



**Society of Saint Vincent de Paul  
International Confederation  
Council General International**

**BROCHURE IN ENGLISH**

# **INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF THE 17TH PRESIDENT GENERAL INTERNACIONAL**



Brother Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez

New term's motto:  
**"See how they love each other" (Ozanam, 1853)**

Paris, 9 September 2023





## SCRIPT

1. Readings – Holy Mass
2. Homily by Father Andrés Motto, CM
3. Farewell speech by the 16th President General International (2016/2023), brother Renato Lima de Oliveira
4. Inauguration speech by the 17th President General International (2023/2029), brother Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez
5. Announcement of the winners of the International Literary Competition - Vincentian Characters - Jules Gossin (2nd President General International)
6. New Board of Directors and organigram chart (2023/2029)
7. Vincentian confraternization

## HOLY MASS' READINGS

### First Reading

#### 1<sup>st</sup> John 4, 7-16

<sup>7</sup> My dear friends, let us love one another, since love is from God and everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.

<sup>8</sup> Whoever fails to love does not know God, because God is love.

<sup>9</sup> This is the revelation of God's love for us, that God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him.

<sup>10</sup> Love consists in this: it is not we who loved God, but God loved us and sent his Son to expiate our sins.

<sup>11</sup> My dear friends, if God loved us so much, we too should love one another.

<sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God, but as long as we love one another God remains in us and his love comes to its perfection in us.

<sup>13</sup> This is the proof that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us a share in his Spirit.

<sup>14</sup> We ourselves have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as Savior of the world.

<sup>15</sup> Anyone who acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God.

<sup>16</sup> We have recognized for ourselves, and put our faith in, the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.

### PSALM

#### Ecclesiasticus 3, 29-30; 4, 1-10

<sup>29</sup> The heart of the sensible will reflect on parables, an attentive ear is the sage's dream.

<sup>30</sup> Water puts out a blazing fire, almsgiving expiates sins.

<sup>1</sup> My child, do not refuse the poor a livelihood, do not tantalize the needy.

<sup>2</sup> Do not add to the sufferings of the hungry, do not bait anyone in distress.

<sup>3</sup> Do not aggravate a heart already angry, nor keep the destitute waiting for your alms.

<sup>4</sup> Do not repulse a hard-pressed beggar, nor turn your face from the poor.

<sup>5</sup> Do not avert your eyes from the needy, give no one occasion to curse you;

<sup>6</sup> for if someone curses you in distress, his Maker will give ear to the imprecation.

<sup>7</sup> Gain the love of the community, in the presence of the great bow your head.

<sup>8</sup> To the poor lend an ear, and courteously return the greeting.

<sup>9</sup> Save the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor, and do not be mean-spirited in your judgements.

<sup>10</sup> Be like a father to the fatherless and as good as a husband to their mothers. And you will be like a child to the Most High, who will love you more than your own mother does.

## **Gospel**

### **Luke 10, 25-37**

<sup>25</sup> And now a lawyer stood up and, to test him, asked, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

<sup>26</sup> He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?'

<sup>27</sup> He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.'

<sup>28</sup> Jesus said to him, 'You have answered right, do this and life is yours.'

<sup>29</sup> But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'

<sup>30</sup> In answer Jesus said, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead.'

<sup>31</sup> Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

<sup>32</sup> In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him and passed by on the other side.

<sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan traveler who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him.

<sup>34</sup> He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him.

<sup>35</sup> Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, "Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have."

<sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?'

<sup>37</sup> He replied, 'The one who showed pity towards him.' Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself.'

## **HOMILY – HOLY MASS** **FATHER ANDRÉS MOTTO, CM**

Dear Vincentian brothers and sisters, let us follow these biblical readings that mark the way forward for all of us. Especially for Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez as the new International President of the SSVP and also for the new General Government. For this task we have many good examples, especially Blessed Anthony Frederick Ozanam. We will make a Vincentian reading of these beautiful texts.

