

# RULE AND STATUTES

SOCIETY OF  
SAINT VINCENT  
DE PAUL

CANADA



# THE RULE AND STATUTES OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

CANADA

“Help honours when, to the bread that nourishes, it adds the visit that consoles, the advice that enlightens, the friendly shake of the hand that lifts up sinking courage when it treats the poor man with respect, not only as an equal but as a superior, since he is suffering that which we would perhaps not be able to bear ourselves; since he is among us as the messenger of God, sent to put our justice and charity to the test, and to save us by our works.”

(Frédéric Ozanam, from an article in *L'Ère nouvelle*, October 21, 1848.)

# INTERPRETATION OF THE CANADIAN RULE AND STATUTES

These Internal Statutes of Canada received the approval of the Permanent Section of the Council General on December 17, 2019. They are subordinate to, and interpreted according to, the Rule of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul of the International Council General and to the International Statutes, and shall be treated together with them as a single legal document.

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## STATUTES

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SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CANADA

## PREAMBLE

Dear Vincentian Sisters and Brothers,

I am delighted to present to you the new edition of the *Rule and Statutes* of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul of Canada.

I say “new” because the document has been revamped, for two reasons: first, we had to make sure the changes made to the International Rule at the Special General Assembly in Rome in June 2016 were incorporated; and second, a consultation among our members revealed that our Canadian Statutes needed updating to better reflect the modern reality of Vincentian life in the country.

The final product required months of work, consultation and review.

Here’s a breakdown of the process followed:

- compiled the changes proposed by members across the country
- established a proposal-review committee (PRC)
- produced a draft document, later edited multiple times by the PRC
- held a review by the Board of Directors of the National Council before submitting the draft to the voting members of the National Council
- held teleconferences to gather the views of voting members of the National Council
- at the June 2019 Annual General Meeting in Windsor, Ontario, had the new version of the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* approved by voting members

- sent the approved *Rule and Statutes* document to the International Council General for ratification, which was received in the fall of 2019.

An extensive team worked very hard to bring this project to fruition. Before introducing you to the members, I want to thank the Vincentians who sent us their proposals for changes. Without your input and insights, this work would have been even more arduous and time-consuming.

Team: Our former National President, Penny Craig, chaired the committee masterfully despite the challenging situation she faced. I owe her a huge debt of gratitude. I also extend my thanks to the following spokespersons from across Canada: Minette Gomez (BC/Yukon), Peter Ouellette (West), Jason Hunt (Ontario), Linda Dollard (Ontario), Michel Olivier (Quebec), Alain Besner (Quebec), Pierre Hébert (Quebec) and Jerry Rex (Atlantic), as well as Clermont Fortin for his editing work. Our employees also put time and energy into the project: Nicole Schryburt, Josée Lemieux and Richard Pomainville, know that I'm deeply grateful.

Do take time to read this document because it is the reference you need to consult when you have questions about the Society's operations. It also explains why we do things differently, and it puts forward thought provoking articles to guide you on your spiritual journey.

Reflecting now and then on the vision, mission and values of the Society, on its core principles and on Vincentian spirituality will help keep you focused on the foundations of your volunteer work.

The people we serve aren't "clients", but people in need; and we help them with love, respect, fairness and joy.

I hope you always draw happiness and fulfillment from your volunteering. Thank you once again for your dedication.

Jean-Noël Cormier  
President, National Council of Canada (2013-2019)

SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CANADA

## VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

### **Vision**

As a Catholic lay organization, we will embrace the world in a network of charity, serving Christ in the suffering, the poor and the marginalized, bringing them love and respect, aid and development, hope and joy, in a more just society.

We also seek to deepen our spirituality and the mutual love and support amongst members, so that, seeing how we serve those in need with one mind and heart, people are attracted to the Society and to Christ who animates it.

### **Mission**

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is:

**To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.**

## **Values**

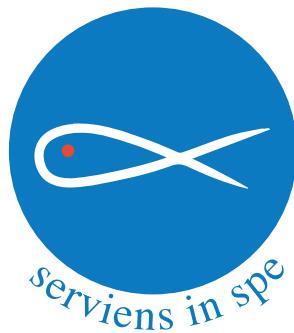
The mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians, we:

- see Christ in anyone who suffers;
- come together as a family;
- have personal contact with the poor;
- help in all possible ways.

**Adopted: SSVP-NCC, AGA, June 2003**

## **LOGO**

The Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (the International Council General) has adopted a logo and recommended it to the Society in every country. However, it is up to each national (superior) council to authorize the use of the Society's logo within its jurisdiction. The National Council of Canada has adopted this logo.



The logo has the following meaning:

- The fish is the symbol of Christianity and, in this case, represents the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.
- The eye of the fish is the vigilant eye of God seeking to help the poor in our midst.
- The crossing at the tail – or tie-knot – represents unity and oneness among members and also the union with the poor.
- The circle bounding the logo signifies the global or worldwide stature of the SSVP, an international Society.
- The words "serviens in spe" mean to serve in hope, the hope that comes from Our Lord Jesus Christ.

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## OPENING PRAYER

**L:** *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*  
**All:** Amen.

**L:** *Come Holy Spirit, live within our lives.*  
**All:** And strengthen us by your love.

**L:** *Send forth your spirit and new life will be created.*  
**All:** And the whole face of the earth will be renewed.

**L:** *Let us reflect on the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, recalling his unity and presence among us: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* (short silence)

**All:** Lord Jesus, deepen our Vincentian spirit of friendship during this meeting. Make us responsive to the Christian calling to seek and find the forgotten, the suffering or the deprived, so that we may bring them your love. Help us to be generous with our time, our possessions and ourselves, in this mission of charity. Perfect in us your love and teach us to share more fully in the Eucharistic sacrifice offered for all.

***Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.***  
**Amen**

**L:** *Most sacred heart of Jesus,*  
**All:** Have mercy on us.

**L:** *Immaculate heart of Mary,*  
**All:** Pray for us.

**L:** *Saint Vincent de Paul,*  
**All:** Pray for us.

**L:** *Saint Louise de Marillac,*  
**All:** Pray for us.

**L:** *Blessed Frédéric Ozanam,*  
**All:** Pray for us.

**L:** *Blessed Rosalie Rendu,*  
**All:** Pray for us.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen*

**L:** *Saint Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary,*  
**All:** *Pray for us.*

**L:** *Saint Vincent de Paul,*  
**All:** *Pray for us.*

**L:** *Blessed Frédéric Ozanam,*  
**All:** *Pray for us.*

**L:** *For all the benefactors of the poor, that God may reward them with eternal life,*  
**All:** *Lord, hear us.*

**L:** *For our Society and all its members, that God may renew our spirit of unity and of service,*  
**All:** *Lord, hear us.*

**L:** *For all who are sick and suffering, that God may give them courage and consolation,*  
**All:** *Lord, hear us.*

**L:** *For all our deceased members, the deceased poor and our deceased benefactors, that God may grant them eternal rest,*  
**All:** *Lord, hear us.*

**L:** *For the unity for which Christ prayed, that all may be one in truth and charity,*  
**All:** Lord, hear us.

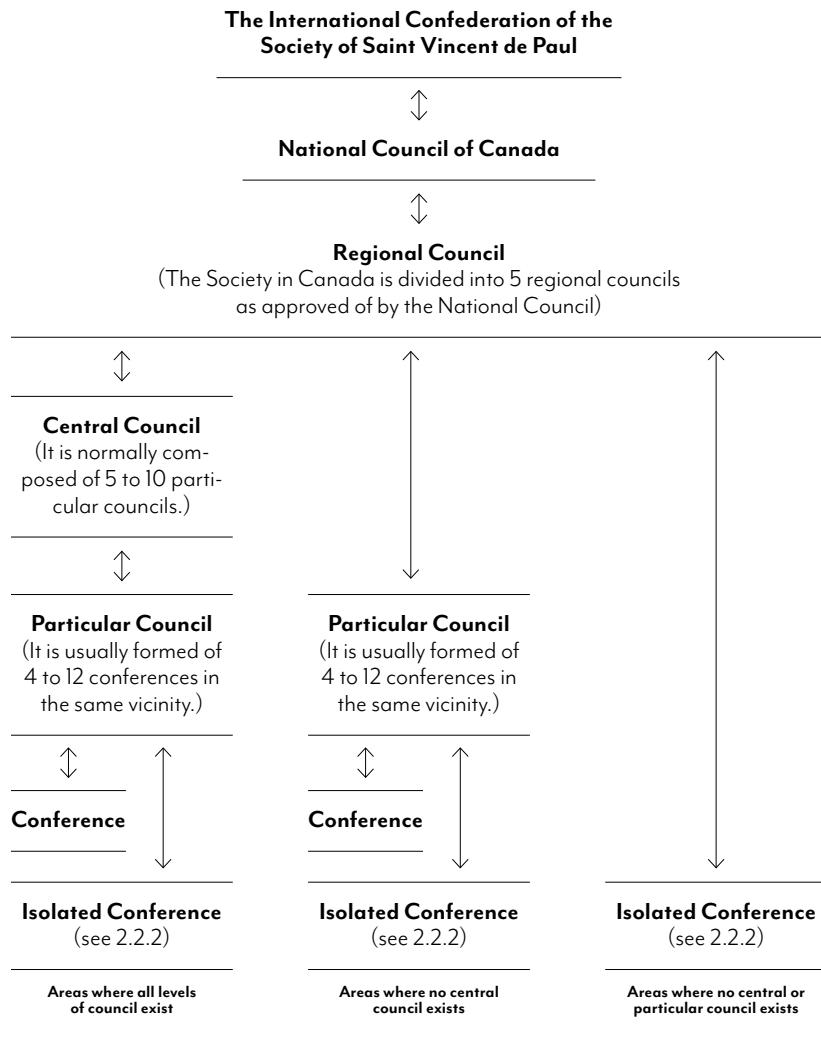
**L:** *For those who have no homes, that they may quickly find a place in which they can live a happy and decent life,*  
**All:** Lord, hear us.

**L:** *That if it be God's will, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, our founder, may be canonized by the Church.*  
**All:** Lord, hear us.

**L:** *That our Holy Father the Pope may be granted the protection, guidance, strength and consolation that he needs to discharge his duties as Christ's vicar on earth,*  
**All:** Lord, hear us.

**L:** *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*  
**All:** Amen.

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL IN CANADA





## SECTION I

# BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE RULE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

### 1.1 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

(See the International Rule for the full expression of the International Society's fundamental principles and spirituality. [www.ssvpglobal.org/en/](http://www.ssvpglobal.org/en/))

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a Catholic lay organization of charity,

- by its constitution;
- in its composition;
- in its administration.

The primary goal and purpose of the Society, its members, staff, volunteers and benefactors is:

- to serve and to minister to all persons in need,\* making no distinctions of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions;
- to promote their dignity in accordance with Christian values and the philosophy of the Society as expressed in the Rule.

\* See 1.2

Vincentians, in serving persons in need:

- are living the message of the Gospel;
- are transformed through Christ.

Vincentians recognize that the service, the activities and the attachment to traditions, as expressed in the stated parameters of the Society, reflect the vision of:

- our main founder Blessed Frédéric Ozanam;
- our patron Saint Vincent de Paul.

Vincentians belong to a worldwide community, and members:

- are drawn from every cultural and ethnic group;
- are united by prayer and reflection;
- take part in gatherings and meetings to organize and administer assistance wherever needed.

Vincentians work as a team within the Society and also in collaboration with other people of good will to:

- serve persons in need;
- discover and help redress situations of social injustice that cause poverty, suffering and need.

Vincentians believe that:

- they are serving Christ when they serve persons in need;
- the activities of the Society reflect the spirit of Christ in promoting the reign of God.

Vincentians carry out their work keeping in mind that:

- no work of charity is foreign to the Society;
- they are the loving companions to their brothers and sisters;
- the Society's vision goes beyond the immediate future, looking toward sustainable development and the protection of the environment for the benefit of future generations.

Vincentians, through person-to-person contact,

- serve in a spirit of love, humility, respect and discretion;
- are ready to serve when needed;
- make home visits.

### **1.1.1 Vincentian Governing Principle**

The Society has the sole right to decide its works, its priorities and the way the work is undertaken, the management of its projects, conferences and councils, its choice of officers, its organizational structures and the formation and training of its members and officers. It has the sole right to manage and distribute its funds and assets.

## **1.2 PERSONS IN NEED**

The reference to “persons in need” is synonymous with the word ‘poor’ designating men, women and children who, either as individuals or as families, are encountering difficulties in their lives. Persons in need may include:

- the homeless;
- immigrants and refugees;
- inmates and their families;
- those with no source of income;
- those searching for employment;
- seniors and those on fixed incomes;
- those living alone with few resources;
- those suffering physically or mentally;
- those who are going through a strike or a lockout;
- those abused physically, sexually or psychologically;
- the working poor who have problems making ends meet;

- those enrolled in governmental financial assistance programs;
- those who have a problem of dependency on drugs, gambling, alcohol, etc.\*

### 1.3 VINCENTIAN SPIRITUALITY

*The Gospel of the Lord according to Saint Matthew –  
Chapter 25 – verses 31 – 40*

*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels of heaven, he will sit upon his royal throne and all the nations will be assembled before him. Then he will separate them into two groups as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The sheep he will place on his right, the goats on his left. The king will say to those on his right:*

*“Come. You have my Father’s blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.*

*For I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me.*

*Then the just will ask Him: “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or see you thirsty and give you drink? When did we welcome you away from home or clothe you in your nakedness? When did we visit you when you were ill or in prison?” And the king will answer them: “I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me.”*

\* This list is open-ended and not limited to the groups of people mentioned.

The mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a response to the message of Our Lord in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. Members of the Society are called to value the principle of life, which manifests God's love for men, women and children throughout the world. Christ came to give hope to persons in need and expects Vincentians to do the same.

By meditation, prayer, reflection on the scriptures, and the teachings of the Church, Vincentians seek to:

- develop their awareness of God;
- develop their relationship with persons in need;
- bear witness by acts of kindness in the spirit of Christ.

The Gospels are the prime source of Vincentian spirituality. Meditating on the spirit of the Rule and on the lives of the saints, especially those of Saint Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, is recommended for greater spiritual development.

### **1.3.1 Characteristics of the Vincentian spirit**

*Charity is patient. Charity is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Charity does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Charity never fails.*

*1 Corinthians 13*

For a Catholic, a vocation is a call of the conscience enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Every vocation leads to a commitment; that is, to an absolutely free adherence to a particular kind of life. Vincentians accept and seek close adherence to a number of characteristics particular to the Society.

#### ***1.3.1.1 The spirit of charity, service and sharing***

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is founded on the principle of serving persons in need. This activity of charity is the fundamental characteristic of the Society. Frédéric Ozanam said: “I would like to embrace the whole world in a network of charity.” Members of the Society are united in the same spirit of poverty and of sharing. They offer their goods, talents and wealth in the service of their neighbours, persons in need, primarily by conducting home visits.

#### ***1.3.1.2 The spirit of humility***

Humility is one of the fundamental characteristics of the Society. Frédéric Ozanam states: “... our guiding rule should be neither to force ourselves on the public gaze nor to conceal ourselves from those who may wish to find us.” Good works speak for themselves. But simplicity and humility,

- strengthen Vincentians;
- hold vanity in check;
- proclaim the Gospel values with a loud voice.

#### **1.3.1.3 *The spirit of truth and justice***

Vincentians work towards the goal of justice for all. When serving persons in need, they are open and non-judgemental, inclusive and not exclusive. Vincentians act without prejudice and are honoured to serve persons in need. Honesty and truth are paramount if the Society is to follow its mandate. The distribution of funds and goods is a privilege. The goods belong to the Society inasmuch as the Society is the steward whose responsibility it is to distribute them to persons in need.

#### **1.3.1.4 *The spirit of warm acceptance and cordiality***

A heartfelt welcome, cordiality and accepting people as they are, characteristics of the early Christians, are part of the Vincentian way. Persons in need can be demanding, but a cheery disposition and a welcoming smile can make all the difference.

### **1.4 MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIETY**

People everywhere are called by Christ to proclaim the Gospel and to be His presence on earth. The Society, as a Catholic lay organization, remains faithful to these teachings of the Church.

Members join the Society because they seek to develop their faith by living it both individually and communally. The Society is for people who feel a need to improve their Christian life and view the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul as a means to accomplish this end.

## **1.4.1 Categories of membership**

Pursuant to the prescription of the Rule of the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (revised in 2016), the Vincentian tradition and legal requirements, the following categories of members are recognized:

### ***1.4.1.1 Full member***

A full member is defined as any person of good will, desirous of living his or her faith by loving and serving persons in need and who has successfully completed the screening and risk management procedures required by the National Council of Canada for full membership. He or she accepts and engages in formation and training as proposed by the Society, and participates regularly in the meetings and charitable activities of the conference or council in which he or she has been received, in accordance with the principles set forth in the International Rule. The full member has voting rights at meetings in accordance with the Canadian Statutes, accepts missions and tasks requested by the president and may be elected or nominated to servant-leader positions at any level of the Society's structure in Canada, if a Catholic.

#### ***1.4.1.2 Auxiliary member***

An auxiliary member is defined as any person, whether Catholic or not, who sincerely and publicly accepts the basic principles of the Society, but does not participate fully in the life of the conference or council in which he or she is enrolled; has successfully completed the screening and risk management procedures required by the National Council policy regarding auxiliary membership; is invited to participate in the charitable activities of the Society; may or may not have contact with those being served, and if so, should be accompanied by a full member.

The auxiliary member who is invited to attend meetings may speak, but has no voting rights. An auxiliary member cannot be elected to servant-leader positions, but may become a full member if he or she complies with the basic criteria for membership into that category.

#### ***1.4.1.3 Casual helper***

Volunteers who assist the Society a few times per year or have contact with those being served where a member is present, do not need to be screened.\* For example, volunteer work may include door-to-door canvassing at Christmas time, preparing hampers, etc. The conference or council president has the responsibility to make that decision.

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\* See National Council of Canada Operations Manual - Duty of Care Document 8.3

#### ***1.4.1.4 Benefactor***

Persons who are recognized because of their financial contribution or other support to the Society are considered benefactors. They may be invited to attend general meetings.

#### ***1.4.1.5 Young adult members\****

Full members between the ages of 19 and 35 inclusively.

#### ***1.4.1.6 Youth member***

Full members from the age of 12 to 18 working with an adult full member as mentor.

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\* Young adult members may belong to a regular conference in which case they are considered regular members. However, they may also be members of a young adult conference, for example, in a university where they are studying.

## SECTION 2

# ORGANIZATION OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL IN CANADA

### 2.1 PROLOGUE

The mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP or the Society) is to serve Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy. To accomplish this mission, the SSVP is organized to achieve set objectives through well-defined activities.

Functioning within a specific area, such as a parish, a school or a workplace, Vincentians form a conference and engage in person-to-person service to persons in need.

The Society has a simple and effective structure, which exists to support it at all levels. The conference\* is the first level of this structure.

Historically, as conferences increased in number and expanded geographically, it became necessary to form different levels of councils. \*\*

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\* Throughout the Rule, the word "conference" always refers to an aggregated conference.  
\*\* Throughout the Rule, the word "council" always refers to an instituted council.

The councils, whether they be particular, central, regional, national or international, are responsible to monitor the implementation and coordination of charitable and administrative activities and special works at all levels of the Society, from the conferences on up. They may themselves engage in activities and special works independently of the conferences. They also help maintain the original spirit of friendship, belonging and sharing for all Vincentians.

#### **2.1.1 Operations Manual of the National Council of Canada (hereinafter referred to as the Operations Manual)**

The Operations Manual of the National Council of Canada is a document that is separate from, but complementary to, the Canadian *Rule and Statutes*. It sets forth policies and procedures for all conferences and councils in Canada, and contains various administrative forms and other information necessary for the management of activities, and service to the persons in need. All conference and council presidents should have a copy of the Operations Manual. The National Council of Canada is responsible for keeping the contents up to date. The Operations Manual is available on the website, [www.ssvp.ca](http://www.ssvp.ca).

#### **2.1.2 Aggregation/Institution**

##### **2.1.2.1 Aggregation of a Conference**

The visible unifying link within the Society is the aggregation of the conferences and the institution of the councils declared by the Council General International (CGI). The CGI preserves among all conferences that unity of values, affections and practices cherished by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, in the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul.

After the formation of a first executive and following a satisfactory trial period of one year, a new conference, working through the intermediate councils, can submit an application\* for aggregation.

#### ***2.1.2.2 Institution of a Council***

In the creation of a council, the most important points to consider shall be:

- the Society's effectiveness in its service to those in need,
- the benefit to members.

The national president approves the creation of such a council on the recommendation, in writing, of the presidents of all appropriate higher councils, and then recommends its institution by the International Council General.

Councils applying for institution shall use the appropriate form to request its institution. The national president shall be provided with all the necessary information for the study of the application\*.

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\* Forms and information on the application process are included in the Operations Manual.

