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OZANAM NETWORK

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Chairman:
Carlos LAFARGA
Head of English Language:
Mary Whilssy CANDELARIA y Karl HILA
Head of Spanish Language:
Carlos LAFARGA
Head of Portuguese Language and Graphics:
Markinhos PERASSOLI

Translation Coordinator:
Ana CUERVO
Head of Social Media:
Mary Whilssy CANDELARIA
SSVP Representative – Famvin Int. Communication Department:
Karl HILA
Ozanam Network Graphics:
Javier GUIJARRO

Acknowledgements to our Translators' Club for their work:

Rachael Barton
Annie Callaghan
GeovanaCervantes
Eneida Fernández
Clermont Fortin
Fábio Fronza
Cleitom Gomes
Philip Kimmins
Domingo López
Marguerite McMillan
Charles Plock
Allan Ribeiro
Antonio Sebastian
Gilson Timóteo
Joanna Waller

Editorial

SSVP: 187 years of charity for the poor

On April 23, 2020, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul will celebrate its 187th anniversary. With pride and joy, we praise the meritorious initiative of the seven founders, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, founded the first Conference of Charity in Paris.

Since then, with God's help, the Society has spread over the five continents. Today, our Society is present in 150 territories, bringing together 47,000 Conferences and 800,000 active members, and helping 30 million people worldwide every day. So, congratulations to all fellow members, associate members, benefactors and employees for the 187th anniversary of the SSVP!

These 187 years are lessons learnt for us all. This is why I dream of a SSVP free from the excessive bureaucracy in which it is immersed today. In many places of the world, this is turning it into an organisation full of constraints, restrictions, prohibitions and hurdles based upon a rigid hierarchy. I dream of a SSVP without barriers to effective communication, because we know that one of the most recurring problems in our entity is information, which is not conveyed to the grassroots.

I dream of a SSVP more open to the new forms of poverty: loneliness, drugs and mental disorders… challenges that our Conferences are not always ready to face. I dream of a more efficient SSVP when it comes to promoting pro-poor growth and helping people in our Vincentian works.

Ultimately, I dream of a peaceful SSVP, without internal conflicts, with members solely focused on conversion, sanctification and a more fraternal world. I pray to Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam to inspire us to be more pious, more tolerant and more friendly. Now, I would like to extend my invitation to all fellow members of the world. So come and dream with me!

Renato Lima de Oliveira
16th President General

Council General International's Statement with regard to Coronavirus

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul worldwide is joining the efforts of national and international health authorities to fight and minimise the effects of this pandemic sparked by the new Coronavirus outbreak (Covid-19).

The National Councils are responsible for guiding local Vincentian grassroots on this issue, and many Councils are actively involved in each country.

However, given the international scope of the Council General, some recommendations and guidelines for Conferences, Councils and special works of our Society are provided below, particularly in day-care centres, homes for the elderly, foster homes, shelters for the homeless and, above all, in home visits.

It is worth mentioning that there are much more harmful diseases than Covid-19, yet we must take the necessary precautionary measures to protect ourselves and those around us without being alarmist. However, due to the wide dissemination thereof in the international media, this disease has had a great social impact; thus, affecting economy and tourism in many parts of the world, as well as resulting in many deaths.

Council General's recommendations are as follows:

1) HOME VISITS

Extra precautionary measures and care for personal hygiene must be taken during home visits, especially when coming in contact with the people assisted. Each Superior Council will, on a provisional basis, ascertain the appropriateness of home visits, provided that the service offered to those in need is not compromised. Other forms of contact may be adopted on a temporary basis.

2) CHARITABLE WORKS

Closest attention must be paid to general recommendations for cleaning, hygiene and disinfection in the works undertaken by SSVP, especially those whose target is the most vulnerable to the new Coronavirus, such as the elderly. With regard to visits to relatives or friends, the basic recommendations of hygiene set out by the health authorities shall be adopted. In rooms, parishes and other places where the Vincentian Conferences are held, conditions of strict cleanliness and hygiene must be observed.

3) ONGOING SOCIAL PROJECTS

The very same general recommendations shall be applied in the ongoing social projects carried out by Vincentian Conferences around the world. All safety protocols set out by the health authorities in each country must be followed.

4) MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

In all charitable activities, both active SSVP members (brothers and sisters) and volunteers shall take extreme precautions to avoid contagion: practice hand hygiene before and after each contact, and social distancing (at least, two metres), as recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

5) EMPLOYEES OF SPECIAL WORKS SUPPORTED BY THE SSVP

The aforementioned recommendations shall be adopted. Those responsible for these special works shall provide employees with what is needed to fight the virus: masks and hand sanitiser, among other products.

6) COUNCILS' HEADQUARTERS

The employees of Vincentian headquarters shall observe the set of recommendations produced by the relevant authorities to prevent the spread of the virus. Each workplace, following consultation with the respective Council, shall take appropriate precautionary measures, while ensuring continuity of services provided: telecommuting, flex schedules or shift work.

7) CANCELLING OR POSTPONING MEETINGS AND OTHER EVENTS

At each Council's discretion, and if it deems it appropriate, activities, meetings, celebrations, ceremonies, seminars, plenary sessions, pilgrimages or other events may be cancelled or postponed. If not vital, it is recommended that they be postponed. In the event of temporary suspension of activities within the Conferences, Councils or special works, all those related to the SSVP shall be duly informed, especially those in need, volunteers, fellow members, members of the clergy, etc.

8) INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

Leaders of the Council General (especially Territorial Vice-Presidents and Zone Coordinators) shall assess, with calm and caution, whether institutional visits scheduled in the 2020 agenda should be maintained, postponed or cancelled.

9) NAIROBI 2020

To date, the Council General International's annual meeting is to be held in Nairobi (Kenya), from 9 to 14 June 2020. The Council General will meet in April to further consider whether or not to hold this event.

10) HEADQUARTERS IN PARIS

The Council General's Secretary General, fellow member Marie-Françoise Salésiani Payet, is taking all necessary measures to guarantee the best working conditions for the employees at Paris' headquarters, in accordance with the guidelines established by the French health authorities.

FINAL MESSAGEL

The 16th President General, fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, asks the whole international Vincentian community to remain calm, without panic, fear or despair. In the age of social media, there can be many fake news and misinformation. The guidelines provided by health authorities in each country shall be strictly observed.

Should any contingency or doubt arise with regard to this issue, the Council General International is at the disposal of all Superior Councils. Our Ombudsman General, fellow member Alfons ten Velde, is available at cgi.og@ssvpglobal.org.

Let us pray together for the end of this pandemic. Prevention is of paramount importance.

Prayer chain with the Virgin Mary and Blessed Antoine-Frederic Ozanam

OUR LADY OF PONTMAIN (picture of the Virgin)

BLESSED ANTONIO-FEDERICO OZANAM

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

One Hail Mary
And this prayer, dedicated to Vincentians around the world …

Our Lord and Our Father,

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

THE BLESSED VIRGIN OF PONTMAIN, (FRANCE)

"But pray my children. God will soon answer you. My Son, allows himself to be moved".
Appearances of the Blessed Virgin at Pontmain (France) 17 January 1871

During this troubled and uncertain period, when "the sun is darkened","the stars fall from the sky"one by one, and "the moon no longer gives its light", (Matthew, 24, 29) we turn to Mary, our Refuge and our Mother. She is the sign God gives us in the battle, when the forces of Evil are released: "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head"(Revelation, 12, 1).

Mary, Blessed Patron of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, we beseech you to intercede with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for the world today."We know this man really is the Saviour of the World!" John 4, 42. We entrust especially to you:

The people whom we are visiting, or whom we meet, especially those living in social works managed by SSVP

The most vulnerable and distressed of our brothers and sisters

All those who do not have the Faith, those who are afraid or overwhelmed by trouble

Our Conferences and Councils, our Charitable works, all our members and our volunteers

The whole Church, our priests, our bishops, our seminarians and our deacons

All healthcare professionals

Our families, friends and work colleagues

Those who will die today

That the Lord may give us the grace of a true conversion of heart, and that we may live evermore deeply the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity

LET US MEDITATE WITH BLESSED ANTOINE-FREDERIC OZANAM

In uncertainty, believe in Providence

« Let us want all that God wants, even uncertainty. Uncertainty is just that trial in which it pleases him to place us, so that we recognise our trust in Him. He has made life uncertain, and death, and even virtue. We would like to be assured of our income in the coming year, and we aren't even sure that the sun will rise tomorrow. We long to be able to rely on good fortune, but we cannot guarantee even a week of good health. By removing human support from us, Providence makes us feel more strongly that it is carrying us. It's like a mother who takes away the chair in which her child was sitting, just so that she can pick him up and carry him in her arms.»

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

The International General Council asks that this document reach all Conferences, Councils and Vincentian works around the world, and that the prayers contained in it be meditated on during the months of March and April 2020.

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

To all the Superior Councils, International Board, International Structure, Paris staff, commissions (permanent, temporary and special), Holy Church and Vincentian Family.

EXTRAORDINARY ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS OF THE 16th PRESIDENT GENERAL

Faced with the pandemic of the New Coronavirus (Covid-19) that has been affecting humanity for some weeks causing severe restrictions on mobility within countries and preventing movement between continents, and also with the aim of protecting the health of the members of the Council General International and SSVP leaders around the world, the 16th President General International, listening to the members of the International Board, the Permanent Section and the international spiritual advisor, and based on the International Rule (Items 1.6, 3.9, 3.10 and 5.2) and the Statutes of the Confederation (Items 3.2, 3.16 and 3.23), takes the following decisions:

1) SUSPENSION OF ACTIVITIES

The face-to-face meetings/activities of the International Board and other existing commissions within the scope of the Council General International are suspended until a better time. Emphasis will be placed on modern information technology tools, such as virtual sessions and videoconferences.

2) INTERNATONAL TRAVEL

The trips of the members of the Board, the International Structure and the Paris staff are suspended until a date recommended by the worldwide health authorities, when there is no more danger of being infected by the New Coronavirus.

3) INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURE ACTIVITIES

Institutional travels by International Territorial Vice-Presidents (ITVPs), Zone Coordinators and Territorial delegates of Youth, Formation and Special Projects are suspended until further notice. If there is any essential need, each case will be analyzed individually with the express authorization of the President General.

4) MEETINGS POSTPONEMENT

The following events are postponed to a later date: 2nd "All Africa Assembly", Panasco 9, 1st SSVP Latin American Youth Forum and 1st SSVP Francophone Meeting. The 3rd Territorial Meeting of America 3 (South America) is transferred to the last quarter of 2020.

5) CGI ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Council General International of 2020, scheduled to take place in June in Nairobi (Kenya), will not now take place but will be held before the end of the year through videoconference. Superior Councils will be informed about the new date, and will receive all documents digitally in order to be able to fully participate in the event and, properly appreciate the resolutions to be voted on.

6) INVITATION TO PGI

The events, ceremonies, anniversaries, plenary sessions and celebrations, to which the President General International had already been invited throughout 2020, will all be postponed to 2021. The Superior Councils should kindly propose the new dates to the President General.

7) NEW INTERNATIONAL HEAD OFFICE

The official opening of the new headquarters in Paris, originally scheduled for September 12, 2020, will take place on a later date, to be announced.

8) STAFF IN PARIS

In order to guarantee the full health protection of the employees of the general headquarters in Paris, all functions and activities will be under the direction of the Secretary General of the Council General International, sister Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet, in accordance with the directives of the French Government.

9) MEDAL AND AGREEMENTS

The award of the "Charity in Hope" Medal, to be given to the Jesuit Refugee Service, and the signing of institutional agreements with the "Order of Malta" and with the "Center for International Training of the Mission Congregation" (CIF) are postponed to a later date.

10) COMMUNICATION & TRAINING/FORMATION

The CGI's communication services (website, online magazine Ozanam Network, newsletters, emails and social networks) as well as our training/formation online resources will be reinforced and enhanced during this pandemic period.

11) CIAD EXCEPTIONAL ASSISTANCE

The Commission for International Aid and Development (CIAD), within the management of the Council General International, is making available a minimum amount of € 50,000 to support countries that may present projects related to the Coronavirus (for example: distribution of masks, protection products and equipment to poor people).

12) TWINING AND FIS ADITIONAL ASSISTANCE

The Twining Committee and the Fund for International Solidarity (FIS) will also intensify the disbursement of funds and the approval of social projects from the Superior Councils, especially those projects focused on those most affected by the New Coronavirus.

13) SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE AMIN DE TARRAZI FOUNDATION

The deadline for the receipt of subscriptions by Superior Councils for new shares in the Amin de Tarrazi joint venture company (the foundation which owns our new headquarters at 65, Rue de la Glacerie, Paris) is extended from 30 April to 31 October 2020. Superior Councils are invited to consider assisting in meeting the planned financial shortfall when an opportunity arises. The Treasurer General will be pleased to supply any information required.

14) EVENTUAL EXTENSION OF MANDATES

Superior Councils that have problems in holding elections for the position of national president, or inauguration ceremony of the new leaders, during this period, exceptionally, may request the Council General to briefly extend the mandates in force, in accordance with Basic Requirement # 11 of the International Rule.

15) YEAR OF FÉLIX CLAVÉ

The International Thematic Year of Félix Clavé remains, with the same deadline for the submission of the essays (8 July), the announcement of the result (8 September) and the solemn closing (8 December), unchanged.

FINAL MESSAGE

In prayer, we continue united in faith, lamenting the precious losses caused by this pandemic, asking the Good Lord to protect us from evil.

The entire Council General International of the SSVP stands beside all the Superior Councils, the Vincentian Family and all the members of SSVP in the world, at this delicate moment.

Those Superior Councils with financial resources are prompted to make additional donations to the Council General (the Fund for International Solidarity, the CIAD and the Twining Committee) in order to join our international efforts, at this difficult time, with special emphasis on helping the poorest countries.

May humanity return to normality soon, and may the most vulnerable who are hardest hit – the poor, the elderly, the unemployed, the homeless and the sick – regain the strength to overcome the adversities arising from Covid-19.

Confident in Divine Providence, we are sure that we will get out of this crisis quickly, and that humanity will return stronger, more united and with more solidarity, and that our members throughout the world inspired by our Vincentian values will play their part in this recovery.

In Clavé and Bl. Antoine-Frederic Ozanam,

Renato Lima de Oliveira
16Th President General

Paris, April 10th, 2020.

Council General launches the International Competition for writings on Félix Clavé

As a way of promoting further the "International Year on the Theme of Félix Clavé", the Council General of the SSVP hereby opens the International Literary Competition on "The First Conference".

Los 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 SVP 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 2020. The organizing committee will announce the final result on 9 September 2020, and the prizes will be sent to the winners immediately afterwards.

The written entries must be no more than 20 pages long.

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 2020.

This competition was announced in the 16th President General's programme for his term of office, which instituted the "themed years" in order to spread knowledge of the life, work and legacy of the founders of the first Vincentian Conference in 1833. Council General hopes that many Vincentians, especially young people, will take part in the Lamache 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.

Documents to download:
Year of Lamache Terms and Conditions
Annex-Year of Clavé

For more information: cgi.formation@ssvpglobal.org

General Council Convenes the first International Board Meeting in the new headquarters

On February 23, the first 2020 CGI meeting was held at the new international headquarters in Paris (France), at 65 Rue de la Glacière.La lectura espiritual, elaborada brillantemente por el padre Andrés Motto, CM, trataba sobre las “Causas de la Pobreza”.

The spiritual reading, brilliantly prepared by Father Andres Motto, C.M., tackled the *Causes of Poverty*.

The 16th President General, fellow member Renato Lima, then announced the names of the new General Secretary, fellow member Marie-Francoise Salesiani-Payet (France), and the new General Ombudsman, fellow member Alfons Ten Velde (Holland). Fellow member Bertrand Ousset, who left the position of General Secretary, is working on the inaugural preparations of the new headquarters and is still member of the special commission for the Vincentian evolution of the International Statutes. The Council General is deeply grateful for his devotion and effort.

During the meeting, fellow member Renato Lima highlighted his recent trips (Lebanon, France and Italy) and underscored the upcoming missions in different countries, such as Malta, Spain, Switzerland, Portugal, Brazil, the United States and Central America. We are delighted to announce that, with Spain’s Superior Council’s support, the first steps of the SSVP have been taken in Morocco as a result of the fruitful ‘SSVP Plus’ Project.