One of the recurring themes in the Book of Sirach is that we should do good to the poor. Many times, he will say it as a negative form of advice: "do not do this". For example: "Son, do not deny the poor his livelihood", "Do not turn your eyes away from the poor". Sometimes he will say it in the form of positive advice: "Listen carefully to the poor". Today... all this advice must be anchored in our hearts. Later on, he will point out that poverty is not a vice. What a topical idea! Laziness is a vice, but being poor is not. A book from my homeland, the Martin Fierro says, "Shame is not being poor, shame is being a thief". As SSVP let us renew our commitment to help people out of material and spiritual poverty. In this 21st century, such a task requires a lot of work and a lot of creativity.

Let us turn to the Gospel of Luke 10, 25-37. Where the parable of the Good Samaritan is told. So much worked on in recent years. It ends with an invitation to action: "Go and do likewise".

Let us note that Blessed Frederick brings the example of Vincent de Paul to explain that the service of the poor cannot depend only on the State. Each of us in society is responsible for ensuring that people enjoy a dignified life. To delegate this function only to those in power is to fail in the duty of every good citizen, of every good Christian, which is to help a brother in need, as Jesus himself teaches us in this parable of the Good Samaritan. Can we imagine the Good Samaritan who, seeing the wounded man by the side of the road, would have simply approached the local authorities to notify them of the incident and continued on his way? That does not seem to be a sufficient attitude.

In the Church of the Acts of the Apostles, the early Christians were already organizing themselves to help widows, orphans and other poor people. Therefore, charity is and must be something permanent and intrinsic in the life of the Church and particularly in the Vincentian life. For charity and justice are at the heart of the Gospel.

Frederick and his friends organized themselves to help the impoverished. Let us remember that the 19th century was not easy for French society: instability and political corruption, a large part of the business community advocated for a harsh and exploitative capitalism,

while conservative groups wanted to maintain the status quo of exclusion which translated into misery for the working class or the unemployed. The abandoned or misguided workers demanded their rights with revolts and revolutions. Frederic Ozanam saw that a considerable part of the population lived in destitution and lack of conditions for a dignified life. It is good to remember, once again, that faced with the question: "What does the Church do in these situations?", this group of friends created the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, to visit and help the poor.

No one doubts that the State has the primary responsibility for overcoming poverty. But we know that alone it is not enough. Even if we had many Vincentians in the different governments. As SSVP we have to build a more just and supportive world. Giving time, goods and skills to the world of the marginalized. Working as an organized community.

For this to go well, the example and guidance of Juan Manuel with his General Council is very much needed. Can I tell you a few elements to get it right? First of all, a ton of humility. Going back to Sirach, it says that a proud heart is like an attraction for misfortune to come. Our dear Pope Francis says to everyone who is elected bishop and cardinal. "Never think you are better than others or have more rights than others". For this is the ruin of every institution. Along with humility I invite you to prayer, formation, teamwork and direct contact with the poor. As Vincent de Paul would say, if you live this, fear nothing. May Mary be with you in this new administration.

**Father Andrés Motto, CM.**

**International Spiritual Advisor (2016/2023)**

## **Speech – Brother RENATO LIMA DE OLIVEIRA 16th President General International**

My dear brothers and sisters,  
Guests of the Vincentian Family,  
Staff from Paris,  
To all who follow us live on Ozanam TV.

### **Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ! Forever be praised!**

Today is a day of celebration for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. In 184 years of a rich and fruitful history, the International General Council now has a new leader, the "major leader", the successor of Bailly de Surcy. Today our confrere JUAN MANUEL BUERGO GÓMEZ, a Spanish, takes office as the 17th International President General.

I am very pleased to have him as my successor. I became his friend some years ago and came to admire him. He has carried out important tasks and participated in relevant assignments in the current Board of the General Council. He has always been by my side in the main moments, both of joy and of difficulties, putting forward ideas and suggestions that have enriched me. Always positive, always visionary, always motivating!

We may even have different opinions, but we hardly ever disagreed on the most fundamental issues of our Society. Due to his moral, human and spiritual formation he prevents people from having conflicts. Juan is a conciliator, a person of dialogue, of consensus. Over the years, I have gained most from this friendship, as have all the other Vincentians who enjoy his closeness.

I know your beautiful family well. I know of your great devotion to St. Vincent de Paul. His passion for Frederick Ozanam is public and notorious. It is motivating to see him cherishing the memory of the seven founders and the Vincentian virtues. He is a man of faith, a man of prayer, a man with a strong spiritual preparation, in addition to the administrative qualities that we all already know.