### **2.1.3 Incorporation, By-laws and Annual Review**

It is mandatory for any council or conference that decides to incorporate under provincial/territorial or federal law\* to send its proposed by-laws and request for authorization to incorporate, through the higher-level councils, to the national council, for review and approval, as set out in the administrative procedure found in the Operations Manual - ADMN/PR-001. As a rule, conferences should not apply for incorporation if their financial resources and the number of their members generally do not warrant it. However, it is understood that there are exceptions.

Each council or conference, once incorporated under their particular provincial/territorial or federal laws, must proceed with an annual review of its by-laws and send any proposed significant revisions to the National Council, through the higher-level councils, for review and approval, as set out in the administrative procedure found in Operations Manual - ADMIN/PR-004.

At least once a year, each conference and council must meet to evaluate its service to the members and to the persons in need as well as to examine the effectiveness of its special works and other projects. At this time, it must also explore ways to provide better service, ways to find those in need, and must consider new types of needs to alleviate.

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\* The policies and procedures for incorporation of an entity are found in the Operations Manual.

## **2.2 DEFINITION/ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES/REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF STRUCTURE**

### **2.2.1 Conference**

#### **Definition**

The founding members of the Society gathered together and called themselves the Conference of Charity. The word 'conference' has been an integral part of the vocabulary of the Society ever since.

Vincentians, within the limits of a parish, a school, a store, a workplace, etc, join together to form a conference. The conference provides an environment in which they develop and nurture a common spiritual life and where they grow in their closeness to the Lord as they encounter Him in the persons in need.

In a conference, objectives and activities are planned, developed and carried out to help persons in need. Conferences report to their particular council. Special provisions specified in 2.2.1.1 govern isolated conferences.

### ***2.2.1.1 Role and Responsibilities of a Conference***

#### **Role**

The main role of a conference is to group together Christians desirous of pursuing the Society's mission. A conference is a gathering of people similarly motivated to serve Christ by serving persons in need. Working within the conference, members can nourish and renew their faith, and sustain each other through prayer so that each member will grow closer to God.

Within a conference, an environment should be created that will enable members to develop a sense of Vincentian spirituality, friendship and solidarity in their charitable activities.

#### **Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of conference members are varied. The most important one is to bring comfort and aid to persons in need. The fundamental activity is the person-to-person encounter with persons in need through home visits, carried out by pairs of Vincentians. Home visitation demands the highest respect for the dignity of persons in need. Vincentians are the guests of the persons being visited, as those they visit are the hosts.

Within the conference, to carry out its mission, members:

- set objectives,
- plan, develop and carry out activities,
- work as a team,
- make decisions by consensus.

Following their recruitment, new conference members should be instructed about the mission of the Society. This will include the *Rule and Statutes*, spirituality, history, structure, objectives, main activities and special works. Within a conference, continuous training should be provided.

Conference members should be made aware and become defenders of social justice. They must be proactive in their defence of persons in need, making no distinctions of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions.

Vincentians should act as catalysts and be the conscience of their local community, as they cooperate with parish organizations, neighbouring conferences, other faith communities and social service agencies.

Vincentians must seek to avoid duplication and competition in the provision of services. The Society should play a leading role in cooperating with others because it cannot do alone everything that needs to be done. In all endeavours, assistance should be welcome from anyone who is sincere and prepared to help, even in a small way.

#### ***2.2.1.2 Reporting and Accountability of a Conference***

At each meeting, a financial report stating revenues and expenses should be presented to the members and reported in the minutes.

A financial report and an activity report will be submitted to the conference and the next higher council each year by the dates noted in the Operations Manual.

These reports are a legal requirement under laws which govern charitable organizations. For this reason, and to be eligible to issue tax receipts, each conference should apply for charitable organization status in accordance with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) requirements and legislation.

Financial and activity reports are essential so that the higher councils may better grasp both the strengths and weaknesses of the conferences and the scope of their work, with a view to offering assistance and serving more effectively. The facts detailed will often be an inspiration to other conferences and councils.

These reports should be published and made available to all members and to the community in general.

### **2.2.2 Isolated Conference**

In any diocese or region, there may exist one or several conferences, that are not geographically within the area of a functioning particular council. They are referred to as “isolated conferences”. To be considered isolated, a conference is usually situated 100 kilometres or more from the nearest particular council.

A conference situated in a region where the geography is such that even a distance of less than 100 kilometres makes linkage with a particular council impracticable, or which has other valid reasons for requesting the designation of isolated conference, must submit its request to the national council for approval. The national president, in concert with the regional council, will make the appropriate organizational decision.

Though isolated conferences may participate only occasionally in the ongoing activities of the closest particular council due to distance, it is the express wish of the Society that they be afforded the opportunity for involvement in the works and decisions of the councils.

The closest particular council may be asked to represent an isolated conference at the central and regional councils to which that particular council is attached. Whenever members of an isolated conference require information or wish to convey their views to a higher council, they will write to or confer with this particular council.

In a diocese or area where no particular or central councils have been organized, all functioning conferences, and this includes isolated conferences, will report to the appropriate regional council.

#### Responsibilities of the Isolated Conference to the Particular Council

Isolated conferences have responsibilities to the particular council regarding communication with, and participation in, particular council activities and meetings. These include:

- responding to any particular council communications they receive;
- providing a report from the conference for each meeting of the particular council;

- giving input related to items on the agenda as a demonstration of the principle that all Vincentians work together regardless of geographical boundaries;
- providing the particular council with as much information as possible concerning the issues the isolated conference is facing in its area so that help may be made available;
- providing the particular council with a report for the National Council of Canada annual report, respecting the established timelines;
- attending the annual meeting of either the particular, regional or national council.

#### **2.2.3 Conference of Youth and Young Adults**

The Society should work diligently to welcome young members into all conferences. Their experience of a community of faith and love and their exposure to poverty deepen their spirituality, spur them to action and help them to grow as human beings.

Each conference should engage in recruiting young members. Efforts should also be made to establish conferences composed exclusively of youth and young adults when circumstances permit. Such conferences may be established in conjunction with a high school, college, university, parish or any person-to-person service to serve persons in need and promote human dignity.

When a conference of youth or young adults is established, the council with jurisdiction will ensure that it follows the structures as reflected in the *Rule and Statutes* of the Society. An experienced adult mentor from another conference or the council will be appointed.

#### **2.2.4 Role of Councils**

The primary role of councils, as appropriate for the various levels, includes, but is not limited to, providing for the spiritual and Vincentian formation of its members; promoting the celebration of feast days and opportunities for Vincentian Family gatherings.

Councils help in various wider capacities, such as internal and external communications, reporting, formation, spirituality, collaboration, outreach, management of special works, and compliance with the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Councils also help conferences in their ministry to persons in need by assisting with heavy demands for person-to-person aid by providing human resource and/or financial aid, or goods.

The council acts as communications liaison with the local diocese and higher Society councils.

#### **2.2.5 Particular Council**

##### **Definition**

Historically, the need for a particular council manifested itself as soon as the Society began to grow out of its ‘one only’ conference composition in 1835 and started to become a multi-celled organization. The adoption of the concept of councils continued to grow as the need arose. This expansion was necessary in order to facilitate communication and administration of the Society as a whole.

A particular council is usually composed of 4 to 12 conferences in the same vicinity; for example, a town, a rural region, a diocese or, in the case of a large metropolitan area, a neighbourhood or district. It is the first level of council within the Society. However, its size may vary depending on local practices and geography. The name of the council should reflect the area that it coordinates.

Particular councils report to either

- the central council to which they belong, or
- the regional council, if they do not belong to a central council.

#### ***2.2.5.1 Role and Responsibilities of a Particular Council***

##### **Role**

The particular council

- animates, coordinates and monitors the activities of conferences in their ministry,
- serves the conferences by furthering charitable activities,
- ensures that the conferences do not do anything to jeopardize the society.

##### **Responsibilities**

The particular council keeps conferences informed about

- changing social conditions,
- new issues and programs,
- modification of, or additions to, internal policies and procedures, as well as changes in the Operations Manual,
- major events.

The particular council provides conference members with the opportunity to

- benefit from the knowledge and inspiration of other Vincentians,
- expand their Vincentian horizons and sense of worldwide responsibility.

The particular council

- encourages the creation of new conferences,
- promotes special works,
- re-activates conferences that have ceased activities or closed,
- organizes training sessions about the Vincentian ministry and spirituality for members, volunteers and staff,
- assists conferences within their jurisdiction to address social justice issues,
- ensures that elections for presidents of conferences under its jurisdiction take place as required.

In order to ensure adequate service to persons in need, and to demonstrate solidarity and the will to share with persons in need, the particular council may provide the conferences with

- financial assistance if they are in need of it,
- other pertinent forms of support.

The particular council may, when engaging in charitable activities and special works that are beyond the capacity of a conference or that have community-wide implications

- work with the support of conferences in its jurisdiction;
- collaborate when necessary with outside organizations.

The particular council reviews applications for aggregation by affiliated conferences and recommends them to the next higher council.

The particular council should solicit financial support for its activities from its conferences as stated in the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* and in keeping with the internal policies.

#### ***2.2.5.2 Reporting and Accountability of a Particular Council***

A particular council will submit its annual financial and activities reports and those of conferences in their jurisdiction to the next higher council by the dates noted in the Operations Manual.

The council will also submit to the next higher council any reports of audits conducted in conferences under its jurisdiction within a reasonable period after the conclusion of the audit. Other reporting may be required according to the by-laws in the case of an incorporated council.

Such financial and activity reports are essential for the council and the higher councils. These reports make it possible for all the councils to understand both the strengths and weaknesses of the conferences in the different jurisdictions and the scope of their work. It enables the councils to offer assistance where necessary and to serve more effectively. Such reports should be made available to the membership and to the public.

A particular council responsible for isolated conferences

- communicates with any isolated conference in its jurisdiction to allow that conference full participation in the council meetings. Initial contact may be carried out through a letter of welcome from and introduction to the particular council.
- continues the contact by sending the notice of meetings of the particular council to the conference. The invitation to attend the meeting could be sent by Skype, telephone or other media if this would facilitate the contact.
- offers the isolated conference the opportunity to present additions to the agenda of meetings and to participate in prayer, reflection and discussions. Using the various media mentioned above will give the isolated conference the opportunity to vote in meetings.
- makes arrangements for the isolated conference to participate indirectly in particular council meetings if direct participation is not possible, which would allow the conference to provide input and to vote. Email or regular mail could be used for this purpose, keeping in mind the timeline.
- facilitates the participation of isolated conference presidents in the vote for the president of the particular council. If attendance at the annual meeting is not possible, a mail-in ballot may be used.
- encourages the isolated conference presidents to attend at least one meeting a year for the valuable interaction that such occasions provide. If the cost of attending a meeting is problematic, the particular council could discuss the situation to find a solution. The particular council president could also visit the isolated conference to help promote the idea of members coming together as a family.

## **2.2.6 Central Council**

### **Definition**

Particular councils may group together to form a central council within a given geographical area determined by the national council. Central councils report directly to their regional councils. The name of the council should reflect the area that it coordinates.

#### ***2.2.6.1 Role and Responsibilities of a Central Council***

##### **Role**

The primary role of a central council is to assist particular councils to live the Gospel message in accordance with the mission and values of the Society in Canada.

##### **Responsibilities**

A central council is responsible to:

- stimulate the growth of Vincentian membership;
- encourage interaction between members of councils and conferences;
- assist in the development of Vincentian works;
- promote opportunities for spiritual growth of all members;
- promote ongoing education and development of all members;
- assist conferences and councils within its jurisdiction to address social justice issues;
- monitor and ensure that the councils or conferences within its jurisdiction do not do anything to jeopardize the society.

A central council, as the higher council in a designated geographical area, recommends to the regional council

- any new conference that has applied for aggregation;
- any new particular council that has applied for institution.

A central council may engage in charitable activities and special works which:

- are beyond the capacity of a conference or a particular council;
- have community-wide implications.

The central council carries out these charitable activities and/or special works with the support of the councils in its jurisdiction and, when necessary, with the collaboration of outside organizations.

A central council shall

- solicit financial support from particular councils in its jurisdiction;
- provide the appropriate regional council with an annual financial and activity report.

The central council must ensure that elections for presidents of the particular councils under its jurisdiction take place as required.

Upon the dissolution of a conference or a particular council, the board of directors of the central council shall put into effect Administrative Procedure 002 – Closing of Conferences and Councils, as described in the operations manual.

The central council shall convene an annual meeting to

- present the minutes of the previous annual meeting;
- present the reports of the central council president, of the board of directors, and of the different committees;
- present the annual externally verified financial statements;
- present the operating budget of the central council for adoption;
- vote on the appointment of auditors;
- discuss and vote on the adoption of any motion introduced by the board of directors;
- carry out the election of a new central council president if it is an election year.

#### ***2.2.6.2 Reporting and Accountability of a Central Council***

Each central council will ensure that its annual financial and activities reports are submitted to the regional council by the dates noted in the Operations Manual. Other reporting may be required for incorporated councils by their constitution and by-laws.

## **2.2.7 Regional Council**

The Society in Canada is divided into five regional councils as approved by the national council:

### **Atlantic Regional Council**

Jurisdiction: The provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick

### **Quebec Regional Council**

Jurisdiction: The province of Quebec

### **Ontario Regional Council**

Jurisdiction: The province of Ontario and Nunavut

### **Western Regional Council**

Jurisdiction: The provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

### **British Columbia and Yukon Regional Council**

Jurisdiction: The province of British Columbia and Yukon

#### ***2.2.7.1 Role and Responsibilities of a Regional Council***

##### **Role**

The main role of a regional council is

- to monitor the activities of the conferences and councils under its jurisdiction, and to take action as deemed necessary;
- to encourage the education and development of members;
- to promote the expansion of the Society in the region;

- to ensure that reporting conferences and councils are functioning in accordance with the *Rule and Statutes*;
- to promote the recruitment of youth members within the region;
- to assist conferences and councils to address and raise awareness of social justice issues.

## Responsibilities

A regional council will

- communicate all relevant information to the councils and isolated conferences within its jurisdiction;
- forward information and reports from them to the national council;
- support and implement national programs where applicable.
- ensure that elections for presidents of conferences, isolated conferences and councils under its jurisdiction take place as required.

A regional council may adopt policies and guidelines

- according to its needs and tradition;
- in conformity with the *Rule and Statutes*;
- subject to the approval of the board of directors of the national council.

A regional council will convene an annual meeting to

- present the minutes of the previous annual meeting;
- present the reports of the regional council president, of the board of directors, and of the different committees;
- present the annual externally verified financial statements;
- present the operating budget of the regional council for approval;
- vote on the appointment of auditors;

- discuss and vote on the adoption of any motion introduced by the board of directors;
- introduce the new president and executive officers if it is an election year.

A regional council responsible for isolated conferences

- communicates with any isolated conference in its jurisdiction to allow that conference full participation in the council meetings. Initial contact may be carried out through a letter of welcome from and introduction to the regional council;
- continues the contact by sending the notice of meetings of the regional council to the conference. The invitation to attend the meeting could be sent by Skype, telephone or other media, if this would facilitate the contact.
- offers the isolated conference the opportunity to present additions to the agenda of meetings and to participate in prayer, reflection and discussions. Using the various media mentioned above will give the isolated conference the opportunity to vote at meetings;
- makes arrangements for the isolated conference to participate indirectly in regional council meetings if direct participation is not possible, which would allow the conference to provide input and to vote. Email or regular mail could be used for this purpose, keeping in mind the timeline.
- encourages the isolated conference presidents to attend at least one meeting a year, either in person or by electronic means, for the valuable interaction that such occasions provide. If the cost of attending a meeting is problematic, the Regional Council could discuss the situation to find a solution. The

regional council president could also visit the isolated conference to help promote the idea of members coming together as a family.

By virtue of their mandate, regional councils have the full powers of a higher council over the councils and conferences under their jurisdiction. These powers are to be exercised with prudence and are subject to the approval of the board of directors of the national council.

#### ***2.2.7.2 Reporting and Accountability of a Regional Council***

The president of a regional council will submit annual financial and activity reports to the national president by the dates noted in the Operations Manual.

The president shall also submit to the national council the results of all audits conducted in conferences and councils under the jurisdiction of the regional council within a reasonable period after the conclusion of the exercise.

#### **2.2.8 The National Council of Canada**

The national council is the highest body and the official voice of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Canada. It holds one annual general assembly. The national council is composed of the following voting members:

- the president;

- the presidents of the councils under the national council's jurisdiction, or delegates appointed by proxy to replace them;
- the members of the executive committee: the vice-presidents, the secretary, the treasurer and the youth or young adult representative.

The national president, with the approval of the board of directors, may appoint a maximum of three advisors from within or outside the general membership of the Society who may participate in deliberations of the national council but have no voting rights.

#### ***2.2.8.1 Role and Responsibilities of the National Council***

##### **Role**

The national council, through its elected president, its appointed executive committee, and its board of directors, provides leadership at the annual general assembly and special meetings and for all Vincentian activities throughout Canada.

The national council is the sole authority for the use of the name, logo and colours of the Society within Canada and ensures that the basic principles of the Society, as contained in the *Rule and Statutes*, are communicated to, and respected by, all Vincentians.

The national council represents the Society in issues dealing with social justice and the environment. It may delegate its authority to deal with such issues to councils or conferences at the local or regional level.

## **Responsibilities of the National Council**

The national council is, for all legal purposes, the highest and ultimate body responsible before any type of national or international jurisdiction for events occurring within Canada. However, under no circumstances shall the national council or any of its board members, be liable for events occurring without their full and proven knowledge.

The national council also has the responsibility of supporting and implementing the Council General International's decisions and directions.

The national council shall convene an annual general assembly (AGA) to

- present the minutes of the previous AGA;
- present the reports of the national council president, of the board of directors, and of the different committees;
- present the annual externally verified financial statements;
- present the operating budget of the national council for adoption;
- vote on the appointment of auditors;
- discuss and vote on the adoption of any motion introduced by the board of directors;
- proceed with the installation of the new national president if it is an election year;
- present the president's proposed executive officers for approval;

- present for approval the amount of the financial contribution for the year that each council and conference is to send to the national office for administrative needs, the development of the Society, redistribution and international obligations.

In addition, during the annual general assembly or in a special meeting, the national council

- may amend the Canadian Statutes;
- may adopt policies and procedures to guide the members with regard to the internal structure and governance of the Society and its various programs and activities.

The national council designates the locations where the annual general assemblies are held. The annual general assembly is traditionally used to educate members, and to enhance Vincentian spirituality and fraternal exchanges through the organization of workshops and social events.

#### ***2.2.8.2 Reporting and Accountability of the National Council***

The fiscal year of the national council ends on March 31, unless the council approves another fiscal period. The annual financial and activity report should normally be made available to the membership, the Episcopate and the community in general. Statutory reports to governments shall also be completed.

An annual National Council of Canada report must also be sent to the Council General International.

## **2.2.9 International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul**

### **The Confederation**

At the international level, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is united in its spirituality and management through the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, hereinafter referred to as the Confederation, which is presided over by the President General.

The Confederation is the sole owner of the Society's name. Only the Council General International may, on behalf of the Confederation, authorize or prohibit the use of its name.

This authority is delegated to instituted national councils.

### **The International Head Office**

The Confederation's head office is located in Paris, France, the city where the first conference was founded in 1833.

#### ***2.2.9.1 Role and Responsibilities of the Confederation***

The Permanent Section, presided over by the President General, is established at the Head Office of the Council General of the Confederation. However, it may be convened anywhere in the world at the discretion of the President General. The members of the Permanent Section are the Board members of the Council General, the Territorial Vice-Presidents and the Correspondents. The Correspondents are responsible for liaison and support to national councils and other members of the international structure in the region assigned.

The mission of the Permanent Section is to supervise and monitor the activity of the Society worldwide to ensure a better international service to members and to persons in need. It makes any appropriate decisions within the scope of the *Rule and Statutes* of member countries e.g. Canadian Statutes, and ensures compliance with both the resolutions adopted by the general assemblies and the recommendations of the International Executive Committee.

## 2.3 ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT AT EACH LEVEL - VOTING MEMBERS

|                   | PRESIDENT CONFERENCE                           | PRESIDENT PARTICULAR COUNCIL   | PRESIDENT CENTRAL COUNCIL   | PRESIDENT REGIONAL COUNCIL  | PRESIDENT NATIONAL COUNCIL  |
|-------------------|--|--|---|---|---|
| Voting members    | Members (must have been a member for 6 months) | Presidents of Aggregated Conferences (including reporting Isolated Conferences)<br><br>Or proxies representing absent presidents + Designated voter (one per conference chosen by its members) | Presidents of Instituted PC + Presidents of Aggregated Conferences<br><br>Or proxies representing absent presidents | Presidents of Instituted PC + Presidents of Instituted CC + Presidents of Aggregated Isolated Conference<br><br>Or proxies representing absent presidents | Presidents of all instituted Councils and Presidents of all aggregated Conferences<br><br>Or proxies representing absent presidents |
| Terms of office   | Conference 3 years                             | Particular Council 4 years   | Central Council 4 years   | Regional Council 4 years  | National Council 4 years  |
| Re-election Terms | 3 years  | 2 years  | 2 years   | 2 years   | 2 years   |

**In all cases, no term is to exceed a maximum of six years**

With the exception of the national council president, whose term is not renewable, candidates are not eligible to run for re-election as president before another full term has been completed.