With regard to the Vincentian Family, the SSVP has been entrusted with the task of organising concrete actions for the ‘2020 World Day of the Poor’. The visit to the co-founder Félix Clavé’s grave will be made on September 15th, in Pau (southern France).

Furthermore, the report produced by the General Secretariat was analysed, and the potential improvements in office and HR management at the international headquarters were considered. In addition, a workshop is being planned for the next annual meeting in Nairobi to further discuss the drafting of new Confederation statutes.

With regard to the cooperation agreement with the 'Sovereign Order of Malta' concerning charitable works and assistance for elderly people, it will be signed in Rome, in June. As far as Ozanam's canonisation process is concerned, further details were provided, following the President General's recent visit to the Brazilian city of Mariana, where a possible miracle was performed.

As regards youth, information was provided about the 1st Latin American Youth Forum for America 2 and 3, which will be held in September in Brazil. Also, the drafting of the International Manual for Youth was discussed, as well as the brochure design and layout aimed at supporting the creation of Vincentian Conferences at universities. Additionally, guidelines were given for the arrangements of the SSVP's International Youth Day (4th July 2020), and the meeting gathering the 12 youth territorial delegates, to be held in in March 2021 in Lisbon, was announced.

The General Vice-President, Joseph Pandian, provided information on the actions undertaken with regard to twinning and the International Commission for Aid and Development (*CIAD*), and prompted countries to be more forthcoming in new donations allocated to special projects in different parts of the world. The Treasurer General, fellow member Larry Tuomey, presented the 2019 accounts and the 2020 budget. Fellow member Claire Victory (Australia) spoke about a draft "Safeguard Protocol" for people assisted by the SSVP. It was decided that the 'Charity in Hope' Medal be awarded to the Jesuit Refugee Service. Fellow member Marisa Téllez (Spain) outlined the next steps to be taken in the areas of training/formation and communication.

On February 24th, the Board held a working meeting with employees at the international headquarters. It was agreed that, on April 16th, a training/formation session would be organised for staff. On June 13th, the upcoming International Board meeting will be held, God willing, in Kenya.

Activity Report of Territorial Vice-Presidency for America 3

LA SSVP ARGENTINA APPOINTS A NEW NATIONAL PRESIDENT

On February 15, the National Council of Argentina - SSVP, currently made up of 40 active conferences with 600 fellow members, held an Extraordinary Assembly to appoint a new president, Soraya Biglioni. The National Council's office, next to Santa de Assis Care Centre (Buenos Aires), hosted the meeting. Julio César Marques de Lima, the International Territorial Vice-President for America 3 (South America), attended the meeting and gave a presentation on 'The National Council's Powers and the SSVP Argentina's Challenges'.

MEETING OF CONFERENCE PRESIDENTS IN ECUADOR

On February 15 and 16, at the Tadeo Torres Foster Home in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador's National Council organised a meeting for Conference Presidents with a view to scheduling SSVP's activities for 2020-2021. Sebastião Ribeiro, Zone-2 Coordinator for America 3 (South America), represented the CGI at this meeting.

File photo. Training session in 2015.

VISIT TO SURINAME

From January 9 to 12, 2020, the International Territorial Vice-President (*VPTI*) for South America, Julio Cesar Marques de Lima, visited the SSVP Suriname.

The VPTI travelled to Paramaribo, the country's capital, to join the members of Santa Rosa de Lima Conference, the only active Vincentian unit in the country. The SSVP has been present in Suriname since 2015, when the Conference was founded in Santa Rosa de Lima Parish, located in the city centre. The Conference is currently composed of 8 members.

During his visit, Julio César Marques took part in the Conference meeting, gave fellow members a training/formation mini-session, and met with Paramaribo's Bishop. He finally visited another local parish to talk about the SSVP to a group of people interested in establishing a new Conference.

Brisbane meeting (May 2019)

Frank Brassil
International Territorial Vice President, Oceania

SSVP Oceania's Projects

Oceania comprises
Australia,
Fiji,
Kiribati,
New Zealand,
Micronesia,
Papua New Guinea,
Samoa,
Solomon Islands,
Timor Leste,
Tonga
and Vanuatu.

There are many challenges within the region for the Society and for the world community. Some countries have only one or two Conferences, Australia has thousands.

A common theme across the region is the shared Vincentian vocation and outlook that empowers members to work with originality and energy to respond to the needs they find in their countries.

In the Solomon Islands our members, who themselves have very little, have founded a primary school to educate children in a township at the edge of the Capital.

In Vanuatu child care centres have been established to introduce education to the youngest members of the community.

In Papua New Guinea Conferences survive and continue to serve their communities without a National Council.

Timor Leste has undergone a rejuvenation with new and younger leaders.

Kiribati and Micronesia suffer from extreme remoteness and low income levels, but the members find wonderful ways to assist their communities.

Australia and New Zealand are strongly committed to Twinning and to the Assist a Student program which funds education through local Conferences.

A key program across the Zone is to improve governance and management at the National level. Increased scrutiny of international financial transfers by donor country governments requires higher levels of financial and organisational control and transparency. Some National Councils are not instituted and some lack financial control systems. Many do not have a Part 3 Rule and a model Rule has been developed and is being implemented.

A critical challenge within the Zone is communication. Distances are far and usually across oceans. In many places communications are difficult and bringing members together for National Meetings can be very expensive. Air fares and inter-island ferries are costly, especially given the low incomes of many members and Conferences.

By contrast, the commitment of Vincentians is very strong and there willingness to embrace change. In many places there is a strong youth element in the Society and this must be nurtured. In May 2019 National Presidents and Youth Representatives came together in Brisbane Australia for a meeting focused on governance, formation and training and youth integration. An outcome of this meeting was that the sense of unity and oneness in the Society was greatly strengthened, and we have a strong sense of being Oceania in the Society.

Michael Nizankiewicz
International Territorial Vice President, Americas 1

Paradise Lost

El Paradise was lost in September 2019. Hurricane Dorian was the most intense tropical cyclone on record to strike the Bahamas. It's regarded as the worst natural disaster in the country's history, and it was one of the most powerful hurricanes recorded in the Atlantic Ocean. The devastation to Grand Bahama Island, in particular, was horrific.

I was scheduled to speak at the annual meeting of the Superior Council of the Bahamas on September 28, the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul. But following the enormous damage and loss of life as a result of Dorian, that meeting was understandably cancelled.

Since I purchased my airline ticket prior to the hurricane, I called Shurn Brown, the SSVP President for the Council of the Bahamas and said I would still like to visit and offer any support, provide the airlines were able to fly into Nassau.

I was able to fly into Nassau on September 26, almost a month after the hurricane, and was pleasantly surprised to see that Nassau had sustained minimal damage. On Friday, the 27th, I flew to Freeport (on Grand Bahama Island), to see that the airport, like most of the island, still had no electrical power. So flights in and out of Freeport could only occur in daylight.

Shurn Brown met me at what was left of the airport and with two other Vincentians drove me to the eastern end of Grand Bahama where

Dorian remained for almost 3 days at a Category 5 with sustained winds reaching 185mph. Some 600 people were still missing, many of them likely washed out to sea.

My words could not possibly describe the devastation I witnessed that day, so I'm including just a few of the photos I took.

It wasn't just the immense damage and loss of life that tore at my heart, it was also seeing the pain in my hosts' eyes knowing that some of the lost homes belonged to their friends. When we returned to Freeport that evening, I insisted on Treating Shurn (Center) and her vice president Wanrea Roxbury (Left) to dinner at one of the very few Freeport restaurants with electricity.

Distribution of food parcels

On Saturday, September 28th, Shurn took me to her Conference at Mary Star of the Sea Parish. The Church suffered significant flooding but, praise God, the new roof stayed intact. However, the adjoining school had severe flooding and the school children had to be relocated until repairs could be made. At the conference's pantry, we loaded vehicles with hot and cold food supplies and drove through several neighborhoods delivering the food to families who still had no power.

In this photo, Shurn and I are delivering food to an elderly woman, was also without electricity for over a month.

Michael Nizankiewicz (in the middle of the picture) alongside Bahamian fellow members

The spirit of the people of the Bahamas is strong, as is that of the members of the Council of The Bahamas. Of course, Vincentians from around the globe responded with prayers and twinning. One of the newest conferences, St. Ignatius on Grand Cayman Island did their first fundraiser and sent almost $5,000 to the Council of the Bahamas. CIAD voted to award the maximum amount to the Council. Several other conferences in the U.S. also responded with dollars to help with restoration.

The Lord is good and, in time, The Bahamas will once again become paradise on Earth.

2019 Annual Report

The CIAD (Commission for International Aid and Development) is a commission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul's Council General International that examines funding requests for the Society's projects throughout the world. Its action focuses on emergency aid, rehabilitation after disasters, development projects, and the expansion and strengthening the Society.

The CIAD consists of 8 of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul's volunteers, from every continent, supported by a staff member.

Its action is funded by donations from National/Superior Councils, mainly in response to appeals after major catastrophes and, more rarely, by outside donors. The CIAD does not raise funds directly from the general public since this funding source is reserved for National/Superior Councils.

It provides emergency help in situations of humanitarian crisis and funds recovery programmes (after a natural disaster for instance), as well as development work. It is also responsible for monitoring the use of funds allocated to these projects around the world.

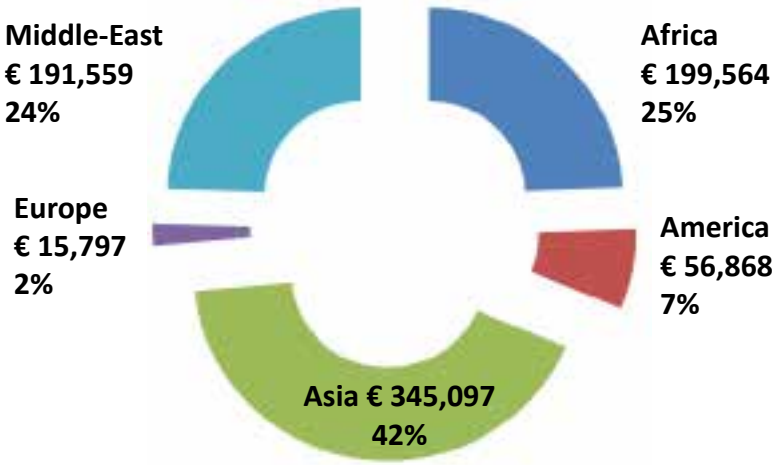
A Few Figures...

CIAD support in 2019:

€ 808,885

60 interventions

41 countries



PART 1:
DETAILED OVERVIEW OF 2019 GRANTS

1-Disasters (natural or manmade) : € 661,180

1a) Emergency (€ 60,108 -8 %)

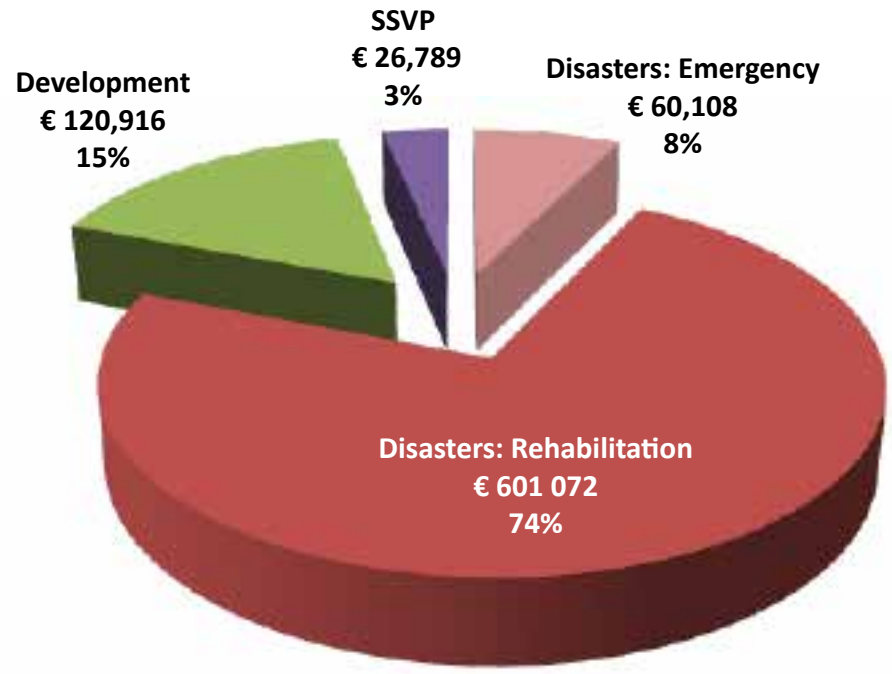
CIAD emergency actions are small interventions aimed at bringing support to victims in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, taking advantage of the local presence of Vincentians, who usually provide emergency assistance such as food, medicines, water or clothing, blankets or tents. They are limited to € 3-5,000, as emergency is not Conference's speciality.

In 2019, this process was used on several occasions:

- Floods in Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Canada, Nepal
- Drought in Angola and Namibia
- Hunger in Madagascar
- Earthquake in Albania
- Cyclone Dorian in the Bahamas
- Political situation, war, terrorism or refugee assistance in Mozambique, Iraq, Burkina Faso, Lebanon.

1b) Rehabilitation(€ 601,072 – 74%)

Long term rehabilitation projects are the way for SSVP to 'bring people back to a normal life' through education, professional training, reconstruction, etc.



Lebanon
Refugee Assistance
€ 116,540

Beneficiaries: 90 elderly refugees and 20 children

SSVP in Lebanon :
43 Conferences and 755 members – www.stvincent-lb.org
Lebanon, a 4M inhabitant's country, is hosting 1.5 M refugees, mainly from Syria and Iraq living in great poverty.
SSVP Lebanon, with the support of CIAD, is offering bi-weekly meals to 90 elderly people and offering full scholarship to 20 children, all refugee from Syria and Iraq.

Syria
Generator for elderly home
€ 14,855

SSVP in Aleppo – 10 Conferences – 75 members
As the situation is slowly improving after many years of war, in the middle of the reconstruction phase in Aleppo, SSVP has started the renovation of their home for the elderly with 35 residents and 10 employees. With the rationing of electric power, it was essential to have a generator in order to be able to bring residents back to a decent place, after almost 5 years of forced exile.

Philippines
'Rebuilding Lives – Programme (year 6)
€ 46,480 in 2019

SSVP in the Philippines : 546 Conferences and 7,280 members
This M€ 1.3 5-8 year programme started in 2014 to alleviate the suffering of victims of super-typhoon Haiyan, covering several fields such as :
- Education (school fees, material, food and accommodation for 800 pupils in High School, College and Vocational)
- Reconstruction of 200 houses
- Health (medical missions and campaigns)
- Livelihood (launch of a Cooperative to create small businesses and micro-credit to 500 people)

India
Kerala Floods and Gaja Cyclone
€ 278,660

SSVP in India : 7,300 Conferences and 67,000 members
In late 2018, India was hit by very severe natural disasters, in particular Gaja Cyclone, and floods in Kerala. With CIAD's support, SSVP could bring:
- Education support to 360 students
- Self-help and relief projects to 500 families
- Repairs and reconstruction of 112 houses

Mozambique
Flood and Cyclones Relief
€ 25,000

SSVP in Mozambique : 34 Conferences
In a space of 2 months (February and March) Mozambique has suffered successive minor and large scale natural disasters that jointly left thousands of people dead while millions more in the marsh of vulnerability and extreme poverty.
With CIAD support, SSVP provided 500 families with meals, food and farming support, such as seeds and training while about 400 families benefitted from complementary forms of support in Construction Material. A total of 600 families also benefitted from mosquito net and chlorine to purify the water.

Malawi
Assistance to flood Victims
€ 25,086

SSVP in Malawi : 121 Conferences – 2,800 members
Malawi is affected every year by a succession of floods and dry-spells. This year, CIAD's support allowed to provide around 300 families with food to cover extreme emergency, but also with crop, to try to favour food security for beneficiaries, and avoid mere assistance whenever possible.

Madagascar
Assistance to Cyclone Victims
€ 25,186

SSVP in Madagascar : 160 Conferences – 3,000 members
Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world and is hit every year by cyclones.
With CIAD support, the Vincentians have completed the reconstruction programme started in 2018 and managed to rebuild 12 houses.

