President General International, i.e.: brother Renato Lima de Oliveira. He was accompanied by sister Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet, Secretary General. The two cities are located on the so-called French Riviera (Côte d'Azur), on the Mediterranean Sea. The visit took place on March 2nd, following a trip to Monaco.

The Council General's delegation was welcomed by sisters Sophie Molto (Vice-president of the Nice Particular Council) and Marie-José Boennec (Secretary of the Council), who led Renato and Marie-Françoise to fulfill an extensive Vincentian agenda in the region throughout the day. The Nice Particular Council is composed of 18 conferences, scattered in various cities of the region, totaling 180 brothers and sisters. The oldest conference dates back to 1854.

The first activity consisted of a visit to the oldest Vincentian special work in Nice, the "Fourneau Economique", which operates within the headquarters of the Particular Council. It is located in the city center where the Executive Secretary Bénédicte offers French classes to foreigners. The "Fourneau" offers 140 meals a day to people in need. Five Sisters of the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity of Sainte Jeanne-Antide Thouret (a branch of the Vincentian Family) support this activity. The project was created in 1871, and is currently led by brother Gérard Forcheri, former President of the Particular Council.

Immediately afterwards, two social projects in Cannes were visited. The first one is called "Jardins Familiaux", which consists of a families' farming project occupying a 4,000 m² plot of land. President Lima de Oliveira talked to one of the 20 beneficiaries of the project, Mr. Gérard Rollandin, who explained in great details the great variety of vegetables and herbs being cultivated. The produces cannot be sold, i.e.: it is only for the consumption of the families participating in the project.

The next project is called "Accueil Ozanam" in the "La Bocca" neighborhood of the city of Cannes, where people in need, especially the unemployed and homeless, have access to clothing, household items and second-hand furniture. At the "Accueil", the Vincentians of Cannes (Robert, Marie-Paule, Geneviève and Bénedicte) offered a welcome cocktail to the leaders of the Council General. The "Accueil Ozanam" is coordinated by brother Jacques Popineau, as is the "Jardins Familiaux" project.

Afterwards, the group was joined by the President of the Particular Council, sister Chantal Luchart, who is active at a Conference in the village of Vence, for a festive lunch. The place chosen was the restaurant the "Palmyre", owned by a Syrian couple who was assisted

by SSVP a few years ago and now, after much effort and work, managed to open their own business with great success. Salim and Gaida welcomed the Vincentians with open arms. Father Francis Somé, a native of Burkina Faso joined the group. He is the pastor of the Notre-Dame de Vie Parish and spiritual adviser to three Conferences.

During the meal, the President General gave the President of the Nice Council a few souvenirs, including books, reports and a relic of Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam. In return, Renato Lima received a copy of the "Directory 2023 - SSVP Nice", containing all the information about the conferences, social works and charitable projects of the region.

After lunch, the President General and the Secretary General participated in the distribution of food to more than 40 needy families in the Parish of Saint Vincent de Lerins. The delivery of the food baskets was coordinated by sisters Monique and Marithé, and by brothers Paul and Claude. President Renato helped in the welcoming of the beneficiaries and was able to talk to several of them, understanding their life stories and employment difficulties. All receive food baskets proportional to the size of each family. This distribution happens twice a week (Thursdays and Saturdays), in addition to the traditional home visits made by the conferences.

"On behalf of the Council General International, we want to thank the Particular Council for the warm welcome we have had. I always feel at home when I am in France. I want to congratulate the brothers and sisters of Nice and the region, for the quality of the service provided to our friends in need. I really enjoyed talking to the Vincentians and the people who are being helped. I learned a lot, all day long", emphasized President Lima de Oliveira.

The strength of the SSVP in Caribbean Countries

Haiti, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico received the President General with open arms

Three countries on two Caribbean islands: we are talking about Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has been working very hard in these countries to strengthen the conferences, to energize the special works, and to strengthen charity for our neediest brothers and sisters.

The 16th President General, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, had the pleasure of visiting the three Vincentian territories and was able to see how our Society works in each nation. "It was a great joy for me to be with the SSVP members in each country, to participate with them in events, and to show them the importance of the Council General International. Our mission is to make the Council General better known and closer to the grassroots," expressed President Renato.

Puerto Rico

The first stage of the trip began in Puerto Rico, a territory associated with the United States of America. English and Spanish are spoken there. President Renato was accompanied during the visit by the President of the National Council of the United States, brother Ralph Middlecamp, and two other members of the Board: brother John Berry (national president-elect) and sister Isabel Darcy.

The visit took place on March 10, 11 and 12, in San Juan, Añasco and Maricao. The following activities took place: a visit to a Vincentian home for the elderly, an audience with Monsignor Roberto Gonzalez (archbishop of San Juan), a visit to St. Vincent de Paul Parish, several home visits (all families received personal hygiene kits), a participation at a meeting of St. Anthony Abbot Conference (in Añasco) and to a Dominican center. The highlight of the agenda was a formation meeting, open to all the conferences of the country, when brother Renato Lima spoke about the projects and programs of the Council General.

The SSVP Puerto Rico has a National Council with 12 conferences and 200 brothers and sisters. The National President is newly elected sister Geovanna Gomez, a dynamic and enterprising young woman. She, with the

support of a very competent team, is reorganizing the SSVP in Puerto Rico, giving encouragement and stimulus for the foundation of new Conferences, especially with young people. The archbishop himself has also pledged his support for the expansion of the SSVP on Puerto Rican soil.

Haiti

The visit to Haiti took place on March 14 and 15, only in the capital, Port-au-Prince. The National President, brother Hughes Vital, received President Renato at the city's airport, accompanied by a Vincentian delegation. The SSVP of Haiti has a National Council, five regional councils (equivalent to Central Councils) and 130 conferences, totaling 1,300 members.

Visits were made to the Institute "Famille Saint Vincent" (a school for 900 students, managed by the Congregation of the Mission), to the Saint John Paul II School (for 600 students, managed by the Daughters of Charity) and to the Seminary Saint Vincent de Paul, where six seminarians are preparing for the priesthood. In these institutions, Renato talked to the students, the seminarians, the directors and the religious leaders.

There was also a special meeting at the headquarters of the National Council, when all the members of the Board of directors and the presidents of the regional councils presented a summary of their activities. On this occasion, the President General addressed a few words to the local SSVP members, explaining how the Solidarity Department of the Council General works and how to apply for financial resources.

At the end of the event, a phrase touched the heart of the President General. A Haitian brother made the following comments: "Mr. President, your mandate is ending, but please keep Haiti in your heart, never forget us. We ask that you be able to act, starting today, as Ambassador of Haiti at the Council General, defending our pleas and praying for us".

In Haiti, an interpreter was needed as the President General speaks neither French nor Creole. The country is one of the poorest in the world, plagued by a political crisis that has generated a devastating social and economic crisis. In addition, the earthquake of 2013 is still showing traces of its passage to this day. The country's young people are seeking better living conditions abroad.

Dominican Republic

On March 16 and 17, it was the turn of the Dominican Republic, a Spanish speaking country that shares the territory of Hispaniola Island with Haiti. The visit took place mostly in Santo Domingo, the capital. The SSVP in the Dominican Republic is formed by a Superior Council, seven particular councils (called "Zone Councils") and 65 conferences, totaling 800 Vincentians, more than half of whom are young.

In this country, President Renato was accompanied by the Vice-President Deputy, brother Sebastián Gramajo, and the Zone Coordinator, sister Gladys Torralba. The National President, Jose Francisco Aguasvivas, received the President General at the airport, which was followed by a very fruitful working meeting with the National Board of Directors, when several questions were answered regarding the positions in a Superior Council.

On the next day, about 70 SSVP members from all over the country participated in a Formation Meeting with the President General, during which two lectures were given, one about Ozanam's canonization and the other about the accomplishments of the current mandate. After the lectures, there was an interesting question and answer session in which President Renato answered questions about the SSVP around the world. The event took place at Calasanz Catholic College, where a conference is to be founded with 12th grade students.

Besides the Vincentian activities, visits were made to the Cathedral of Santo Domingo (built in 1540), and to tourist spots, such as the Historical Center and one of the houses where Christopher Columbus when he landed in the Dominican Republic in 1492. On the flag of the country, the words "God, Homeland and Liberty" stand out, which caught the attention - positively - of brother Renato, because these are the most cherished values for all nations, and they are missing in many places in the world.

Conclusion

All the visits were relatively short, since the President General's professional and family commitments prevented him from staying longer in these countries. However, it was enough time to get to know the reality of each region, their potential and weaknesses, in order to bring the guidelines and suggestions of the Council General for a better administration of the SSVP. This is the purpose of the President General's global visits.