In order to provide for consistency in presidential changeover at all levels, newly elected presidents shall take office on July 1 of the appropriate year.

### **2.3.1 Conference - Election Procedures**

A president, elected by conference members in a secret ballot, directs the conference. An election for a president must be conducted at least three months before the term of office of the sitting president. If no election has taken place at the end of the term, the president of the next higher council shall convoke and preside over the election of a new president.

To proceed with the election, the retiring president or the vice-president notifies the members, at least 30 days in advance, of an election meeting to take place at a specific date and place. Members present at such a meeting will appoint an election chair and a secretary. If necessary, the president of the next higher council may be asked to chair the election proceedings.

The chair requests the names of prospective candidates, all of whom must be full members, and confirms whether or not the nominees are willing to stand for office.

- If only one candidate is nominated for the presidency and accepts, he or she is declared elected by acclamation.
- If there are two candidates, the one who obtains the most votes is considered to have won the election. In the event of a tie, a second ballot must be held at the same meeting.
- If there are more than two candidates and none obtains 50% + one of the votes on the first ballot, a second vote by secret ballot will be held at the same meeting between the two candidates who obtained the greatest number of votes on the first ballot.
- After the votes have been counted, the chair announces the results.

After the newly elected president has appointed a vice-president, secretary and treasurer, it is the responsibility of the retiring president and officers to promptly turn over to the new officers all books of minutes, financial records, accounts, and other relevant documents.

For new conferences, the election procedure may be less formal. Preferably, it should be done in the presence of the next higher council president or delegate.

### **2.3.2 Particular Council - Election Procedures**

Voting members elect the president of a particular council by secret ballot three months before the expiry of the term of office of the sitting president. If the sitting president does not call an election, the president of the next higher council shall, within a period of three months after the expiry of the term, convene a meeting of voting members from each conference and chair the election proceedings.

The chair requests the names of prospective candidates, all of whom must be full members, and confirms whether or not the nominees are willing to stand for office.

- If only one candidate is nominated for the presidency and accepts, he or she is declared elected by acclamation.
- If there are two candidates, the one who obtains the most votes wins the election. In the event of a tie, a second secret ballot must be held at the same meeting.

- If there are more than two candidates and no one obtains 50% + one of the votes on the first ballot, a second vote by secret ballot will be held at the same meeting between the two candidates who obtained the greatest number of votes on the first ballot.
- After the votes have been counted, the chair announces the results.

### **2.3.3 Central Council - Election Procedures**

An election for a president must be conducted by secret ballot three months before the expiry of the term of office of the sitting president and carried out at the annual meeting. Three months before the meeting, an election committee of three senior Vincentians is formed for the purpose of organizing the election of a new president. The election committee invites members of the council who are eligible to vote to elect a president, to forward the names of prospective candidates, all of whom must be full members. The committee will contact these candidates before the annual meeting to confirm whether or not they are willing to stand for office.

At the annual meeting, a member of the election committee will act as chair to preside over the election according to the following procedure:

- If only one candidate is nominated for the presidency and accepts, he or she is declared elected by acclamation.
- If there are two candidates, the one who obtains the most votes is considered to have won the election. In the event of a tie, a second vote must be held at the same meeting.

- If there are more than two candidates and none obtains 50% + one of the votes on the first ballot, a second vote by secret ballot will be held at the same meeting between the two candidates who obtained the greatest number of votes on the first ballot.
- After the votes have been counted, the chair announces the results.

If no election has taken place at the end of the term, the president of the next higher council shall convoke and preside over the election of a new president within a period of three months after the expiry of the term.

#### **2.3.4 Regional and National Councils - Election Procedures**

##### **a) Structuring the Election Committee**

Eighteen months before the expiry date of the term of office of the sitting president and board of directors, the sitting president appoints an election committee consisting of the past president as chair, if willing and able to act, and three senior Vincentians, not standing for nomination.

If the past president is not available, the sitting president will appoint a chair.

##### **b) Announcement or Notice of Election**

The chair of the committee sends a letter to the presidents of all instituted councils and aggregated conferences, as appropriate for jurisdiction of either regional and national council, inviting all qualified full members who believe they have the qualifications to be president to submit their names to the election committee using the appropriate C3 Nomination

Form containing the appropriate number of nominators. (See also C2 and C3 for election related forms in the Complementary Documents section.) The election committee will verify the membership status of those nominated.

### **c) Timelines**

Once the need for election of either a regional or national president has been announced, the election committee sets a deadline for nominations to be received by the regional or national election chair, as appropriate. The deadline date set by the election committee must be before the annual general assembly of either regional or national council as appropriate, and one year prior to the end of the term of the sitting President.

This deadline shall be at least two months before the respective annual general assemblies. It should be noted that the annual general assembly dates vary. The National Council of Canada's annual general assembly is usually held in June, or as determined by the National Council Board of Directors. Regional councils' annual meetings may be held at different times of the year, again as determined by a Regional Council Board of Directors.

Candidates will have the opportunity to address the annual general assembly held the year before the term of office of the currently sitting president ends June 30.

After nominations have been declared, canvassing on behalf of a candidate or against a candidate is forbidden.

Should no candidate be nominated, for either regional or national council, the next higher council shall be informed.

A regional council informs the national council president and requests assistance to recruit candidates; the national council president informs the council general president and requests an extension of one year to recruit candidates.

However, if a potential candidate expresses a willingness to take on the position of president during the annual meeting of either the national council or regional council, the voting members are informed. The nomination process is opened for another 30 days and members are informed of the potential candidate. This extension of nomination time allows for others to express their willingness to be nominated as well. If no other candidate arises, then the first potential candidate is acclaimed. If other candidates arise, then the election proceeds in the usual manner.

#### **d) Voting Method**

Electronic or mail-in ballots are sent to all voting presidents, along with information about the candidates and concerning the voting deadlines.

Electronic voting for president is acceptable at the regional and national levels only, given the distance between many of these councils. Proper security measures must be applied to ensure the validity of the voting process.

An election shall also be held when a sitting national or regional president has ceased to perform his or her functions by reason of resignation, incapacity or death. The board of directors shall determine the procedure to follow in such cases.

**e) Announcement of Voting Results**

- If only one candidate is nominated for the presidency and accepts, he or she is declared elected by acclamation. The time before assuming office the following year is used by the president elect as a learning period.
- If there are two candidates, the one who obtains the most votes wins the election; in the event of a tie, a second secret vote by mail-in or electronic ballot must be held.
- If there are more than two candidates and none obtains 50% + one of the votes on the first ballot, a second vote by secret ballot will be held between the two candidates who obtained the greatest number of votes on the first ballot.

The results of the election are announced as soon as the election committee has completed the counting of votes.

The news will be communicated to the members by the sitting president through the reporting councils at the various levels of the council concerned.

The installation of the new president and the presentation of his or her executive members take place at the next annual general assembly of the regional or national council, as the case may be.

**2.4 PRESIDENT'S TERM OF OFFICE FOR ALL LEVELS**

A president's term of office begins July 1. A president having to step down before the end of his or her term may be replaced by the 1st vice-president, as interim president, if willing and able to serve, until June 30.

If an election is held, the new president will immediately take office for his or her elected mandate. If he or she is in office six months or more before July 1, this period will be considered to be the first year of his or her term.

The terms of office of the retiring executive officers end only when the newly elected president appoints new executive officers, including the reappointment of any current executive members. It is the duty and obligation of the retiring officers, to promptly turn over to the new officers, all books of minutes, financial records, accounts and other relevant documents.

## **2.5 PRESIDENT'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The president will be dedicated to the service of persons in need, to the needs of conferences and councils, and to the spiritual and moral needs of the members.

The president should epitomize the Society's spiritual mission and, at each meeting of conference or council, ensure that there is a reading, carefully chosen for the spiritual benefit of the members.

The president should be an experienced active member who has a good knowledge of the *Rule and Statutes* and their application, and who understands and values the culture of the Society.

Ideally, the president should reside within the limits of the area served by the conference or council.

The president should not hold two presidential offices. If elected to another presidency, the current conference or council must elect a new president.

The president is an *ex officio* member of all committees of the conference/council. Please note that some of these responsibilities can be delegated.

The president will be the one named whenever the council has the right to have a director appointed to any other council or organization.

As servant leaders, a president must:

- take an active interest in the welfare of the members;
- support and assist members in their Vincentian actions as circumstances require;
- meet with any member who does not attend meetings to discuss the situation;
- maintain membership of the conference or council and provide reinforcement to the members;
- encourage the recruitment of new members;
- allocate or delegate a reasonable amount of charitable work and other tasks to each member;
- make sure that all tasks are properly carried out;
- avoid autocratic behaviour;
- never claim, in the execution of his or her duties, special privileges or distinction;
- act with a considerable measure of humility;
- always keep in mind that the president is at the service of the members;
- chair the meetings of the conference or council executive and board meetings
- be familiar with and sign all minutes, after approval, along with the secretary or any other officer appointed by the board for this purpose.

A president, as administrator, must also ensure:

- the uninterrupted pursuit of the work to which much effort has been devoted by personally seeing to the preparation of one or more possible successors;
- that he or she is fully informed of the needs of those served and of the work of the members, without monopolizing the work;
- that decisions are made collectively to foster a community/team spirit with conferences and councils, both in their orientation and in their activities;
- that links and communications are effectively maintained between conferences and councils to which they are closest;
- that, as a voting member representing the conference or council at higher levels, he or she takes part at these meetings. If unable to attend, the president should be represented by a substitute designated by proxy.
- that working relationships are developed, to make known the needs and achievements of the Society, with neighbouring conferences and councils, the parish council at the conference level, agencies and government welfare organizations, local civil and religious authorities, and members of the community;
- that an annual report is submitted to the next higher council on a timely basis, in accordance with the National Council of Canada Guidelines for each level;
- that aggregation of conferences and institution of councils within his or her jurisdiction are recommended;
- that information received from the higher councils and from other conferences is shared;

- that, after consultation with members, he or she appoints vice-president/s, secretary, treasurer and spiritual advisor, all of whom hold office at his or her discretion;
- that support, advice and counsel are sought from the next higher council president on matters and issues of local, regional and national concern;
- that presidents of conferences and councils within the identified jurisdiction are elected on a timely basis;
- that annual conference or council review meetings are held.

See **Complementary Documents C.10 and C.11**

#### **2.5.1 Extraordinary Duties and Responsibilities of Presidents of Particular, Central, Regional and National Councils**

In addition to those already outlined, other duties of the presidents will vary in accordance with their council positions. These include the presidents of particular, central, regional and national councils.

Often, these councils are incorporated bodies and have special works established such as store operations, homes, etc., and staffing that require additional managerial functions. These presidents are required to

- be responsible for supervising the day-to-day management of the affairs of the council;
- be responsible for supervising the maintenance of the office and properties of the council and the functioning of the management sub-committees;

- be responsible for naming chairpersons of standing committees;
- ensure compliance with legislative requirements as they apply to staffing and accountability, documentation and reporting.

## 2.6 APPOINTMENT AND ROLE OF OFFICERS

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Basic structure</b></p> <p><b>Up to 3 VPs – Secretary – Treasurer – Youth representative (voting member)</b></p> <p><b>Spiritual Advisor (no vote)</b></p> <p><b>Secretary and Treasurer are voting members, if full members.</b></p> <p><b>Appointment of officers must be approved at the first meeting of the members.</b></p> <p><b>Note- It is acceptable to re-appoint officers who have previously served.</b></p> | <p><b>The President recommends the appointment of officers at the AGA of the relevant council, and the appointments are confirmed by the voting members in attendance</b></p> |
|---|---|

The appointed officers accept the responsibilities conferred upon them by the president. When necessary, other members can be entrusted with special duties. It is possible to name a secretary and treasurer who are not members of the Society. However, in such cases, these persons are appointed by the president because of their expertise and can take part in the deliberations in a meeting but do not have voting rights. The spiritual advisor does not have voting rights at any level of the Society.

## **2.6.1 Duties of Officers**

### ***2.6.1.1 Duties of the Vice-President***

Most conferences have one vice-president, and some councils may also have only one; however, it is acceptable for councils to have up to three vice-presidents. If there are more than one vice-president, each must be designated as first, second or third.

Duties of the Vice-President are:

- to replace the president when he or she is absent or unable to fulfill his or her duties; (Usually the first vice-president is the designated replacement.)
- to collaborate with the president in all matters affecting the conference or council;
- to be a member of the executive committee;
- to preside at council meetings and to act in lieu of the president for council activities in the absence or disability of the president;
- to carry out various duties that have been assigned, such as taking charge of a committee, planning activities, recruitment, youth membership, training and formation, etc.;
- to assist the president on visits to conferences.

#### ***2.6.1.2 Duties of the Secretary***

The secretary is responsible for:

- recording the minutes of the meetings and circulating them as appropriate; (The minutes should reflect an exact report of what decisions and motions transpired during the previous meeting.)
- preparing and circulating the notices of all meetings and agendas in consultation with the president;
- signing all minutes of meetings along with the president;
- keeping an up-to-date listing of members with names and contact information, noting changes of names or contact information for those in conference or council executive positions and notifying the council at the next higher level; and, when a member moves to another area and with the member's permission, notifying the conference in that area of the member's arrival;
- ensuring the confidentiality and safety of the information gathered regarding members' screening documents and about those served;
- drafting correspondence and other documents at the request of the president;
- keeping records, statistical data and archives, including all records related to the election of the president;
- preparing an appropriate annual report in collaboration with executive and committee chairs, and collating other reports from lower levels and submitting them to the next higher council, as appropriate;
- acting as the custodian of the stamp or mechanical device generally used for affixing the seal of the council;\*

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\* Generally, a Conference does not own a corporate seal unless it is incorporated.

- signing contracts, documents\* or instruments, when required;
- executing such other powers and duties as may from time to time be assigned or that are related to the position of secretary.

#### ***2.6.1.3 Duties of the Treasurer***

At all levels of the Society, the treasurer exercises control over the financial operations of a conference or a council with prudence, due diligence and integrity. Managing the assets of a conference/council requires knowledge and some financial management expertise, mature judgement and a strong sense of responsibility.

The treasurer is responsible for:

- keeping accurate and appropriate records of the funds and securities of the conference or council;
- ensuring that funds are deposited, in the name of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Conference or Council at the financial institutions chosen by the members of the conference or council;
- ensuring that deposits are made regularly and promptly; (Large sums of money are not to be accumulated before a deposit is made at a financial institution.)
- ensuring that invoices and/or statements are obtained before disbursements are paid as required for auditing or review of financial records; (To safeguard the good name of the Society, all accounts are paid, as they become due.)

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\* In the case of an incorporated council or conference, the secretary is also responsible for signing by-laws and keeping records of amendments and additions to them as is generally defined in the incorporated entity's by-laws.

- ensuring that account books are kept up to date and show the true financial position of the conference/council;
- ensuring that all payments are signed by two persons duly authorized by the conference/council as noted in the minutes in a 'banking resolution';\*
- informing members of the conference or council of the financial position by submitting a written financial statement at every meeting (Presentation of the report is included in the minutes of the meeting.);
- preparing an annual budget for presentation and approval of the membership;
- conducting a review of the account books annually or upon request by a financial review committee made up of members of the conference/council or of qualified persons outside the conference/council;\*\*
- preparing and presenting an annual financial report to the membership and submitting it to the next higher council;
- preparing and sending income tax receipts\*\*\* to donors as appropriate; preparing and submitting an annual Canada Revenue Agency Charity Tax Return;
- monitoring and making recommendations to the executive committee, management committees, and the board of directors regarding property and capital expenditures, lines of credit and investments;

\* A Banking Resolution motion is entered into the minutes indicating that at least three members have signing authority and that these three are registered with the banking institution. Each cheque must be signed by two of the three members, one of which should be the treasurer if available.

\*\* In the case of incorporated entities, the financial review is conducted annually in accordance with recognized accounting rules and as required by the constitution and by-laws of the corporation.

\*\*\* All conferences and councils should apply to Canada Revenue Agency for charitable status and have their own Business Identification Number in order to issue tax receipts.

- managing other powers and duties as assigned by the president; participating as a member of the board executive and the finance committee.

**Note : Isolated conferences shall submit their annual reports to the particular/regional council that serves as their liaison within the Society.**

## **2.7 APPOINTMENT AND ROLE OF THE SPIRITUAL ADVISOR**

In accordance with the tradition established at the beginning of the Society, the president will appoint a spiritual advisor. The spiritual advisor will foster the spiritual life within the conference or council in light of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But the spirit of the Rule will be promoted in its entirety and be the basis for any program of spiritual development.

The president may consult with a local bishop or the head of the religious order, as appropriate.

Should a priest, permanent deacon or other member of a religious order not be available as spiritual advisor, the president, after consultation with members, may appoint a lay person who has the appropriate spiritual training.

Priests, permanent deacons and members of religious orders are not eligible to be appointed to any office within the Society other than spiritual advisor. The spiritual advisor attends meetings but does not have voting rights.

The presence of the spiritual advisor strengthens the bond between the spiritual and apostolic activities of the conferences and councils and those of the church.

In a parish, the pastor is usually asked to be the spiritual advisor and, if he declines, it would be prudent to request that he recommend someone for the role.

If a parish priest who has declined to be the spiritual advisor occasionally attends a conference meeting, he will always be invited by the president to contribute to the discussion following the reading of the spiritual reflection.

At council level, although chosen by the council president, the spiritual advisor must obtain approval from his or her ecclesiastical superior.

Duties may include organizing or participating in special events such as celebrating masses on special occasions, preparing funeral prayer services, preparing prayers for general assemblies of conferences and councils.

He or she may be asked to contribute articles to council publications and website and to organize and coordinate religious activities such as retreats for members of conferences and councils.

He or she may also be asked by the president to carry out other tasks in relation to this role.

## 2.8 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERSHIP - NON-INCORPORATED

Incorporated entities, please refer to the Operations Manuel of the Society under [www.ssvp.ca](http://www.ssvp.ca), or your incorporated by-laws.

Minimum number of members of the Board of Directors

| CONFERENCE   | PARTICULAR COUNCIL  | CENTRAL COUNCIL  | REGIONAL COUNCIL   | NATIONAL COUNCIL  |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Members only,<br>no Board of<br>Directors<br>at this level | President<br>VP(s)<br>Secretary<br>Treasurer<br>Youth<br>Spiritual Adv.*<br>Past President*<br>Presidents of<br>aggregated<br>conferences plus<br>approved delegate<br>of each confer-<br>ence; aggregated<br>isolated confer-<br>ence presidents as<br>appropriate | President<br>VP(s)<br>Secretary<br>Treasurer<br>Youth<br>Spiritual Adv.*<br>Past President*<br>Presidents of in-<br>stituted particular<br>councils plus one<br>approved delegate<br>of each particular<br>council | President<br>VP(s)<br>Secretary<br>Treasurer<br>Youth<br>Spiritual Adv.*<br>Past President*<br>Presidents of<br>Instituted central<br>council, and par-<br>ticular councils;<br>aggregated isolat-<br>ed conferences as<br>appropriate | President<br>VP(s)<br>Secretary<br>Treasurer<br>Youth<br>Spiritual Adv.*<br>Past President*<br>Presidents of<br>instituted regional<br>councils |

### 2.8.1 Special Nominations/Appointments - Non-Incorporated Boards

The president of the board may appoint one or more persons chosen from among or outside the general membership of the Society to be in charge of one or more of the working or standing committees entrusted with specific tasks that serve the interests and development of the Society.

\* Non-voting members - however, may speak at meetings

The choice of persons from outside the Society to sit on committees should not be considered as a general rule but rather as an exceptional procedure. Such persons may be invited to take part in the work of the council or a committee

- because of their personal qualifications or
- because there is a need for members of their profession on the executive committee or
- when it is not possible to find within the regular membership a sufficient number of persons qualified to fill administrative positions.

This becomes especially pertinent in incorporated councils that need to hire staff or carry out some particular task. These persons may participate in the discussions but have no voting rights.\*

## **2.9 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL BOARDS OF DIRECTORS**

### **2.9.1 Role of the Board of Directors**

The Role of the Board is to:

- ensure the affairs of the Society at all levels under its jurisdiction are functioning in compliance with the *Rule and Statutes* of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Canada;
- monitor the activities of the conferences and councils under its jurisdiction, and take action as deemed necessary;
- establish standing and ad hoc committees to carry out efficiently and effectively the role of the Society in the area under its jurisdiction;
- implement the directives of higher councils affecting its jurisdiction

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\* Refer to Operations Manual, section regarding Incorporation.

- communicate to councils and conferences under its jurisdiction any information coming from higher councils;
- send recommendations to the National Council for the creation of new councils and conferences that have been forwarded by councils under its jurisdiction;
- ensure that an Elections Committee is formed and oversee the organization of the election of a president;
- act on recommendations of the National Council for changes in the boundaries of councils, if necessary.