Venezuela
Economic Crisis
€ 8,847

SSVP in Venezuela : 16 Conferences – 410 members-
https://www.facebook.com/SSVPvenezuela/
The Society in Venezuela is trying hard to keep on bringing assistance to the poor in the awful political and economic crisis the country is going through. It is even difficult to send funds to the country; however, CIAD managed to give this small support in order to distribute food baskets and support SSVP canteens.

Sri Lanka
Education project for war victims
€ 9,859

SSVP in Sri Lanka : 335 Conferences – 3,500 members
In several districts of Sri Lanka, many families still live in a very vulnerable condition after 30 years of war, although finished 10 years ago. The Society has selected 705 students to support them with school material and/or clothing, food, bicycles, special courses, night school and equipment such as tables, chairs and computers.

And also...

Argentina - Repairs to SSVP elderly home
Burkina Faso - Food and relief assistance to terror displaced people
Zambia - Food assistance to drought victims
Nepal - Blankets for winter

2 - Development (€ 120,916 – 15%)

Cameroon
Farm
€ 2,300(€ 20,000)

SSVP in Cameroon: 192 Conferences
A Conference in Cameroon has set up a farm, and has requested CIAD's support on some kick-start and development costs. A first phase of € 2,300 was granted to cover legalization costs so that the Conference legally owns the land donated for the project. This will turn into a profit making and employment creating project.

Burkina Faso
Pig rearing training
€ 8,020

SSVP in Burkina Faso : 31 Conferences – 800 members
The project consists in creating small farms, on the beneficiaries' premises, in which 5 to 10 young people from the Parish are to be trained each year, for one month, in the management of pig breeding and supported to set up to improve their breeding in their environment. This includes material set-up of the farms, provision of piglets, start-up maintenance and feeding and professional training for beneficiaries to reach self-sufficiency and food security.

South Sudan

SSVP in South Sudan: 29 Conferences

Be in Hope Orphanage - € 15,000
Whereas it is not its vocation, CIAD is helping cover part of the running costs of an orphanage which provides all needs (accommodation, meals, access to education) to 20 street children. This is continued support from 2018

Pilot Farm - € 15,000
With CIAD and other partners support, SSVP in South Sudan is developing a farm in order to grow high yielding organic crops to generate income to sustain SVDP projects, improve food security and feed the poor through subsidized pricing.

Brazil
Mobile Bathroom
€ 8,000

SSVP in Brazil 15,500 Conferences – 150,000 members
On the occasion of their weekly contact with homeless people, bringing them food, toiletries, clothes and blankets during the night, also providing fraternal listening to these assisted people, the Vincentians of Juiz de Fora, state of Minas Gerais, and from that began to gather the main demands of this homeless population, seeking to rescue relevant aspects for the establishment of human life in dignified conditions. Among these demands, the need for a place for a shower stood out markedly in the lines of men and women assisted.
CIAD thus supported the purchase and adaptation of a trailer, which will be able to move around the city to attend to the homeless, offering bathrooms for men and women.

Jerusalem
Kindergarten and Professional training support
€ 34,000

The sole SSVP Conference in Jerusalem is striving to slow down 'brain drain' and especially of Catholics from this cradle of Christianism. SSVP is paying fees to send children to kindergarten, with the double advantage of favouring their education and socialization and of allowing their parents to get a job. In addition, SSVP is funding professional training of local youth, so that they can find a job on the spot, and do not have to flee from the city.

And also...

Myanmar – Systemic change training sessions for members
Italy – Support to a CM Fathers activity in favour pf poor families
Senegal – Accommodation for students of a SSVP Professional training Centre

3 - SSVP Expansion (€ 26,789 – 3%)

3a) "SSVP Plus" (€ 10,733)

'SSVP Plus' is CGI's programme to set up or re-establish SSVP in countries where it is not. Missions took place in this framework in Niger, Liberia, Tanzania, and the Cayman islands.

3b) Ssvp strengthening (€ 16,056)

To help develop or strengthen SSVP in countries where it is weak, CIAD has supported the funding of several kinds of activities such as training, support to running costs of National Councils, material equipment or funding of assemblies. This took place in Central African republic, Madagascar, DR Congo, Venezuela, Panama, Honduras and Nepal.

PART II: SOME PAST PROJECTS

Nepal
Earthquake reconstruction
€ 780,000 in 3 years

After the tremendous earthquake that took place in 2015, SSVP started an ambitious reconstruction programme in 2016 together with Caritas. The 300 houses planned were finished in 2018
In addition, SSVP Conferences set up some small projects such as piggeries and other animal rearing self-help projects, education support, medical assistance or food provision.

Central African Republic
Assistance to war/terror victims
€ 38,950

The poorest country in the world is suffering an extremely violent turmoil. SSVP brings assistance to thousands of displaced people, fleeing violence or getting back home.
With CIAD, 4 missions have been organized in 2017 and 4 in 2018 to distribute food, hygiene and household items and clothing.

Benin
Equipment for SSVP Medical Centre
€ 14,265

With the help of SSVP France and the support of local Church, SSVP Benin has created a medical centre in a lakeside area with no medical facility. CIAD has funded the purchase of medical material. This now gives a 200,000 people area an access to healthcare, which is an exceptional success.

Lebanon
Catering project
€ 17,377

CIAD has supported the creation by a Conference of a cooking/catering workshop which participates in local development through the purchase of local agricultural production, job creation and income generating activity for both workers and the Conference.

Botswana
Information centre for SSVP Centre for Children
€ 13,800

Christ the King Cathedral Conference runs a home called the 'SSVP Centre' for orphaned children as well as disadvantaged old people who have no relatives to look after them.
CIAD supported the construction of a library, study area and computer lab for the children hosted in this Centre. SSVP also grants access to other disadvantaged children in the neighborhood.

Ethiopia
In prison professional training
€ 4,300

With the extra benefit of re-establishing SSVP in Ethiopia, a Conference working in a Prison in Ambo has purchased a welding machine and a woodwork machine to allow prisoners to receive training, work and make some benefits to earn their living.

Through CIAD, CGI is constantly trying to support the Vincentians' efforts to help our friends in need all over the world! Needs are huge, permanent, changing, and not limited to big well publicised disasters! Our Commission for International Aid and Development needs continued support to keep on with its vital work!

Conferences or Councils who wish to support CIAD can do so through the Fund for international Solidarity (FIS)…
Please get in touch with your National Council or with CGI!

cgi.ciad@ssvpglobal.org

www.ssvpglobal.org

CGI members

CGI's Visit to Dominican Republic

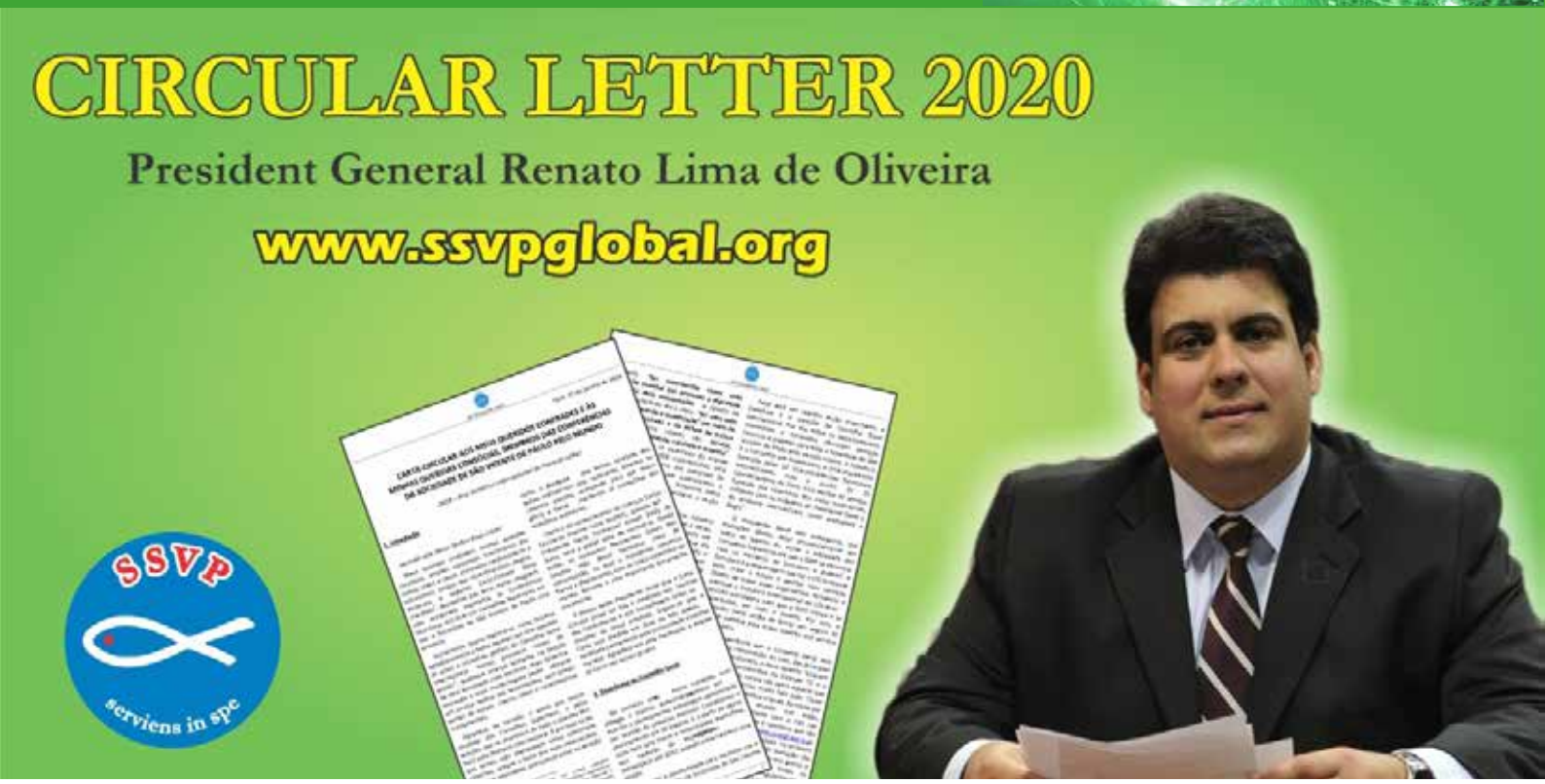
CGI's representatives joined Dominican fellow members during their assembly and elections for national presidency.

From February 5 to 9, CGI members made a visit to the Dominican fellow members, and actively participated in the National Assembly, as well as in the SSVP elections in this country. The aforementioned CGI members were as follows: María del Carmen Guzmán, *VPTI* for America 2; Gladys Herrera, Coordinator for Zone 1 – America 2; and Edgardo Fuentes, Youth Delegate for America 2.

Youth meeting

Following the meetings and the election of the new national team, the groundwork was laid for a better structuring of the Superior Council. By the same token, new posts were created, and delegates for twinning, training/formation and youth were appointed. As for youth, a national committee made up of young people was set up, with a view to motivating and bringing our Society to the youth.

Assembly attendees



Circular Letter 2020

Renato Lima emphasizes, to name a few, the actions related to youth, the United Nations, communication, the SSVP's expansion to new territories, the red-tape issue, the decisions made in the Councils, the value of the systemic change, the importance of social media, the prayer and fraternal correction.

For the fourth year in a row, our fellow member, Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, has published the Circular Letter, which will be addressed to all fellow members of the world, giving food for thought. The letter will be translated in seven languages.

Since 1841, the Circular Letter has become a tradition for Presidents General. The document is divided into five sections: 1) Introduction; 2) Council General's News; 3) Recommendation for Vincentians; 4) International themed year dedicated to the founder Félix Clavé; and 5) Conclusions. In 2020's issue, our President Renato Lima emphasizes, to name a few, the actions related to youth, the United Nations, communication, the SSVP's expansion to new territories, the red-tape issue, the decisions made in the Councils, the value of the systemic change, the importance of social media, the prayer and fraternal correction.

Given that the Circular Letter is rather lengthy (15 pages), our recommendation is to read it in parts during Conference meetings. We would like to thank the Superior Councils for collaborating with the Council General in the dissemination of the Circular Letter in their respective countries, publishing it on the Internet and discussing about it in formation/training courses and meetings. For any comment or suggestion: cgi.circularletter@gmail.com.

Enjoy your reading!

Link to Circular Letter

Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet, new Secretary General

In late February 2020, the Council General International (CGI) appointed its new Secretary General, a Vincentian member with a long-standing involvement and commitment to the SSVP.

Born into a family with both Vincentian and Salesian spirituality, she was brought up, from an early age, on the path of service to the poorest people, and she used to join her parents to visit needy families.

She has held various positions at the SSVP: President of a youth Conference, President of a regional Council and member of National Council's Board in France all through the term of office of several national presidents.

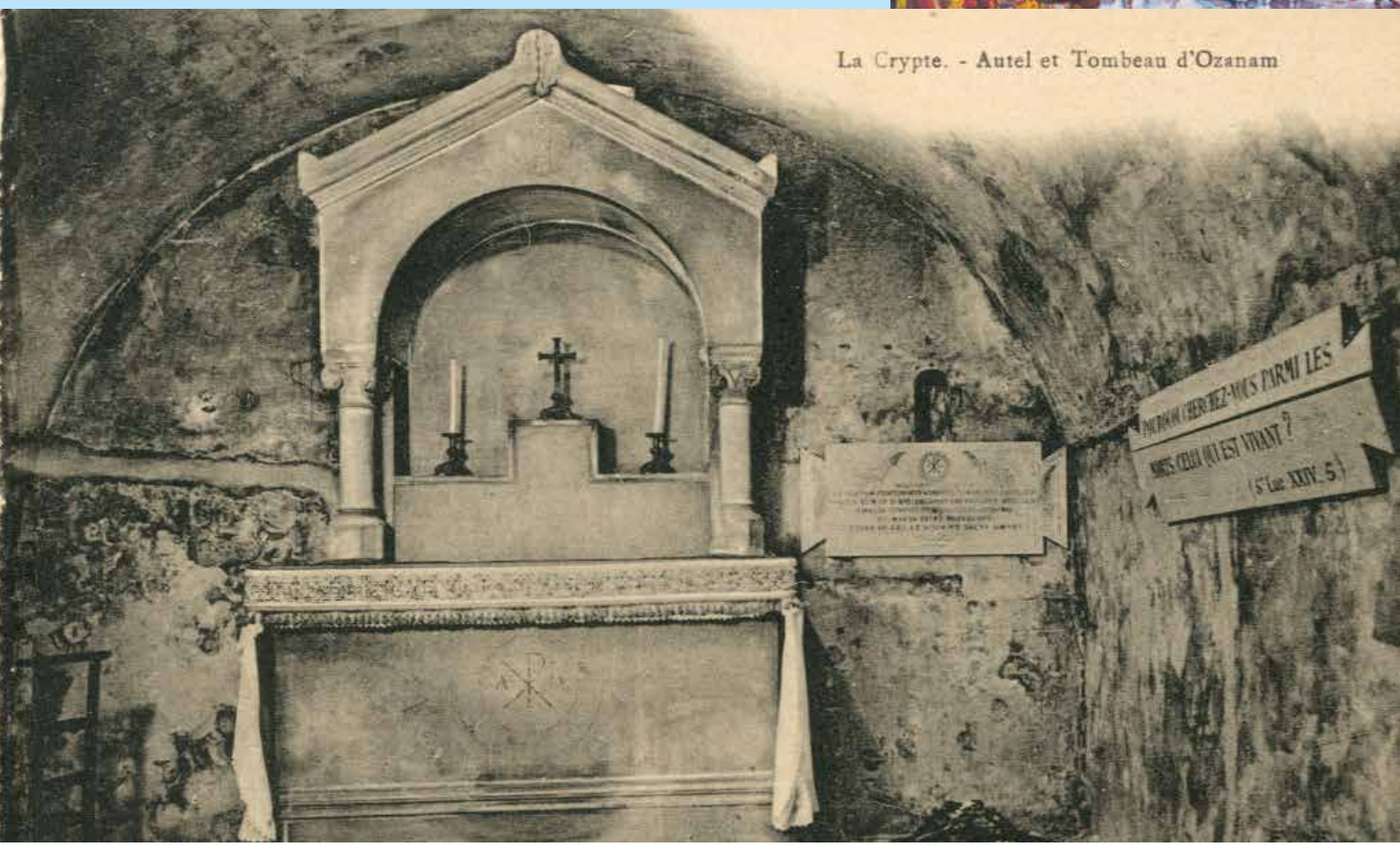
Furthermore, she has been involved in a number of CGI's missions, enabling her to come to understand this institution from different viewpoints, working in the field of formation/training, and, lately, as CGI's Ombudswoman, actively contributing to the unity of the Vincentian spirit within our entity.