"I will never forget the affectionate manner in which I was received in Haiti, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. In all countries, we left some gifts, such as flags, books, music CDs and the relic of Blessed Antoine-Frederic Ozanam. But the greatest gift I received was the sympathy, hospitality, prayers and kindness of the Caribbean Vincentians," said Renato Lima.

President General receives Brazil's highest medal

The insignia was conferred in the grade of "Commendator" to brother Renato Lima

On December 16, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General International of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP), received the highest decoration of the Brazilian government, granted by the President of the Republic, Jair Bolsonaro, the **Medal of the Order of Rio Branco** ("White River").

This medal was created in 1963 and, each year, is intended to "reward those who have earned the recognition of the Brazilian government, serving to stimulate the practice of actions and deeds worthy of honorable mention as well as a distinction for meritorious services and civic virtues" (text of the rules of the Order of Rio Branco).

The "Order of Rio Branco" is a decoration awarded in five degrees: Grand Cross, Grand Officer, Commendator, Officer and Knight. The medal of Renato Lima had the rank of "Commendator of the Republic". The insignia is a four-armed, eight-pointed cross enameled in white, which has in the center a silver sphere with the Latin inscription "Ubique Patriae Memor", which means: "Wherever I am, I will always have the homeland in my memory".

Since taking office, President Lima de Oliveira has already received 12 titles of "Honorary Citizen" and three other Brazilian mentions: Legislative Merit Medal (2016), Pedro Ludovico Legislative Merit Medal – Goias Province (2016) and the Public Security Merit Medal – Federal District (2022).

"I dedicate all the mentions and awards I receive, as well as the titles of citizenship, to the fellow members around the world, because, in reality, this recognition is not for me, but for our dear members, who carry the Vincentian seed to every corner of the planet", emphasized brother Renato.

He concluded: "We Vincentians do not seek any human recognition, only from God. However, by receiving these medals, Parliaments and Governments show that they publicly value the greatness of the Vincentian work to overcome poverty, exclusion, and social vulnerability".

The word "commendator" means that the person awarded has distinguished himself by "contributing to the enhancement of society, either through his work or his social, economic and political influences". It is not a noble title, and no remuneration is received for it.

The Pope of the dialogue between faith and reason

He was one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century

Touched, but comforted by the hope in the Risen Christ, we have received the sad news that this Saturday, 31 December 2022, the fruitful existence of His Holiness Benedict XVI, the Pope Emeritus of the Holy Church, has come to an end.

On behalf of the Council General International of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, we express our deep condolences to the Holy Father Pope Francis and the Holy See. We remember with affection the pontificate of Benedict XVI, highlighting his contribution to the salvation of souls.

An admirable intellectual and theologian of great depth, Benedict XVI was also a simple, humble, sensitive, and very thoughtful man. His writings and teachings are a reference for the Church. “Love – caritas – will always be necessary, even in the most just society,” he taught us in his first encyclical, when he emphasized that the Church “cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments or the Word.”

After his brief but fruitful pontificate, the Pope Emeritus spent the last years in recollection, between studies and prayers, praying for the good of the people of God. He preached beforehand “the Church can never be dispensed from the practice of charity as an organized activity of believers, just as there will never be a situation where the charity of each individual Christian is not needed, because man, besides justice, has and will always have need of love”.

Pope Benedict has been an outstanding figure in the history of the Church. His encyclicals have a formidable

spiritual content and constitute extraordinary documents of catechesis and evangelization: “Deus caritas est” (2005), “Spe salvi” (2007) and “Caritas in veritate” (2009). He knew, like no one else, how to promote the dialogue between faith and reason.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian Family throughout the world praise God for the rich magisterium of Benedict XVI. We Vincentians are especially thankful that Benedict XVI has raised to the altars during his pontificate six members of our Society: Saints **Alberto Hurtado and Rafael Arnaiz Baron**, Blessed **Giuseppe Toniolo** and **John Joseph Lataste**, and the martyrs **Prudencia Cañelles Ginesta** and **Teresa Cejudo Redondo**.

He, by the way, taught that “the saints are the true bearers of light within history, because they are men and women of faith, hope and charity. Let us pray that the Lord will now receive this dedicated worker of his harvest and grant him the reward for his labors for the Kingdom of God. **May you rest in divine peace, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI!**

Paris, December 31, 2022
Brother **Renato Lima de Oliveira**
16th President General of the SSVP
On behalf of the entire Council General International

Biography

Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger nació el 16 de abril de 1927
Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger was born on April 16, 1927 in the city of Marktl (Germany). From a humble family, he entered the seminary at the age of 12. He was fluent in several languages, including Greek and Latin. He was ordained a priest in 1951. Later, he earned a doctorate in Theology at the University of Munich. In 1978, he took over as archbishop of Munich, and was also named cardinal (he participated in conclaves that elected John Paul I and John Paul II). He was chosen as the 265th pope on April 19, 2005, after the death of John Paul II. In February 2013, at the age of 85, Benedict XVI resigned his post due to health issues. Argentine Jorge Mario Bergoglio, our Pope Francis, succeeded him.

Testimony

Below we publish a beautiful testimony, authored by brother Juan Manuel Buergo Gomez, 3rd Vice President General Deputy, which represents, with fidelity, what all of us members of the SSVP are feeling at this moment.

Text PDF (Text in Spanish)

Henri Planchat, a fellow member and later a priest, was beatified in April

He was one of the martyrs killed during the Paris Commune of 1871

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) and the Religious of St. Vincent de Paul (RSV), as well as the entire Vincentian Family and the Holy Church, celebrate with joy the beatification of Father Henri Planchat, who was a fellow member of a Vincentian Conference in Paris in the early years of our Society.

Mathieu-Henri Planchat (1823-1871) was born in La Roche-sur-Yon, France. He came from a wealthy and very pious family whose father was a magistrate. At his father's request, Planchat graduated in law at the University of Paris Panthéon-Sorbonne, but soon after he entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice to study Theology.

Partner and priest

During his Theology studies, he participated in the St. Lambert Conference between 1843 and 1850. During this period, he met brother Jean-Léon Le Prevost, who was president of the Saint Sulpice Conference. In 1845, Le Prevost had just founded with two other friends (Clément Myionnet and Maurice Maignen), the Congregation of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul (RSV).

With them, the young Henri dedicated himself to the service of the poor and the youth of the Parisian suburbs. According to his bishop, three days after his ordination on December 21, 1850, Henri Planchat went to Le Prevost to be received as the first priest of the new Congregation, which until then had only brothers.

Henri Planchat's religious activity was quite remarkable. He abandoned his comfortable life to serve the poor, acting as chaplain in various works of the SSVP and of the Congregation itself. He visited the poor and the sick, directed a social work for street children and adolescent apprentices, with a strong predilection for the Christian formation of children and young people. In 1862, at the request of the SSVP Conferences of Paris, he was appointed chaplain of the Patronage St. Anne, which helped hundreds of children and young people. He was known as "the apostle of the suburbs" for his work close to the people.

When the Franco-Prussian War broke out (1870), he joined the patriotic movement in favor of the wounded evacuated to the capital and the soldiers in charge of its defense. At the request of brother Paul Decaux, Vice-president of the Paris Particular Council (SSVP), he created an ambulance service to care for the wounded.

Paris Commune

After the war of 1870, the "Paris Commune" broke out, a communist-inspired movement that lasted 72 days, with numerous bloody battles throughout the city. Henri Planchat was never involved in political struggles. His concern was for the wounded of the wars and the safety of children and young people.

On the very day of the beginning of the "Paris Commune" on March 18, 1871, a band of insurrectionists assaulted the Patronage St. Anne under the pretext

of seizing weapons, but none were found. Days later, the Patronage was assaulted again. Planchat was interrogated, humiliated, beaten and imprisoned for two months, along with other religious and civilians.

On May 26, 1871, in an anarchist ambush, Planchat and other companions were violently shot, during the terrible "Haxo Street Massacre". He was 47 years old. After his death, Father Planchat's fame as a martyr spread rapidly. In 1897, the diocesan phase of the beatification process was opened in Paris. After being introduced in Rome in 1964, this cause finally received the unanimous vote of the consultors in October 2020 and of the theologians of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints in May 2021.

It is important to note that the "Paris Commune", apart from socio-political interests, was deeply averse to religion. The "Commune" considered religion as "an obstacle that had to be eliminated". The hatred of faith was evident in the innumerable destructions of churches and looting that took place in places of worship.