For all this, I wish, at this moment, with great vigour, to thank God for his election, because it was really the "hand of God", through the Divine Holy Spirit, that watched over the electoral process and chose, among the three suitable candidates, the one who should occupy this noble function, at this time of our Society.

### **Dear brothers, dear sisters,**

In these seven years that I have had the honor of leading the General Council, we have faced a pandemic that has imposed immense restrictions on humanity. Not only that, but we have also had to deal with an increasing number of refugees, the reality of terrorism and wars, the growth of misery, inflation and unemployment, and worst of all: the increase in moral and spiritual poverty, represented by the absence of Christ in people's hearts and lives.

Even with difficulties, these have been seven years of many joys and accomplishments. The advances made by the General Council are undeniable. For example, in the fields of communication, youth, formation, transparency, international structure and management, we have made great steps ahead. On the theme of the seven founders and the canonization of Ozanam, progress is evident. The Ombudsman General's Office has also been an initiative that has



generated numerous benefits and mitigated conflicts, earning it a well-deserved place in our Statutes. The single universal logo is already being adopted by 90% of the countries that form the Confederation!

We are much closer to the Church, to the Vincentian Family and to various benevolent entities worldwide, through agreements and alliances. We are better known today in the Vatican and the United Nations. We have expanded our charism to nine new nations. On the economic side, thanks to a responsible and austere management, we are in the best financial situation of the last 20 years.

We have invested heavily in institutional relations. We have visited 50 countries during the seven years, even with the pandemic and my professional limitations, bringing the presence and support of the General Council everywhere, encouraging our members to live and deepen our charism, strengthening the network of charity dreamed of by the seven founders. In addition, Ozanam TV was highlighted for the transparency it added to this administration.

We have acquired a new, modern and spacious headquarters, preparing the General Council for the future. It is clear that we are now much closer and we are better known and recognized in the relationship with the National Councils, and especially with the brothers and sisters at grassroots level (Conferences).

We have also succeeded in discovering new talents in these seven years of administration who, with God's grace, will be able to serve in the new administration. I have tried to be a humane, courteous and humble president, despite my limitations and shortcomings. I am proud of all that we have undertaken together as a board. I have dedicated myself to this service "body and soul", choosing as my motto "Whoever wishes to be first, let him be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 10:35).

I could not fail to mention at this ceremony the importance of France for me, for the General Council and for the whole Society. During my seven years in office, I have been to several French cities in order to the tombs of the founders, where I have always been received with great affection and consideration. This has given me the opportunity to get to know the charitable work of the Conferences, which seek to provide a differentiated service to families in need and to people living in solitude.

My appreciation for France is so great that I presented an amendment to the Statutes, approved in Rome last June, including this great country in the list of fixed members of the International Executive Committee, no matter how many Conferences it has or will have. This is a very just recognition that is necessary, and which represents, for me, my "end-of-term gift" to dear France.

### **Dear brothers, dear sisters,**

I always say that serving on the General Council is a challenge of enormous responsibility, but at the same time it is a great privilege. The General Council is nothing more than an institution that watches over the future of our Society, keeping it together, always innovating and bringing new services and programs through strategy and communication. Being PRESIDENT GENERAL is a great honour.

I can only thank God for being the first Brazilian to occupy the noble service of President General. I have carried the name of Brazil to all corners of the world, and have shown everyone that we, although coming from a developing country, are able to manage the most important Council in the structure of our Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

I do not intend to mention names here today, because I run the risk of forgetting several, and I do not want to be unfair or unkind. First of all, I thank immensely my family (Andréa, Gustavo and Bianca) who have supported me without limits

during these years. Also, on behalf of dear Father Andrés Motto, I thank all those - the Board of Directors, the staff of the headquarters and the Superior Councils - who helped me to carry out the mission of having been the 16th INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT GENERAL OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VICENT DE PAUL, a service for which I never imagined that God would one day call me, choose me or summon me.

To you, dear Juan, I wish God to protect you from all evil and injustice. May God lead you along the paths that lead to unity and friendship among ALL the members of the SSV, an essential environment for the exercise of Vincentian service. In order for our Society to fulfil the mission God has entrusted to us, it is imperative that each one of us cancel ourselves so that the Society, and only the Society, may appear and grow.