"I would like to be just the loving, respectful and trusting servant who is imbued with Frédéric Ozanam's and his colleagues' spirit of charity and fraternity"

In addition to the aforementioned roles, Marie-Françoise Salesiani represents the SSVP at the United Nations, from its headquarters in Geneva. As she says, "this gives me the chance to give voice to the poor within an international context, and make known the values of Vincentian spirituality.".

The President General has entrusted her with this new mission as Secretary General, taking over from Bertrand Ousset, whom we would like to thank for his work and commitment to the Council General. This position immerses Marie-Françoise Salesiani in the hub of the CGI, which gives her the opportunity to keep on working for our beloved society while being daily committed to the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters.

Married with three children and three grandchildren, Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet is a teacher as well as a businesswoman; and she is driven by a clear goal: "I would like to be just the loving, respectful and trusting servant who is imbued with Frédéric Ozanam's and his colleagues' spirit of charity and fraternity".



Javier F. Chento
Member of the Council General International's International Commission for Historical Research

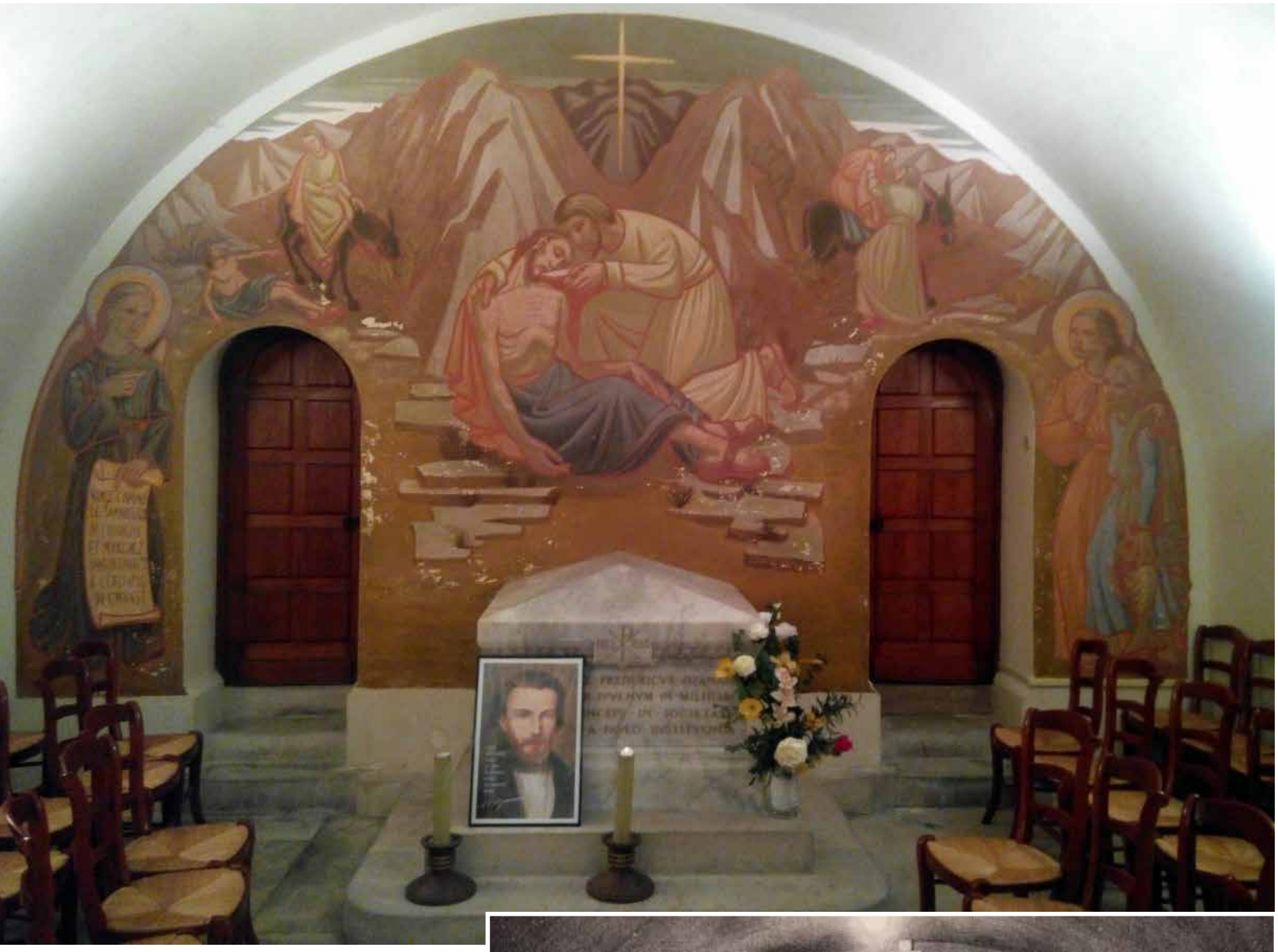
The amazing history of the crypt of the blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam

There is a very special place for all Vincentians in the Church of Saint-Joseph-des-Carmes (Paris): here rests the body of the blessed Antonio-Federico Ozanam, the main founder of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Frédéric died in Marseilles on 8th September 1853, barely a week after arriving in France, already very ill after his trip through Italy. Funerals were held in Lyon, where his family wanted to bury him, and at the Saint-Sulpice parish church in Paris, where they temporarily hosted the body. His wife, Amélie, then insisted on burying him in a church, despite difficulties as it was prohibited to bury laypeople inside churches.

After much opposition and knocking on many doors, Amélie achieved her goal: with the verbal permission of minister Fortoul, a personal friend of Ozanam, and the indispensable support of Father Lacordaire, she was able to lay to rest the body of her beloved husband at the Saint-Joseph des Carmes church, where the Dominican priests were laid. The small crypt, which was dug out in the church basement in the same place where it remains today, was accessed by a staircase on the right-side of the church.

The above, recently discovered, undated picture shows us the crypt as it was originally, albeit many years have passed. We can see the damp staining and mould which covered the walls and Amélie, in one of her writings from 1867, said: "The saltpetre has invaded the walls. The mould has affected the cement and ruined all that I asked to do and deteriorated all the sculptures and works".



The crypt had two significant renovations: the first, on the 100th anniversary of Frédéric Ozanam's birth, when the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul constructed a new marble tomb and renovated the crypt. The canonical exhumation was carried out in July 1929. New access to the crypt was opened and the altar was completely renovated (picture on the right).

In 1953, the 100th anniversary of Frédéric Ozanam's death, the shrine was remodelled again. The central columns were removed, as well as various decorations. A French artist, René Dionnet, painted the picture of the Good Samaritan which, even today, decorates the wall (above picture). This is the current appearance of the crypt, simple and humble, where thousands of members from around the world frequently come together to pray before the tomb of our beloved blessed Ozanam.

Historic Meeting of Over 100 Branches of the Vincentian Family

On the 400th anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, and with the aim of working more closely in the years to come, the leaders of over 100 branches that make up the Vincentian Family met in Rome, from January 8 to 12, 2020, to share the joy of being blessed with this spirituality and of working under the theme: "The Vincentian Family moves forward".

At the beginning of this historic meeting, broadcast live by our colleagues from Ozanam TV, there was an audience with Pope Francis which concluded with a photo of all participants with the Holy Father. Afterwards, Father Tomaz Mavric, President of the Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family, prompted us to take a look at the reality that this great Family is experiencing, and pointed out some of the fields where we are called to collaborate: formation / training, education and care of the needy.

Fr. Robert Maloney, originator of the Vincentian Family and former Spiritual Counsellor of the Council General International, talked about the past and the present of the Vincentian Charism, and invited us, as a Family, to dream of the goals to be attained in the foreseeable future.

This historic event, a gathering of over 205 participants, also covered important issues such as the following:

- The mission of the Vincentian Family;
- Communication within the Vincentian Family and the potential of the Internet and new technologies, and the challenge they represent for the future;
- The impact of the 2018 Film Festival of the Vincentian Family;
- The FamVin Alliance on behalf of the homeless, a major initiative of the Vincentian Family;
- The culture of vocations and the transmission of the charism across branches of the family.

The SSVP was represented by Ricardo Tavares (chairman of the Vincentian Family Department), by Eduardo Marques (SSVP's rep for FamVin in the fields of formation / training, vocational culture and lay

representation of the Vincentian Charism) and by the SSVP's President General, fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, who actively took part in this event by giving a speech.

Our President General' speech was devoted to the Vincentian Family's financing model, making concrete proposals regarding the economic commitment to be made by the branches in Famvin events, fostering strengthened collaboration among members and suggesting the idea that each Vincentian could give one dollar a year to FamVin.

Later in his speech, Renato Lima emphasised the quest for holiness within the Vincentian Charism, taking quotes from some FamVin members, already on the altar, such as Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and St. Elizabeth Seton.

Finally, our President General highlighted historic moments about the SSVP's inception, as well as the virtues and invaluable contribution of each of its founders, who made it possible the creation of our beloved Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Moreover, he presented the SSVP's song of the 7 founders to all participants, which was released in 2019, during the events scheduled for the 180th anniversary of the SSVP's Council General International Finally, our President General highlighted historic moments about the SSVP's inception, as well.

The agenda of this international meeting gathering leaders of the Vincentian Family was very intense, full of debates, discussion groups, celebrations, presentations... It was such an enriching experience that a forthcoming edition is to be planned for 2023 or 2024.

Click here to view the presentation made by the SSVP's President General for the international historic Famvin meeting held in Rome, under the theme "The Vincentian Family moves forward".

Video produced by Ozanam TV for meeting #Famvin2020Rome.

Centre International
de Formation
Saint Vincent de Paul.

Vincentian Family Annual Letter 2020

Pbro. Dr. Andrés R. M. MOTTO, C.M.
Director of the C.I.F.

To all Superiors General, Provincials, Presidents of Associations and Movements, all members of the great Vincentian Family

Dear brothers and sisters:

"Grace and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ the Lord"

As every year, the International Centre of Vincentian Formation (CIF) invites you or who you delegate to participate in the Vth **CIF MEETING FOR THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY**. It will be held from Monday, August 3 to Wednesday, August 26, 2020.

It is dedicated to all the members of the Vincentian Family, whether they are lay people, religious female and male, religious or diocesan priests. It is offered to all those who wish to deepen their knowledge of Vincentian ethics and spirituality.

In these weeks we will see: what is the Vincentian Family; how to work together in the integral dignity of the poor; what was St. Vincent's original inspiration and how to deepen it; some important figures of the Vincentian Family; the Vincentian ethics; the effective ways to solve spiritual and material poverty; how to improve the togetherness and economy of our groups.

All this will be accompanied by some trips to the Vincentian places in Paris and other places in France. It will also be a space for the mutual knowledge of Vincentian associations and congregations. In addition, we will dedicate time to prayer and meditation, as well as to free time.

This invitation is also extended to those lay people who, without being strictly part of a Vincentian association, work hard in our works: schools, administration, charitable works, missions, secretariat, archives, hospital world, etc. It seems to me that this meeting could also be a "good gift" for those who are celebrating their vows or ordination anniversary, or for those lay people who have been working for years in leadership roles in Vincentian places. In the same way, it could be a part of the time well spent, for those who have asked for a sabbatical year.

I would only ask you to invite people who are eager to learn about our spirituality, who have minimal

conditions for teamwork and who are determined to come.

Additional information. This meeting is held at the Mother House of the Congregation of the Mission (Lazaristes), 95, rue de Sèvres, PARIS FRANCE. The course is given in English, Spanish and French. The cost is 1,900 euros including all expenses.

Last details. Since the Motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission has a large number of visitors, and we have a limited number of places, you should confirm your participation as soon as possible. And from July 3rd there will be no more registrations. I will respond to your e-mails, sending you the registration with all the necessary information. Remember that many countries need a visa to enter France. This procedure usually takes longer than you think, so you should do it well in advance and present the documents that the French government requires. The first thing we need in order to start the visa process (besides the photocopy of the passport) is *the photocopy of the ticket with the date of entry and exit of the country and the photocopy of the traveler's medical insurance.* As you can see, in this type of procedure, the two pieces of information I marked in italics are taken out before the Visa, not after. I repeat, if we do it with enough time, there is no problem.

I bid you farewell with the unwavering affection I feel for each of you. Your brother in Mary and St. Vincent.

PS 1: to confirm the presence of the participants or to consult any doubt I ask you to write to my personal e-mail andresmotto@gmail.com

PS2: You can follow the activities of the CIF on Facebook at Cif France or on our website:
cif-paris.webnode.es/

Family photo of attendees of the Vincentian Family's regional meeting in Brazil

SSVP President General's Talk in Brasilia on the 1st Gathering of Leaders of the Vincentian Family

Fellow member Renato Lima underscored the importance of the '13 Houses Campaign'

On the last day of the meeting, on February 15th, in Brasilia (Brazil), the SSVP's 16th President General, fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, was invited to give a talk on "An overview of the 1st Meeting of the Vincentian Family's International Leaders" to the representatives of various Vincentian branches who attended the meeting, held in the Central-Western region of the country. The event gathered around 50 people from six different Vincentian branches.

The fellow member Renato Lima summarised all the talks given during the event held in Rome last January, showing photos of display stands, round tables, discussion groups and celebrations. One of the highlights was the audience with Pope Francis, who gave his apostolic blessing to the Vincentians. In his talk, Renato Lima also praised the work of Ozanam TV for broadcasting live all the activities.

President General took also the chance to explain how to use the app "Yapp Famvin 2020", a digital tool bringing together all documents discussed during the event.

Besides the main theme of the talk, President Renato Lima highlighted the importance of the '13 Houses Campaign', primarily aimed at providing

Relic of St. Vincent, displayed during the event

decent housing for 10,000 people by 2025, among other social actions for refugees, people living in an unsuitable environment or those who are displaced for various reasons. Renato Lima elaborated on the foundations of this initiative, providing updated statistics and the list of countries implementing the Project and the discussions held at the UN about the importance of a broader agreed definition of homelessness.

"It's up to every Christian to give shelter to homeless brethren. Building houses is not new to the SSVP though. Our Conferences have always been used to renovating or building houses for the poor. The difference now with the '13 Houses Campaign' lies in the fact that these concrete actions must be undertaken in liaison with the Vincentian Family, in a broader context. I am sure that this Project will be a great success and, beyond the houses to be built, this will result in a strengthened collaboration within our beloved Vincentian Family.", remarked the President.

A relic of St. Vincent de Paul, donated by the Congregation of the Mission to the SSVP's Council General International, was displayed at the event, which touched and inspired all the attendees.

President General summarises the meeting held in Rome, which gathered international Vincentian leaders

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

The causes of poverty

We continue looking at the complex issue of poverty to investigate ways to better help the less fortunate. I write this article in the middle of the Parisian night, my favourite time of the day to write. Continuing with the topic of poverty, this is my second article in this matter where I examine the *causes* of poverty. We want to look for a balance: on one hand, we accept the fact that it is a very difficult task to overcome poverty; on the other hand, we refuse to accept that poverty is an inevitable reality for a sector of the world. In conclusion, poverty can be remediated, beyond any obstacles on the way.

In the main, the causes of any condition need to be examined for it to be reversed. Since in most cases poverty is caused by interconnected causes, a detailed analysis is greatly required. There are numerous causes of poverty, but only 10 causes will be mentioned in this article to keep it short. The numbering is by no means by order of importance, since the specific poverty of a person or region can vary considerably case by case. One word of caution, this is not an easy topic to discuss and many people or groups of people may feel singled out as responsible for a cause of poverty and may even consider us as their enemy.

1) Political Corruption. Many governments, which include a variety of political parties, are corrupt. They have diverted large amounts of money for personal gain, which otherwise were meant for investing in programs to benefit the people. It is a disgrace to find out that so many leaders have made money in illicit ways, are in involved in money laundering, or play political favourites. The public corruption is usually associated with private corruption and it exacerbates when followed by misguided and inefficient policies, people that do the minimum in their jobs, etc.