Beatification

Following the favorable ruling, on November 25, 2021, Pope Francis recognized the "martyrdom for the faith" of Father Planchat and four other Catholic leaders killed during the Paris Commune, called the "Haxo Street Martyrs" (Ladislas Radigue, Polycarpe Tuffier, Frézal Tardieu and Marcellin Rouchouze). He signed the decree of their beatification and the ceremony will take place on April 22, 2023, 4 PM, in the Church of Saint Sulpice in Paris.

The remains of Henri Planchat rest in the Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette, in Paris, in the 15th District. In July 2021, the 16th President General of the SSVP, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, visited the Shrine and prayed at the grave of Henri Planchat. In the 20th District, where the building of the Patronage of St. Anne was located, the Paris City Hall has paid tribute to him by naming a street after him, which has been renamed "Planchat Street".

The Council General International was represented at the beatification ceremony by the Secretary General, sister Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet, the Secretary General Deputy, brother Jean-Marc Ossogo, and the International Spiritual Advisor, Father Andres Motto (CM).

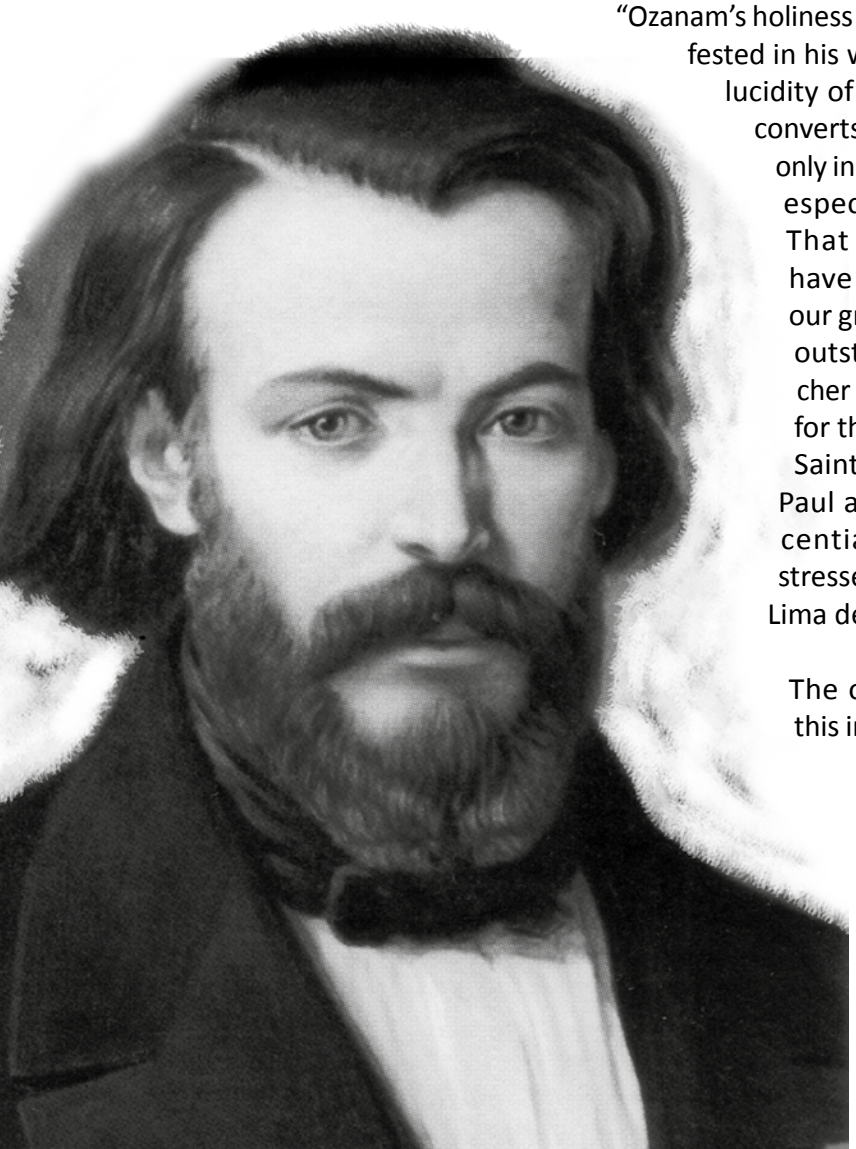
Click here to read a little more about the history of the Religious of Saint Vincent de Paul through the book "Maurice Maignen: apôtre du monde ouvrier", written by Richard Corbon.

President General publishes a synthesis of Ozanam's books

The texts are available on the website of the International Vincentian Family

One of the seven founders of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam, was an extremely learned man. He was a professor of several subjects, spoke many languages and wrote 11 books, as well as hundreds of articles, booklets, chronicles, texts and pamphlets.

At the invitation of brother Javier Chento, International Coordinator of the Vincentian Family website (www.famvin.org), the 16th President General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, writes summaries of Ozanam's books every month. The following summaries have already been published: "The Origins of Socialism" and "A Pilgrimage to the Country of El Cid".



"Ozanam's holiness is also manifested in his writings. The lucidity of his thought converts hearts, not only in his time, but especially today. That is why we have Ozanam as our great inspirer, outstanding teacher and example for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian Family," stressed President Lima de Oliveira.

The objective of this initiative is to spread even more Ozanam's thought within the SSVP and the Vincentian Family, presenting his ideas to the entire Vincentian community, in an accessible and direct language, contributing to the formation of our members.

Ozanam was part of a young Catholic intellectual generation, deeply idealistic and active socially and politically. His life was marked by faith and holiness, which we can see through his historical and literary writings. He always defended Christianity, the family, life, human dignity through work, democracy and care for the humblest.

Brother Renato Lima is the author of several books in Portuguese, among them the series "Vincentian Chronicles" (five editions), "Falling in love to Justice and Charity" (in Spanish), "Governmental Relationship" and "The Vincentians and the Brazilian Parliament". By June, the book "Circular Letters written between 2016 and 2023" will be published and launched at the General Assembly in Rome.

Don Bosco in History

Proceedings of the First International Congress of Studies on St. John Bosco
(Salesian Pontifical University - Rome, January 16-20, 1989)
Spanish edition directed by José Manuel PRELLEZO GARCÍA

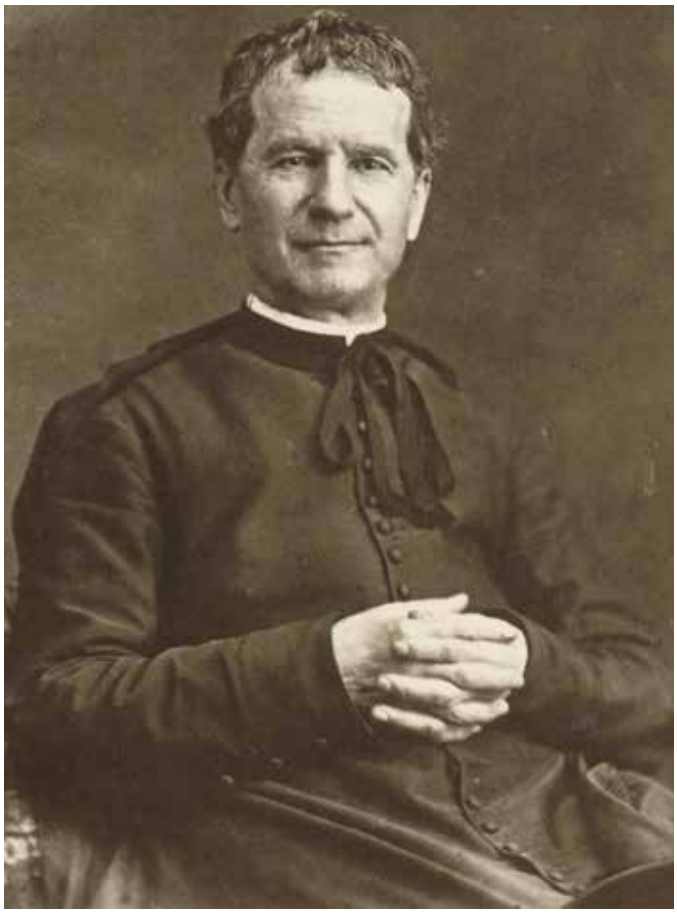
- He was a member of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul in Turin starting in 1850.

- He was first President of the Turin Particular Council (1853), then President of the Superior Council of Piedmont (1856). Cf. L. TERRONE, Il conte Cays, Colle Don Bosco (Asti), LDC 1947, p. 142.

- Member of the aforementioned Conferences in Nice, according to MB X, 1337.