In fact, the Society does not need us; WE ARE THE ONES WHO NEED IT MOST in order to reach out to the vulnerable and thus come face to face with the suffering Christ in these our brothers and sisters. May God give you and your family the strength to combat the complex and challenging situations that are sure to arise in your journey as President General. Jesus himself promised: "Whoever declares himself in my favour before men, I also will declare myself in his favour before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10, 32).

### **Dear brother Juan,**

I will pray for you every day, that you may have the health to continue in this mission. I will be a loyal and discreet former President General. I will always be by your side, as God will be by your side, according to the promise: "The Lord is by my side like a strong warrior; therefore, those who persecute me will fall defeated. The Lord saved the life of a poor man from the hands of the wicked" (Jeremiah 20:11-13).

In this, my last address as President General, I pray to God that the serene and loving mantle of Our Lady may cover us with blessings and joys, and that the General Council may continue to be what it is today: a beacon to enlighten, inspire and guide our entire beloved Society. And may you, dear President Juan, be blessed more and more each day, showing yourself as a true example of servant leadership, to inspire our members all over the world with the Vincentian virtues!

Our family, Juan, means EVERYTHING to us! I, without the presence and intercession of my family, would not have made it to the end of this journey. Just as you, with the unconditional support of your family, will be able to walk this valuable "missionary path" until the last day, with charity, compassion, patience and simplicity.

Thank you all very much!

Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ! Forever be praised!

Brother **Renato Lima de Oliveira**

16th President General International

Paris, September 9, 2023

**SPEECH – 17<sup>TH</sup> PRESIDENT GENERAL INTERNATIONAL**  
**Brother JUAN MANUEL BUERGO GÓMEZ**

Good morning, dear friends,

On this very special day for me, I begin by invoking the Lord in the face of this immense responsibility of being the seventeenth President General, which the assembly has placed in my hands without my having any merit for it. The Lord, as I said to my fellow members in Rome, sometimes makes use of weak people to do His holy will. The Conferences need now more than ever a greater commitment to undertake new paths that increase the double purpose for which they were founded: "To be useful to our brothers and to ourselves". Together in friendship, in prayer and in fraternal community, which is the seed of our beloved Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

God's plans almost always exceed us and sometimes overwhelm us, only if we recognise that God loves us we shall feel confident enough, strong enough, to allow ourselves to be impregnated by His grace and to know that we are fulfilling His will, which is to carry out our mission with the apostolic zeal with which our patron Saint Vincent de Paul exhorts us. Apostolic zeal is an authentically Vincentian virtue, it is always being there in the adverse situations of our brothers and sisters, sharing their sufferings, but also their joys. It is the experience of feeling loved, it is an embrace of love that changes lives.

We are "useless servants" and only by grace can we face this service in hope; it will be only by His love poured out, it will be by our example of mutual love, as I was saying to my fellow members in Rome, when that contagious joy, that Christian commitment will be manifested, with which we will be able to excite and promote a healthy growth of the Conferences.

The motto I have chosen to personify the unity and fraternity of the Conferences is aimed at fostering a sense of belonging, at nurturing friendship among the members and at feeling united in St. Vincent with the rest of the branches of our Vincentian Family.

The motto is embodied in a letter written by our principal founder, Frederic Ozanam, in Pisa in 1853, when he was already mortally ill:

"...Tears of joy escape my eyes, when I find at such a great distance our little family, always small by the discretion of its works, but great by the blessing of God. Although speaking different languages, our hands are always clasped with such fraternal cordiality that they could well recognise us by the same sign with which they recognised the first Christians: **"See how they love each other"**.

It is this same emotion, the same that Frederick felt, that we feel when we recognise each other by our love for one another.

The "network of charity that embraces the world", which Frederic Ozanam longed for, it is the one that we have been weaving for the past 190 years. Today, by the Lord's will, the Society of St Vincent de Paul is a great family by God's blessing implanted in 155 countries, and it is admirable to see how we all feel united in a single Conference that extends throughout the world. But when fraternal cordiality disappears and the network of charity is broken - and sometimes we suffer these tearing because our ego does not allow the Holy Spirit to act -, neither the existence nor the healthy growth of the Conferences is possible, we lose our essence. That is why it is necessary to respect ourselves, to ask for forgiveness, to forgive ourselves and to go to the sacraments, to restore ourselves with His grace.