Further investigation has led me to discover that most of the money coming out of corruption, it is mostly spent on: A. Properties, parties, luxury goods, eccentricities, travel, drugs and hiding large sums of money in foreign bank accounts. B. Financing political campaigns; maintaining political schemes; buying or silencing people; paying journalists, buying social media and money dealings with criminal partners.

This is a long-standing and very common cause of poverty.

2) Wrong Priorities. For many years, some of the main global expenditures have been in armaments, illicit drugs, beauty products, tourism. I am not against travelling or buying anti-wrinkle creams, but I believe that we would be better off if the main global expenditures were mainly in food, housing, education and health. Wouldn't we?

3) Historical Injustice. The history of humanity is, in a way, a history of injustice and impunity. Historically, many people, groups or individuals have been dispossessed of their land, resources, wealth and position. In other instances, people have to pay for exorbitant external debts caused by fraudsters making the common people go bankrupt. I want to reiterate that this cause is applicable to all peoples, groups and individuals.

4) Felony. Organized Crime. Some individuals find a way of becoming rich illegally, marginalizing others and reducing them to misery. I have not seen a single country where crime reigns while poverty is minimized. Crime has many faces: drug trafficking, scams, illegal trade, robberies, mafias, extortion, kidnappings, human trafficking, organ sales, illegal gambling, etc. Many criminals live in marginalized slums; others are white-collar criminals who live in gated communities or mansions. Most of these "lawful" earnings enter the market through *money laundering*. Small-scale crime and organized crime are both evils, being the latter much more lethal and unsurmountable.

In many countries, crime benefits from the complicity of government members from the judicial, executive and legislative powers. We are aware of many members of the police service and security forces and even religious representatives who commit crimes or are involved in criminal associations. Based on my investigations, even religious representatives from different denominations including Christians and Catholic, Jewish, Islamic and Hindus are involved in crime.

Criminal activity discourages the righteous, shies away workers, creates an environment of fear and anger in the minds of decent people, perpetuates the cycle of poverty, sickens, hurts…

5) Unemployment. It perpetuates the cycle of poverty. It is terrible when young people can't enter the workforce, or when an adult loses his or her job and is unable to find another one. Informal or casual work is not a viable solution; it must be a steady job that provides a good income. The government is responsible for employment for everyone, since it also generates enough funding for social services and future pensions to ensure stability in people's lives. A measure of a good government is its ability to create and maintain job opportunities. Long-term unemployment causes workers to experience a slow death, due to hunger, misery and desperation. The longer the worker stays unemployed, the longer it takes to get a new job. When there are no jobs, peo-

ple must resort to government subsidies, becoming completely dependent on the government.

6) Indifference. Many people enjoy a higher standard of living than others, and some are not willing to think about or share their goods with those less fortunate. Others are even inconvenienced when they are *reminded* of their brothers in need. They limit their help to their families and friends, and some don't even help anyone at all. Their ambition makes them think that the poor are dangerous or are a nuisance. Even though they are hard workers, they end up being selfish, indifferent and unscrupulous by desiring more material wealth. Adam Smith said that the poor are the "invisible ones". Vincent de Paul and Frédéric Ozanam made them "visible" by bringing awareness and advocating for social obligation to help them. Pope Francis, like Vincent de Paul and Frederick Ozanam, is asking us to increase our social sensitivity for others, to feel and be more compassionate for their pain so we can act on it.

7) Lack of Housing. A house, either own or rented, is a basic need. Homeless people face poverty, homelessness causes poverty. Millions of people are submerged in this situation without a way to come out of the cycle of misery and poverty. By talking of homeless people, I am not only referring to those living in the streets, but refugees, migrants living in poverty, people evicted from their homes by scams committed by banks, fraudsters, etc. I am also referring to those living in substandard housing conditions without running water, sewer systems, proper electricity and living with disease carrying animals (cockroaches, mice, spiders, scorpions, insects, etc.) It is not only the housing, but the conditions surrounding the house that perpetuates the cycle of poverty, such as lack of green spaces, lack of proper recreational spaces, unpaved streets, potholes, non-existent garbage collection services, lack of urgent care services, lack of access to education close to their homes, low educational level, unsafe streets… All of these make poverty insurmountable.

8) **The poor themselves.** We must mention this too. There are poor people who remain in poverty or make their situation worst by failing to improve it. For example, laziness, addictions, lack of training, money mismanagement, bad influences, certain physical or mental disabilities, psychological disorders, behavioural disturbances, etc. Many have been undernourished during infancy causing major learning disabilities.

During my time working in marginalized areas, I noticed that many don't have any savings because they either waste every penny they make, or they don't know how to properly prioritize their finances. For example, they spend beyond their needs in a "Quinceañera Party", for their daughter's 15th birthday, getting in debt for a very long time.

One is responsible of his own poverty by not showing up for work, by asking to stay in dubious positions to make more money and by chronically accepting subsidies or social help rather than working.

Unfortunately, we must include the delinquent poor

acting outside the law. I have met parents who teach children to steal, other parents teach their young children how to beg or they have others take their children for begging.

9) Natural Disasters. It must be recognized that many places in our planet constantly face harsh conditions, arid lands, extreme weather hindering the production of goods. Many times, these conditions are caused by human errors which in the long run contribute to desertification, global epidemics, pollution, etc. Some examples are excessive levelling of the land or water pollution.

In addition, every now and then there are droughts, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, forest fires, plagues and epidemics that cause destruction and devastation where, in some instances, the lives of hundreds of people are lost. These "natural disasters" are evils caused by natural forces of our planet or by human activity, such as oil spillages, forest fires caused by excessive levelling of the land or poor urban planning.

10) Spiritual Poverty. We are aware that millions of people have no access to the Word of God, to spiritual writings, catechesis, religious formation, the Eucharist, a chapel, are not able to belong to Christian associations or belong to a Parish that includes them, assists them or visits them. It hurts us when Catholic Christians abandon their faith or end up in an evangelic sect. One of the causes of this sad reality is the lack of pastoral care workers, not proper assignment of pastoral care workers or their lack of training. Another cause is the lack of options for the poor and the overall decrease in the missionary spirit.

We need to do more, and we can do more than what we are currently doing. I worked in several slums in José C. Paz and San Miguel in Argentina when I was a seminarian. In our Vincentian seminary, we were not given much time to be with the poor, spending only Saturday nights and Sunday mornings with them. I remember that in such a short time, I rejoiced teaching catechism to children and youth, organizing youth groups and working with missionary lay women who visited, in the name of Jesus, all the houses in the neighbourhood.

We have considered 10 causes of poverty. We must ask ourselves: To what extent have we contributed in the increase of poverty? What specific actions are we doing to remediate it? Remember that we can always do more. An awareness that leads to inaction is not proper of a Vincentian. Realize that neither Vincent de Paul nor Frédéric Ozanam lived in peaceful times, quite the opposite. Their unconditional love to Jesus and the fellow human being opened paths of dignity and recovery. So… what about us?

SSVP Plus – Vincentian Mission in Morocco

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has undertaken the necessary steps to establish the SSVP in Morocco

In late January, an SSVP delegation made up of the International Vice-President for Middle East and North Africa, the National President of SSVP Spain, Juan Manuel Buergo, and the Zone Council President of Cádiz (Spain), Francisco Holgado, went to Morocco to lay the foundations for a future SSVP in this country.

Cardinal Romero (middle of the picture) alongside SSVP members

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has undertaken the necessary steps to establish the SSVP in Morocco.

The trip was marked by the visit of Cardinal Romero, Archbishop of Rabat, who gave his blessing to undertake the Vincentian mission in Morocco, and urged the SSVP to work hand in hand with the Daughters of Charity in Temara, the Franciscan friars of Rabat, the Oasis Parish in Casablanca and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Casablanca and Marrakech.

The Sisters of the Sacred Heart were so pleased with the proposal brought forward during the meeting, which took place in their convents in Marrakech and Casablanca, that they will prompt both the priests they know and the Catholics engaged in parish life to be involved. In the meantime, the SSVP Spain will liaise with the Franciscans and the Daughters of Charity, both of whom are of Spanish origin.

The trip was marked by the visit of Cardinal Romero, Archbishop of Rabat, who gave his blessing to undertake the Vincentian mission in Morocco

However, it should not be overlooked the fact that Morocco has 35 million inhabitants, but only 23,000 of them are Catholics. Catholicism is being rolled back. The Church, organised in two districts, supports 35 parishes. This entails that any project to be undertaken should be closely monitored, so there is still an exciting way ahead.

“Despite the SSVP’s autonomy to operate and be established, our mission in Morocco, with the support of the Church and the different religious congregations, is a godsend which will surely help us attain our primary goal: setting up the SSVP in Morocco.”, concluded the President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira.

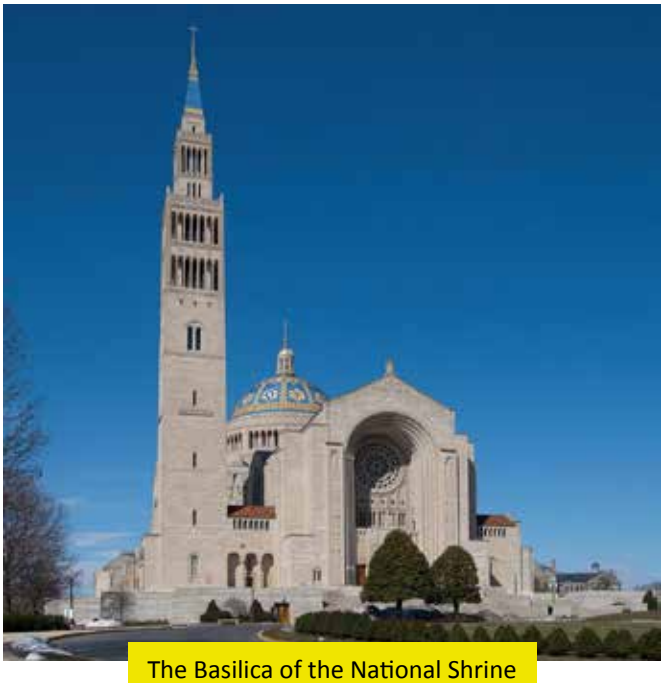
Fellow member Eduardo Marques, the SSVP Plus Project Manager, thanked the SSVP Spain and the Vice-Presidency for Middle East and North Africa for their hard work and collaboration with the Council General in this noble mission.

Throughout 2020, the SSVP Plus Project will conduct institutional actions in 12 other countries with a potential for a SSVP founding process, namely Greece, Cape Verde and the Scandinavian countries.

A Dream Come True

President General, Renato Lima, made a tour of several archdiocesan councils within the Council of the United States.

During a tour of Washington DC, including a visit to the White House and the Capitol Building, he also attended a special youth-rally mass for life at the National Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the largest basilica in the United States. He was accompanied by David Barringer , CEO of the U.S. Council and Tommye Grant, President of the Council of Washington, D.C.



The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

There are a number of side chapels within the Basilica and when the President General saw the chapel of St. Vincent de Paul, he mentioned to his hosts that it would be wonderful if there were an image of Blessed Frederic Ozanam also in the chapel. Perhaps it was just wishful thinking, but David Barringer made a mental note of Renato's brief comment.

A brief two-years later the dream became a reality on Sunday, January 26. This year also marks the 175th anniversary of the establishment of the Society in the U.S. (St. Louis in 1845, a short twelve years after the founding in Paris).

More than 2,00 Vincentians from all over the U.S. participated in a special mass at the Basilica that was televised by EWTN, with Bishop Donald Hying, the Episcopal Advisor of the U.S. Council, serving as the primary celebrant. Immediately following the mass was the official unveiling and dedication of the Ozanam mosaic in the chapel.

The mosaic is a beautiful addition to the chapel and serves as an inspiration to all Vincentians to see the key founder of the Society permanently displayed. It is in a 20 X 30 inch case with some 4,000-glass tiles forming the image of Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

Immediately following the dedication, a special re-

Mosaic in tribute to Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

David Barringer, SSVP CEO in the US (on the left) alongside bishop Hying (in the middle)

ception was held in a hall on the campus of Catholic University where over 300 guests viewed a video of Frederic's life and impact, emphasizing his vision of embracing the world in a network of charity.

During this special day, numerous Vincentians commented that this permanent display of Frederic, in such a holy basilica, might serve to facilitate his canonization.

Sometimes, dreams do come true.

To see a complete set of the professional photographs taken that day, go to the following link:
https://flic.kr/s/aHsmL6SAWN

Ralph Middlecamp, President of the Superior Council in the US (on the left); Tommye Grant, President of the Council in Washington, D.C. (in the middle); and Michael Nizankiewicz, International Territorial Vice-President for America 1 (on the right).

Dr. Elie KHOURY
Member of Saint Marc Conference – Dora. Lebanon
dreliekhoury@yahoo.fr

El SSVP´S LabMobile. A Doubly Innovative Charity Project

Ghazir and Dora Conferences

Back in 2006, Lebanon's National Council came up with the idea of bringing free medical services to people who were isolated in their villages in the aftermath of the July 2006 war. Aerial bombing destroyed roads to the south of the country, essentially forcing an embargo on the villages.

On 22 October 2006, we first provided medical services. Our team consisted of five physicians, two qualified nurses and two assistants, all volunteers. It took four hours to travel 115 km in order to reach the border village of Debel in southern Lebanon.

Once there, we offered the villagers physical check-ups and medicines, and shared their fears and concerns. We realised how useful just a few medical instruments could be. With only a stethoscope and blood pressure cuffs we were able to diagnose various disorders and warn people against conditions, which are sometimes silent, that had been undiagnosed and that could have had serious life-threatening consequences. At noon time, we shared a simple meal with them: "Maling" sandwiches (made with canned luncheon meat). According to a colleague, it had been more than 40 years since he last ate it, and it was the best thing ever.

Our mission was a great success for the local population as well as for the team, so much so, that we were ready to do it again in another southern border village.

Our second mission took place a month later with the same impact and the same impression on the team.

PGI, Renato Lima, also toured this project during his visit to Lebanon

Being with these people revealed to us that there was a great need for medical services, so we decided to conduct missions in other villages, this time in the northern and eastern parts of the country, on Bekaa valley. As a matter of fact, screening for these chronic illnesses, which often evolve at low-noise levels, can prevent more serious accidents leading to permanent or partial disability. These physical disabilities can often lead to work stoppage and loss of household income. The purpose of our medical missions was to advise people before they reached that stage. Behavioural change, thanks to prevention and medical treatment, could help reduce one of the potential causes of poverty.

During these sessions, we brought along a lab instrument to perform blood tests for glycaemia, lipid profiles and creatinine levels. We found these tests most useful in diagnosing chronic diseases. People who were fasting waited impatiently for us in the morning. Whenever we arrived, there was a crowd of people waiting to get their blood tested. Our biggest challenge was to get the results quickly. If a result was abnormal, the patient was immediately examined by a medical specialist.

Whether they were from Saint Marc Conference (Dora), a working class and poor section in the northern suburb of Beirut; from Ghazir, a village in the Lebanese mountains; or villagers from Saint Joseph Conference in the Keserwan region on Mount Liban, we realised that the people we serve in our conferences also need free blood testing, since 44% of the Lebanese population has no medical coverage. According to a survey on household living conditions carried out by the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS), Lebanese people spend nearly $1.15 billion each year on medicines and blood tests, which accounts for 46 % of the health system's expenditure. For low-income households, this represents up to 13 % of their budget.

On the other hand, around a third of the Lebanese population (1.5 million people) live below the poverty threshold, earning less than USD 4 per day, hence being unable to meet their basic needs.

This request to provide the local population with free blood testing, and the impact of these check-ups in our many missions, particularly on the prevention of diseases and their related complications, prompted us to launch the Labmobile project in November 2018 during a Charity dinner organised by Saint Marc Conference.

The purpose of the project is to fight against the so-called "medical deserts". These deserts are understandable from a geographic standpoint but also in terms of time. The project consists of purchasing a van equipped with a lab bench, overhead

lighting, a blood-collection chair, lab instruments and an alternative source ensuring autonomy for the equipment, thus allowing the team to work in remote areas.

The mobile laboratory allows people to obtain their blood results almost immediately so that the physician can see them right away. With this service, we can take samples at home of those who are bedridden and unable to move around.