- In 1884, he attended the General Council of the Saint Vincent de Paul in London, England.

Among the associations connected to Don Bosco and the Salesians, there were also those formed by the Catholic bourgeoisie who, in accordance with the mentality of the social Catholicism of the time, were dedicated, among other things, to charitable actions in favor of the proletariat and the marginalized. The Society of Saint



Vincent de Paul, founded in Paris by Frederic-Antoine Ozanam in 1833, stood out in this line of action.

His model of charity was the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul. The first Conferences were established in 1844, in Nice, Italy, then belonging to the Kingdom of Sardinia, then in Genoa (1846) and finally in Turin in 1850. From the very first moment, Don Bosco became their promoter. So much so that a few years later, with the help of the Count Cays, he founded so-called “Auxilliary Conferences”,whcih were implemented in his three Oratories of God.

In general, Don Bosco’s relationship with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was deep and permanent.

VI CIF for the Vincentian Family

Sunday July 2 to Wednesday July 26. Address: 95, rue de Sevres. Lazarist Motherhouse. 75006 Paris. France. In this session, presentations are combined with visits to Vincentian places. We will engage in research about the rich Vincentian theology and will explore possible solutions to the problems that afflict the poor. In addition, this year we will offer some presentations related to communication within the Vincentian Movement. To register I ask you to write to me at: andresmotto@gmail.com (cost 1,950 euros).

Some practical suggestions

(1) Since the rooms at the Motherhouse in Paris are almost all reserved well in advance of the multiple activities, we ask participants to arrive the same day or the day before, but not earlier. The same request is made when leaving because these rooms have already been reserved for someone else.

(2) The cost of the various sessions includes all expenses. The best method to pay for these sessions is paying in cash or depositing the money in the French CIF account (doing this prior to the beginning of the session).

(3) Remember that many countries require a visa to enter France! This process is usually longer and more complex than at first percieved. Therefore, the process should be initiated well in advance of one's intended date of travel. To start the process, the French government requires copies of the following documents: photocopy of passport; date of entry and exit from France; photocopy of Travel Medical Insurance (not a photocopy of your country's health insurance). For those who do not need a visa, the process is simpler: complete the registration form and take out Travel Medical Insurance.

PS: to confirm the presence of the participants, please send me an email at:
andresmotto@gmail.com

Dr. Andrés R. M. MOTTO, C.M.
Director del CIF

9th Latin American Meeting of the Vincentian Family

The members of the new Favila Board were elected for the next 3 years.

The 9th Latin American Meeting of the Vincentian Family, organized by Favila (Vincentian Family of Latin America) took place in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, March 14-19.

This meeting was attended by 91 participants from Latin America and the Caribbean countries, reprensenting about 16 branches of the Vincentian Family.

The SSVP had many representatives from several countries. The General Council International was represented by brothers José Hailton Coelho (Brazil) and Sebastián Gramajo (Argentina).

During these six days, the participants shared their experiences under three linked themes: see, judge and act. In this way they evaluated and mapped out actions and strategies as a Vincentian Family.

The presentations and dynamics were centered on the Vincentian charism, the synodality of the Holy Church and the challenges to face poverty, not only material, but also moral and spiritual.

At the end of the event, the new leaders of Favila were elected for a three-year term (2023-2026), and José Hailton was elected as Treasurer, whom we thank.

DePaul University hosts World Catholicism Week

Lectures were given by international experts

From April 13 to 15, DePaul University, one of the most prestigious institutions of higher education, located in Chicago, United States of America, organized the "World Catholicism Week - 2023", on the theme "Becoming a Church of the poor: the Vincentian charism and reform". **The event was held in hybrid mode with free registration**.

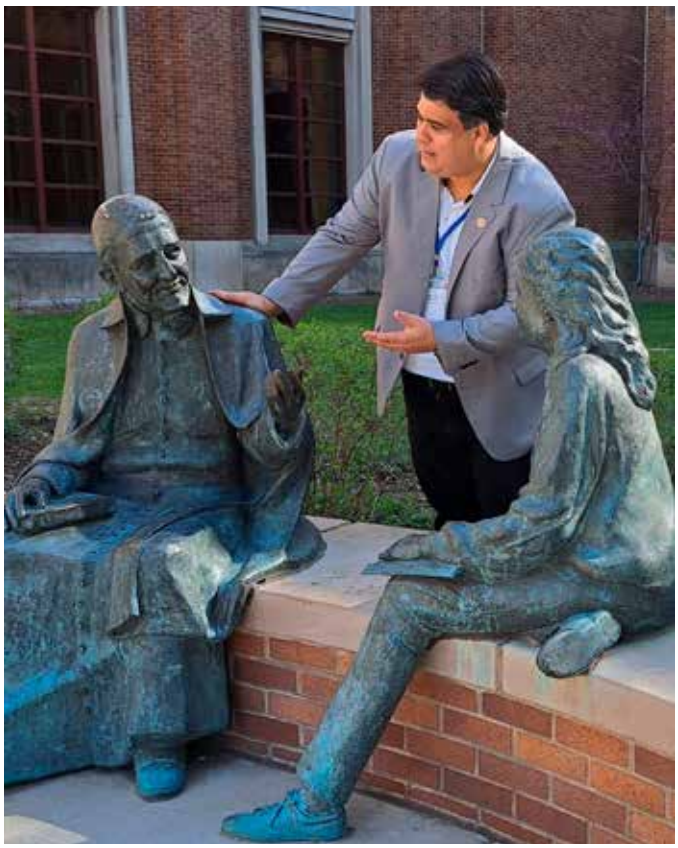
Each year, the "World Catholicism Week" brings together academics and experts from around the world, many of them members of Vincentian Family branches, to reflect on a theme. This year, the focus was on how the Vincentian charism can contribute to the process of reform and modernization of the Church that Pope Francis has inaugurated: what is the Vincentian vision for making the Church more open to God and to the poor? Why does the Church need reform, and what kinds of internal and external resistance does it face?

Speakers from various countries and organizations had been invited, among them brother **Renato Lima de Oliveira**, 16th SSVP President International, who participated in Roundtable #4 (Saturday), entitled "The Transformation of Society". The theme of his lecture was: "The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul: 190 years of Love, Empathy, and Hope for Those in Need". Brother Renato presented 10 innovative initiatives of the SSVP around the world to face new poverties, complementing the home visitation that is traditional in the Vincentian Conferences.

Another SSVP member who made a presentation was brother **Raymond Sickinger** (United States), author of several books and responsible for training at his National Council, who discussed the theme: "To Become a Church for the Poor: Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam's lay vision of Reform and Transformation", within the Roundtable #1 (Thursday), which had as its background "Historical, Vincentian Perspectives on Reform".

One of the most anticipated talks was given by **Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée**, member of "The Seven Founders" Department (formerly the Historical Research Commission) of the Council General International. He is the author of several books, two of them very famous: on Amélie Ozanam and the other on the SSVP in the XIX Century. His presentation was titled: "Do We Invent the Saints We Need? Pope Francis, the Saints 'Next Door,' and Lay Vincentians"; it was held within Roundtable #3, entitled "The Internal Reform of the Church".

DePaul University was founded in 1898 by the Lazarist Fathers (Congregation of the Mission). It is, indeed, a Vincentian university. Since then, DePaul has grown into a renowned institution on the international and academic scene, offering a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate programs in areas such as business, law, art, music, social sciences, natural sciences, and more.



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

Let us Renew our Hope

My dear brothers and sisters of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul:

Let us start by reflecting on human hope. The philosopher Ernst Bloch wrote a valuable book: *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* [The principle of hope]. It expresses his philosophy around the subject of hope. He does it because he is convinced that human beings live in tension with the future. We always believe that the future will be better. The novelty of the future guides us towards the achievement of what is possible. For Bloch, the principle of hope is not merely a psychological question, but it defines the human being. It is to believe that what is not yet, the incomplete, what is going badly, has the capacity to improve. This hope is transformative. It broadens our horizons, rather than limiting them. For the horizon to change effectively, however, we must be actors, not just spectators. Not hoping that change will be delivered in an Amazon box. A hopeful person is not resigned to a dog's life, to accepting corruption, bewailing their fate. On the contrary, from the possible we can seek the better. This attitude made Bloch, for

example, into a convinced pacifist. As you can see, this book can offer many lessons to SSVP members.

It is also true that history very often gives us a 'slap in the face', as we see how our best plans come to nothing, are disappointed, undermined. More than once, humanity itself "sabotages" its greatest plans. When the effects of this are severe, the sense of the absurd arises. Take care, this sense is not something that happened only recently. Coming in many different ways, we find it in some very ancient texts: Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, Greek, Mayan, etc. Let us recall the Gilgamesh poem, for instance. It is also found in literature of the time of Saint Vincent, in Shakespeare's Hamlet, for instance.