#### **2.9.2 Responsibilities of the Board of Directors**

- manage the financial affairs of the council by drafting an annual budget and accountability report for consideration and approval at the annual meeting;
- monitor financial performance and recommend property and capital expenditures, lines of credit and investments to the council;
- ensure that appropriate annual contributions are forwarded to the national council and regional councils;
- review and approve hiring and remuneration of any employees of councils, if appropriate;
- generally, promote and implement effective communication up and down within the Society's structure;
- develop and maintain effective relations with the Catholic church, and other Christian churches, ecclesiastical communities and other faiths, as well as the civil authorities in its region as part of its mission to serve those in need;

- promote social justice and the protection of the environment, and delegate responsibilities in these areas to the reporting councils and conferences within the appropriate jurisdiction when applicable;
- take measures to increase membership within its jurisdiction;
- implement upper level decisions;
- develop activities within jurisdiction;
- effectively manage offices, as appropriate;
- ensure compliance with the *Rule and Statutes*;
- ensure that an election committee is appropriately structured in a timely manner;
- ensure that By-Laws, if an incorporated entity, are reviewed and updated annually and sent to higher councils for approval.

## **2.10 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **2.10.1 Role of the Executive Committee**

The executive committee, reporting to the board of directors, has delegated responsibility for the day-to-day management of the affairs of the conference or council.

The executive committee is chaired by the president.

The executive committee generally includes the officers of the conference or council, the past president and spiritual advisor spiritual advisor as non-voting members, and other appointed members who do not have voting rights.

The executive committee meets as often as necessary to discharge its responsibilities, usually monthly before the meetings of the board of directors, except in July and August,

when meetings are held at the call of the chair, should the need arise.

The main role of the executive committee is to assist the president to ensure that the operating policies, procedures and projects of the conference or council, as approved by the voting members, are respected, executed and updated, and that recommendations for changes are made in a timely manner.

The executive committee recommends appointments to the board of directors in accordance with the provisions of the *Rule and Statutes* of the Society.

The main responsibilities of the executive committee at the national level are to

- implement and communicate the resolutions adopted by the national council;
- develop and recommend to the board of directors, amendments to the *Rule and Statutes*, policies, programs and practices for internal management, and for the protection and development of the Society in Canada;
- develop and recommend to the board of directors short- and long-term plans for the expansion of the Society;
- manage other national committees on behalf of the board of directors;
- organize meetings of the board of directors and the annual general assembly;

- review and recommend to the board of directors the creation of new councils and changes to the boundaries of existing councils.

It must also

- prepare the annual operating budget and financial statements for approval by the board of directors and by the national council;
- recommend to the board of directors property and capital expenditures, and investment strategies.

It undertakes to

- develop and recommend to the board of directors strategies for effective relations with the Catholic Church, other Christian churches, ecclesiastical communities and other faiths, as well as civil authorities;
- propose to the board of directors efficient ways to communicate with all levels of the Society in Canada;
- publish the *VincentPaul Canada* newsletter and any other publications approved by the Society for the general membership and other subscribers.

## **2.10.2 Responsibilities of the Executive Committee**

The responsibilities of the executive committee include, but are not limited to doing the necessary groundwork, overseeing and expediting the management of the conference or council, as the case may be, in relation to budgets, special works and various reports.

### Responsibilities related to budgets

- reviewing and recommending the annual operating and capital budgets to the board of directors;
- monitoring adherence to the budget;
- considering and, where appropriate, approving recommendations for any departure from accepted operations policies or approved budgets;
- recommending the appointment of auditors;
- reviewing and recommending the annual externally verified financial statements for presentation to the annual meeting of the council.

### Responsibilities related to special works

- reviewing and preparing for approval by the board of directors, the operating policies and procedures of any special works programs related to, for example, stores operations, homes, etc., to ensure that they are consistent with the *Rule and Statutes* and spirituality of the Society.
- ensuring that all legislation governing the operation of the special works program is respected;
- reviewing and recommending to the board of directors, staffing that may be required for any special works program and ensuring the appropriate performance appraisals are conducted.

### Responsibilities related to reports

- reviewing and recommending to the board of directors, the annual reports for presentation at the annual meeting of the council;
- reviewing and passing on to the next higher council through the board of directors, any applications for aggregation or institution;
- assisting conferences and councils, if requested, to obtain their charitable status;

- providing assistance, if requested, to complete annual reports;
- ensuring that annual reports are received and sent to the next appropriate higher council by the deadline set by the National Council of Canada.

## **2.11 MEETINGS**

### **2.11.1 Types of Meetings**

Meeting types are defined as Regular Meetings, Special Meetings and Annual General Assemblies.

Regular meetings provide an opportunity for members and board members to:

- plan activities and develop projects;
- strengthen their spirit of community;
- celebrate mutual friendships;
- express their desire to serve the Lord by serving persons in need;
- pray and reflect together to deepen their spirituality;
- work and grow as a team while praying;
- work and grow as a team while trying to resolve the personal and family issues of those we serve at all levels;
- review their contacts with persons in need and share their experiences.

Meetings should not be lengthy. Expediency can be achieved if officers and members spend some time preparing their reports and having pertinent documentation available.

**Electronic Meeting Participation:** Subject to the provisions of any by-laws, if incorporated, and if all directors of the council agree, board or committee meetings may be held by telephone

or by video-conference. A director so participating in such a meeting is deemed to be in attendance for the purposes of the meeting record.

### **2.II.2 Frequency of Regular Meetings**

|  | CONFERENCE             | PARTICULAR COUNCIL BOARD | CENTRAL COUNCIL BOARD | REGIONAL COUNCIL BOARD | NATIONAL COUNCIL BOARD      |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Meetings (or according to incorporation by-laws) | At least twice a month | At least quarterly       | At least quarterly    | At least twice a year  | At Least three times a year |

### **2.II.3 Typical Meeting Agendas**

Typical Meeting Agenda for Conferences and Councils

- a) Opening Prayer
- b) Welcome & Roll Call
- c) Spiritual Reflection
- d) Reading from The *Rule*
- e) Conflict of Interest
- f) Approval of the Agenda
- g) Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting
- h) Correspondence
- i) Communications from Higher Councils
- j) Finance Report
- k) Secret Collection

- l) Committee Reports
  - 1) Social Justice
  - 2) Home Visits Reports\*
  - 3) Training
  - 4) Special Projects
  - 5) Strategic Planning
- m) New Business
- n) Good of the Society
  - 1) Prayer Requests
  - 2) Deceased Members
  - 3) Roundtable Discussion
- o) Next Meeting
- p) Closing Prayer
- q) Adjournment

## **2.12 QUORUM**

The quorum is established when no less than 30% of eligible voting members are present or represented at any meeting.

\* Note: This is generally a conference agenda item.

## 2.13 VOTING

### 2.13.1 Board of Directors Regular Voting Members

|                                      | PARTICULAR COUNCIL | CENTRAL COUNCIL | REGIONAL COUNCIL | NATIONAL COUNCIL |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>President</b>                     | X <sup>1</sup>     | X <sup>1</sup>  | X <sup>1</sup>   | X <sup>1</sup>   |
| <b>Vice-President/s<sup>2</sup></b>  | X                  | X               | X                | X                |
| <b>Secretary</b>                     | X                  | X               | X                | X                |
| <b>Treasurer</b>                     | X                  | X               | X                | X                |
| <b>Youth Representative</b>          | X                  | X               | X                | X                |
| <b>Designated</b>                    | X                  | X               |                  |                  |
| <b>Conference Presidents</b>         | X                  |                 |                  |                  |
| <b>Particular Council Presidents</b> |                    | X               | X <sup>3</sup>   |                  |
| <b>Central Council Presidents</b>    |                    |                 | X                |                  |
| <b>Regional Council Presidents</b>   |                    |                 |                  | X                |

**Note: Past president and spiritual advisor do not vote, but may speak at meetings**

**1 - To break a tie**

**2 - Up to 3 vice-presidents may be appointed**

**3 - For particular councils not represented by central councils**

## 2.13.2 Annual General Assemblies and Special Meetings Voting Members

|             | CONFERENCE     | PARTICULAR COUNCIL | CENTRAL COUNCIL | REGIONAL COUNCIL | NATIONAL COUNCIL |
|-------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| All members | X <sup>1</sup> |                    |                 |                  |                  |

### PARTICULAR COUNCIL

|   |  |                |   |   |     |
|---|--|----------------|---|---|-----|
| President   |  | X <sup>1</sup> | X | X | AGA |
| Vice-President/s <sup>2</sup>   |  | X              |   |   |     |
| Secretary   |  | X              |   |   |     |
| Treasurer   |  | X              |   |   |     |
| Youth Representative  |  | X              |   |   |     |
| Designated Conference Members (One by conference and chosen by members) |  | X              | X |   |     |

### CENTRAL COUNCIL

|                                       |  |  |                |   |     |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|----------------|---|-----|
| President                             |  |  | X <sup>1</sup> | X | AGA |
| Vice-President/s <sup>2</sup>         |  |  | X              |   |     |
| Secretary                             |  |  | X              |   |     |
| Treasurer                             |  |  | X              |   |     |
| Youth Representative                  |  |  | X              |   |     |
| Designated Particular Council Members |  |  | N/A            |   |     |

|  | CONFERENCE | PARTICULAR COUNCIL | CENTRAL COUNCIL | REGIONAL COUNCIL | NATIONAL COUNCIL |
|--|------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
|--|------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|

#### REGIONAL COUNCIL

|                               |  |  |  |                |   |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|----------------|---|
| President                     |  |  |  | X <sup>1</sup> | X |
| Vice-President/s <sup>2</sup> |  |  |  | X              |   |
| Secretary                     |  |  |  | X              |   |
| Treasurer                     |  |  |  | X              |   |
| Youth Representative          |  |  |  | X              |   |

#### NATIONAL COUNCIL

|                               |  |  |  |  |                |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|----------------|
| President                     |  |  |  |  | X <sup>1</sup> |
| Vice-President/s <sup>2</sup> |  |  |  |  | X              |
| Secretary                     |  |  |  |  | X              |
| Treasurer                     |  |  |  |  | X              |
| Youth Representative          |  |  |  |  | X              |
| Regional Presidents           |  |  |  |  | X              |

**Note: See also 2.14 Proxies**

**Past president and spiritual advisor do not vote, but may speak at meetings**

**1 - President vote to break a tie**

**2 - Up to 3 vice-presidents may be appointed**

### **2.13.3 Voting Process**

Voting is conducted by show of hands unless the president or his or her substitute decides, in exceptional circumstances, to proceed by secret ballot when the matter is deemed sensitive or divisive. A simple majority will validly adopt resolutions. Each voting member in attendance or represented at the meeting is entitled to one vote. The president, or his or her substitute, as chair of the meeting, does not vote, except in the event of a tie, in which case he or she will exercise a casting vote.

### **2.14 PROXIES**

A voting member who cannot attend a meeting should be represented by a member or an officer of his/her conference or council using a signed Proxy Form,\* which will be presented to, verified and accepted by the secretary or his or her substitute before the meeting.

Appointed voting members (e.g., officers of a board) cannot be represented by proxy at any meeting. A voting delegate may not hold more than one proxy.

The appointment of proxies must be recorded in conference or council minutes.

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\* See the Annex Complementary Document C1 for the Proxy Form.

## **2.15 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

### **2.15.1 Basic Requirements**

The Society shall preserve its good reputation for honesty and responsible stewardship. Therefore, conferences and councils must be good stewards of the Society's finances.

Funds received from all sources (collections, benefactors, members, higher councils, etc.) are to be used exclusively in the pursuit of the Society's aims and objectives.

Conferences and councils zealously manage and maintain the Society's assets. They shall avoid hoarding money. Unused funds and surpluses accumulated beyond a reasonable reserve fund shall be remitted to the council at the next higher level.

Conferences and councils should create an annual budget based on the previous years' revenue and expenses that includes a reserve of 3-month revenue.

Councils may establish financial policies related to the minimum annual contribution from its councils and conferences.

Any asset, including, but not limited to, trust accounts, investments, real estate, which is held in the name of the Society, must be used by Vincentians for the Society's purpose.

If any such asset is transferred to any entity, it should not be transferred without proper reimbursement, either in cash, or through a memorandum of understanding or other similar document approved by the next higher council, setting forth a mutually agreeable exchange of services.

Any property so transferred from the Vincentian entity to any other group must not continue to carry the name of the Society for any purpose whatsoever.

The Society must not hold title to any asset just for the purpose of holding such assets; it must use these assets to pursue the Society's mission.

Any donations received and banked by the parish or any other third party will be receipted by that party. Likewise, the conference or the council will issue receipts for all donations that it banks itself.

Respecting the wishes of donors: Offerings given by the faithful for a certain purpose can be applied only for that purpose. The Society will take all reasonable steps to respect the wishes of donors.

The main source of funding for particular, central, regional, national and international council general is from the conferences and councils who have a duty to financially support higher councils by sending them surplus funds for the maintenance and expansion of the Society in Canada and throughout the world.

Funds may also be solicited from conferences and councils for specific and urgent needs.

Funds may be sought from outside the Society – e.g., bequests, foundations, grants; however, they must be in compliance with the Society's principles and traditions.

In the event of the dissolution of a conference or council, all debts and liabilities legally incurred by and on behalf of the conference or council shall be fully discharged by the higher council of the Society. Remaining money or property and all files and documents must be passed promptly to the next higher council.

#### **2.15.2 Auditing and Financial Review**

All conferences and councils must have their financial records reviewed annually by a knowledgeable person and submit an annual report to the next higher council.

Incorporated bodies shall also complete an annual Registered Charities Information Return and a Corporate Tax Return. They may apply for the Government Services Tax (GST) rebate. A very substantial percentage of the income of the corporation, as is indicated in government regulations, shall be spent on charitable work. The directors of the corporation are responsible for all deductions at the source.

All conferences and councils with a Canada Revenue Agency business number shall also complete an annual tax return.

## **2.16 FUNDRAISING**

See Section 3 - Specific Provisions of the Canadian Statutes, 3.11 and the National Council of Canada Operations Manual re policy FIN-001.

## **2.17 SPECIAL WORKS OF THE SOCIETY**

### **2.17.1 Definition**

Special works of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul may be defined as those areas of work responding to specific community needs. The works shall be consistent with the objectives of the Society and be under the control of councils or conferences. When a special work requires administration covering a wide area, for example, in the case of a community store or a summer camp, it should be organized by a conference or council.

Councils or conferences shall seek incorporation when the special work involves a commercial operation or hiring staff.

In the event that a special work is separately incorporated by a conference/council, care should be taken at the outset to ensure that its articles of incorporation, by-laws, and other governance and management documents recognize the relationship to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, including, but not limited to, name use, logo use, asset acquisition or disposal.

The president of the council to which any of the Society's special works belongs, is entitled, after due consultation with the president of the national council and evaluation of the legal consequences, to replace the members of the board of management of that special work and any of its employees, regardless of their function.

Special Works may include:

- the operation of stores
- summer camps
- visiting homes for the aged
- visiting shut-ins
- prison ministry
- drop-in centres for women
- shelters and soup kitchens
- low-cost housing
- other Society special projects

## **2.17.2 Twinning**

Twinning is a special work of the Society. It is a fraternal sharing of the Society's prayers, relations and resources with less fortunate conferences and councils in other countries.

Twinning has been an informal part of the Society since its creation because conferences and councils have always tried to assist one another. It became more firmly established when the 1979 Plenary Session of the Council General International stated that "all monies collected in the name of the Society anywhere, belong, in principle, to the poor of the world". Canada started to develop a formal twinning program in the 1980's.

See National Council of Canada Operations Manual - Section 6.4 - Twinning; the Twinning Manual and Twinning Resources on the website [www.ssvp.ca](http://www.ssvp.ca)

### **2.17.3 Stores**

Since the foundation of the Society, Vincentians have been active in the distribution of various types of essential goods to those they serve. Stores bear witness to our Christian faith through our solicitude and care of those who lack adequate clothing, furniture and other types of necessities. Employees and volunteers of stores should be mindful of remaining open and non-judgemental, and that they are honoured to serve persones in need.

Stores act as intermediaries between people wishing to make donations in kind and those in need. Stores make supplies available for free or at a low cost, which is in keeping with the budget of those the Society serves.

Saint Vincent de Paul stores, as special works, are the most visible activity of the Society, because they involve a commercial operation at specific locations in the community. The operation of a store requires a supply of goods donated by benefactors for those in need, or retail sale at low prices to maintain the commercial viability of the operation. It may include the establishment, maintenance and operation of workshops, warehouses, stores and shops, as required for the service to persons in need.

Stores may also be used as training and educational centres where those in need can learn a trade, or develop workplace skills, which will eventually enable them to become self-supporting.

Stores can also allow for the manufacture and sale of goods of different kinds, such as crafts, for the benefit of persons in need.

The operation of a store shall be legally and effectively under the control of, and run by, a conference or council. Usually, the store constitutes a separate incorporated entity, the majority of whose administrators are members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Stores shall comply with the provisions of the *Rule and Statutes* and the Society's internal policies and procedures with regard to incorporation, operations and dissolution of the entity.

Stores should be financially viable and any surpluses should be reinvested in the extension of the Society's services to persons in need.

To open a store, it is necessary to

- make a survey of the needs in the area where the opening of a store is projected;
- define a suitable area and find a site for the store;
- recruit volunteers to manage and/or help in the stores and, if necessary, recruit permanent and/or temporary employees;
- find or purchase equipment for displaying the goods and for functioning commercially (cash register, counters, telephone, etc.);
- publicize the project;
- develop a program for collecting merchandise for the store (clothing, furniture, home appliances, dishes, books, bedspreads, etc.);
- inspect merchandise and reject any that is too badly damaged to keep in the store;

- repair or clean if necessary, any merchandise that can be kept in the store;
- display, distribute or sell merchandise that is fit to use;
- create a friendly environment.

A store committee is recommended to help with store operations. The primary responsibility of the store committee as given by the conference or council is to set policies and goals for the store operations. Success of store operations depends on good communications and adhering to the chain of command of conference/council, store committee and store management. The Committee does not become involved in the day-to-day operation of the stores. Boundaries need to be established between the store committee and store director/manager. The store committee sets policies and evaluates the store director/manager on the execution of the policies. The store director/manager manages the day-to-day operation of the store and manages the people employed or volunteers that run the store. It is critical that the committee not interfere with the manager's duties.

#### **2.17.4 Summer Camps**

Camping is an opportunity to use God's gift of nature as an educational and experiential tool. Many children and young people are not able to benefit from summer camp due to a lack of funds or family situations. Summer camps provide an opportunity for children and youth who live in large urbanized areas to

- develop an affinity with nature;
- experience God in a new setting;
- become more aware of environmental issues.

Several conferences and councils have purchased land suitable for camping. Activities such as swimming, canoeing, hiking, horseback riding, organized sports and games are a few of the activities that may be made available to children in a surrounding of Christian love and care. Camps are supported by conferences, councils, schools and by members of the public who wish to help defray the camping fees. Camps also provide an opportunity for young people to become camp counsellors and leaders.

Many recognized accredited summer camps exist in different parts of Canada. Some conferences and councils pay for the cost of a stay in one of these camps for children and young people who otherwise would not have such a vacation.

#### **2.17.5 Prison Ministry**

“I was in prison and you visited me.” (Matt. 25:36). This is a key directive from Christ to act with compassion and love for those incarcerated. In cooperation with the prison authorities, including the prison chaplain, Vincentians may receive permission to visit jails. They arrange opportunities for Eucharistic prayer services, the sacrament of Reconciliation, and spiritual counselling. Walking the hallways and ranges of the prison, and enquiring about the physical and spiritual needs of the inmates, as well as those of their loved ones, are some of the ways that Vincentians may serve.

## SECTION 3

# SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF THE CANADIAN STATUTES

### **3.1 AMENDMENTS TO THE CANADIAN STATUTES**

Any modification or amendment to the present Canadian Statutes shall be approved by a two-thirds majority vote at a meeting of the National Council. However, no modification or amendment to the present Canadian Statutes may be discussed at a meeting of the National Council, unless a notice of motion, bearing the signatures of at least three voting members, has been filed with the national office within thirty (30) days following the official notification of a meeting.

### **3.2 OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

The official languages of the National Council of Canada are French and English.

All official documents, communications, material and publications originating from the National Council of Canada that are destined for the general membership shall be published in both official languages. In addition, all meetings of the National Council shall be conducted in both official languages.

### **3.3 POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE SOCIETY**

The Society does not identify with any political party and always adopts a non-violent approach to any situation. The Society encourages Vincentians to participate fully in public life in such a way as to bring Christian values to political matters, but no conference or council can endorse any candidate for election to a political post.

A Vincentian who holds a political office at any level of government cannot hold any mission of representation or office in the Society during his or her term of political office. However, he or she may remain a member of the Society.

### **3.4 ADVOCACY**

The national president is the spokesperson for the Society on matters of social justice and other related issues, in union with the national council's board of directors. The president of a regional council alone can speak for the Society on local and/or regional issues of social justice and other subjects that are linked to the mission and values of the Society. The national president can delegate this same responsibility to central council presidents.

### **3.5 SCREENING AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a charitable organization committed to the protection and safeguarding of

- the vulnerable persons\* it serves;
- its members;
- its volunteers;
- its employees.