This laboratory, easy to set up and move about, includes blood collection kits. The tests are the same as those in conventional laboratories, but they are chosen for their easy use. The objective is twofold: Preventive medicine for serious or even silent diseases (diabetes, dyslipidemia, anaemia…); and rapid diagnose of common but serious diseases in poverty-stricken populations living in remote villages and neighbourhoods.

The Labmobile was officially launched at a Charity dinner in June 2019 organised by Ghazir Conference.

The project is doubly innovative in its concept: a medical lab which can be moved anywhere in the country when needed, offering a specialised public health service, and a funding method resulting from collaborative efforts at a local and international level.

The Labmobile provides a very specialised medical service that requires knowledge and hands-on know-how provided by a team of experts (medical specialists, laboratory professionals) as well as equipment to achieve the goals of our mission.

We have set up a computer database to collect patients' demographic data and for reporting purposes. We systematically take each patient's blood pressure. This database could ultimately serve as a national public health epidemiological study. For each mission, we choose one or two diseases for screening such as diabetes, dyslipidemia, hepatitis, prostate disorders, anaemia…

This medical service has proven its worth on each mission; even if it means detecting only one case of hypertension, diabetes or dyslipidaemia out of forty patients, monitoring diabetes with a HbA1C test, warning a man in his fifties about his high PSA levels, detecting signs of hepatitis B in a young person when there is a vaccination against this disease, or finding iron-deficiency anaemia in a lactating mother who came to the LabMobile after hearing about a SSVP medical team coming to the village at Sunday mass, where the priest prompted people to sign up for this medical campaign.

We are now the village's event. Everyone gets ready to welcome us. They put up billboards at the village entrance, make the appointments and welcome people. When we arrive after a long journey, they

are there to greet us with coffee before starting our work. Often we meet either in a parish hall in front of a church, or at the local Saint Vincent de Paul Conference site, or at the Red Cross site.

We park the LabMobile at the site entrance and begin taking samples, doing check-ups and examining patients. We spend a whole day with them and then share a meal together. This is the moment where we can relax before heading back home, with our hearts full of nice memories, joy and especially the hope of seeing each other again. And at the end of each day, we get the same questions: When are you coming back? Where will it be? These are only some of the signs resulting from the great satisfaction of all the medical staff and their enthusiasm to leave their families once more for another medical mission, just to serve those in need. The team members are all volunteers, but not necessarily active Vincentians. They give up a day's work taken from their weekly rest time because they believe in our mission and have experienced a sense of service, far from politics and personal gain.

As for financing the purchase and fitting out of the LabMobile, this project is the result of the solidarity first experienced between two conferences in the same country (Saint Marc in Dora and Saint Joseph in Ghazir), their close collaboration, their strong friendship, and the pooling of resources between the "physician" and the "funder" of each of the two conferences, who strove to create this project in such a short time frame.

Upon approval of Lebanon's National Council, we produced a 3-minute promotional film presenting the project and its feasibility, which was showed at our Charity dinner in November 2018. We received a lot of positive feedback and interest from the people there. This pushed us to go further: we presented it to businesses, corporations and embassies in order to obtain funds for the purchase and fitting-out of the van. We even took part in talk shows on TV and radio several times using videos and photos to promote our cause. After five months, we were able to order our van.

France's National Council provided funding for the laboratory equipment. Thanks to the twinning between Saint Marc Conference in Dora and the Loire Departmental Council in France, our twin presented the project to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul's International Commission in France. The promotion of a local project between two Lebanese conferences worldwide shows that our work with the poorest of our brothers and sisters can inspire people around the world, as long as they are convinced of our mission and that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul's message of love and hope is known and spread. This cross-border solidarity reminds us that our Society is an international network of charity according to

the model Frédéric OZANAM would have wanted nearly 190 years ago.

The LabMobile is a true testimony to Vincentian charity on three levels. First of all, it is Vincentian charity at the local level, between members of a conference and the people they serve. This project arises from the charity that is actively extended to the most needy by trying to meet their needs while bringing social justice to them.

It is also testimony to Vincentian charity at the national level between members of two conferences of a country and volunteer members of the medical team. Lastly, it is testimony to Vincentian charity developed worldwide with members of the conferences of Loire and all of France.

The LabMobile is a concrete example of an innovative work of charity that knows no bounds. Even though it is an expensive service, our challenge is to offer it free of charge while keeping quality results.

The sustainability of our project is the result of our donors' perseverance and the generosity. My wish would be to set up several teams of experts who can take turns to carry out the missions and serve the greatest number of people.

Andrés R. M. Motto, CM
andresmotto@gmail.co

What is ecology?

In this new section of Ozanam Network, I want to share with you some articles related to ecology. Why ecology? As members of the Vincentian Family, this is a theme that should concern us. Ecological problems affect us all, but especially the poor. For example, climate change is a negative reality. Humankind is responsible for this increase in the average temperature of Earth's atmosphere. Those who suffer the most are indigent people since global warming affects food production, and gives rise to drought and other environmental disasters.

The word 'ecology' was coined by the German philosopher and biologist, Ernst Heinrich Haeckel (1834-1919) in 1869

With regard to this theme, some people minimize environmental issues; others, as apocalyptic prophets, exacerbate the problems. As far as I am concerned, I promise to do my best and speak in a balanced and grounded manner.

I have committed myself to this cause for many years; that's why, I have written various articles on this theme. I've learned a lot from Nature. It comes to my mind the time when I was a junior seminarian. Along with other seminarians, we were in charge of the community farm. It was an activity I enjoyed and it filled me with peace. With the passing of time, I learned more about land cycles and farming tools, and about the joy of watching vegetables grow and ripen. This activity saved money, since all the salads and vegetables we ate were grown on the community farm.

WHAT IS ECOLOGY?

Let's take a look at this basic topic. The word 'ecology' was coined by the German philosopher and biologist, Ernst Heinrich Haeckel (1834-1919) in 1869. Ecology comes from two Greek words: 'Oikos' means 'home' and 'logos', 'study'. Therefore, the etymology provides us with a rather precise concept. Ecology is the knowledge allowing us to walk more gently on Earth, our 'home'. Another definition: ecology is the study of the harmonious unity that living beings share with their environment … a unity that guarantees life and survival. Haeckel defined ecology as that part of environmental studies in which we study about organisms, plants and animals and their relationship or interdependence on other living and non-living environment.

This science experienced a rapid and extensive development. Today, ecology is studied in almost all schools throughout the world. There are also environment-related degrees, as well as Ministries or Departments of Environment and environmental police officers, etc.

Ecology arose from a branch of Biology before becoming an independent science. Ecology has become the science of life with a clear interdisciplinary approach. Biology, chemistry, anthropology, human rights and ethics, to name a few, have contributed to further develop this ecological science, which welcomes the various religious cosmologies and theologies. As a science that is related to life as a whole, it is naturally bound up with politics and the economy. Ecology encompasses multiple dimensions because it teaches us that everything is intertwined and interrelated.

We ought to distinguish two words that are not synonymous: ecology and environment. Ecology is a science and the environment is the subject matter of the ecological science. Therefore, ecology as a science is the theoretical part of the knowledge, while the environment, with the passing of each day, is modified and changed for either the better or the worse.

However, we ought to distinguish two words that are not synonymous: ecology and environment. Ecology is a science and the environment is the subject matter of the ecological science. Therefore, ecology as a science is the theoretical part of the knowledge, while the environment, with the passing of each day, is modified and changed for either the better or the worse.

People need to be knowledgeable about the ecological balance, which is the result of the harmonious functioning of a network of reciprocities. Nonetheless, this balance is upset due to three elements: [1] the adverse proliferation of many simultaneous negative factors; [2] faced with a permanent corruption, it can result from one long-lasting element; [3] when going beyond the threshold of what is bearable (here we refer to something so large that nature is unable to neutralize this negative element).

Ecology points out that in recent centuries, humankind has become a distorted element. Human beings can be the custodians of the Creation or its ultimate enemy. Some centuries ago, some people became a threat to the environment. Therefore, we need to take up again our vocation as custodians of the environment.

The fact that our increasing ecological awareness is good news … that is very positive even though that awareness varies among the different countries and regions. We know that in many areas, ecological policies are reduced to mere words. As Vincentians, we know that our challenge is to either engage in the struggle for ecological balance, or go into ecological

collapse. I do hope that we will make the right choice. People are capable of acting in a responsible manner, and this attitude should guide our environment-focused activity. The defense of the environment includes the protection of human rights. As Vincentians, we are not advocating for an ecology not including human beings. Quite the opposite, we foster an ecology ensuring the fulfillment of human beings, which entails relating ecology with other realities and sciences, since, without a new system of values, ecology will never be concretized.

An attitude of solidarity ought to reinforce the concept of globalization. Actions are interrelated. What is done in one place of the planet affects and has repercussions on other areas of the planet. Therefore, we have to seek and discover environmental limits and not overcome such limits.

In the main, economists and ecologists have not gotten along. The economy has suffered from bias: Based on the myth of progress, it has suggested that with unrestricted economic growth, people will be better and better off. While it is true to say that economic growth has led to various good effects, there have been many ecological imbalances. Some ecologists have spoken in an In the main, economists and ecologists have not gotten along. The economy has suffered from alarming, extremely pessimistic manner … as if next year the planet will explode! Other ecologists have proposed extreme solutions: not to use airplanes. Such words lead us nowhere. On the one hand, we have one type of economists who only focuses on careless production which leads to serious environmental degradation; on the other hand, there are others claiming that the environment can only be saved by overriding the economy … hence, there can be no dialogue. Our proposal is to unite those who are advocating for an integral ecology … technology ought to be at the service and the defense of ecology. We cannot live in an unhealthy environment; we cannot nullify centuries of patient scientific progress. A “technology strike” cannot be sustained but rather we should promote the rational and healthy use of technology that will result in long-term solutions. This is not a question of deserting or contaminating and then abandoning business.

An attitude of solidarity ought to reinforce the concept of globalization. Actions are interrelated. What is done in one place of the planet affects and has repercussions on other areas of the planet. Therefore, we have to seek and discover environmental limits and not overcome such limits. The defense of nature implies organizing life from the perspective of respect, austerity and solidarity.

Ecology began with an awareness of those who were warning us that something was wrong with the manner in which we were living. Slowly, society accepted this warning and we have seen the enactment of laws to protect the environment and punish those who inflict harm on the environment.

Young vincentians protecting mother earth

The National Council of India functions with the help of Six Regional Coordination Committees since India is a vast country. Western India Region is one of the regions which organized youth meetings on 19th & 20th October 2019 at Pedro Aarupe Centre, Raia, South Goa. The meeting had the theme "Young Vincentians Protecting Mother Earth". Around fifty Youth from different central councils participated with much enthusiasm.

The meeting had formally inaugurated with respect to Founders and Patron, lightening of traditional lamp. Bro. James Dabre, National Twinning Officer, Bro. Abhil Micheal & Bro. Ornel Raj, National Youth Coordinators, NCI, Bro. Amancio, Regional Coordinator, Dr. Jorson, Resource Person graced with their presence.

There were different topics was handled by the resource persons like Dr. Jorson on Attitude of a Vincentian, The youth of Goa demonstrated an easy way to grow trees called "Seed Balling" technique, which reduces the work of digging a big hole to plant trees. Br. Aamancio also stressed the same. Fr. Roger Coutinho on Different types of addictions followed by holy rosary was recited as we are walking towards the Statue of Our Lady of Sorrows. Bro. Abhil Micheal, National Youth Coordinator

shared his experience of being a young Vincentian. Bro. Leo Levin, National Vice President insisted on roles and responsibilities of youth in SSVP and shared about the global young Vincentian activities followed by early dinner.

In the evening we had a gathering at Utordha Beach with games, dance, camp fire and entertainment for the participants organized by the local conference members along with some little snack. Later on during the campfire, we were singing with our hearts in the sand on our feet and the wind in our face.

Day 2 was a surprise for all of us that Bro. Dr. Johnson Varghese, National President had arrived in the morning, which really motivated us. The day started with holy mass, where the participants among themselves had shared the sermon instead of the mass celebrant. Mr. Jovito Lopez handled a session on pollution and the environmental affects. Youth Bro. Johnson introduced Youth T Shirt.

During his talk, Bro. Johnson shared his experience as being a national youth representative and also encouraged the youth to come forward to take initiatives in their respective central councils. He had also promised that the National Council of India will extend its complete support for the development of the young people.

CC Youth Representatives presented the activity reports for the previous year and was evaluated by the national team. Bro. Johnson had interactive session with the participants to get to know the reality at the ground levels. The whole meeting was organized by Sr. Arita and Bro. Alexius, the Regional Youth Coordinators of Western India Region

Aude Geant

I came to give, and I received

I have been a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul since January 2015. At first, I was concerned in providing timely service to the needy and, although I thought I was doing a good deed, it turned out to take a central role in my daily life. My life changed in such a radical way that I thought I was just giving; but I received. I was thinking only in practical ways; but I found brothers and sisters, I made friends, and I rediscovered my faith.

Arrival at SSVP

During that time, I had just moved into an apartment in Paris and my roommates told me about a youth conference in Saint Pierre de Montrouge where they were both volunteers. Curious by nature, I went there one night "just to see what it was like" and I liked it so much that I stayed for 4 years.

My first visit to the homeless remains a remarkable memory. We began, as we did every Monday, with a prayer to entrust to the Lord the people we were going to meet and the experiences we would share with them. I was ready to go and help the homeless withstand the winter chill with coffee, tea and homemade soup thermos, when the volunteers gave me some good advice. On that evening, I met Phillip, an adorable white-haired grandfather, in a subway near the Montparnasse station. I felt immediately at ease with him and after chatting for about 10 minutes, he asked me, with lots of hope in his voice and a big smile on his face, if I could right there and then, in the subway station where he was taking refuge within the crowd, sing a Hail Mary. What a joy it was to share this together!

From that moment, I would run after work to have my weekly meeting on Mondays with the volunteers and the people on the street who were now part of my life.

"As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

Philippe passed away, but our conversations and his words full of wisdom remained in my heart. Particularly, I think of some words he said to me one night: "You know, in Paris, we don't die of starvation, we die when other people turn their eyes away from us." This phrase, seemingly simple, has accompanied

Aude Geant (in the middle of the picture) at the World Youth Day, held in Panama

me on the hundreds of street visits I have done since. After that experience, how can one be indifferent to the one sitting on the floor who asks something from us? How could I turn a blind eye to the man begging on the subway for something to eat? In their pleads, they ask for material goods, in their hearts and eyes, they seek attention, a sign of kindness, they ask for dignity, and they seek the tenderness that is denied to them.

We often pass by in front of them without noticing them, often we do not take the time to listen, or laugh or cry with our neighbour. A simple smile, a greeting, can brighten up the day of those who feel left out and abandoned.

Philippe reminded me of our essential needs: we are social beings and we cannot live without each other. Selfishness and indifference are evils that eat away at our society. “As I have loved you, so you must love one another”, this is the most important commandment.

For me, belonging to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul means to embody, in all our actions and words, kindness and care for our brothers and sisters.

Volunteering and missions

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul offers us many opportunities, without a shortage of possibilities, to carry out the beautiful mission of serving Christ through those in need while embracing the world in a network of charity. And for me, things moved quickly right after my first visit in January 2015.

My Conference primarily arranges many activities: in the streets to visit our brothers and sisters, in the neighbourhoods to share and bring joy to the elderly people, in the hospital library, and in the social centres to provide the homeless a safe place to rest.

In March, I was at the French National Conference in Metz and discovered that contrary to what I thought, it was a global association and not just a small and isolated one. That was wonderful news.

Right after I returned from this event, I became a member of the Parisian committee to help maintain and develop the Youth Conferences. In this role, I attended a European meeting in Lyon in November.

In 2016, I organized WYD in Krakow for 34 people from the French Vincentian Family. The group was made up of people from SSVP, WYD, Vincentian Fathers, and a Daughter of Charity, who met with the common goal of encountering Christ and meeting the Vincentians from all over the world.

In 2018, I was an interpreter at the international youth meeting in Salamanca. Then, I was able to participate in different events in Colombia, where I spent 6 months. And last November, I participated in Fratello, a pilgrimage in Lourdes launched by Pope Francis for the World Day of the Poor. Today, I am lucky and joyful to be able to help organize a trip to the Holy Land that will bring together 30 guests and 15 volunteers.