In the 20th century, the idea of the absurd was magnified, particularly in the Existentialist movement. This emphasised the helplessness of human beings. This is the case, because ultimately, the human being has no support. Capturing the meaningless nature of existence leads one to express what one experiences: nausea, nothingness, the useless passion of being, life is vomit (apologies to those present), etc. In this respect, Sartre was one of its best ambassadors. I often acknowledge his grave, as it is in the Montparnasse cemetery, beside the Lazarist pantheon.

Of course, we cannot deny that helplessness exists. During the Covid pandemic, for instance. Or when we see the lack in so many countries of positive leaders, whether of the right, the left, or the liberals. Or where we see Mafia organisations involved in major sectors of society. Or when we see, in many SSVP conferences, that things are not going well, and these problems are repeated over and over again. Or when we see that, despite so many years of work, poverty is still not resolved… and is growing. We could also include distressing personal situations, such as the difficulties we find in trying to change ourselves, but we would go on too long. Sometimes this feeling of helplessness may combine with a sense of the absurd. In these moments, one perhaps might only give in, and stand under a tree, having a glass of French wine, to forget all these problems.

Christian hope produces trust, and makes God the foundation

But here, hope comes to our aid, showing that there can always be a turning point in history. It is interesting to see how often hope revives in the midst of the greatest crises. And I rejoice that this is so. Christian hope strengthens human hope, since it tells us: God wishes our good, and helps us to achieve what is good. Vincent de Paul and Frédéric Ozanam were people of great hope, even in the midst of really critical situations.

Saint Vincent teaches us to live in hope, which is just like saying we trust in God's goodness. He points out: "Trust and hope are almost the same thing". Christian hope produces trust, and makes God the foundation. We have to rely on Him: "I have to rely on God alone, and hope for the grace of perseverance from Him". We can say that loving in hope is the source of Vincent de Paul's theology of hope. Hope gives a strength to human beings to continue doing God's work, despite times of sterility and poverty, loss and ruin, intrigue and persecution. The golden rule of the Vincentian moral life is always trust in God. This allows the Christian to be a good tool in God's hands.

I also end with a saying of the worthy Julio Cortázar, who say that hope is life itself, defending itself. I share some questions with you:

1. What disheartens me?

2. Am I a hopeful person?

3. How do I grow in hope?

4. How can I give hope to those most marginalised?

5. How to serve in hope?

Andrés R. M. Motto, CM

EE.UU.

John Berry, president elect of SSVP in the United States

After 25 years of professional carrer in companies, and in the United States federal government, working in the fields of nuclear energy and environmental engineering, our brother assumed the general direction of SSVP in Georgia in 2006. He is now the newly elected National President of the SSVP in the United States and will take office on September 9, 2023.

Always worried with poverty and the most vulnerable families need, John Berry will put all your engagement and skills to peform his service as National President of a contry which the SSVP counts with 100 000 brothers/sisters, distributed in more tahn 4 400 Conferences.

During the electoral process, the finalist applications were the John Berry's and the Brian Burgess'. In the words of President General, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, "Both North American applicants, John and Brian, are very good brothers, engaged and committed, with the right qualities to be an excelent president of the National Council of the United States. For this reason, the Council General was very glad already. Now that we know who won the election, we receive John with arms wide open, we're already sure the he will keep the good working that our brother Ralph Middlecamp began 6 six years ago".

The President General deepened into the figure of the ideal president and into the good work from the United-States' SSVP, adding that «our beloved brother Ralph has served with a high professional level, but, above all, with much charity. The USA are an exemple for our Con-federation, and we're sure that with John we'll have the same availability and proximity».

Bolivia

Celebration of first decade of activities - National Council of Bolivia

A Vincentian reunion in Cochabamba to celebrate 10 years of activities.l

The 10 years of activities of the National Council of SSVP in Bolivia were celebrated on October 29th, 2022 with a Vincentian event held in the city of Cochabamba, where is located the national headquarters of SSVP in the country.

The meeting was attended by conferences members and Board members of the National Council of the SSVP in Bolivia. The CGI was represented by brother Sebastião Ribeiro da Silva, Coordinator of Zone 2 of the Territorial Vice Presidency - America 3.

The program consisted of a formation session and discussions with the Zone Coordinator, an Eucharistic celebration and a social evening. The activities took place at Uspha Uspha and Olla de la Madre, a location where the Society offers services aimed at assisting our brothers and sisters in need.

The first Conference in Bolivia was founded in the city of Cochabamba on October 20th, 2000. In 2012, the National Council was established, and currently coordinates the work of 9 conferences and two social works.

Asia

News from the International Territorial Vice Presidency – Asia I

Sri Lankan presidential elections and meeting with the Archbishop of Dhaka-Bangladesh

Brother Johnson Varghese, International Territorial Vice President – Asia I (ITVP-Asia 1), visited recently the Superior Councils of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

At the end of October 2022, brother Varghese was invited to participate at the National Assembly of Sri Lanka, which was meeting for the first time after the pandemic and brought together more than 150 Vincentians from several regions where conferences are active.

At the end of November 2022, brother Varguese visited Bangladesh to discuss important issues linked to the functioning of the SSVP in that country. He also met with the Archbishop of Dhaka, His Excellency Bejoy N D'Cruze. A very successful meeting in which he was accompanied brothers Joseph Pandian, International Vice President General and brother Gabriel Mondel, representative of the Territorial Vice Presidency Asia I for micro-projects.

Uruguay

Uruguay SSVP holds a Formation Session

Formation session sought to revive the conferences in post-pandemic period.

The National Council of Uruguay held a formation session on November 5th, 2022 in Montevideo, the capital city of the country. The formation was held to bring together again the members of the local conferences after a period of restrictions due to the Pandemic of Covid-19.

The SSVP in Uruguay has among its active members a good number of elderly people who have had to submit to rigid social isolations during the pandemic. They impacted deeply on the work carried out by local conferences. In this period of resumption of services offered to those in need, the National Council wanted to motivate the Vincentians to return to the normal activities conducted conferences.

The meeting was attended by the International Territorial Vice President (ITVP) America 3, brother Júlio César Marques de Lima, and brother Francisco Velasco, Coordinator Zone 3 - VPTI America 3. The program included presentations on Frederic Ozanam and the challenges of the SSVP International for 2023. There was also an activity about the difficulties of recruiting new conferences members.

At the end of the session, the Territorial Vice President made a presentation on ideas for recruiting new members and expanding Vincentian work. The meeting ended with the celebration of the Holy Mass in the Church of the Miraculous Medal in Montevideo.

The SSVP of Uruguay was founded on June 13, 1859. The National Council currently coordinates 10 conferences and is engaged in 3 social works, a night shelter and two homes for the elderly.

Venezuela

Election of new National President - SSVP Venezuela

National Assembly which chose the new National President was attended by the Zone Coordinator of CGI.

Sister Genny Molina was elected new National President of the SSVP Venezuela during a National Council Assembly was held in the city of Valencia October 28-30, 2022. The new President replaces sister Josefina de Gonçalves whose term had ended.

The program of the National Assembly included, besides the election of a new National President, formation sessions and a meeting of the regional representatives of the young Vincentians who chose their leaders for the next term of the national mandate. Letters of aggregation were also delivered to some conferences.

Sister Maria Rosa Corral, Coordinator of Zone 1, International Territorial Vice-presidency (ITVP -CGI) America 3 participated in the Venezuelan National Assembly. She thanked Josefina for the excellent work accomplished despite the difficulties of conducting Vincentian work in her country.

The Society was founded in Venezuela in 1885. The first conference was established in Caracas, capital of the country. Despite the deep economic crisis that has hit this South American country, the local Vincentians remain firm in their commitment to serve the poorest. The SSVP in Venezuela has currently 42 conferences and is engaged in six social works, involving 250 members.

Siria

Aleppo, a Martyr City, Receives a Breath of Hope

On February 6, 2023, at 3:20 am, a terrible earthquake devastated the city of Aleppo, under torrential rains and freezing winds. People lay under rubble or in the streets without shelter. The screams, cries and moans of children tore through the silence of the night. The smell of death emanated from the destroyed houses. People cried or ran along the sidewalks in search of their relatives trapped under the rubble. Aleppo became a dead city in 40 seconds.

The President General International, Renato Lima de Oliveira, upon receiving the bad news, contacted me early in the morning to ask about the SSVP members, their families and the nursing home, and asked all Vincentians around the world to support and pray for them.