Precisely for this reason, the first point of my program is our spiritual strengthening, because, ultimately, we are members of the Conferences in order to improve ourselves and to grow in faith.

An ambitious program that, in short, wants to make our institution and its social action better known as a world reference. To this end, I want to strengthen communication, support relations with the Vincentian Family, try to provide a better service to the National Councils, promote new international twinning projects, increase collaboration with other similar institutions for the creation and extension of the Conferences, increase the presence of the youth, and also, study creative forms of financing, to attract new resources and tackle the new types of poverty we are facing.

Today, on the feast of Blessed Ozanam, I would like to recall here before the tomb of our patron saint, the loving and committed words of Frederick about St. Vincent: "A model that we must strive to live as he himself did, the divine model that is Jesus Christ. He is a life to be continued; a heart in which to warm one's own heart, an intelligence in which to seek light; a model on earth and a protector in heaven; to whom we owe the double cult of imitation and invocation".

After these beautiful words of Frederick, I would now like to express my gratitude to Tomaz Mavric, to the Daughters of Charity present here representing the Society, their Mother General Sister Françoise Petit, the former Servant General Presidents who preceded me, but most especially to my predecessor, President Renato Lima de Oliveira and his outgoing team who, in spite of the many difficulties of all kinds he faced along the way, has always been there, without faltering, giving the best of himself to provide a better service to the evangelical work of the Conferences, thank you very much, dear Brother Renato, for the example of fortitude that you have given us.

During your presidency I have participated in different commissions as a member and chaired the International Historical Commission, the service position that I have most enjoyed, mainly because of all that I have been able to learn. In recent years, I have also had the honor of being appointed 3rd Deputy General Vice-President. I would also like to thank you for the opportunity and the trust you have placed in me.

Let me now express my recognition to the new members of this Bureau, who have accepted this position of service, as well as all the members and volunteers of the Conferences throughout the world, for their selfless work, always recognized in the eyes of God.

Thanks to all the employees, to all the benefactors and friends of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for their work in favor of the needy, both materially and spiritually. I am grateful to the priests who are concelebrating today, to the Sisters and to the leaders and members of the other branches that make up the Vincentian Family, and to all the members and other faithful present here today.

Finally, I would also like to make a special mention of gratitude to the spouses and relatives of the members from all over the world, who patiently put up with the absences and sometimes also suffer changes in family plans because of some assignment of service.