The Society has a moral, ethical and spiritual obligation to appropriately screen and train its members, volunteers and staff. It is legally required under the principle of “duty of care”. This responsibility is part of the risk management framework.\*\*

All members and employees of the Society, at any level, who regularly or occasionally have contact with and serve vulnerable persons, must successfully meet screening requirements, complete orientation and training, and abide by applicable internal policies and procedures approved by the National Council of Canada.\*\*\*

The screening process for all full members includes the following:

- completion of a membership application form;
- a police record check;
- a screening interview of the applicant;
- interviews of applicant's references;
- signature of a service covenant/confidentiality agreement;
- orientation and training on risk management, abuse prevention, discrimination and harassment.

\* Vulnerable persons are those who are in a position of material or emotional need, who are sick, or who are physically or mentally handicapped.

\*\* Since there is an inherent degree of risk in serving persons in need, the Society must take reasonable measures to reduce any risk.

\*\*\* See the National Council Operations Manual for more information on the screening process.

### **3.6 CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE**

The concept of confidentiality is based on the individual's right to privacy, expressed or implied, and has both legal and ethical implications. Confidentiality means that disclosures made by a family or an individual to any of the Vincentian conference or council members or staff, will not be revealed to others, except in specific circumstances, and then only for the purpose of serving the family or individual in question.

Members shall observe the utmost confidentiality in the provision of material aid and any other kinds of help. Confidentiality is one of the building blocks for the development of mutual trust between the persons being served and the Society. Persons being served should be informed that their identity will be protected by the Society, and that their consent will be sought before any disclosure is made to persons or organizations outside the Society.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul may need to collaborate with other community groups or government agencies when serving those in need. In situations such as preparing Christmas hamper lists, obtaining assistance from food banks, making a referral to a government social agency, etc., it is sometimes important to share information with those outside the Society concerning the individual or family being served. Those in need, benefitting from such collaboration, shall be informed of the necessary disclosures in such cases.

Information about a family or an individual may be released to persons or organizations outside the Society; for example, the police or child protection services, without the informed consent of those concerned. This is the case if

- the situation is urgent;
- there is a real danger that a person will cause harm to himself or herself or others;
- there is a real danger to the community at large.

When time permits, the conference or council president should be consulted before action is taken.

Conferences and councils shall keep accurate and secure records of persons being served. Those records, as well as any archives, should be kept in a secure place under the responsibility of the conference or council president or his or her substitute.

Confidentiality is part of the service covenant of all members and staff. A breach of this requirement may be grounds for requesting the resignation of the member or the employee. Members and staff of the Society should be informed of and guided by relevant internal policies and guidelines about disclosure.

### **3.7 CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

In order to fulfil the mission of the Society with justice and transparency, anyone who serves in it, in any capacity -- a member, an employee, a volunteer who, though not a member, works for the Society, any member of the families of these persons -- should avoid, and report any potential or actual conflict of interest situations.

Such a conflict occurs when the self-interest of any of those mentioned above might conflict with the best interest of the Society.\* When in doubt, the matter shall be discussed with the conference or council president to clarify the situation and find a solution.

### **3.8 PAID EMPLOYEES AND THE PRINCIPLE OF VOLUNTEERISM**

Employees of the Society may not be elected to or appointed to office in conferences, councils or special works projects in order to maintain the voluntary character of the Society. An exception may be made in instances where their technical or other expertise is needed to render service, but an employee shall not be appointed as council president or vice-president.

Employees may attend meetings of the conference, council or special work to which they report, and may participate in deliberations, but have no voting rights.

Employees wishing to participate fully in the work of a conference may become members of a conference provided this conference is not, at the same time, their employer.

\* See the Operations Manual for National Council Guidelines on Conflict of Interest.

### **3.9 REMOVAL OF A MEMBER/OFFICER/DIRECTOR/PRESIDENT**

Should it become necessary to consider the removal of a member, officer, director or president, the conference or council concerned shall follow the administrative procedures established by the National Council for situations of this nature.

See [Operations Manual, ADM PR 003](#)

### **3.10 THE SECRET COLLECTION**

A secret collection among members present should be part of every conference and council meeting.

This tradition has existed from the time of the very first conference in 1833. The secret collection provides an opportunity for members, if they wish to do so, to make a personal contribution by donating money according to their financial situation, without the knowledge of other Vincentians. The money is usually collected, declared and deposited by the treasurer to be used to serve persons in need.

### **3.11 FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES**

Traditionally, the most common fundraiser in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is the "person in need box" (also known as the poor box). The "person in need box" held by a Vincentian at the entry of the church after Masses also serves as a reminder to the whole parish of the work carried out by Vincentians on behalf of those in need in the local area. Conferences and councils may also pursue other forms of fundraising that are in keeping with the values and principles of the Society.

### **3.12 THE USE OF FUNDS AND ASSETS - ETHICAL INVESTMENTS**

The Society uses funds and property to help relieve the suffering of persons in need. Included in this is the help given directly to individuals and to families as well as funds spent on the organization, maintenance and development of works and services to relieve the suffering of the persons in need.

The Society may not, at any level, allot funds to other organizations, except for branches of the Vincentian family; for example, the Sisters of Charity. Funds may be allotted to organizations that are pursuing objectives similar to those of the Society and that are registered charities according to the Income Tax Act. However, funds may be allotted only if the Society participates in the activities of these organizations and plays an active role in their management.

Ethical investment practices shall be followed to ensure that the Society does not, at any level, invest in companies or institutions which

- operate in a way that seriously disadvantages persons in need;
- endanger the environment;
- are involved in military weapons;
- adhere to or promote, explicitly or implicitly, values contrary to those of the Society.

Vincentians entrusted to undertake previously and duly authorized offices, missions or tasks for the Society are entitled to the refund of the expenses incurred. Expenses related to the organization of meetings and conferences are authorized. Expenses related to the participation of Vincentians attending such meetings or conferences are also authorized as long as these events are designed to help the Society function well and to contribute to the improvement of services to persons in need.

### 3.13 RETENTION AND ARCHIVING OF RECORDS

Conferences and councils are required to provide for the ongoing maintenance and safekeeping of all records that provide historical data related to governing documents.

| NON-INCORPORATED CONFERENCES OR COUNCILS                          |           |  |         |               |
|---|-----------|--|---------|---------------|
| DOCUMENTS   | TIME KEPT |  |         |               |
|   | 3 years   | 3 years past the end of the term of that president | 6 years | In perpetuity |
| <b>Aggregation, institution, or twinning forms</b>                |           |  |         | X             |
| <b>Membership application forms</b>                               |           |  |         | X             |
| <b>Canada Revenue Agency: charitable registration forms</b>       |           |  |         | X             |
| <b>Minutes of meetings</b>  |           |  |         | X             |
| <b>Financial records</b>  |           |  | X       |               |
| <b>Lists of members of the boards of directors</b>                |           |  |         | X             |
| <b>General correspondence during the mandate of any president</b> |           | X  |         |               |
| <b>Case records</b>   | X         |  |         |               |
| <b>Annual reports</b>   |           |  |         | X             |
| <b>Proxies during the mandate of any president</b>                |           | X  |         |               |

If provincial government regulations specify a period of more than six years for keeping financial records, the government regulations take precedence.

### **3.14 CLOSING OF A CONFERENCE OR A COUNCIL**

Because of the closing down of a parish, or the merging of parishes, a conference or council may submit a recommendation for closure or for its amalgamation with another conference or with a council, as the case may be. In such a case, the appropriate National Council administrative procedure\* shall be followed.

\*See the National Council Operations Manual for ADMIN PR-002.

The procedures outlined in the Rule of the Council General International\* shall be followed for the suspension or dissolution of a conference or council. The regional president may assist conferences and councils in any procedures.

\*See Section 4, point 6.7 – 6.11.1 of the International Rule and 2.2.5, 2.2.6.1, 2.2.7.1 of the Canadian Rule and Statutes.

### **3.15 DISPUTES AND ISSUES**

Disputes within the Society should be resolved in a Vincentian spirit of charity, for the good of the Society and the people it serves. Informal discussions between the members concerned and their conference and/or council president should resolve the issue satisfactorily. The National Council Operations Manual offers guidelines for any such situation. The president of the relevant regional council shall intervene if the problem persists. He or she may ask the national president to strike a mediation or arbitration committee to inquire into the dispute. This committee will report on the situation to the national president.

At the request of the national president, the Council General International may intervene in disputes arising at conference or council level. Its proposed decision shall take into account the spirit of the Rule of the Society and the Canadian Statutes.

Any member, conference or council that takes legal action through civil or other tribunals, without the express authorization of the International President General, in order to settle disputes between members, conferences or councils, shall be automatically separated from the Vincentian friendship by virtue of this action and shall be excluded, for all intents and purposes, from the Society.

Conferences and councils, with the approval of the national president, may seek legal advice and defend themselves if legal action is taken against them or against one of their members by an organization or an individual outside the Society. The national president shall seek full disclosure of the facts and seek the advice needed for the situation before giving his or her approval.

### **3.16 INSURANCE COVERAGE**

The Society has a legal and ethical obligation to protect its members while they are involved in mission activities on behalf of the Society in Canada. Conferences, councils and special works, at all levels, should take steps to purchase general liability insurance for all their members and staff. The risks covered should include all those specified by the National Council. Insurance coverage must be renewed as long as the need for it exists.

### **3.17 VISITING IN PAIRS**

Home visitation is a fundamental activity of the Society, and has been carried out in pairs since the beginning of the Society in the 1830's. This traditional activity shall continue to be carried out by two members, preferably a man and a woman.

The Society has a moral and a legal responsibility to exercise due care and diligence for the protection of the visitors and of those being served. Visiting in pairs constitutes a reasonable and necessary obligation. That kind of visit gives the two Vincentians the opportunity to see different aspects of a problem and other possibilities for solving it. It also helps foster friendship between members, which is so important to the Society and follows the example of Our Lord who sent out his disciples in pairs for mutual support and inspiration.

### **3.18 PUBLIC AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The Society should inform the general public, as well as the civil and religious authorities, of its works, achievements and needs.

This is essential for the Society in order to:

- have it recognized as a major Catholic charitable organization;
- thank supporters for their help;
- promote its expansion and support, financial and otherwise.

To this end, the president of the local conference or council is responsible for acting as the spokesperson for the Society within his or her area of jurisdiction.

### **3.19 WORKING WITH CHRISTIAN OR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

Each Vincentian should seek to deepen a personal commitment to ecumenism and to cooperation in works of charity and justice, as a contribution towards the achievement of that full and visible unity of the Church. However, the Catholic beliefs and ethos of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul must be preserved. The president, vice-president and spiritual advisor of conferences and councils should therefore be Catholic. In certain cases, though not Catholic, they may be members of churches and ecclesial communities that share certain Catholic beliefs such as the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the seven sacraments and devotion to Mary. In such a situation, the next higher level of the Society shall be consulted before the Society allows them to stand for election or nomination to the position of president or vice-president.

The Society accepts the principle of affiliated groups. These groups are usually members of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities, or non-Christian religions. They may participate in the charitable work and the fraternal life of the Society. However, they are not eligible for office in the Society.

### **3.20 WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

The Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying injustices that cause it. Therefore, it is committed to identifying the root causes of poverty and contributing to their elimination. In all its charitable actions, there should be a search for justice.

Affirming the dignity of each human being as created in God's image, Vincentians envision a just society in which the rights, responsibilities and development of all people are promoted. The distinctive approach of Vincentians to issues of social justice is to see them from the perspective of those in need who are suffering from injustice. The Society helps those in need to speak for themselves. When they cannot, the Society must speak on their behalf so that they will not be ignored.

The Society opposes discrimination of all kind and strives, through charity, to foster new attitudes of respect and empathy for the weak, for people of different cultures, religions and ethnic origins, thus contributing to the peace and unity of all the people of the world.

The Society's vision goes beyond the immediate future and looks towards sustainable development and protection of the environment for the benefit of future generations.

## SECTION 4

# THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

## 4.A THE RULE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL\*

### 1. THE ORIGINS OF THE SOCIETY AND SERVICE TO THE POOR

#### 1.1 ORIGINS

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a worldwide Christian community, founded in Paris in 1833, by a group of young Catholic lay people and an older person, who joined together to create the first Conference. The Society wishes to remember them all with gratitude, as they set an example of dedication to the poor and to the Church. From Le Taillandier, who received the first inspiration, to Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, Paul Lamache, François Lallier, Jules Deveaux, Félix Clavé, all of them knew, in their humility, how to seek the wise advice and support of the one who would become the first President General of the flourishing Society, Emmanuel Bailly.

\* Section 4A, taken verbatim from the International Rule, respects the original numbering of the articles.

The Holy Spirit was undoubtedly present in all of them at the founding of the Society, fostering the charisms of each one. Among them, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam was a radiant source of inspiration. The Society has been Catholic from its origins. It remains an international Catholic voluntary organization of lay people, men and women.

## **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF OUR SERVICE**

### **1.2 THE VINCENTIAN VOCATION**

The vocation of the Society's members, who are called Vincentians, is to follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love. Members show their commitment through person-to-person contact. Vincentians serve in hope.

### **1.3 ANY FORM OF PERSONAL HELP...**

No work of charity is foreign to the Society. It includes any form of help that alleviates suffering or deprivation and promotes human dignity and personal integrity in all their dimensions.

### **1.4 ...TO ANYONE IN NEED**

The Society serves those in need regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions.

## **1.5 TO SEEK OUT THE POOR**

Vincentians strive to seek out and find those in need and the forgotten, the victims of exclusion or adversity.

## **1.6 ADAPTATION TO A CHANGING WORLD**

Faithful to the spirit of its founders, the Society constantly strives for renewal, adapting to changing world conditions. It seeks to be ever aware of the changes that occur in human society and the new types of poverty that may be identified or anticipated. It gives priority to the poorest of the poor and to those who are most rejected by society.

## **OUR PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE POOR**

### **1.7 PRAYER BEFORE PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS OR VISITS**

Vincentians pray that the Holy Spirit may guide them during their visits and make them channels for the peace and joy of Christ.

### **1.8 REVERENCE FOR THE POOR**

Vincentians serve the poor cheerfully, listening to them and respecting their wishes, helping them to feel and recover their own dignity, for we are all created in God's image. In the poor, they see the suffering Christ.

Members observe the utmost confidentiality in the provision of material and any other type of support.

### **1.9 EMPATHY**

Vincentians endeavour to establish relationships based on trust and friendship. Conscious of their own frailty and weakness, their hearts beat with the heartbeat of the poor. They do not judge those they serve. Rather, they seek to understand them as they would a brother or sister.

### **1.10 PROMOTION OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

Vincentians endeavour to help the poor to help themselves whenever possible, and to be aware that they can forge and change their own destinies and that of their local community.

### **1.11 CONCERNS FOR DEEPER NEEDS AND SPIRITUALITY**

Vincentians are sincerely concerned with the deeper needs and the spiritual well-being of those they help, always observing a profound respect for their conscience and the faith they believe in, listening and understanding with their hearts, beyond both words and appearances.

Vincentians serve in hope. They rejoice in discovering the spirit of prayer in the poor, for in the silence, the poor can perceive God's Plan for every person.

The acceptance of God's Plan leads each one to nurture the seeds of love, generosity, reconciliation and inner peace in themselves, their families and all those whose lives they touch. Vincentians are privileged to foster these signs of the presence of the Risen Christ in the poor and among themselves.

### **1.12 GRATITUDE TO THOSE WE VISIT**

Vincentians never forget the many blessings they receive from those they visit. They recognize that the fruit of their labours springs, not from themselves, but especially from God and from the poor they serve.

## **2. VINCENTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND VOCATION**

### **Faith in Christ and the Life of Grace**

“Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1-2)

### **2.1 LOVE IN UNION WITH CHRIST**

Convinced of the truth of the Apostle St. Paul's words, Vincentians seek to draw closer to Christ. They hope that someday it will be no longer they who love, but Christ who loves through them (Gal 2:20 “... I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God”), and that even now, in their caring, the poor may catch a glimpse of God's great love for them.

## 2.2 THE JOURNEY TOGETHER TOWARD HOLINESS

Vincentians are called to journey together toward holiness, because true holiness is perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which is central to their vocation and the source of its fruitfulness. They aspire to burn with the love of God as revealed by Christ and to deepen their own faith and fidelity. Vincentians are aware of their own brokenness and need for God's grace. They seek His glory, not their own. Their ideal is to help relieve suffering for love alone, without thinking of any reward or advantage for themselves.

They draw nearer to Christ, serving Him in the poor and one another. They grow more perfect in love by expressing compassionate and tender love to the poor and one another.

Therefore, their journey together toward holiness is primarily made through:

- Visiting and dedicating themselves to the poor, whose faith and courage often teach Vincentians how to live, Vincentians assume the needs of the poor as their own.
- Attending the meeting of the conference or council, where shared fraternal spirituality is a source of inspiration.
- Promoting a life of prayer and reflection, both at the individual and community level, sharing with their fellow members. Meditating on their Vincentian experiences offers them internal spiritual knowledge of themselves, others and the goodness of God.
- Transforming their concern into action and their compassion into practical and effective love.

Their journey together towards holiness will be all the more fruitful if the members' personal lives are characterized by prayer, meditation on the Holy Scriptures and other inspirational texts and devotion to the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary, whose protection we have always sought, and to the teachings of the Church.

### **2.3 PRAYER IN UNION WITH CHRIST**

In every Conference throughout the world and in their personal lives, Vincentians raise their prayers to God, united with the prayer of Christ, on behalf of one another and their masters the poor, whose suffering they wish to share.

### **2.4 THE SPIRITUALITY OF BLESSED FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM**

The spirituality of one of its founders inspires Vincentians profoundly.

The Blessed Frédéric Ozanam:

- Sought to renew faith, among all people, in Christ and in the civilizing effect of the teachings of the Church through all time.
- Envisioned the establishment of a network of charity and social justice encircling the world.
- Attained holiness as a layman through living the Gospel fully in all aspects of his life.
- Had a passion for truth, democracy and education.

## 2.5 THE SPIRITUALITY OF SAINT VINCENT

Having been placed under the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul by the founding members, members of the Society are inspired by his spirituality, manifest in his attitudes, his thoughts, his example and his words.

For Vincentians, the key aspects of Saint Vincent's spirituality are:

- To love God, our Father, with the sweat of our brow and the strength of our arms;
- To see Christ in the poor and the poor in Christ;
- To share the compassionate and liberating love of Christ the Evangelizer and Servant of the poor;
- To heed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

### 2.5.1 Essential virtues

Vincentians seek to emulate Saint Vincent in the five virtues essential for promoting love and respect for the poor:

- Simplicity – frankness, integrity, genuineness.
- Humility – accepting the truth about our frailties, gifts, talents and charisms, yet knowing that all that God gives us is for others and that we can achieve nothing of eternal value without His grace.
- Gentleness – friendly assurance and invincible goodwill, which mean kindness, tenderness and patience in our relationship with others.
- Selflessness – dying to our ego with a life of self-sacrifice; members share their time, their possessions, their talents and themselves in a spirit of generosity.
- Zeal – a passion for the full flourishing and eternal happiness of every person.

## **2.6 A VOCATION FOR EVERY MOMENT OF OUR LIVES**

The Vincentian vocation affects all aspects of members' daily lives, making them more sensitive and caring in their family, work and leisure activities. Vincentians are available for work in the conferences only after fulfilling their family and professional duties.

### **3. MEMBERS, CONFERENCES, COUNCILS – COMMUNITIES OF FAITH AND LOVE**

#### **3.1 MEMBERSHIP**

The Society is open to all those who seek to live their faith loving and committing themselves to their neighbour in need.

*(See Article 6.4 of the Rule.)*

#### **3.2 EQUALITY**

The Society, in each of its conferences (the primary basic unit of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul), makes no distinction regarding gender, wealth, occupation, social status or ethnic origin.

#### **3.3 MEETINGS OF THE VINCENTIAN MEMBERS**

The members meet as brothers and sisters with Christ in the midst of them, in conferences that are genuine communities of faith and love, of prayer and action. Spiritual bonds and friendship between members are essential, as is the common mission to help the poor and marginalized. The entire Society is a true and unique worldwide community of Vincentian friends.

### **3.3.1 Frequency of the meetings**

The conferences meet regularly and consistently, usually weekly, but at least every fortnight.

## **3.4 FRATERNITY AND SIMPLICITY**

Meetings are held in a spirit of fraternity, simplicity and Christian joy.

## **3.5 PRESERVING THE SPIRIT**

Members of all ages strive to preserve the spirit of youth, which is characterized by enthusiasm, adaptability and creative imagination. They are willing to make sacrifices and take risks for the benefit of the poor wherever they may be: by sharing their discomfort, needs and sorrows and defending their rights.

## **3.6 COUNCILS**

Conferences are grouped under various levels of councils.

Councils exist to serve all the conferences they coordinate. They help the conferences to develop their spiritual life, to intensify their service and to diversify their activities so that they may always be responsive to the needs of those who suffer.