Driven by a feeling of empathy and aware of the crucial role of the Society in this time of crisis, the President of SSVP Aleppo, Joseph Ahmar Dakno, quickly published this message:

«My Vincentian sisters and brothers in Aleppo,

We thank God for his grace and mercy, for our survival of this natural catastrophe that has struck Aleppo.

At this moment, we are experiencing the catastrophic effects of a devastating geological phenomenon. Some people have lost their loved ones; may they be in heavenly arms. Others have lost their homes, their property, their cars, their businesses….

This is our mission and it is the will of the founder of the Society, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, who never ceased to repeat that "the poor are our masters, and we are their servants.

We appeal to all members to provide aid and relief to all victims of the earthquake».

Immediately, all collaborators and volunteers set out to serve, crossing roads blocked by debris

and destroyed buildings to help the victims. A crisis unit was created and a swarm of young Vincentians roamed the streets, providing food, first aid and being sensitive to the reality of children, adults and families in shelters, tents and even on the streets.

Children terrified and traumatized by the earthquake were cared for by groups of Vincentians who organized dance sessions, songs and distributed crayons and drawing pads. They were also served a small snack.

I am sure that Frederic Ozanam would have been delighted to see these Vincentians “embracing the world in a network of charity”. The solidarity of all our members was remarkable and was very helpful at this disastrous time. Funds were sent from the Council General International, Lebanon, Jordan, the Holy Land and soon from France.

Despite the repeated earthquakes that continue to hit Aleppo and the overall dangerous situation, I decided to visit my brothers in Aleppo and bring them a message of international love.

My visit was a great moral support and comfort.

Ella Bitar
International Territorial Vice President for the
Middle East and North Africa

Paraguay

The National Council of Paraguay is reestablished

Formation preceded the inauguration of the new National President

From April 21st to 23rd, a team from the International Territorial Vice Presidency (ITVP), America 3, visited Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, to hold training sessions for local Vincentians and for the inauguration of a new National President.

The training sessions were presented by the International Territorial Vice President (ITVP), the Zone 2 Coordinator and the Formation and Training Coordinator at the ITVP America 3. As a special guest, the 2nd Vice President of the Brazil National Council exposed the opportunities for support to the Paraguayan Vincentians through the twinning established between the two countries.

The re-foundation ceremony of the Paraguay National Council and the inauguration of the new National President were held at the end of the training sessions. The Nomination Term signed by the General President was read, naming Brother Osvaldo Javier Hidalgo Viveros Provisional President for a period of one year. The visit ended with the celebration of a Holy Mass of thanksgiving for the 190 years of the SSVP foundation.

The new president introduced the new National Council Board members and thanked the Vincentians for their presence and the support of the CGI Territorial Vice Presidency. He recalled the challenges that must be faced: "…we are going to organize the National Council, continue founding new conferences and continue the work in support of active conferences" he said.

The SSVP ended its activities in Paraguay in 2013. In 2015, Vincentian activities were resumed in the country with the creation of two SSVP conferences. Currently, the National Council coordinates the activities of five conferences, one of which is a youth conference, and initiatives are underway to establish new conferences in the country.

Caring for spirituality

In today's world, meaningful friendships are hard to come by and maintain. I have often found myself justifying to others why I spend my free time visiting the poor or sorting donations on Saturday mornings. When you are a Vincentian, this is who you are. This is your Vocation. The essential elements of a Vincentian are spirituality, friendship, and service. Being an active member of a conference all three of these things are present. You don't have to justify why you do what you do when you are with your Conference. Everyone in the room is there for the same reason. And just to be clear, it is NOT because we are perfect. Blessed Frederic said, "I want to become better and do a little good." This quotes has always stood out to me. Nobody is perfect, and it is easy and natural for us to struggle with our Vincentian virtues at times. It is through this friendship, service, prayers and reflection that we become better. Our good works are the most important part of what we do, but that is simply a result. It is a blessing being able to form these friendships within my conference, and with my neighbors in need. The wonderful thing about conferences are that each individual brings unique perspective, experience, and talents to the group. I love looking around the room and seeing the different faces of our members, each member playing a special role in how we serve.

Often in our conference meetings we have a lot that needs to be discussed, reports on our recent visits, and so on, I often find members wanting to rush through the prayers and reflections. At one time, our conference had begun to minimize this section to a quick and simple opening and closing prayer. The conference began to disconnect, members often argued, and the tone of our meetings shifted. A few months ago, we elected a new president and our readings, reflections and prayers have returned, and it makes all the difference. Friendships are truly strengthened the more we pray, reflect, and serve together. We are able to bond over uncomfortable situations while serving our neighbors. We are able to understand where one another are coming from, and we are able to support one another as we grow in holiness, even as we stumble on some of the Vincentian virtues. My involvement with my conference helps me put my problems into perspective. I would like to think that through my experience as a young adult Vincentian member, I am becoming better and doing a little good.

Kathleen Brissette
International Jouth Delegate of
Council General International

Presentation of the Medal "Charity in Hope" 2022

Territorial Vice-president America 3 present, on behalf of the General Council International, the Medal to the Fraternity Without Borders Organization

In 2018 the Council General International created the medal "Charity in Hope", with the aim of recognizing those who are an example of "service in hope", while strengthening ties with personalities and/or entities with which SSVP pursue common objectives and projects. Since then, the medal has been awarded to the Rotary Club International, the World Organization of the Scout Movement, the Jesuit Refugee Service and the Pontifical Foundation "Aid to the Church in Need" (ACN).

In 2022, the medal was awarded to the humanitarian organization "Fraternity Without Borders" - FSF, which works in some of the poorest countries in the world, bringing hope and a deep desire to help end hunger and build a world of peace. The Fraternity was founded in 2009 in Brazil and today it develops projects in sub-Saharan African countries, in Senegal and in Haiti.

During the CGI assembly held in Paris in June 2022, an announcement was made that the medal would be awarded to the Fraternity Without Borders, but the signing of a cooperation agreement and the awarding of the medal were postponed due to the FSF President' scheduling difficulties.

The International Territorial Vice-president America 3, brother Julio César Marques de Lima, was charged to present the medal on behalf of the CGI and to sign the cooperation agreement. The presentation took place in the city of Uberlândia, Brazil, on November 13, 2022, during the V Meeting of the FSF. In awarding the medal, the CGI representative read a message from the President General and delivered the award to Mr. Wagner Moura, FSF's founder-president.

After the conclusion of this partnership, National Councils in countries where the FSF is present will be able to contact the FSF with the aim to establish joint initiatives benefitting those most in need.

Caritas thanks SSVP for joint effort in building 300 houses in Nepal

The initiative took place after the 2015 earthquake

The devastating earthquakes that struck Nepal in 2015 left 8 844 confirmed deaths, more than 20 000 injured, 600 000 houses fully destroyed, and more than 280 000 houses partially damaged.

During this time, the Council General International of the Society of St Vincent de Paul helped the affected people of Bulung Village (Dolakha District) rebuilding the village about 300 houses, to support Caritas Nepal. We also supported the installation of drinking water systems to these households. Altogether, SSVP spent around Euro 800 000 euros in earthquake's reliefing.

During the visit to Nepal made by the President General International, Brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, on January 14th and 15th, a special diploma was delivered to the Council General International, and it will be placed at the world headquarters in Paris. The certificate is an acknowledgement of our partnership with Caritas Nepal by helping the people affected by the disaster, and for supporting Caritas Nepal in the social development services in general.

"I want to thank all the countries, that make up our Confederation, for having, in 2015, sent the economic resources necessary for CGI to effect this collaboration with Caritas, and thus we were able to help hundreds of Nepalese," said President Lima de Oliveira.

Brother Johnson Varghese
ITVP Asia 1

SSVP - the International Twinning Program and the Canadian Experience

The Twinning Program

The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries and the Vincentian preferential option for the poor spurs Conferences and Councils to assist others with less resources... This direct link between two Conferences or Councils, consisting of: **sharing prayers, a profound friendship and material resources,** is called "Twinning". This is one of the activities most cherished by the Society. Twinning aims to create a unique global network of charity, love and solidarity, dedicated to sharing the necessities of life with as many of Christ's poor as possible.[1]

The programs includes **Twinning Projects**, which offer financial support for material (housing, water well, micro-business, etc.), education (school, daycare, cafeteria, etc.), social development (shelter for the aged or women, orphanage, etc.) or medical assistance (dispensary, mobile health unit, etc.). Projects are meant to help and empower a group of persons in need, with the aim of resolving a structural or systemic issue in their community.