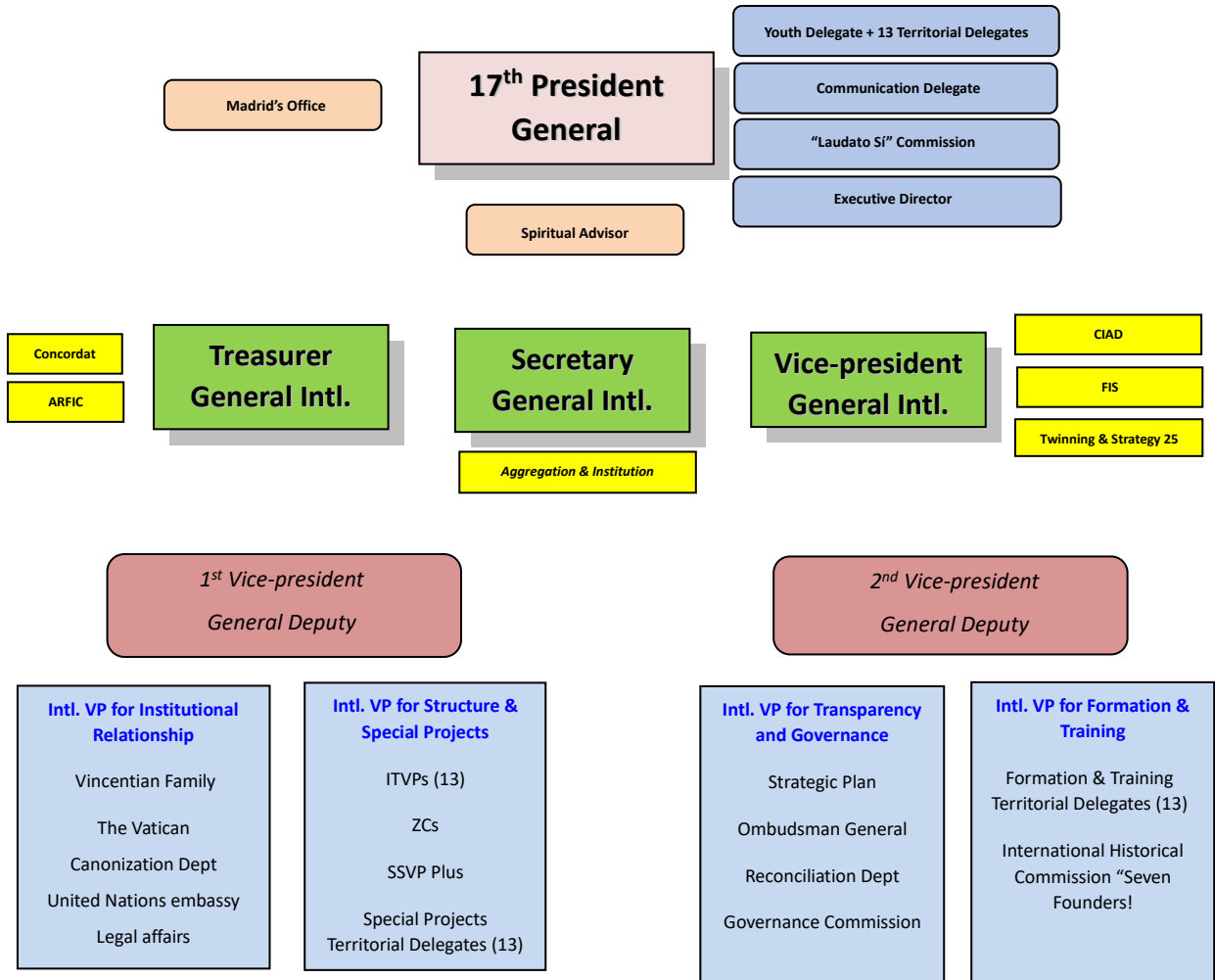
May the Immaculate Virgin, our patroness, protect the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Vincentian Family, us and our families.

Thank you again for your presence and your support. Receive a fraternal embrace in Saint Vincent de Paul and in Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

Paris, 9 September 2023, feast of Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

Brother **Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez**  
17th President General International

# ORGANIGRAM CHART (2023/2029) COUNCIL GENERAL INTERNATIONAL



**NEW INTERNATIONAL BOARD (2023/2029)  
COUNCIL GEENRAL INTERNATIONAL**

| <b>Foto</b>   | <b>Name</b>                        | <b>Country</b>           | <b>Service</b>   |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
|    | <b>Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez</b>    | Spain                    | 17º President General International                        |
|    | <b>Ralph Middlecamp</b>            | United States of America | Vice-president General International                       |
|    | <b>Jérôme Perrin</b>               | France                   | Secretary General International                            |
|    | <b>Alfons Ten Velde</b>            | The Netherlands          | Treasurer General International                            |
|    | <b>Juliana Rosa Silva</b>          | Brazil                   | International Delegate for Youth, Children and Adolescents |
|    | <b>Adela Redondo Écija</b>         | Spain                    | International Delegate for Communication & Marketing       |
|   | <b>Padre José Francisco Orozco</b> | Spain                    | International Spiritual Advisor                            |
|  | <b>Sebastián Gramajo</b>           | Argentina                | 1 <sup>st</sup> Vice-president General Deputy              |
|  | <b>Antonio Gianfico</b>            | Italy                    | Intl. Vice-president for Institutional Relationship        |
|  | <b>Júlio César Marques de Lima</b> | Brazil                   | Intl. Vice-president for Structure and Special Projects    |
|  | <b>Urbanus Kinuthia</b>            | Kenya                    | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice-president General Deputy              |
|  | <b>Luz María González</b>          | Mexico                   | Intl. Vice-president for Formation & Training              |
|  | <b>Elaine Heyworth</b>             | England                  | Intl. Vice-president for Transparency & Governance         |
|  | <b>Joseph Pandian</b>              | India                    | Ombudsman General International                            |
|  | <b>Mark Gaetani</b>                | Australia                | Concordat & ARFIC  |

**Note:** the other positions and services will be appointed in due course.



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