Councils at appropriate levels are particularly called to: create new conferences, help existing conferences to expand, promote special works, prepare training courses and encourage Vincentians to attend them, foster interest in cooperation with the Vincentian Family, promote cooperation with other organizations and institutions, develop friendship between members in the same area, and provide communication to and from conferences and higher councils. In summary, to promote the sense of belonging to a Society which encircles the world.

### **3.7 YOUNG MEMBERS**

Young members keep the Society young. They see with new eyes and often look far ahead. The Society works constantly to form youth conferences and welcomes young members into all conferences. Their experience in a community of faith and love and their exposure to poverty deepen their spirituality, spur them to action and help them to grow as human beings. The senior members assume the responsibility of assisting them along their path of training, respecting their personal choices and their aspirations of Vincentian service.

### **3.8 AGGREGATION AND INSTITUTION OF CONFERENCES AND COUNCILS**

The visible unifying link within the Society is the aggregation of the conferences and the institution of the councils declared by the Council General.

### **3.9 SUBSIDIARITY AND FREEDOM OF ACTION**

The Society embraces the Principle of Subsidiarity as its basic standard of operation. Decisions are made as close as possible

to the area of activity to ensure that the local environment and circumstances (cultural, social, political, etc.) are taken into consideration.

In this way, the Society promotes local initiatives within its spirit. This freedom of action of conferences and councils, which has been kept faithfully since the origins of the Society, enables them to help the poor spontaneously and more effectively, free from excessive bureaucracy.

In exercising this freedom of action to face the challenge of poverty in their area, Vincentians feel called to pray together for guidance and strength and for that creative imagination which is the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, “Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions.” (Joel 3:1).

### **3.10 DEMOCRACY**

All decisions are made by consensus after the necessary prayer, reflection and consultation. The democratic spirit is fundamental at all levels of the Society and, when appropriate, matters are put to a vote.

### **3.11 PRESIDENTS AS SERVANT LEADERS**

Following Christ’s example, the presidents at all levels of the Society endeavour to be servant leaders. They provide an encouraging atmosphere in which the talents, capacities and spiritual charisms of the members are identified, developed and put to the service of the poor and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The president of the conference or council will have special responsibility for promoting Vincentian spirituality.

### **3.12 FORMATION OF MEMBERS**

It is essential that the Society continually promote the formation and training of its members and officers, in order to deepen their knowledge of the Society and their spirituality, improve the sensitivity, quality and efficiency of their service to the poor and help them be aware of the benefits, resources and opportunities that are available for the poor. The Society also offers members higher training in order to better help to raise the cultural and social level of those who request this support.

### **3.13 THE SPIRIT OF POVERTY AND ENCOURAGEMENT**

Members of the Society are united in the same spirit of poverty and of sharing. They encourage one another to live a profound spiritual life and spirit of prayer. For this purpose, the role of a spiritual advisor is very important.

### **3.14 THE USE OF MONEY AND PROPERTY FOR THE POOR**

Vincentians should never forget that giving love, talents and time is more important than giving money. Nevertheless, the Society uses money and property to help relieve the suffering of those in need. The Society's funds must be handled with the utmost care, prudence and generosity. Money must not be hoarded. Decisions regarding the use of money and property are to be made after reflection in the light of the Gospel and Vincentian principles. Accurate records must be kept of all money received or spent. The Society may not allot funds to other organizations, except occasionally for other branches of the Vincentian Family, save under exceptional circumstances.

### **3.15 COMMUNICATION**

The vitality of the Society's network of charity depends on the regular and rapid exchange of news and information. Such communication broadens the members' horizon and enhances the interest of members in the experiences and challenges of their brothers and sisters throughout the world. The Vincentian response to communication is a willingness to learn and a desire to help.

## **4. RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE VINCENTIAN AND CATHOLIC NETWORK OF CHARITY**

### **4.1 TWINNING**

Conferences and councils help others in need, both at the national and international level. This is one of the activities most cherished by the Society. The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries and the Vincentian preferential option for the poor spurs conferences and councils to assist others with less resources or in particular situations.

This direct link between two conferences or councils, consisting of sharing prayer, a profound friendship and material resources, is called twinning. This activity contributes to world peace and to understanding and cultural exchange among peoples.

#### **4.1.1 Prayer as the basis of friendship**

Twinning promotes spirituality, deep friendship, solidarity and mutual help. Funds and other material resources can be provided to enable a conference or council to help local families. Financial, technical, medical and educational support is given to projects which are suggested by the Society locally and which encourage self-sufficiency. Even more important is support given through prayer, as well as through mutual communication regarding what has been accomplished and what is happening among Vincentians in each area, including news about persons and families.

#### **4.1.2 Vincentians' personal commitment**

The Society urges the Vincentians to consider undertaking a personal commitment for a particular period of time to work with Vincentians in other countries or to spread conferences.

## **4.2 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**

When disasters, war or major accidents occur, the Society launches emergency initiatives on the spot and provides funds for the local Society to help victims.

## **4.3 THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY**

Members throughout the world, together with other communities inspired by the spirituality of Saint Vincent de Paul and with those whom they help, form a single family. Gratefully remembering the support and encouragement the first Conference received from Blessed Rosalie Rendu, the Society maintains and develops close relationships with other branches of the Vincentian family, while preserving its identity. It cooperates with them in spiritual development and common projects, as well as with the Church's charitable pastoral initiatives at every level, whenever this may be mutually enriching and useful to those who suffer.

# **5. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH HIERARCHY**

## **5.1 A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP**

Faithful to the clear intentions of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and his companions, the Society has a close relationship with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Respect of the members for the hierarchy provides the foundation for harmonious reciprocal cooperation.

## **5.2 AUTONOMY**

The Society is legally autonomous as to its existence, constitution, organization, rules, activities and internal government. Vincentians freely choose their own officers and manage the Society's activities and assets with full autonomy, in accordance with their own Statutes and the legislation in effect in each country.

## **5.3 MORAL RECOGNITION**

The Society recognizes the right and duty of the diocesan bishop to confirm that none of its activities is contrary to Catholic faith or morals. The Society, whenever possible, informs the diocesan bishops of its activities annually, as a sign of ecclesial communion.

# **6. OTHER RELATIONSHIPS - ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS**

## **6.1 EVERY MEMBER SHOULD FOSTER ECUMENISM**

Each Vincentian should seek to deepen a personal commitment to ecumenism and to cooperation in works of charity and justice as a contribution towards the achievement of that full and visible unity of the Church for which Christ prayed, 'that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they be one in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.' (Jn 17:21).

## **6.2 THE SOCIETY IS COMMITTED TO ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH COOPERATION**

Following the teachings of the Catholic Church, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul recognizes, accepts and encourages the call to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and cooperation which arise from its charitable activity. It is prepared to participate in the Church's ecumenical and interfaith initiatives within each country, in harmony with the diocesan bishop.

## **6.3 THE ADOPTION OF PRACTICAL INITIATIVES**

Conferences and councils should establish a dialogue with their counterparts in other Christian churches or ecclesial communities and other faiths, with regard to cooperation in charitable work, wherever this is appropriate.

## **6.4 ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH MEMBERSHIP**

In some countries, circumstances may make it desirable to accept as members Christians of other confessions or people of other faiths who sincerely respect and accept the Society's identity and its principles insofar as differences of faith allow. The Episcopal Conference should be consulted.

## **6.5 PRESERVING THE CATHOLIC CREDO AND ETHOS**

The Catholic beliefs and ethos of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul must be preserved. The president, vice-president and spiritual advisor should, therefore, be Roman Catholic. They may, in certain situations depending on national circumstances, and after consultation with the local diocesan bishop, be members of churches and ecclesial communities which share the Catholic belief in, among other issues, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the seven Sacraments and devotion to Mary.

## **6.6 AFFILIATED GROUPS CAN WORK VERY CLOSELY WITH US**

The Society accepts the principle of affiliated groups. These groups consist mainly of members of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities who are attracted by the work of the Society and/or its spirituality. They are welcome to participate in the charitable work, appropriate council discussions and the fraternal life of the Society, but are not eligible for office in the Society. Groups from non-Christian religions may also be similarly affiliated.

## **6.7 RELATIONSHIPS WITH STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER CHARITIES**

When the problems they encounter are beyond their competence or capacity, Vincentians may contact government agencies and other more specialized charitable organizations, provided that such action helps the Society in its struggle against injustice and respects the spirit of the Society.

## **7. RELATIONSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY – WORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

### **7.1 THE SOCIETY GIVES IMMEDIATE HELP BUT ALSO SEEKS MID-TERM AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS**

The Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying the unjust structures that cause it. It is, therefore, committed to identifying the root causes of poverty and to contributing to their elimination. In all its charitable actions there should be a search for justice; in its struggle for justice, the Society must keep in mind the demands of charity.

### **7.2 A VISION OF THE CIVILIZATION OF LOVE**

Affirming the dignity of each human being as created in God's image, and Jesus' particular identification with those who are excluded by society, Vincentians envision a more just society in which the rights, responsibilities and development of all people are promoted.

As citizens of one world, Vincentians listen to the voice of the Church which demands their participation in creating a more equitable and compassionate social order, promoting the culture of life and the civilization of love. In this way, the Society shares the Church's mission to evangelize the world through visible witness, in both actions and words.

### **7.3 VISION OF THE FUTURE**

The Society's vision goes beyond the immediate future, looking toward sustainable development and protection of the environment for the benefit of future generations.

### **7.4 THE PRACTICAL VINCENTIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE**

The distinctive approach of Vincentians to issues of social justice is to see them from the perspective of those we visit who suffer from injustice.

### **7.5 A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS**

The Society helps the poor and disadvantaged speak for themselves. When they cannot, the Society must speak on behalf of those who are ignored.

### **7.6 FACING THE STRUCTURES OF SIN**

Where injustice, inequality, poverty or exclusion are due to unjust economic, political or social structures or to inadequate or unjust legislation, the Society should speak out clearly against the situation, always with charity, with the aim of contributing to and demanding improvements.

### **7.7 STRIVING TO CHANGE ATTITUDES**

Vincentians oppose discrimination of all kinds and work to change the attitudes of those who view the weak or those who are different with prejudice, fear or scorn, attitudes which gravely wound the dignity of others.

The Society strives, with charity, to foster new attitudes of respect and empathy for the weak, so that all are able to understand, recognize and defend the right of each person to be responsible for his or her own life. The Society promotes understanding, cooperation and mutual love among people of different cultures, religions, ethnic origins and social groups, and so contributes to the peace and unity of all peoples.

## **7.8 POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE SOCIETY**

The Society does not identify with any political party and always adopts a non-violent approach.

It is good that some members follow and fully participate in their political vocation in such a way that they bring Christian values to political matters. Those members who hold political offices will be asked, always with charity, not to hold any mission of representation in the Society during their term of political office.

## **7.9 WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES**

The Society should work not only with individuals in need but also with families and communities. It can help an excluded or deprived local community to develop a sense of responsibility and solidarity which leads it to improve its economic, social or environmental well-being, always retaining the personal contact of members with those who suffer.

## **4B INFORMATION RELATING TO THE STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL**

### **4.1 THE CONFEDERATION**

At the international level, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is united in its spirituality and management through the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, hereinafter referred to as the Confederation, which is presided over by the President General.

The Confederation is the sole owner of the Society's name. Only the International Council General may, on behalf of the Confederation, authorize or prohibit the use of its name.

### **4.2 THE INTERNATIONAL HEAD OFFICE**

The Confederation's head office is located in Paris, France, the city where the first conference was founded in 1833.

### **4.3 OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

In recognition of the establishment of the first Saint Vincent de Paul Conference in France, the official language of the Confederation is French. All the Confederation's official documents shall be drafted in this language.

The co-official languages of the Confederation are Chinese, English, Portuguese and Spanish. The Confederation undertakes to publish most of its publications in all the official languages.

## **4.4 THE ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL**

The supreme democratic body of the Confederation is the Council General, which meets in ordinary or extraordinary assemblies and is presided over by the President General.

## **4.5 FREQUENCY OF ASSEMBLY MEETINGS**

The Council General assembly normally meets once every six years. An extraordinary general assembly shall be convened when requested by the President General, or by 50% or more of the voting members.

### **4.5.1 Voting members**

The Council General is composed of the elected presidents of the superior (national) or assimilated councils, which they represent, and which are instituted in the different countries and in clearly defined regions around the globe. Each president is entitled to one vote.

Assimilated councils are councils that have been instituted or conferences that have been aggregated, and which are legally constituted within the scope of their national legislations as non-profit organizations representing a country or a region, in which a superior council has not yet been instituted.

#### **4.5.2 Other members**

Different circumstances may mean that there are other members of the Council General as follows:

**Associated councils:** These are councils that cannot achieve full legal member status due to limitations in their national legislations or to the fact that they have availed themselves of legal instruments governing legal members other than those established by the Council General.

**Temporary members:** These are members appointed by the President General in countries or regions where the Society is not present and until such time as the appropriate superior or assimilated council can be instituted.

**Missionary members:** These shall be members appointed by the President General to perform specific tasks and services. They shall always include members that have served as international presidents general.

The other members of the Council General as described above can participate in the Council General deliberations but have no voting rights.

### **4.6 AFFILIATION TO THE CONFEDERATION**

A superior (national), assimilated or associated council of the Society that wishes to join the Confederation shall submit a written request to this effect to the President General. The Council General, through its permanent section, approves such requests.

#### **4.7 LEGAL LIABILITIES**

Under no circumstances shall the Confederation or any of its governing members, by virtue of the affiliation described in Section 4.5 above, be liable for events occurring without their full and proven knowledge. The superior, assimilated and associated councils shall, for all legal purposes, be the highest and ultimate bodies responsible before any type of national or international jurisdiction, for events occurring within their jurisdictional areas.

#### **4.8 ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT GENERAL**

The President General is elected by secret ballot by all the members of the Society, represented by the presidents of the superior, assimilated and associated councils. Each president is entitled to one vote. The election takes place at a general assembly of the International Council General with a quorum of 30% of the voting members being present and the postal vote of those electors who are unable to attend in person. If no candidate obtains one-half plus one of the votes presented, voting members present will vote in a second and final round for the two candidates having obtained most of the votes during the first round.

The term of office of the President General is six years only. The President General must not be more than 65 years of age when elected.

## **4.9 FUNCTIONS OF THE PRESIDENT GENERAL**

The President of the Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and its Council General represents the Society before:

- The Holy See;
- All international religious or civil organizations;
- Any public or private organization in general.

The President of the Confederation:

- Supervises, fosters and coordinates the Society's activities worldwide;
- Is responsible for implementing the resolutions of the Council General Assemblies, in compliance with the provisions of the Rule, the International Statutes and pursuant to the Society's tradition;
- Reports annually, in January, to the members and councils on the progress of the Society and the prospects for the future.

## **4.10 THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL**

The board of directors of the Confederation's Council General is composed of the President General, a vice-president general, a secretary general, a treasurer general and a member entrusted with the International Youth Delegation, all of whom are appointed by the President General. A spiritual advisor is also part of the board but has no voting rights. The President General may also appoint deputies to the vice-president, secretary or treasurer to complete the board. These deputies may participate in deliberations but have no voting rights.

#### **4.10.1 Role and responsibilities of the board**

The board advises and counsels the President General. The board collaborates with the President General in the:

- Development of strategies to be proposed to the Council General assemblies;
- Implementation of agreements reached at such assemblies;
- The implementation of the recommendations of the international executive committee.

### **4.11 THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE STRUCTURE**

#### **4.11.1 Territorial vice-presidents and area coordinators**

The President General appoints territorial vice-presidents and area coordinators from among the Society's worldwide members.

The territorial vice-presidents support and coordinate the Society in large geographical areas around the world. They may organize regional meetings with the authorization of the President General. Canada is represented by the territorial vice-president for America I, which also includes the United States and a number of island states in the Caribbean.

The area coordinators have delegated responsibility for a specific group of countries, and assist the territorial vice-presidents in their supervisory and promotional tasks.

#### **4.II.2 Other international services**

The President General may delegate to different members the task of presiding over work. Individual members may be delegated to carry out specific missions or to be part of commissions established to achieve particular objectives. A specific mission could be the restructuring of the Society within a particular country, or the training and formation of Vincentians where insufficient resources exist.

#### **4.12 THE END OF TERMS OF OFFICE**

In order to ensure the smooth hand-over of functions, all terms, posts and services delegated by the President General shall automatically cease six months after a new president general takes up his or her appointment.

#### **4.13 THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The international executive committee is responsible for coordinating the Society's strategy in the interim periods between Council General assemblies. The committee must give particular attention to ensuring that what is done complies with the requests and matters approved at the general assemblies. The committee shall report, through the Secretary General, on the results of its management and administration during the interim years in which the assembly is not convened and shall request the ratification of its performance at the general assembly.

#### **4.13.1 Membership**

The permanent members of the committee are the President General, the Vice-President General, the Secretary General, the Treasurer General, and the appointed deputies.

Legal members of the committee are the presidents of the superior (national) or assimilated councils having more than 1,000 active and aggregated conferences within their jurisdiction. In addition, the President General shall appoint to the committee, on the proposal by the permanent and legal members of the committee, five members from superior (national) or assimilated councils with a lower degree of representation around the world. These members serve a two-year mandate.

#### **4.13.2 Voting and quorum**

Each superior (national) and assimilated council president, or representative, as described above, has one vote. The President General shall likewise have one vote, which, if the case may be, shall be considered the casting vote. The valid adoption of resolutions by the committee requires the attendance or representation of at least 30% of its voting members.

Members of the international service structure are invited to attend the committee meetings with a right to speak but not to vote.

## **4.14 THE PERMANENT SECTION / GOVERNING BOARD**

The permanent section, presided over by the President General, is established at the head office of the Council General of the Confederation. However, it may be convened anywhere in the world at the discretion of the President General. The members of the permanent section are the board members of the Council General, the territorial vice-presidents and the correspondents. The correspondents are responsible for liaison and support to national councils and other members of the international structure in the region assigned.

The mission of the permanent section is to supervise and monitor the activity of the Society worldwide to ensure a better international service to members and to the poor. It makes any appropriate decisions within the scope of the *Rule and Statutes*, and ensures compliance with both the resolutions adopted by the general assemblies and the recommendations of the international executive committee.

The permanent section shall specifically monitor resolutions adopted at the most recent assembly meeting of the Council General or by the international executive committee, as well as the degree of implementation of these resolutions in the different superior, assimilated or associated councils and by the Council General itself whenever appropriate.

### **4.14.1 Voting members**

The voting members are the presidents of superior (national), assimilated or associated councils attending a session of the permanent section. Each president is entitled to one vote.

## **4.15 INSTITUTION, AGGREGATION AND DISSOLUTION**

Only the Council General is empowered to institute new councils and aggregate new conferences to the Society, after consulting the appropriate superior, assimilated or associated councils.

The President General designates a speaker to receive all proposals from the councils. He or she obtains opinions from the members of the permanent section specifically responsible for handling relations with the requesting councils. The speaker presents the request to the permanent section, which either rejects or approves the application. The President General and the Secretary General sign all aggregation or institution letters. The requesting councils and the beneficiaries, councils or conferences, shall be notified of all decisions concerning the request for aggregation or institution.

Conferences applying for aggregation must have been created and have provided services to the poor for at least twelve (12) months. The conferences and councils, once aggregated or instituted, shall retain their status unless circumstances require the President General to proceed with their suspension or exclusion.

### **4.15.1 Dissolution or suspension**

For reasons prompted by the seriousness of a particular event, the President General may temporarily suspend or permanently exclude a conference or a council, after notifying the permanent section accordingly. A permanent exclusion shall entail the cancellation of the aggregation or institution.

Each president of a superior (national) or assimilated council has, on a precautionary basis by virtue of his or her election, received and accepted accordingly at the head office of the Council General, delegated powers to temporarily suspend a conference, council or member. A president may make such decisions in cases of extreme seriousness and urgency.

In such circumstances, the President General shall be notified of such decision and the justification for it, within 15 working days. The notification shall include full documentation, particularly relating to the intervention of a conciliation committee, where appropriate. The member, conference or council may appeal to the President General who shall approve or reject the appeal.

#### **4.15.2 Other procedures**

The President General, on the initiative and request of one of the international territorial vice-presidents, shall start the procedure of suspension or exclusion in the event of any serious circumstances. The President General shall report this serious situation to the permanent section.

The superior, assimilated or associated council that has supervised the conference or council is responsible for executing the sanction, in agreement with the Council General, and for ensuring the transfer of the property and files of the dissolved organization.

In the event of suspension or dissolution of a superior (national), assimilated or associated council, the President General shall appoint a provisional board.

#### **4.16 EXTRAORDINARY PROCEDURE**

In agreement with, and normally at the request of, the superior, assimilated or associated council concerned, the Council General may intervene in disputes arising at conference or council level. Its proposed decision shall take into account the spirit of the Society and any specific aspects of the Society's Statutes at the location in question, providing they are approved in conformity with the Rule, the International Statutes, and are ratified accordingly by the permanent section.