The concept of mutual assistance dates back to the beginning of the Society in 1833 when its main founder, Blessed Frédéric-Antoine Ozanam, stated "I would like to embrace the whole world in a network of charity". The Council General International (CGI) officially launched twinning, as a formal program, in 1954. Twinning was reinforced at the International level in 1979 when those present at a 'Plenary Meeting' of the CGI declared that, "all monies collected in the name of the *Society anywhere, belong in principle, to the poor of the world*."[2]

The International Twinning Commission (ITC), its governing body, was created by the President General of the Society in 2011 to foster and enhance twinning worldwide. The ITC is composed of a Chairperson and Coordinators representing all continents.[3] The CGI designates donor National Councils to twin with specific recipient countries because of language, proximity, cultural and historic relationships, etc. (e.g. USA/Canada >> Americas). At this time, there are 18 donor countries to 85 receiving Vincentian territories. In 2021, forty one (41) countries did not received funding while others had multiple donors. Donor countries contributed a total of 2,539,096€ (63% for projects) in 2021, an increase of 83,017€ over 2020.

SSVP Canada's Twinning Experience

Twinning relationships were first established in the 1960s in Canada with recipient conferences and councils of emerging countries (e.g.: Chili, Dominican Republic). The first Twinning Guide was drafted in 1971. However the program was formalized later, in the 1990s, with the establishment of a National Committee and Regional Twinning Coordinators, and the publication of a Twinning Manual. The program has been eagerly promoted since then.

At this time, Canadian donor conferences and councils support 192 active twinning in 22 countries, mostly in Caribbean, Central and South American countries. There is coordination with the SSVP USA to avoid duplication of donor twins to receiving partners. For the year 2021, the financial donations by SSVP Canada entities amounted to 243,198€ (10% of worldwide contributions). The number of twinning continues to increase annually.

Challenges

Our brothers and sisters in developing countries need twinning, the SSVP's main worldwide charity network, more than ever. In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, wars (Ukraine), large increase of migrants/refugees and degradation of social/political/security environments in several countries (Haiti, RDC, Venezuela) have created serious challenges for local Vincentians and their ability to support those most in need. Twinning remains an important solidarity and sharing program for the Society.

Clermont Fortin
Chairperson, National Twinning Committee
National Council of Canada – SSVP

References:

[1] International Twinning Policies & Procedures Manual (2019), Preface, p. 2

[2] IBID, section 1A, p. 7

[3] IBID, section 1B, p.7

Report on the participation of the SSVP Council General at the United Nations – Geneva

The United Nations in Geneva has been for more than 75 years a center of multilateralism, working for peace, the rights and well-being of "men, women and children everywhere. In the historic setting of the Palais des Nations, the UN – Geneva brings together people, organizations and nations to ensure a better future for all.

As a diplomatic center with almost universal representation of states, Geneva is the ideal place for international cooperation to flourish. Last year, some 5,300 meetings were held at the Palais des Nations, each of them impacting the lives of people around the world in various ways.

Driven by the desire to maintain international peace and security, it works actively to advance disarmament, implement the Sustainable Development Goals, protect and promote human rights, promote gender equality, eradicate poverty and provide timely and effective humanitarian assistance in emergency situations.

Through partnerships between governments, civil society, research centers, academia and other international actors, UN Geneva strives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. By fostering mutual respect and understanding, cultural exchange and debate, UN Geneva protects and preserves the institutional memory and cultural heritage of the United Nations (https://www.ungeneva.org/rapportannuel/).

I have the privilege of representing the Council General International of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul at the United Nations in Geneva. I am very grateful to the President General who chose me and placed his trust in me. These past three years have completely changed our way of life, but despite the difficulties and my humble means, I have been able to continue to maintain relations with our NGO partners and UN agencies.

Here are some of the files and work carried out, sometimes by videoconferences, through exchanges or by co-signing different Statements prepared by our NGO partners:

- February 28 – April 1, 2022. 49th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, co-signatory of the Declaration Call for Peace for Ukraine..

- Statement to the United Nations High Commissioner on Violence against Children: Interactive dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary

General on Violence against Children.

- March 21, 2022. Statement by the Global Non Killing Centre at the 49th session of the Human Rights Council. Item 4, General debate, Geneva.
- April 6, 2022. Mail to Nicolo Ciatttoni of Points Coeur on aid to Ukraine from SSVP countries bordering Ukraine.
- April 12 and 13, 2022. Celebration of the International Street Children's Day; participation in round tables organiszed by the « Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil International » on the theme « From exclusion to inclusion: what perspectives do children living in the street have? »
- August 19, 2022. Participation in a ceremony commemorating the « World Humanitarian Day ».
- September 1, 2022. Statement dated August 31, 2022 by Bishop Fortunus Nwachukwu at the 10th Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.
- September 12 – October 7, 2022. 51st Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, Item 3: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to development.
- Joint oral statement delivered by: Pope John XXIII Community Association.
- September 21, 2022. Participation to the 10th anniversary of the Geneva peace talks.
- Declarations on the right to development.
- September 12 – October 7, 2022. Session of the Human Rights Council. Signing of the oral statement of Pope John XXIII Community Association.
- September 14, 2022. Webinar continuation of the cycle on Human Trafficking: "The use of technology to recruit and control victims of human trafficking with special reference to sex trafficking of children and women".
- September 15, 2022. Event: The Doha (Qatar) Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries: Human Rights Challenges and Opportunities".
- September 25, 2022. Celebration of the 10th World Day of Migrants and Refugees.
- September 29, 2022. Webinar continuation of the cycle on Human Trafficking / "Human Trafficking and Laudato Si towards a new paradigm to ensure the protection of human dignity, prevent and eradicate human trafficking". Building a new model of society focusing on people. This cycle of webinars takes place since 2021.
- September 30, 2022. Agenda item 6: General discussion.
- Interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity.
- October 24, 2022. Statement by Bishop Fortunus Nwachukwu at the International Dialogue on Migration and the International Organization for Migration, part 1: "What do we know? Climate change, food insecurity, human mobility and the role of oceans, water and land."
- November 6-18, 2022. COP 27 on climate change in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt.
- November 29, 2022. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People..
- December 13, 2022. Consultation of the ECOSOC Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations..

I thank brother Renato Lima for having chosen me for such an important service to our Society.

Marie Françoise Salesiani-Payet
SSVP General Secretary
SSVP Representative at the UN – Geneva Headquarters

María Luisa Téllez
Vice President International Training

The Critique

Today, in these pages offered by the Ozanam Network magazine, we are going to talk about criticism.

For Vincentians it should always be constructive criticism. A useful tool that facilitates coexistence, especially in the face of our brothers and sisters to whom we lend our help.

According to the following definition, to CRITICIZE is "to communicate information to others in such a way as to enable them to use it for their own benefit".

A few elements that constitute constructive criticism:

1. Delineate the behavior that facilitates criticism.
2. Make the critique specific to the problem you want to address.
3. Ensure that the behavior to be criticized can be modified.
4. Do not insist too much. A long and repetitive criticism will make the interlocutor "disconnect" and not pay attention out of boredom.
5. Commit to help and collaborate to find a solution.
6. Avoid angry gestures. Voice and language should not convey hostility, irony or sarcasm.
7. Offer small incentives if behavior change occurs.
8. Ensure that the other person understands the criticism and the reason for it.
9. Demonstrate understanding and empathy for feelings and self.
10. Make your critique at the right time and in the right place. Never in front of other people.

And finally, if a critique produces positive results, it should be acknowledged and verbally thanked the person.

Interview with Irmgard Groier, new International Vice President for SSVP Europe 2

"Faith holds it all together"

Our Society in Austria brings us closer to his life, which is sustained by an attitude open to love for her fellow human beings and for the love of God, a love that sustains faith and makes us very sensitive to the suffering of others.

What does the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul mean in your life?

For me, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul means being at the service of others; there are many who need me as much as I can give. Over the years I have become more sensitive and I detect situations of poverty more easily. This evolution also allows me to focus on the essential things in life and on the special qualities of my fellow human beings, whom I help with joy and devotion.

What qualities would you highlight about the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul?

Love, humility, mercy are values that appear within the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul when you live it from the inside. These qualities are important to situate yourself, to have a critical look, to give space to poverty in your life and to walk the path that saint Vincent de Paul taught us and that he lived in such a self-sacrificing way.

Could you describe how you live your faith within your Vincentian Conference?