All these missions I was entrusted with have taught me a lot, allowing me to develop skills while having experience and adventures I did not imagine possible. With SSVP members, I have grown in my relationship with others and with God. I have met wonderful people, gained beautiful new friendships and reconnected with my faith. I thank everyday my fellow partners and the beneficiaries for all the wonderful gifts they gave me and the Holy Spirit for putting the Society of St. Vincent de Paul on my way.

The highest form of Charity

The SSVP's Italian Federation has published the second volume of the writings of Frédéric Ozanam. After the first one, published in 2013: "Il cuore ha sete di infinito" (The heart is hungry for infinity) a collection of one hundred among his more significant letters, now the second one concerns a choice of his social and political writings entitled "La più alta forma di carità" (The highest form of Charity), as per a famous sentence of G. B. Montini, the future pope Paul VI. The volume was edited by Maurizio Ceste, member of the historic commission of SSVdP, with the collaboration of some significant exponents of the culture, economy, volunteering. One of them is our President Renato Lima de Oliveira, who commented on the minutes of an assembly of the Conference in 1848.

The volume collects some of the most important political writings of Frédéric: passages from letters, articles from the newspaper L'Ère nouvelle and Le Correspondant, passages from University lessons, etc. His research relied on support of Magdeleine Houssay and Christine Morel Franconnet (the scholar who identified 23 social and politics articles contained in L'Ère nouvelle). Both wrote a comment on a text.

In particular, thanks to the dear deceased Christian Verheyde, Maurizio had the possibility of photographing all the 23 articles regarding political and social issues, published on L'Ère nouvelle, kept in the Bibliotheque Nationale de France in Paris.

It is the first time that such a work has appeared in Italy and perhaps anywhere in world.

The volume is divided into four parts, and contains 68 tracks: 36 letters, 28 journalistic articles, excerpts of university lessons and other writings.

The volume starts from 1830 where in a letter, not yet twenty years old, Ozanam manifests his immature political ideals, to 1848, year in which he best expresses its social ideas and when, through the newspapers, he launches his appeals to a direct political commitment, which results in his candidacy to the National Assembly.

The years 1851-53 conclude his social journey, in which shines through his love and hate for active politics.

Meeting of PGI with Lebanese youth

Lebanon, 160 years of charity

Neither war, nor political and economic crises have stopped the work of the SSVP in Lebanon. For 160 years, our fellow members have continued their effective care of the poorest people in their country. We offer a picture of their work here, through an account of the visit which the President General, Renato Lima, made there in the first week of the year.

From 2 to 7 January, the SSVP President General visited Lebanon. He spent his time mainly in Beirut and its surroundings.

SSVP Lebanon was founded in 1860, and currently has 50 Conferences, 8 Particular Councils and 13 special works. Historically, the Lebanese SSVP is closely linked and twinned with SSVP France.

The President General experienced the very varied, worthwhile work of the SSVP in Lebanon, continuing through the turbulent political and economic situation in the country which seriously impacts the lives of the poorest people in the country. SSVP Lebanon, with Paul Kallassi as its president, looks after elderly people in its care homes, supports the education of children in its learning centres, helps to maintain camps for refugees (most of whom come from Iraq and Syria), manages farming projects and health centres... For instance, they have a sustainable honey production project, which sells its produce at holiday times, or to businesses associated with the catering sector, the profits being used for many needy families. They have also set up Mobilab, a mobile medical unit which provides consultations and clinical analyses for the poorest areas of Beirut. One of the “patients” for this Mobilab was the President General himself, who tested the efficiency of the service first hand, as he underwent several medical tests, together with other patients from the area.

As usual on his visits, the President General met the Apostolic Nuncio and various bishops from the area, as well as the representatives of the Vincentian Family

branches in the country. He also met the young Vincentians in Lebanon, whom he described as “a united group, motivated and truly committed to the mission and values of the SSVP”.

At the Jubilee Ceremony for the 160th anniversary, the Holy Father’s Apostolic Blessing was given, and the “rebuilding lives” project introduced, aimed at restoring the Church of St Vincent de Paul Beirut (destroyed by bombing in the 1990s, in the civil war across the country) and building a social centre alongside it.

Finally, the President General, Renato Lima, visited the tomb of the former President General of the SSVP, an example of a Vincentian life and commitment, Amin Abouhamad de Tarrazi. The visit was made alongside Jean-Michel de Tarrazi, Amin’s nephew.

Saint Rita Conference (refugee children)

Meeting with Italy's Superior Council

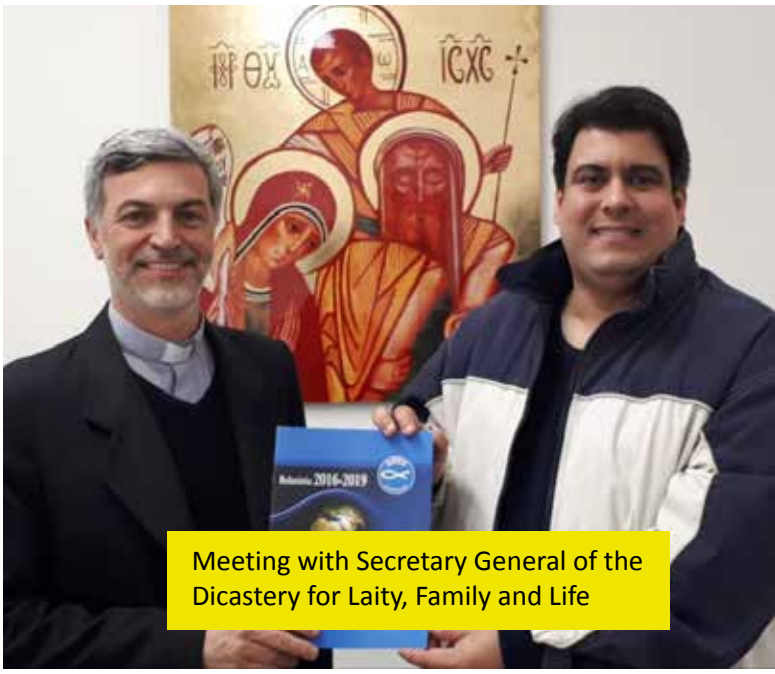
The President General travels to Italy

Meetings with the SSVP in Italy, and with Vatican officers, agreements with branches of the Vincentian Family and organisations related to the SSVP (Order of Malta and the Religious of Saint Vincent), working on the canonization process for Frédéric Ozanam, and attending the meeting of FAMVIN leaders in Rome.

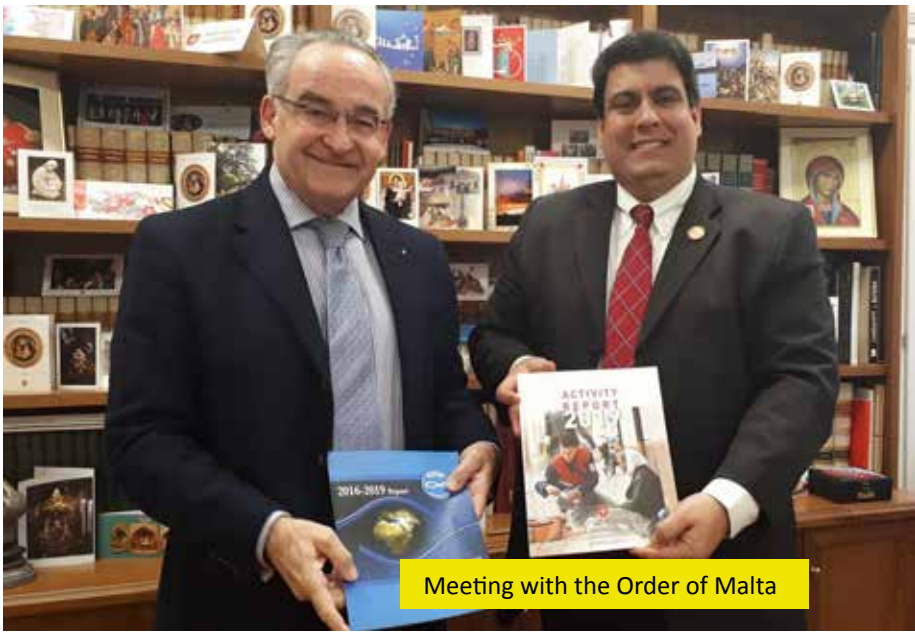
In the first two weeks of January, the President General of the SSVP, Renato Lima, visited the Superior Council of Italy, a country with a strong Vincentian presence, over 12,000 members organised into 1,300 Conferences and 36 Central Councils, with 20 special projects in various parts of the country.

The Italian National President is Antonio Gianfico, who is also responsible for representing the Council General International at the Vatican when the President General cannot attend the meetings concerned.

The visit to the Superior Council of Italy began in Naples, in the south of the country, an area with a strong SSVP presence. Our beloved president was able to visit some special works, such as the



Meeting with Secretary General of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life



Meeting with the Order of Malta

Ozanam Centre for people in need in the Sant'Antimo area, as well as to attend a meeting with members of the Naples Central Council of the SSVP.

After visiting Naples, Renato Lima was in Rome with a tight schedule of official meetings. He had an interesting meeting with the leadership of the International Secular Vincentian Missionaries (MISEVI), with whom, God willing, a collaboration agreement will soon be signed. Next, the President General had an interview with the Secretary General for the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, Alexandre Awi Mello, with whom he planned his attendance at the next meeting of this Vatican body on 4 June, in Rome.

Continuing the Vatican theme, Renato Lima then met the Under Secretary to the Dicastery for the Service of Integral Human Development, Fr Segundo Tejado Muñóz, and also the prefect of the Dicastery for Communication, Paolo Ruffini. He was accompanied by the Vatican Press Officer Raúl Cabrera, who invited the SSVP to join the Dicastery for Communication in the near future.

Another important meeting took place between our President General and the Order of Malta, in the person

Visiting Ozanam Centre

Meeting with the Vatican Conference

of Dominique de La Rochefoucauld-Montbel, Minister for Humanitarian Action and International Cooperation of this organisation, with which Renato will also sign a cooperation agreement on 3 June in Rome.

The President General also attended the meeting of the National Council of SSVP Italy, and one with the Religious of Saint Vincent de Paul, who are celebrating their 175th anniversary, and invited Renato Lima to their general assembly this year, which will be held in Quebec.

Finally on this trip, the President General attended meetings with the leaders of the Vincentian Family in Rome, under the heading "the Vincentian Family moves forward"; with Fr Giuseppe Guerra C.M, to see at first hand the progress being made in the canonization process of Frédéric Ozanam; with the Pontifical Commission for Latin America; and he was also present at the ceremony to raise the SSVP Conference of Saint Peter at the Vatican to international status, bringing our global presence to cover 150 territories.

Meeting with international MISEVI

Saint Etienne-du-Mont Conference

President General's Official Visit to France's National Council

President, Renato Lima, also visited two social projects and a Vincentian conference.

On the first weekend of February, the SSVP's 16th President General and fellow member, Renato Lima de Oliveira, participated in the ordinary meeting held in Paris by France's National Council Board. On behalf of the Council General, fellow member Larry Tuomey (General Treasurer) and Father Andres Motto, C.M. (Spiritual Advisor) also attended the event.

The meeting, which was attended by 15 French Board members, was presided over by fellow member Michel Lanternier. In France, the SSVP has around 1,000 Conferences, 18,000 members (11,000 of which are active Vincentians and 7,000 are volunteers) and 25 social projects, in 93 out of the 101 departments of this country.

In the first part of the meeting, after the prayers and two truly inspiring spiritual readings, the members of the National Council made their presentations on the SSVP's work in France. The first to speak was President M. Lanternier, who told the story of the French Society from 1833, going through the creation of the Council General and ending with the creation of the Federation in 2010. Shortly afterwards, other national leaders introduced the strategic plan of the National Council, the French SSVP's international support to dozens of countries, the projects to renew the Conferences, measures to strengthen training, as well as specific actions to fight solitude and new forms of poverty.

Later on, President Renato Lima presented a paper titled "2016-2020 Council General International's Highlights", in which he outlined the ongoing projects, programmes and initiatives within the Council General, with special emphasis on training,

youth, communication, transparent management, the canonisation of Ozanam and institutional relationships, as well as the prospective joint actions between the Council General and the National Council.

"We joyously greeted President Renato Lima, accompanied by fellow member Larry Tuomey and Father Motto. The President General's presentation was a good chance to better grasp the objectives and priorities of his term of office, and to learn more about this work and its responsibilities. I am sure that this visit will yield good results in the future", remarked President Lanternier. The French president presented fellow member Renato with the publication The Rule in light of Pope Francis' pressive work carried out by the Conferences, the social projects and the National Council. On behalf of the Council General, our heartfelt thanks for their support and generous donations made by France. The Council General is always at your disposition, in unity", said the President General International.

After the Council meeting, the Council General's delegation was prompted to learn about two social projects. The first one, Accueil 15 (Home 15), is a place providing shelter for poor or homeless people, located in the 15th district of Paris. There, they can bathe, access the Internet, eat, pray and spend their time in pleasant cohabitation. The fellow member Renato Lima had lunch there

Visiting 'Accueil 15' project

words, which will be officially launched in June of this year.

President Renato Lima said: "I very much appreciated the presentations given by the French brothers. They were truly charitable lessons. The devotion and commitment of this national board is well-known. Congratulations to France for its im- and interacted with brethren-in-need.

In the evening, a visit was made to Saint Etienne-du-Mont Conference, active since it was founded in 1833. Renato Lima and the Council General's delegation were greeted by fellow members of the Conference. Here, there is a shelter for homeless people in the cold season where they have

refuge, personal hygiene supplies and food, and they receive affection and understanding with utmost respect and charity. On this occasion, a delicious meal made with sausages and lentils was served. The brethren-in-need spoke about their life experiences, many of which were extremely touching.

After dinner, and accompanied by fellow member Yoen Laurent, the Council General's delegation walked through Rue Mouffetard and other streets of the Latin neighbourhood (historic district of the SSVP), where the seven founders began the charitable actions under the guide of Sister Rosalie Rendu, DC. It was truly a memorable night, filled with moments of sharing and learning.

Since he took office, the fellow member Renato Lima has conveyed the Council General's message of peace, charity and unity to 40 countries. We thank God for our President's availability, who, in addition to the intense Vincentian mission he has taken on, reconciles his professional, family and academic life. In 2020, he will also visit the following countries: Brazil, Portugal, Spain, the United States, Canada, Columbia, Italy, Switzerland, Kenya as well as other five Latin American nations (to be decided shortly).

France's National Council

Chicago and Madison: two North American Cities which received a visit from President General

At the end of February, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira (16th President General), at the invitation of DePaul University, was in Chicago (USA) to give an important presentation at the "Response to Reduce Poverty" Seminar, where he presented some Systemic Change projects currently underway by the SSVP worldwide.

Taking advantage of his four-day stay in the United States, our President, visited Vincentians of the Chicago and Madison areas. The President General was fraternally accompanied by the National President, brother Ralph Middlecamp, who accompanied him to all the various events and locations.

Chicago (State of Illinois)

In Chicago, Renato attended Holy Mass in the Saint Mary of the Lake Parish, where shortly afterwards, there was a "Vincentian Breakfast" in the church hall with the leaders of the Central Council and members of the clergy. On that occasion, the President emphasized the importance of good institutional relationships between the SSVP and the Church, the value of home visits, and love for the most vulnerable. This event was also attended by Vincentian Conferences.

Before presenting at the university later that evening, the President General had dinner with the Vincentian leaders and local professors of DePaul University. The dinner was also attended by Professor Matthieu Brejon, a French Vincentian who teaches

at DePaul University in Chicago. His commitment to social and religious history has led him to editing and writing books and articles on the subject. The SSVP in Chicago was founded in 1847 and currently has 1,800 members, 9 District Councils, 1 Central Council and 116 Conferences.

Madison (State of Wisconsin)

After leaving Chicago, Renato and Ralph went to Madison, where they had an intensive agenda. The first event consisted of a lunch in a place called "Port St. Vincent de Paul"; a shelter for 32 homeless men, who receive decent living conditions, hygiene and food.

Renato had the joy of attending a dinner at the home of brother Ralph and his beloved wife (Cathy), with the presence of Vincentian leaders from Madison and other neighboring cities. Bishop Donald Hying (Spiritual Advisor of the National Council) and Father Bart Timmerman (local Spiritual Advisor) also attended the dinner. On this occasion, Renato shared a little bit about his Vincentian life and the initiatives of the Council General International since 2016, when he became President General.