#### **4.17 CIVIL AND OTHER TRIBUNALS**

Any member, conference or council that takes legal action through civil or other tribunals, without express authorization from the Council General, in order to resolve disputes between members, conferences or councils, shall be automatically separated from the Vincentian friendship by virtue of this action and shall be excluded, for all intents and purposes, from the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

## SECTION 5

# APPENDICES

### 5.1 ORIGINS

It is important for all Vincentians to educate themselves about the origins of the Society so that they may better understand and appreciate the circumstances that led to its creation and expansion into a worldwide Catholic charitable organization. Information and training sessions and personal reading will enable each member to become familiar with the main founders of the Society and with other people who contributed to its establishment.

The Canadian *Rule and Statutes* would not be complete without the presentation of:

- a short biography of the Society's patron;
- short biographies of its main founders, and of Blessed Sister Rosalie who had a great influence on the Society's founders;
- a brief account of the origins of the Society in Canada.

### 5.2 SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL (1581 – 1660)

Saint Vincent de Paul, patron of the Society, was named patron of works of charity by Pope Leo XIII.

Vincent de Paul was born to peasant farmers on April 24, 1581, in a village near the town of Dax in Gascony, France. In 1595, his father, recognizing his intellectual talents and pleasing personality, and aware of the limited possibilities in the region, enrolled Vincent in a boarding school run by the Franciscans.

Vincent received Tonsure and Minor Orders in 1596 and went on to complete his education at the University of Toulouse, France. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1600. His ambition was to obtain an ecclesiastical post, which would provide prosperity for him and his family.

Father Vincent settled in Paris where, in 1623, he received a degree in Canon Law from the University of Paris. He soon secured a position as Chaplain to Queen Marguerite de Valois but his life was to change shortly thereafter.

During this period, Father Vincent suffered an intense spiritual crisis. After some time, he promised that if God were to take away the darkness he was experiencing, he would dedicate his life to the service of the poor. The anguish went away and Father Vincent would remain faithful to his vow for the rest of his life.

Father Vincent became acquainted with Father Pierre de Bérulle, a holy priest who later became cardinal and who also became Father Vincent's spiritual director. Father de Bérulle got him his first parish at Clichy, near Paris, in May 1612. There, Father Vincent rebuilt the local church and transformed it into a model parish. He was transferred to another parish in 1617, Châtillon-les-Dombes, where he again experienced the misery of the peasants and organized the practice of Christian charity to respond to their material needs.

During this same period Father Vincent was also entrusted with the education of the son of Count Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi and his wife Françoise Marguerite, one of the most prestigious families in Europe. Count de Gondi appointed Father Vincent Chaplain of prisons and of the slaves rowing the galleys. King Louis XIII appointed him General Chaplain of the Galleys in February 1619 and he worked at this ministry for a few years. Father Vincent was becoming more devoted in the service of the poor whom he felt were his lords and masters. He felt the need to

establish institutions to carry out his ministry and mission, which he now saw as the continuation of the mission of Jesus himself.

Father Vincent received a generous endowment from the de Gondi family in April 1625 so he could pursue his work of charity. He set up missions and colleges spreading out to Scotland, Ireland, Italy, Poland and North Africa. He established The Confraternities of Charity in 1617 to attend to the poor and the sick. Today, this organization is known as the International Association of Charities (IAC).

The Archbishop of Paris granted his approval to Father Vincent's community of priests and brothers, The Congregation of the Mission, also known as Vincentians, on April 24, 1626. Their mission was to evangelize the poor in rural areas and to help in the formation and education of priests. On November 29, 1633, in a small house in a suburb of Paris, the Daughters of Charity, an order of non-cloistered women, was established, co-founded by Father Vincent and Louise de Marillac, to carry out a hands-on ministry to the poor.

Saint Vincent de Paul pursued his mission with great energy and conviction, answering the material and spiritual needs of the poor and the abandoned all his life. He is a most admirable example of charity in action. Saint Vincent de Paul passed away on September 27, 1660. Pope Clement XII canonized him on June 16, 1737.

### **5.3 BLESSED FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM (1813 – 1853) AND HIS COMPANIONS**

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam is recognized as the main founder of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. He was that rare type of individual of intellectual genius and extraordinary holiness. He

was a husband and father, professor and researcher, journalist and author, apologist and defender of the faith. Above all, he personified the Good Samaritan.

Antoine Frédéric Ozanam was born in Milan, Italy, on April 23, 1813, where his parents, residents of Lyon, France, had moved temporarily. His parents were devout Catholics who passed on to young Frédéric a deep love of God and the poor. After graduating from high school at the Royal College of Lyon, he moved to Paris to study law as his father wished. There, he was confronted with a society in deep turmoil and detached from its faith, as a result of the Revolution of 1830. Guided by André-Marie Ampère, an eminent scientist and Catholic, he came to the unshakable certitude that Christianity was the only remedy to cure the evils of his time.

He gathered around him students of like mind and faith and they confronted faculty members of the Sorbonne University who attacked their faith. He persuaded the Archbishop of Paris to have Father Henri Lacordaire, a renowned preacher, deliver a series of lectures at Notre-Dame Cathedral. The success of those lectures, or conferences, was overwhelming and the Conférences de Notre-Dame were launched.

Ideas about social justice were promoted in the *Tribune Catholique*, a newspaper founded in 1832 by Emmanuel Bailly. A literary circle, *La Société des bonnes études*, was linked to this newspaper. The aim of this circle was to develop among Catholics a taste for historical, philosophical and religious research. Ozanam had a similar idea and he and his friends became active in what became known as the *Conférences d'histoire*. It developed into a dynamic forum of discussion and research at the university.

One March night in 1833, a fellow student who was a non-Catholic, challenged Frédéric and friends. His question was “What are you doing for them (the poor), you and your fellow Catholics...? Show us your works!” Ozanam knew that faith must be translated into action and that, like the apostles, they needed to evangelize by the practice of charity. He rallied the group when he cried out, “The blessing of the poor is that of God...let us go to the poor.”

One evening, on April 23, 1833, Frédéric and five other students met in the office of Mr. Bailly and the “Conference of Charity” was born. They asked Sister Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul to teach them how to minister to the poor with love and respect, and she did so with much kindness. By 1834, the conference had more than 100 members. Taking the saint as an example to follow, it renamed the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and placed it under the protection of the Blessed Virgin.

Ozanam was becoming a respected figure in professional areas. As a Doctor of Law in 1836, he began a career as a lawyer and then became professor of Law in Lyon. In 1839, he graduated as Doctor of Literature. He finished first in the 1840 competitive examination of the Faculty of Arts and Literature at the Sorbonne. He was named professor of Foreign Literature at the same university in 1844.

Ozanam married Amélie Soulacroix in Lyon on June 23, 1841 in a wedding celebrated by his brother Alphonse. A daughter, Marie, was born in July 1845. His life, with his family, teaching, research, writing and various civic social and religious commitments, was a full one.

In addition to the service he gave to the poor, he researched the conditions of the working classes and defended their rights as human beings and workers. He co-founded the newspaper *l’Ère Nouvelle* (New Era) to propagate his social and political ideas. Ozanam was one of the first to formulate the idea of a “natural salary” to claim compensation against unemployment and accidents, and to ask that a pension be guaranteed to workers.

In 1852, exhausted from years of excessive work, he was forced to rest and went to Italy. However his health continued to deteriorate. Although weak, he left Italy with his wife by steamship on August 31, 1853 and landed in Marseilles, France a few days later. He passed away in that city on September 8, 1853, the feast of the birthday of the Blessed Mother, to whom he had such a great devotion. He is buried in the crypt of the Church of St-Joseph-des-Carmes in Paris. His feast is celebrated on September 9.

Pope John Paul II beatified him in Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris on August 22, 1997.

### *Emmanuel Bailly (1794-1861)*

Bailly was a journalist, editor and publisher. As publisher of the Tribune Catholique, he was involved with the Société des bonnes études and established a family boarding house where Ozanam stayed for a period. He was very close to young people and helped them combine their studies with their religious formation.

Ozanam and his friends came naturally to him for advice regarding their plan to serve the poor. He provided a meeting place for the new conference and generally guided their action. Having a great devotion to Saint Vincent de Paul, he linked the new Charity Conference to the great Vincentian spiritual family. He agreed to become the first president of the nascent Society, a position he occupied until he had to step down in 1844 due to illness. He remained a member of the council almost until the end of his life.

### *Jules Devaux (1811-1880)*

Devaux was born in the Normandy region of France and moved to Paris in 1830 to complete his medical studies. He met Ozanam and his friends when he took part in the Conférences d'histoire. He was present at the early meetings of the Society's foundation and one of those in the group who approached Bailly for advice. He was the first conference treasurer. He settled in Normandy after completing his medical studies in 1839. Later in life, he abandoned the medical practice and travelled to Germany where he attempted to establish the first conference; however, this attempt had to be postponed. Devaux, a discreet and self-effacing member of the Society, passed away in Paris in 1880.

### ***Paul Lamache (1810-1892)***

Lamache was born in the Normandy region of France. He settled in Paris to study law, where he met Ozanam in 1832 and joined him in the Conférences d'histoire. He wrote many articles for different publications, participated in the great debates of his time and became involved in the beginnings of the Society. He was the first Catholic writer to declare himself against slavery. He was an eminent law professor at several universities in France and was a passionate defender of justice.

### ***Auguste Le Taillandier (1811-1886)***

Le Taillandier was born in Rouen, France into a family of tradespersons. His family moved to Paris, where he pursued legal studies. He joined Ozanam in the Conférences d'histoire as a virtual silent witness, because he did not participate in the discussions. In 1833, he told Ozanam that it would be better for them to join some charitable work rather than to involve themselves in futile debates. He was active in the founding of the Society, in addition to other charitable work, such as giving religious instruction to apprentices and visiting inmates. He returned to Rouen, married, and founded a conference there. He was recognized with several honorary titles and awards for his contribution to his community.

### *François Lallier (1814-1886)*

Lallier made Ozanam's acquaintance at the Law Faculty of the Sorbonne and became one of his closest friends for the rest of his life. He was the godfather to Ozanam's daughter Marie. He participated in the debates of the Conférences d'histoire and was actively involved in all the steps leading to the founding of the Society. In 1835, he was entrusted by Bailly to write the first Rule of the Society. In 1837, he was appointed secretary general of the Society and signed circulars, which form an important part of the Vincentian tradition. In 1879, the then President General commissioned him to write an account of the Society's origins and he produced a brochure in 1882. In his professional life, he was first a lawyer, and later named a magistrate in Burgundy, where he was born.

### *Félix Clavé (1811-1853)*

Clavé is the least known of the Society's founders. A native of Toulouse, France, he moved to Paris in 1831 where he pursued his studies and associated with Ozanam and friends. He participated actively in the founding of the Society. He founded a conference in the district of Paris where he lived. He then moved to Algeria, where he attempted to establish a conference, but without success. In 1839, he went to Mexico to live with relatives. During his absence, his name was linked to a sensational criminal case, the Lafarge affair. The criminal trial reached no conclusion; however, it deeply affected him. For a long time, the Society refused to speak of him and his role as a founder. Eventually, Clavé married. In his professional life, he published several works, including some books of poetry. He died tragically two months after Ozanam's death.

#### **5.4 BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU (1786-1856)**

Jeanne-Marie Rendu was born in Grex, France of devout Catholic parents. During her childhood, she experienced the upheavals of the Revolution and wars that left many impoverished and others fighting against the Church.

On May 25, 1802, she began her life as a Daughter of Charity in Paris, and was given the name of “Rosalie”. Several months later, she was transferred to the Mouffetard district of Paris where she would work for more than fifty years among her beloved poor. At the age of twenty-eight, Sister Rosalie was appointed Superior of the House.

Emmanuel Bailly, who eventually became the first president of the Society, sent Frédéric Ozanam and Auguste Le Taillandier to Sister Rosalie for guidance and direction in their work of charity, before the Society was formed. For two years, Sister Rosalie directed the young Vincentians to the homes of the needy and abandoned, always showering them with wise advice and suggestions.

When it came to forming a second conference, it was very difficult for the Vincentians to think about breaking the bonds that their friendship had created among them. The unassuming Daughter of Charity convinced them that a second conference was needed and this became the starting point for the expansion of the Society.

In 1852, the Government of France presented Sister Rosalie with the Cross of the Legion of Honour as Mère des pauvres. She passed away on February 7, 1856 and was buried in the Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris, at the request of the poor. On November 9, 2003, in recognition of a life devoted to the poor, Sister Rosalie was beatified.

## 5.5 ORIGINS OF THE SOCIETY IN CANADA

The conviction and enthusiasm of the founders of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul convinced many Catholic students to join the nascent Society. One of them was a young Canadian, Joseph Painchaud, Jr. (1819-1855). He joined the Saint Severin Conference while studying medicine in Paris. On returning home, Dr. Painchaud introduced the Society into Canada by establishing the Conférence Notre-Dame at the Québec Cathedral (now a basilica) parish on November 12, 1846. During the conference's first year of existence, the members distributed \$5,000 to the poor, mostly to aid victims of two major fires that destroyed two-thirds of the city in that year. The new Vincentsians also opened a hospice for seniors, a Savings Bank (Caisse d'économie) for workmen and labourers and assisted German and Irish immigrants arriving in Québec City. The Society expanded quickly and the first particular council was instituted on October 11, 1847 in the Québec City area, bringing together nine conferences. The superior council, which is now called the national council, was created in 1850.

Blessed Bishop Ignace Bourget, then Archbishop of Montréal, first established a conference in Montréal in 1848 in Saint Jacques Parish. Dr. George Muir, who was an active member of the Québec City conference, moved to Toronto where he became the instigator of the first conference at St. Michael's Cathedral Parish in 1850.

The Society continued to expand in Ontario with the establishment of the Conference Notre-Dame de la Merci (bilingual) in Ottawa by Mr. Jimmy Joyce and his companions, in December 1860. Three years later, the first francophone conference was founded at the Notre-Dame du Bon Secours Parish (now Cathedral-Basilica) of Ottawa. The Society expanded to Hamilton, London, Windsor and other Ontario communities.

Mr. Michael Hannan founded the first conference of the Atlantic Provinces in Halifax, in 1853. Other conferences soon sought aggregation in Saint John, New Brunswick, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island and St John's, Newfoundland. The Society also expanded into the western provinces and British Columbia. In the Prairies, the first conference was founded in Saint Boniface, Manitoba, in 1913 and in Calgary, Alberta in 1931. Five conferences were aggregated in Vancouver on March 1, 1915.

While conferences and councils were founded in many parts of Canada, they did not immediately join the national council, instituted in Québec City in 1850, due to the prevalent colonial status of the different provinces.

The first female conference was founded in Italy in 1856. However, it was only in 1933, in Québec City, that the first female conference was established and aggregated in this country. Three more such conferences were reported to exist in 1936. In 1915, there were ten aggregated conferences out of the 228 in existence, composed almost exclusively of young adults, most of them located in the Québec City region, active in a seminary, a university and within Catholic groups.

The establishment of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in different parts of the country was facilitated through the good offices of the local bishops. For a long time, it was customary for a bishop to preside over the general assemblies of the Society and address the participants.

The unity of the Society was cemented and strengthened in 1969, under the presidency of Gérard Le May, who reformed the National Council of Canada.

## 5.6 FEAST DAYS AND CEREMONIES

Vincentians are called to journey together toward holiness. They are aware of their own failings and the need for God's grace. They seek His glory, not their own. They draw nearer to Christ, serving Him in those in need and in one another, and by praying together.

Conference and council members should celebrate liturgical ceremonies together throughout the year, particularly Vincentian ceremonies such as the annual commissioning ceremonies that help to maintain a spirit of profound moral and material friendship among members. Feast days are important dates for the Society and Vincentians should make a special effort to meet and demonstrate the spiritual nature of the Society by attending Mass together. The feast days are:

- April 23, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam's birthday;
- September 9, feast day of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam; See Spirituality Resources on the website [www.ssvp.ca](http://www.ssvp.ca)
- September 27, feast day of Saint Vincent de Paul; See Spirituality Resources on the website [www.ssvp.ca](http://www.ssvp.ca)
- December 8, feast day of the Immaculate Conception of Our Blessed Virgin Mother, patroness of the Society.

Certain other dates when liturgical ceremonies are regarded as particularly meaningful to Vincentians are:

- May 9, feast day of Saint Louise de Marillac;
- November 9, feast day of Blessed Rosalie Rendu;
- 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, World Day of the Poor;
- First Sunday of Lent, because during Lent, the need to undertake more charitable works is emphasized along with the need for more prayer and penance.

## **5.7 CEREMONIES**

### **5.7.1 Installation of Conference or Council President**

The vocation of the Vincentian is to follow Christ through service to those in need and, in so doing, to bear witness to His compassion and liberating love. A president, by virtue of his or her role, is called upon to represent and promote this vocation. After the election or nomination of a president at any level, an installation ceremony should be held in the presence of members to confirm the new president's commitment to this mission.

**See Complementary Documents, C.4 and C.5, or Spirituality Resources on the website [www.ssvp.ca](http://www.ssvp.ca)**

### **5.7.2 Installation of a New Member**

After at least six months in the Society, new members may take part in a commissioning ceremony to express their commitment to the spiritual dimension of membership. The ceremony may be conducted during a Mass, or at a conference meeting, with other members present.

**See Complementary Documents, C.6.**

### **5.7.3 Commissioning Ceremony**

The Second Vatican Council said, “The laity who have followed their vocation and have become members of one of the associations (...) recognized by the Church, try faithfully to adopt the special characteristics of its spiritual life.” Together, with our prayers, the commissioning ceremony helps members do this.

Any date is suitable for this annual ceremony. However, the beginning of the year or any of the feast days are especially recommended. The commissioning is for full members only who have been active members of a conference for at least six months.

**See Complementary Documents, C.9 or Spirituality Resources on the website [www.ssvp.ca](http://www.ssvp.ca)**

## **5.8 PRAYERS AND SERVICES FOR VARIOUS OCCASIONS**

Prayer is a part of each Vincentian’s daily life and work, and they try to “tune in to God” as often as possible throughout the day.

**See Complementary Documents, C.7 and C.8, or Spirituality Resources on the website [www.ssvp.ca](http://www.ssvp.ca)**

## **5.9 FINDING THOSE IN NEED**

“Vincentians strive to seek out and find those in need and the forgotten, the victims of exclusion or adversity.” (The International Rule, I.5)

Vincentians can visit people in their homes or in:

- Hospitals;
- Nursing homes, and residences;
- Night shelters for the homeless;
- Orphanages;
- Prisons;
- Holding areas for asylum-seekers;
- Accommodations for AIDS victims.

Vincentians may receive referrals from:

- Parish priests and other religious;
- People visited;
- Other parishioners;
- Society's special works, such as shops, furniture stores or advice centres;
- Schools (permission of the families must be obtained before referring them to the conference);
- Government agencies, especially those that provide support and benefits to, or counselling for, the persons in need;
- Doctors and health workers (perhaps through a Society leaflet indicating how the Society can be contacted);
- Day centres for the elderly or for other disadvantaged people;
- Support groups for the victims of crime;
- Other caregiver organizations that do not have visiting programs;
- Churches of other Christian denominations or religious centres of other faiths who do not have their own visiting program.

“The Society serves those in need regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions.” (The International Rule, 1.4)

“(The Society) ... gives priority to the poorest of the poor and to those who are most rejected by society.” (The International Rule, 1.6)

## COMPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS

## PROXY FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, appoint Brother/Sister \_\_\_\_\_, a full member of the aggregated Conference of \_\_\_\_\_, or the instituted \_\_\_\_\_ Council of \_\_\_\_\_, located in the municipality of \_\_\_\_\_, Province of \_\_\_\_\_, Canada, to act and vote on my behalf on any matter identified in the Notice of Meeting and on any other matter properly presented at the Meeting scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_.

Name of the person who is being represented by proxy \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_ Title

\_\_\_\_\_ Conference/Council

\_\_\_\_\_ Date (month/day/year)

**Note: Please cross out words which do not apply to the affiliation of the appointee. A designated voting delegate may not hold more than one proxy letter.**

## ELECTION OF A PRESIDENT

This information relates to the relevant sections of the Canadian Statutes about the election and responsibilities of presidents at all levels of the Society.

### 1.1 NOMINATION FORM

This is a generic form to be filled out by candidates and nominators for the election of a president of a conference or council. The required number of nominators for each nomination increases with the level of responsibilities and the geographic area of a jurisdiction. All nominators shall be full members of the Society within the jurisdiction for which an election is held. Only members of aggregated conferences and instituted councils are eligible as candidates or nominators.

The number of nominators is as follows:

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| <b>Conferences:</b>                     | <b>2 nominators</b> |
| <b>Particular and central councils:</b> | <b>3 nominators</b> |
| <b>Regional councils:</b>               | <b>4 nominators</b> |
| <b>National council:</b>                | <b>5 nominators</b> |

## **1.2 QUALIFICATIONS**

Candidates for the election for president, at all levels, shall meet a number of requirements and should possess certain desirable qualities and skills.

### **1.2.1 Requirements**

A candidate must be:

- a full member of the Society;
- a practicing Catholic;
- a volunteer, which means that he or she does not hold any paid position within the Society, including a position in any of the special works.