I live my faith with affection for all. I encounter my fellow human beings through love. Love that is born from the heart becomes an open heart and, therefore, a loving heart. Love can do much; it makes us strong, it gives us courage and, above all, it enables us to approach our neighbor with affection and understanding. It brings us especially close to those in need, those we care for, who depend on the love that comes from the heart. But love also comes from God and it is this divine love that gives us the possibility to see people as brothers and sisters, with all their dignity. We all have divine love and power in us, and in every person we meet, we meet God. It is a wonderful cycle in the life of each one of us.

How did you feel about being called to international service in the General Council?

At first, I felt a little overwhelmed, how could I possibly be asked to do such a thing? I then took some time for reflection, analyzed all the pros and cons and then decided to accept this very honorable and responsible position that I will exercise with humility and gratitude.

What are the objectives you would like to set for yourself as International Territorial Vice President Europe 2?

I will be in contact first with the Zone Coordinators and then with the National Presidents of each country in Europe 2. I would like to encourage the use of online conferences whenever possible. I have set myself the goal of getting to know in depth the people who are part of this zone that I have been assigned to coordinate.

From your point of view, what do the Conferences of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Europe most need to revitalize their evangelizing action?

When there is a need to revive the evangelizing mission, it usually takes courage to live the faith. Faith holds everything together. When the heart speaks and love takes hold of you, faith is with you.

Faith is much deeper than we think and, above all, it is constant. It is faith in an all-encompassing God, a loving God, a God whom we sometimes find difficult to see but who is there, a God whom we must never

forget. It is unconditional love that allows us to live what constitutes our faith. Show your faith!

A few brief details about my Vincentian life and service

Growing up in a very Catholic family, social commitment was not foreign to me. Already as a child and later as a teenager, I accompanied my parents when there was something to do on a voluntary basis. Listening to people has always been important to me. This listening has stayed with me to this day.

In 1991, my father had to leave the presidency of the Central Council of the Vincentian Communities of Carinthia for health reasons and in a very natural way I was elected to represent this Zone Council. In April 1993 I assumed the presidency, which I still hold today. From 1998 to 2012 I was involved in social counseling, home visits, food parcels and financial aid.

On January 23, 2005 I was elected President of the St. Hemma Parish Conference and on February 2, 2007 this group launched the "VinziBus" project for the homeless. In July 2011, we inaugurated the "Clothing Room" project for clothing distribution. We also founded a food distribution center, in collaboration with Caritas and other local associations. We carried out this action just before a massive arrival of refugees in November 2015. This resource started by opening 3 times a week and served about 100 people a day. It is now open 5 days a week.

However, the activity with which I most identify is "perspectives for children", a children's project in which children receive school supplies, clothing, engage in sports activities and therapy. The children must feel that they have a place of reference in order to strengthen their personality. This is the only way to a mature and independent life.

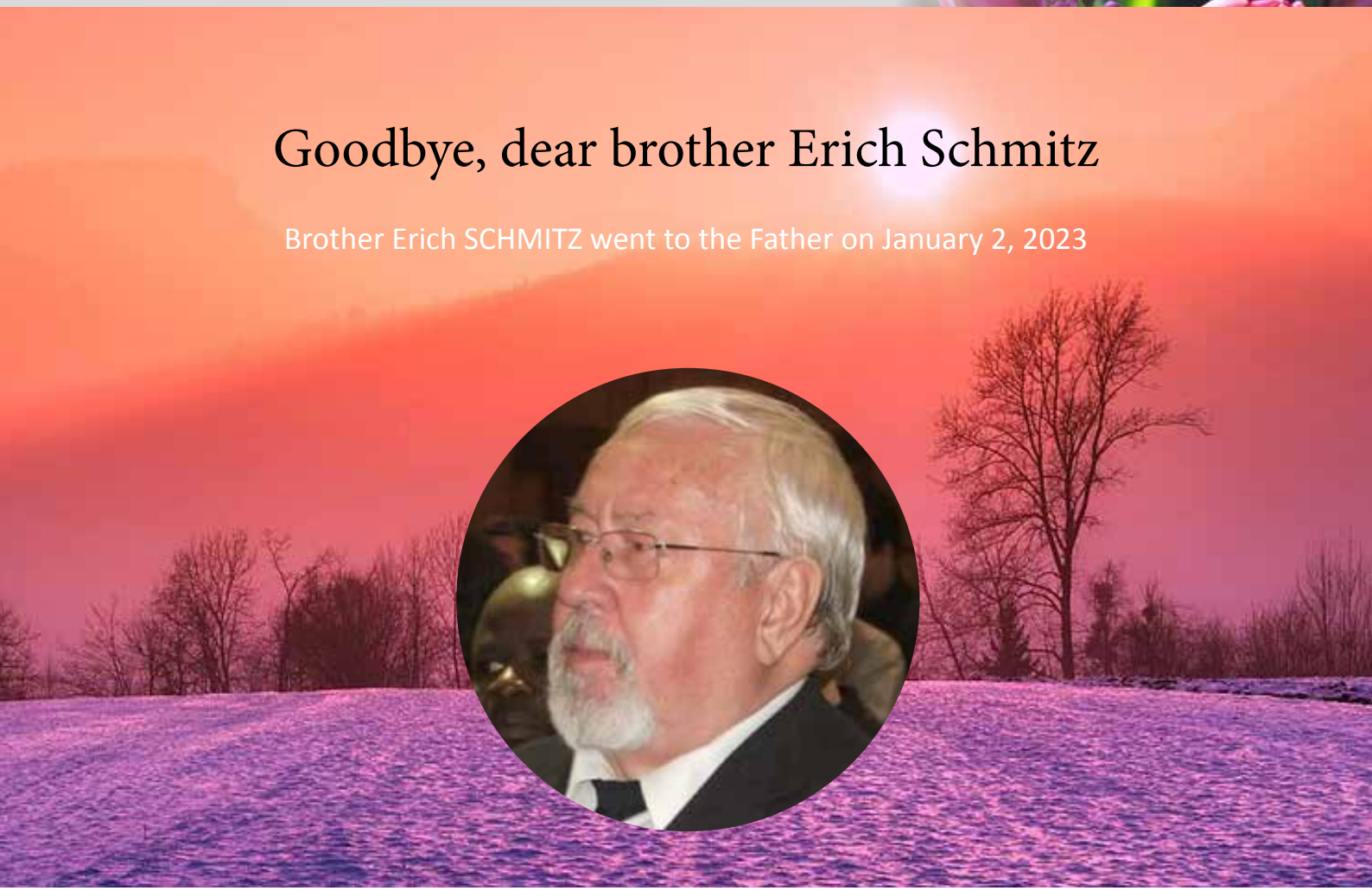
In addition to all of the above, at Christmas I organize the distribution of food and hygiene items for needy families. All this is done with a great team of volunteers to whom I am very grateful for their collaboration.

I have been serving the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul for 30 years and in all this time I have been able to acquire a lot of social and charitable experience.

Now, I would like to tell you a little about my family life. I live in the south of Austria, in the federal state of Carinthia. I am 73 years old, have three children and three grandchildren. What are my hobbies? I go to a ballet school for adults and do yoga with my son. I also take singing lessons and this activity allows me to sing during mass, together with a small choir, in my church.

Goodbye, dear brother Erich Schmitz

Brother Erich SCHMITZ went to the Father on January 2, 2023



He was a long-time brother, having entered the German Conferences in 1959. He lived in Remagen and fulfilled several missions in our Society:

Leader of the Vincentian Youth for 8 years, National President of Germany (13 years), Vice President (6 years), Vincentian Youth Committee member (7 years), Zone Coordinator Europe II (15 years), VinPaz Coordinator (4 years) and Secretary General of the CGI from 2005 to 2010.

Our distinguished brother was very involved in the Church and with the poor.

All those who knew him remember him as a friendly, empathetic and very warm man, always ready to improve things.

On behalf of all of you, on behalf of members of the Secretariat with whom Erich worked, I offer our condolences to his children and grandchildren, assuring them of our fervent prayers.

Farewell dear Erich! We entrust you to our merciful Father, may He welcome you into eternal joy and peace.

Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet
General Secretary

MISSION

A NETWORK OF FRIENDS, SEEKING HOLINESS VIA THE PERSONAL SERVICE TO THE POOR AND THE ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE..

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- **EMPATHY**

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2. **YOUTH**
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   Building a global network of spiritual and material support
4. **EXPANSION**
   Presence in all countries
5. **VINCENTIAN FAMILY**
   Permanent and closed collaborationa
6. **SOLIDARITY**
   International and local partnerships
7. **GLOBAL AID**
   Revamping fraternal aid and development
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   Renew with the use of world-class technology
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