On his last day visiting Madison, the President General visited some Vincentian thrift stores ("Dig & Save", "Williamson Street" and "Odana Road"). He also visited the "Processing Center" that coordinates the actions of the various stores (shops).

Also on the agenda were stops to the, "SSVP Locker Program". They offer free locker storage for clothing, utensils and other objects used by the local homeless people who have nowhere to store their personal belongings; the "Charitable Pharmacy of Saint Vincent de Paul", which distributes medicines and vitamins for free to people in need; the "Food Pantry" which assisted families with food at no cost through a system of points and coupons delivered during the home visit; and, finally, in the City of Stoughton, the President General visited another Vincentian store. In all these thrift shops visits, the President General spoke with employees, customers and volunteers, interacting with everyone.

In addition to these initiatives, the President General had two Vincentian meetings at the headquarters of the Central Council, one with the Presidents of the Conferences and others with adolescents and young adults. Brother Renato also granted an interview to reporter Jane Grinde of the newspaper “Catholic Herald”, the most prestigious media outlet of the Catholic Church in Madison.

The SSVP in Madison was founded in 1925 and currently has 500 members in 30 Conferences, a Central Council and three District Councils.

“I really enjoyed all the activities I participated in, both in Chicago and Madison. I am very happy with the exemplary professionalism of our social works and the quality of the services provided to the most needy. The local Vincentian youth is also an encouragement and points out that we are preparing the future leaders of our Society well. Finally, travelling with dear brother Ralph was a gift from God to me. I will never forget our dialogues, which were always very purposeful, frank and loyal”, said our president Renato Lima

The President General will return to the United States, God willing, on two more occasions this year: in April, for a Vincentian event in Boston; and in September, in Saint Louis, for the anniversary ceremony of the 175 years of the SSVP on American soil.

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International Vincentian leader visits Madison
print
Around the Diocese
Written by Jane Lepeska Grinde, Catholic Herald Correspondent
Thursday, Mar. 12, 2020 -- 12:00 AM

MADISON -- "Spirituality, friendship, and service," the essential elements of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, clearly exuded from Renato Lima de Oliveira, the international president general of the society during an interview at the Middlecamp Center for Vincentian Charity here.

The first Brazilian to hold the high office was warm and friendly and full of gratitude for the work of the society volunteers in the Diocese of Madison.

Holding a copy of the February 6 Catholic Herald with Bishop Donald J. Hying's column on the "Life and Legacy of Blessed Frederic Ozanam," Lima de Oliveira said he was grateful to the bishop, who has been a Vincentian for 20 years and is advocating for the sainthood of the founder.

Volunteers Teri and Ray Cobb (blue T-shirts) join Society of St. Vincent de Paul officials for a picture during the visit of the international president general to the Middlecamp Center for Vincentian Charity, Madison. With the Cobbs from left are: Ernie Stetenfeld, head of the district council; Ralph Middlecamp, national president; and Renato Lima de Oliveira, International president. Teri Cobb is president of the society's conference at St. Christopher Parish, Verona. (Catholic Herald photo/Jane Lepeska Grinde)

How he became involved in society

Established in France 175 years ago, the society is the largest organization in the Catholic Church. Lima de Oliveira became involved in 1986 at the age of 15 as a volunteer while at a military boarding school in Sao Paulo. It gave him something to do while away from his home in Brasilia. "In retrospect," he said, "God sent me to Sao Paulo. Now I understand perfectly."

After three years, he went home to study journalism and eventually earned three postgraduate degrees and a master's degree in political science from the University of Brasilia.

In the fourth year of his six-year elected term as president, Lima de Oliveira travels worldwide but still maintains a full-time job with Anatel, Brazil's equivalent of the Federal Communications Commission. He is married and the father of two children, ages 19 and 16.

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President General's Speech on "Systemic Change" at a US Vincentian University

Students, professors and the community were very keen on the social projects brought forward.

On February 27, in Chicago (US), the 16th President General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, gave a speech on "Systemic-Change social projects undertaken by the SSVP around the world", at the request of DePaul University, one of the most prestigious institutions of higher education in the United States.

The President of the SSVP's National Council of the United States, fellow member Ralph Middlecamp, joined fellow member Renato Lima in the aforementioned speech.

Founded in 1898, DePaul University is the nation's largest private Catholic university, which is committed to "an educational experience that weaves together mind, place, people and heart" (as it is shown on the institution's website). Serving 25,000 students enrolled in higher-education courses, the university is run by the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentian priests).

The speech given by President Renato Lima, which was part of the lecture series "Poverty: Vincentian Response around the World", was focused on ongoing Systemic-Change projects in 10 countries, such as Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, Grenada, Brazil and Lebanon, to name a few. "I tried to show the academic community the need to adopt a charitable practice yielding concrete results to those who need it most, and the need

for jobs and income generation, since this is the best way to break the poverty cycle", stated our President.

Renato Lima also took the chance to highlight excerpts from his 2020 Circular Letter, which provide positive views on the Systemic Change. "One of the worst things about poverty is that it takes away people's hope, and they are even convinced that poverty is inexorable, being the only thing they can expect in their lives. Hence, Systemic-Change projects open a new path to hope for the poor, helping them understand that hardship can be overcome. The Systemic Change is strongly focused on the leading role of people and their ability to make long-term changes.", remarked the President in his Circular Letter.

After the speech, the participants were prompted to take part in the question & answer session, where some interesting topics were discussed. One of the questions raised was providential: the possibility of establishing a Vincentian Conference at DePaul University. This suggestion was welcomed by President General, who promised to be present if, God willing, this were to happen.

The Council General International would like to express its sincere thanks to DePaul University's leaders for their love, their professionalism and the warm welcome given to our fellow member Renato Lima in Chicago.

Geneva Hosts the Institutional Visit of the General Council's Delegation

This is the first time President Renato Lima has been involved in activities undertaken in Geneva.

In early February, fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, the SSVP's 16th President General, had the privilege of visiting the UN headquarters in Geneva (Switzerland). Along with him were the French fellow member Marie-Françoise Salesiani-Payet (Secretary General) and the Swiss fellow member Ueli Gubser (Zone 1 Coordinator of Vice-Presidency for Europe 1).

On this occasion, President General and the Vincentian delegation attended the meetings held on human rights. Afterwards, they visited the Palace of Nations (built in 1945) and its surroundings. Fellow member Marie-Françoise represents the SSVP's Council General International at the major events in Geneva, usually accompanied by Sister Monique Javouhey, DC (these two branches of the Vincentian Family are the only ones established in the region).

"Human rights is a key issue for SSVP's work around the world. It's up to all Vincentians to fight against injustice and violations of human rights, particularly regarding certain disadvantaged groups such as refugees or the most vulnerable excluded women, children and elderly people. We cannot condone disrespect whether in political, social and religious terms, since these are inherently human. We must also keep working more closely on advocacy for the poor. This is the only way to give voice to the excluded vis-à-vis national lawmakers.", stated President Renato Lima.

Marie-Françoise elaborated on how the SSVP works with the UN in Geneva, as well as on the discussions to be held with diplomats, ambassadors, NGOs and the Church itself, in order to yield better results. "This is a process that takes time to convince, but it works in the end. Everyone respects us here and consults us on topical social issues such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education and the living conditions of the most needy", explained Marie-Françoise.

In September 2020, God willing, President General will officially visit Switzerland for three days. Then, he will be back to Geneva to take part in other UN events. "I think that one of the major missions of a General President is to pave the way for our entity to liaise with new associations and institutions which, somehow, will help us alleviate material and spiritual poverty. We cannot do much on our own. Ozanam already prophesied: "[…] charity alone could not solve the problems of the poor […]", concluded President General.

Supporting, implementing and strengthening the SSVP's institutional work at the UN, both in New York and in Paris and Geneva, is regarded as a top priority by Council General's Board. Under the leadership of fellow member Edmund Keane, the Council's team consists of 6 Vincentians, two in each city. In New York, God willing, an office will be set up to better organise the SSVP's activities. In Geneva, the commitment to reactivate St. Francis de Sales Conference (the first to be established in Switzerland) will be another landmark, since the SSVP is well known and highly appreciated in this country.

Join the SSVP's *Translators Club*!

If you have language skills and are interested in collaborating with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in conveying its message, projects and actions worldwide, we prompt you to be part of our 'Translators' Club'.

Find attached the official announcement for this second call launched by the Council General International. The requirements are laid down therein, as well as the information sheet to be filled in to become member of this Club. Thanks for your help and for sharing this initiative.

Enlace al documento

The SSVP urges its fellow members to share their projects and activities

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul urges its fellow members to share their projects and activities in order to make them known worldwide. If you are part of a Conference and want to tells us about your experience with disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, please send an email to the Communication department (cgi.communication@ssvpglobal.org). The text should have a minimum length of 300 words and, if possible, some photos related to the project or activity. Your experience, shared on the SSVP's website and social media, will help and inspire thousands of people. Thank you for sharing and contributing to building up our ever-growing network of charity.

The 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration

In 1995, the UN's 4th World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Declaration, aimed at ensuring the improvement of human rights for women and girls and achieving gender equality in all spheres of public and private life.

25 years ago, the SSVP had the opportunity to take part in the preparations of the 4th World Conference on Women (held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995) via the International Catholic Center of Geneva (CCIG). There, in Geneva, along with all the Catholic and Christian NGOs, the preparatory work of the different UN Commissions was closely monitored, and the respective remarks and recommendations were made.

The extraordinary thing in Beijing was that a parallel NGO forum on women's rights was held for the first time under the slogan: "Women's rights are human rights".

While in many parts of the world today, women's and girls' rights are ever more jeopardised, and undermined, and even denied (domestic violence, national or international conflicts, discriminatory migration policies, refusal to recognise women's rights within certain institutions…), it is essential to remember that women's rights must be recognised in all circumstances throughout the world, thus protecting them from continued discriminatory actions and exploitation.

Visit this link to read more about the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

María Luisa Téllez
International Vice-President for Formation and Training

The Virtues of St. Vincent

Dear Vincentians,

As I reflect on the virtues that Saint Vincent taught us, I set out to write about them under two premises: the first one, from a humble viewpoint, because I sincerely believe that I cannot contribute much, if anything, to what is written about this subject in all the books we, Vincentians, have access to, as well as all the articles published on Internet; the second premise is the 'state of emergency' declared over Coronavirus in Spain and in almost all European countries. This has led me to ponder on these virtues and how we might put them into practice in these difficult times.

SIMPLICITY AND HUMILITY: It means recognising our dependence on God and being ourselves, by helping out those in need while begging for the help of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

MEEKNESS: It implies being compliant and gentle, and thinking about our neighbours in the same way we think about ourselves.

MORTIFICATION: It is the season of Lent, but, even if that were not the case, we have the chance to offer our sacrifice and prayer to the Lord. Prayer on the streets, prayer "among the pots and the pans", as Saint Teresa reminded us, and, of course, prayer in churches, if possible.

ZEAL: It entails persevering. The world can change with simple good deeds. Zeal is synonymous with passion, as described by our President General Renato Lima in his book Passionate for charity and justice. We must be passionate for justice, the driving force for change in our society, and for zeal, in order to bring hope to the poor, at times, the last resort to move on with their lives. In these harsh times, we should take advantage of this 'impasse' and this silence to meditate on these five virtues identified by Saint Vincent and how to put them into practice.

In the hope of the Resurrection uniting all Christians, my warmest greetings,

Death of Sr Kathleen Appler

The Council General International of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and all Vincentians around the world join in prayer and share the sadness of the Daughters of Charity and the whole Vincentian Family at the loss of Sister Kathleen Appler

On 18 March 2020, the Superioress General of the Company of Daughters of Charity, Sister Kathleen Appler, passed away at the Mother House in Paris (France). The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is very touched by the sad news of her death.

Born in Utica, New York, Sr Kathleen entered the Daughters of Charity in April 1973 in Boston (Massachusetts). She was elected Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity at the General Assembly in Paris on 25 May 2015. Before taking on this role, Sr Kathleen had been a member of the General Council of the Daughters of Charity in Paris, since June 2009, and visitator to the former North-eastern Province, based in Albany, New York. On 8 July 2019, Pope Francis appointed her a member of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life.

The Council General International of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and all Vincentians around the world join in prayer and share the sadness of the Daughters of Charity and the whole Vincentian Family at the loss of Sister Kathleen Appler, a true example of a life devoted to the charism of Saint Vincent.

May she rest in peace,

Renato Lima de Oliveira
President General International
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Brother Renato Lima de Oliveira
16th President General

President General International's Letter on the Global Health Crisis

"We have faced the global coronavirus crisis, a pandemic that is forcing social confinement and, of course, the prohibition of personal contact, especially with the elderly."

In our spiritual journey as Christians, baptized and Vincentians, we have already experienced innumerable tribulations and challenges, in all areas of our lives: in the family, in the professional field, in studies, in the search for work, in the area of health, and among many other dimensions as human beings. Also in the Church and in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, we sometimes experience disappointments and setbacks that leave us letdown and very sad in certain situations.

In recent weeks, we have faced the **global coronavirus crisis**, a pandemic that is forcing social confinement and, of course, the prohibition of personal contact, especially with the elderly. Several important events, courses and assemblies are being postponed. Donations to our Conferences, Councils and Vincentian special works are being reduced. We all have to reinvent ourselves to keep Vincentian charity updated.

Anxiety about not being able to make home visits, as we used to, is psychologically impacting many brothers and sisters in all countries.

"The poor will and the homeless be the most affected and the most vulnerable."

The economy will be impacted. The poor will and the homeless be the most affected and the most vulnerable. However, as Vincentians, we will not be immune to this inevitability. We will also be affected and impoverished by these turn of events.

Let us have faith! Once, a more experienced Vincentian consoled me saying: *"There are lights and shadows everywhere, and in our Society, we face the same lights and the same shadows as in any other entity".* This comment made me reflect on the necessary resignation when dealing with the difficulties of our life.

"If we have faith in God and full trust in Our Lord Jesus Christ, we will overcome adversities. Shadows will immediately dissipate. We will beat the coronavirus! Everything will pass. Let's have faith!"

If we have faith in God and full trust in Our Lord Jesus Christ, we will overcome adversities. Shadows will immediately dissipate. We will beat the coronavirus! Everything will pass. Let's have faith! If you have financial difficulties, **have faith**, ask God to give you patience to obtain the financial resources you need. If you are unemployed, **have faith**, because God will show you several opportunities to start working again.

If you are sick, **have faith**, because Our Lady will not allow pain to invade your heart. If you have problems with your marriage or your relationships, **have faith**, because Our Lord wants your happiness and will help you. If you have children involved in the world of addictions or who walk in bad company, **have faith**, because Christ is the way, the truth and the full life, and he will not allow young people to get lost in the world.

If there are problems in the Church and in the SSVP, **have faith**, since these episodes are secondary compared to the immense benefits of the practice of charity, which is the purpose that led us to serve the poor. In my life as a Vincentian brother, I have experienced intense emotions and I have also seen moments that are not so favorable. But in all these episodes, **with much prayer and faith**, we managed to overcome all these challenges.

"In times of war against the coronavirus, I tell you firmly: be strong, be faithful and do not be discouraged."

Therefore, in the face of this cruel reality, in times of war against the coronavirus, I tell you firmly: **be strong, be faithful and do not be discouraged**. *"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged"* (Deuteronomy 31, 8). Hold on to the Lord, because He will never forget us. There are many shadows that haunt us, but they will come out with the light of the Holy Spirit. When you least expect it, shadows will give way to light. *"And God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness"* (Genesis 1, 3s).

Let us continue to pray for all the SSVP members, for the great Vincentian Family and for the poor of the world. We will double our care with hygiene and public health. **We will no doubt win this battle!**

STRATEGIC GOALS 2016-2022

MISSION

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

VISION 2022

TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A WORLD WIDE ORGANIZATION, WHICH PROMOTES THE INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OF THOSE MOST IN NEED.

VALUES

- **SERVICE**
- **Spirituality**
- **HUMILITY**
- **CHARITY**
- **EMPATHY**

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

www.ssvpglobal.org

Ssvp-Conseil Général International

CONFEDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA SOCIÉTÉ DE SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
65 rue de la Glacière, 75013 París (France) TEL: +33-153 45 87 53 / cgi.communication@ssvpglobal.org