### **1.2.2 Desirable qualities and skills**

Each section of the Canadian Statutes dealing with the duties of the president at the different levels provides guidance concerning the basic qualities and skills required for a member to assume the responsibilities of a president.

#### ***1.2.2.1 Qualities***

A candidate must have:

- a deep attachment to the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* and spirituality of the Society;

- great dedication to the spiritual and temporal welfare of persons in need;
- experience in the service of persons in need, particularly in relation to home visits;
- a personal interest in social issues;
- the ability to lead by consensus whenever possible;
- good communication and listening skills;
- sound judgement.

#### ***1.2.2.2 Other Skills***

The candidate should also possess:

- knowledge and appreciation of financial matters, such as budgeting;
- experience in organizing and chairing meetings and committees;
- experience in fundraising.

NOMINATION FORM FOR  
THE ELECTION OF A PRESIDENT  
SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT  
DE PAUL

We, the undersigned, nominate

\_\_\_\_\_, (print name)

a full member of the Aggregated Conference or Instituted Council,

\_\_\_\_\_,

for the position of President of the Conference of \_\_\_\_\_,

or the \_\_\_\_\_,

Council of \_\_\_\_\_.

I accept the nomination \_\_\_\_\_ (signature),

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2 \_\_\_\_\_.

## NOMINATORS

1.

---

print name

---

signature

---

name of conference or council

2.

---

print name

---

signature

---

name of conference or council

3.

---

print name

---

signature

---

name of conference or council

4.

---

print name

---

signature

---

name of conference or council

5.

---

print name

---

signature

---

name of conference or council

## INSTALLATION CEREMONY FOR A PRESIDENT DURING MASS

The installation takes place following the Creed. The Past President and the President-Elect stand before the Celebrant.

The Past President goes to the microphone and introduces the Society and the President-Elect to the Celebrant and the Congregation as follows:

**Past President:** The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is an international Catholic charitable organization of lay people, founded in 1833 by Frédéric Ozanam and his companions. It is made up of conferences and councils, the members and the presidents of which are at the service of those in need.

Presidents:

- are responsible for ensuring that the spirit and the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* of the Society are observed in all activities;
- guide and assist members in their personal service to others;
- are the necessary link with other conferences and councils by their attendance at meetings;
- cooperate with other organizations as the official representatives of the Society;

- direct the preparation of reports and see that they are sent to the higher levels of the Society for recording.

The office of President is a responsibility, not an honour.

\_\_\_\_\_ has been elected President of \_\_\_\_\_.

Father (or Your Grace), I present to you \_\_\_\_\_.

## PRESENTATION OF THE CANDLE

**Priest:** \_\_\_\_\_, receive this light, may it be a sign of the light and joy which the charity of Christ brings to those in need.

## PRESENTATION OF THE CANADIAN RULE AND STATUTES

**Priest:** \_\_\_\_\_, receive the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. May your observance of the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* and your dedication to its spirit bring blessings to you, to the members of the Society and to the whole Church.

## EXPRESSION OF COMMITMENT

**Priest:** \_\_\_\_\_, you have received the light and the Canadian *Rule and Statutes*. Are you willing to commit yourself to spreading this light and encouraging the observance of the Canadian Rule and

Statutes in order to bring relief to those in need, to foster holiness in your fellow members and yourself and to bear witness to the greater glory of God?

**President:** Yes, I am willing to make this commitment.

## INSTALLATION

**Priest:** \_\_\_\_\_,  
you are hereby installed as President of \_\_\_\_\_  
Conference (or Council) of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. May God bless you and may God's work prosper.

## PRAYER

**Priest:** *Let us pray,*

*Holy and everliving God, your providence reveals the glory of your name and your works to us. Look with love on all the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and guide them in their good works, lead them to holiness and prepare them for eternal life. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.*

**All:** Amen.

## INSTALLATION CEREMONY FOR A PRESIDENT WITHOUT A MASS

This brief ceremony may be used for installing a new president without a Mass. It may take place at a meeting of the conference or council. If the spiritual advisor is not present, the past president or another officer will assume the role of leader for the installation.

### OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*

**All:** *Amen.*

**Leader:** *Holy and everliving God, through the lives and works of Saint Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, you have taught us to follow your example in caring for those in need. Look now with love on this Society and bless the work we do in your name. We ask this through Christ our Lord who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.*

### SUGGESTED READINGS

**1st reading:** Eph. 4:1-7, 11-13, or Rom. 12:3-13, or Psalm 16, or Psalm 23

**Gospel:** Luke 4:16-24, or John 21:15-17

## **HOMILY OR REFLECTION**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE PRESIDENT**

The past president (or another officer if the past president is the leader) presents the president for installation with these or similar words:

The members of \_\_\_\_\_

Conference/Council have carefully chosen \_\_\_\_\_

to be their new president. The members of this conference/ council, relying on the help of the Holy Spirit, ask you to install him/her as president.

The past president (or the other officer) passes candles, then a copy of the Rule to the leader.

### **PRESENTATION OF THE CANDLE**

**Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_,

receive this light. May it be a sign of the light and joy which the charity of Christ brings to those in need.

### **PRESENTATION OF THE CANADIAN RULE AND STATUTES**

**Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_,

receive the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. May your observance of the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* and your dedication to its spirit bring blessings to you, to the members of the Society and to the whole Church.

## EXPRESSION OF COMMITMENT

**Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_,

you have received the light and the Canadian *Rule and Statutes*. Are you willing to commit yourself to spreading this light and encouraging the observance of the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* in order to bring relief to those in need, to foster holiness in your fellow members and yourself and to bear witness to the greater glory of God?

**President:** Yes, I am willing to make this commitment.

## INSTALLATION

**Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_,

you are hereby installed as president of the \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, Conference/Council of the Society of

Saint Vincent de Paul. May God bless you and may God's work prosper.

## RITE OF PEACE

**Leader:** Let us share with one another a sign of the peace of Christ.

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** *Let us pray,*

*Holy and everliving God, your providence reveals the glory of your name and your work to us. Look with love on all the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, guide us in our good work, lead us to holiness, and prepare us for eternal life. We ask this through Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.*

**All:** *Amen.*

## INSTALLATION CEREMONY FOR A NEW MEMBER

After at least six months in the Society, new members may take part in a Commissioning Ceremony to express their commitment to the spiritual dimension of membership. The ceremony may be conducted during a Mass, or at a conference meeting, with other members present. The Conference President and the Spiritual Advisor (or a Priest) preside over the Ceremony. During Mass, the ceremony takes place following the Creed.

### COMMISSIONING AT A CELEBRATION OF MASS

**Priest:** The needs of the Church are many and varied, but God shows his goodness by sending people to bear witness to his love in the community. Today we will be asking God to bless our brothers and sisters (as applicable) who have declared their willingness to serve the Church as full members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

**Conference President:** This is a very significant occasion for the Society.

---

has (have) been welcomed among us for some months, and has (have) now expressed a desire to make a formal commitment to membership and its spiritual dimension. In Christ's name, we are gathered together to commission our brothers and sisters as committed new members, to be channels of peace, hope, love and practical help to persons in need.

---

## PRESENTATION OF THE CANDLE

**Priest:** \_\_\_\_\_,

receive this light, may it be a sign of the light and joy, which the Charity of Christ brings to those in need.

## PRESENTATION OF THE CANADIAN RULE AND STATUTES

**Priest:** \_\_\_\_\_,

receive the *Canadian Rule and Statutes* of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. May your observance of the *Canadian Rule and Statutes* and your dedication to its spirit bring blessings to you, to the other members of the Society and the whole Church.

**Priest:** \_\_\_\_\_,

you have received the light and the *Canadian Rule and Statutes*. Are you willing to commit yourself to spreading this light and encouraging the observance of the *Canadian Rule and Statutes* in order to bring relief to those in need, to foster holiness in your fellow members and yourself and to bear witness to the greater glory to God?

**Each New Member:** Yes, I am willing to make this commitment.

**Priest:** *Holy and everliving God, your providence reveals the glory of your name and your works to us. Look with love on the new members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, guide them in their good works, lead them to holiness and prepare them for eternal life. We ask this through Christ Our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.*

**All:** Amen.

End of Ceremony.

#### COMMISSIONING AT A CONFERENCE MEETING

The same ceremony is held at the beginning of the meeting, presided over by the Spiritual Advisor and the Conference President. If the Spiritual Advisor is not present, the past President or another officer, and the Conference President may lead the ceremony.

## MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR DECEASED VINCENTIANS

**Leader:** *Let us continue in the Father's name and call on the Holy Spirit to be with us in the name of Jesus.*

**All:** *Amen.*

**Leader:** *We are gathered today as a Vincentian family to honour the memory of our Vincentian brothers and sisters who have passed from this life to rest in the arms of the Lord.*

*In our world today, the Church needs enlightened and faithful servants of Saint Vincent de Paul. Vincentians are called to befriend persons in need, thus discovering Christ in their midst.*

*Today we recall the service of our deceased Vincentians and their work and service to persons in need. We pray that God our Father, who is our strength, has opened His arms wide and has joyously welcomed them into the fullness of life.*

**Song:** *On Eagle's Wings (or hymn of choice)*

**Proclaimer:** *Isaiah 49:13-18*

**Leader:** *Heavenly and merciful Father, hear our prayers on behalf of your faithful servants whom you have called into the light of your presence. May they be joyously welcomed into your loving, caressing arms. We ask this through Christ our Lord and Redeemer.*

**All:** *Amen.*

**Leader:** *God our Father is the glory and joy of each of our departed members whose memory we celebrate today.*

Each conference or council honouring a deceased member comes to light a candle as a light to the rest of us. Please call each Vincentian by name.

**Leader:** *Compassionate God, Saint Vincent de Paul, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and Mary our mother gave of themselves. These are our heavenly mentors.*

*They are blessed and so are our Vincentians who spent their lives serving persons in need and proclaiming your greatness. We thank you for allowing them to be in our lives and we thank you for giving us life through the death and resurrection of Jesus.*

**All:** *Amen.*

**Leader:** *Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.*

**All:** *And may perpetual light shine upon them.*

**Leader:** *May they rest in peace.*

**All:** *Amen.*

## PRAYERS FOR VARIOUS OCCASIONS

The secret is to “tune in to God” as often as you can throughout each day. Things and people around you will help. See something beautiful and think of God, thanking Him for His creation. See people and see Christ in them, marvel at His goodness, treat them as you would treat Him, and thank God for another reflection of His glory. Situations will arise when prayer comes easily: in trouble, in temptation, in a difficult situation. PRAY for this almost constant awareness of the presence of God around you - then you will pray hundreds of times each day.

### PRAYER FOR THE POPE

*Lord Jesus, cover with the protection of Your Divine Heart our Holy Father the Pope. Be to him Light, Strength and Consolation.*

*V. O Mary! Help of Christians.*

*R. Pray for him.*

*V. Saint Joseph! Patron of the Universal Church.*

*R. Pray for him.*

## **PRAYER FOR HOSPITAL VISITATION**

*O Lord, best sufferer of all time, help me understand the sufferings I am about to witness around me. Teach me to offer the help most needed, to say the right things, to sympathize and console, to strengthen and encourage, to say the word of comfort and cheer. Teach me to spread Your love in this place of sickness, to listen to suffering, to explain suffering, to reassure and turn pessimism to optimism, to see You in suffering humanity, You crucified, You at Your best, You at Your strongest. These are poor souls, yet privileged and noble souls; these are called to imitate You more intimately. These are Your special friends. Give me strength to pass on some strength to them. Use me as the instrument of Your love, and enrich and ennable me through contact with those who share Your cross. Sword-pierced Mary, tender and understanding Mother, be with me as I try to give myself to your suffering children. Amen.*

## **PRAYER FOR HOME VISITATION**

*O God, someone in this house needs me. I don't know how I will be received, but I go as Your ambassador, however unworthy and weak I am myself. Give me Your power to help in the best way possible, offering what is needed, giving the proper advice, saying the right thing. I am Your servant and the servant of anyone who needs me. I am weak - You can make me strong. I am tongue-tied - You can supply my words. I lack courage - You give me confidence. I am perplexed - You can give me the answer. I am useless - You can make me useful. Above all, make me recognize You in these people, and seeing You, let me love them as I love You. They need Your love, they need my love, let us love them together. I will do my best: be with me in what is Your work, and mine. Kind, gentle, understanding Saint Vincent de Paul, inspire me in all my dealings with the needy whom you knew, understood and loved so much. Amen.*

## **PRAYER FOR PRISON VISITATION**

*Lord, You fell three times under the cross, but You got up three times; teach me to help prisoners to rise up again! I may never have been in prison, Lord, but I often wonder what I have done to merit the freedom I have. At least I have something in common with the prisoners because I too have often yielded to temptation. Give me the light to see the dignity in each human being, even in those men and women who have lost the esteem of others. Give me the wisdom to comfort, to counsel and console without seeming self-righteous or patronizing. Help me, Lord, to be genuine and sincere, to be understanding and humble. If I can help, show me how. If I cannot help, at least I can befriend. If I cannot befriend, at least I can show I care. No matter how I am received, even with cynicism and resentment, give me the strength and courage to bring you closer to those men and women who need you in their loneliness. Amen.*

## **PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE**

*Direct, O Lord, our actions by Your holy inspiration, and carry them on by Your gracious assistance; that every prayer and work of ours may begin always from You, and by You be happily ended. This we ask through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.*

## PRAYER OF OFFERING

**LORD JESUS,**

*I give You my hands to do Your work,  
I give You my feet to go Your way,  
I give You my eyes to see as You do,  
I give You my tongue to speak Your words,  
I give You my mind that You may think in me,  
Above all, I give You my heart,  
that You may love in me Your Father and all mankind.  
I give You my whole self that You may grow in me,  
so that it is You, Lord Jesus,  
who work and live and pray in me. Amen.*

## PRAYER IN SICKNESS

*Dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I hold up all my weakness to Your strength,  
my failure to Your faithfulness, my sinfulness to Your perfection, my loneliness to  
Your compassion, my little pains to Your great agony on the cross. I know that  
You will cleanse me, strengthen me, guide me, so that in all ways my life may be  
lived as You would have it lived, without cowardice and for You alone. Show me  
how to live in true humility, true contrition and true love. Amen.*

## THOUGHTS FOR MEDITATION

### **Saint Vincent de Paul**

*Our Lord is in perpetual spiritual communion with the soul that does His will. The paradise of earth, like that of heaven, consists of charity. Do you wish to find God? He speaks to the simple. He assists them and blesses their labours. The soul filled with charity is a sanctuary where God delights to dwell. Teach me, O my saviour, by both Your grace and Your example, to be truly humble of heart. Those who have loved the poor during life shall meet the approach of death without fear.*

### **Saint Louise de Marillac**

*God communicates Himself more fully with the soul deprived of human consolation. The poor stretch out their hands to us, but it is God who receives what we give to them. Remove all obstacles to interior peace, and then await in patience the visit of Jesus.*

## COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

### WHEN

Any date is suitable for this annual ceremony. However, the beginning of the year or any of the Vincentian feast days is especially recommended. The commissioning is only for full members who have been active members of a conference for at least six months. It is a renewal of members' commitment to serve those in need in the spirit of Christ and of the Society.

The ceremony may also be held during a meeting of the Society. Ideally, it should be led by the spiritual advisor, another priest or a deacon, who has a very close connection to the conference, although the actual commissioning is proclaimed by the conference president, because Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay society. If no member of the clergy is available, a member other than the president may read the words attributed to the spiritual advisor.

If the commissioning takes place during a Mass for the Society, it should take place just before the offertory. The ceremony should not be celebrated during a regular parish Mass, as this is not in keeping with the humility of the Society.

## **MATERIAL NEEDED**

All the members of the conference should be informed well in advance which meeting or Mass will include the commissioning ceremony for active members.

Required are:

- a copy of the text for the ceremony for the spiritual advisor (priest) and for each member,
- either a candle for every member or one candle to be passed to the newest or youngest member to hold on behalf of all the members,
- matches,
- a copy of the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* of the Society.

## **THE CEREMONY**

Abbreviations

|     |                            |
|-----|----------------------------|
| SA: | Spiritual advisor (priest) |
| CP: | Conference president       |
| M:  | Member(s)                  |

## **INTRODUCTORY RITES**

**SA:** *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

**ALL:** *Amen.*

Using the following, or similar words, the SA prepares those present.

**SA:** *God shows His goodness by sending people to bear witness to His love in the community. Today we will be asking God to bless our brothers and sisters who have declared their willingness to continue serving the Church as full members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.*

### **THE VINCENTIAN PROMISE AND PRAYER**

All stand. The SA says:

**SA:** *I invite you to make the Vincentian promise:*

**A vocation to bear witness to Christ's love**

**SA:** *In response to the call of Christ who invites you to follow Him, do you promise to bear witness to his compassionate and boundless love for the poor, the lonely, the suffering and deprived, those without faith and those who feel unloved?*

**M:** *I do.*

**Vincentian friendship and mutual enrichment**

**SA:** *Do you firmly resolve to treasure the warm friendship and unity which from the beginning has been a hallmark of our Society?*

**M:** *I do. Grant me, Lord, the grace to grow in humility, and to serve in hope, as the light of faith and the flame of love are kindled among us.*

Members light one another's candles or the president lights one candle and gives it to the newest member, who represents the members as a whole. All members still respond together.

**SA:** *Receive the light of Christ, which illuminates the path to those who are troubled.*

Vincentian love for those in need (see Mt 12:20, describing Jesus)

**SA:** *Do you promise to seek and find those who are forgotten and to devote yourselves generously to the personal service of the poor?*

**M:** *I do. Help me, Lord, to be sensitive to their vulnerability, and never to break the crushed reed of the broken-hearted, nor to quench the smouldering embers of human dignity and faith.*

**SA:** *Do you promise to respect and not to judge, to empower and not to impose, and most of all, to try to understand the deeper needs of those you serve?*

**M:** *I do. Help me, Lord, to sow seeds of faith and hope, and to bring comfort and solace, aware that a smile is the sunshine of Your love.*

## Commitment to social justice

**SA:** *Do you promise to support the Society's modest work for social justice, and to help build a civilization of love and a culture of life?*

**M:** *I do.*

## Our frailty and need for inspiration and support

**SA:** *Do you promise to persevere in regarding your visits as a sacred trust to be carried out faithfully each week, in the name of Christ, so far as family and other duties permit?*

**M:** *I do, but I know the depths of my own needs, my frailty and failings. Lord, make me ever more aware of the blessings I receive from those I visit, and of my need for the support of my Vincentian brothers and sisters. Never let me forget that whatever good I do comes from You and You alone. Amen.*

## THE BLESSING OF THE CANADIAN RULE AND STATUTES: LOYALTY TO THE CANADIAN RULE AND STATUTES

The president of the conference holds the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* with outstretched hand for the SA to bless.

**SA:** *Let us pray:*  
*O God, by whose word all things are made holy, pour down your blessing upon this Canadian Rule and Statutes of the Society, and grant that those who read it with a receptive mind, in the light of the Gospels and with the help of the Holy Spirit, may come to know Jesus better, to see with His eyes and love with His heart. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## PRAYER OF BLESSING

The SA says the prayer of blessing, with hands outstretched over the members.

**SA:** *Lord God, our Father, bless all our members as they renew their commitment to membership of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. May the Holy Spirit strengthen their resolve, fill their hearts with joy, an ever more vibrant faith and an ever deeper love for You. Bless also all auxiliaries, benefactors, all their families and those whom the conference is privileged to visit. We ask this through Christ our Lord.*

**ALL:** *Amen.*

## COMMISSIONING

The conference president says:

**CP:** *In the spirit of Jesus,  
and in the name of our Patron, Saint Vincent de Paul,  
and our principal founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam,  
I renew the commission of all the full members of the  
conference  
“to go to the poor with love”  
and share their burdens and joys as true friends,  
with the help of God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy  
Spirit.*

**ALL:** *Amen.*

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE REVIEW MEETING

### SUGGESTED AGENDA

Conferences may adopt the suggested agenda or develop one they feel is more appropriate for their needs.

### MEETINGS AND ADMINISTRATION

- Is the meeting weekly and at the best time and on the best day for members?
- Is the meeting too long or too short? (Complex projects could be discussed first by the board (key officers) or by a small sub-committee, to save time in the conference meeting).
- Are essential records in place, such as names, addresses and phone numbers of members (with copies to each member), names and addresses of families or individuals visited (kept most confidentially), minutes, treasurer's records, a conference diary so that there are reminders of key Vincentian meetings and events and of the birthdays of those we visit?

- Is a record of visits made, which enables the conference to be aware if someone has been overlooked, with a total each week of the visits in each category required, for the secretary's annual report?

## **VISITS**

- Is the discussion about the visits adequate?
- Do members have the right attitude towards those in need?  
(See *Canadian Rule and Statutes 1.1*)
- Does the conference actively seek and find those in need?  
(See Appendix 5.9 and International Rule 1.5)

## **SPIRITUALITY**

- Is there a spiritual advisor?
- Is sharing of opinions always invited after the spiritual reading?
- Are the prayers said slowly and reflectively?
- Do we feel and act like a spiritual community?

## **UNITY**

- How much harmony and friendship (or friction) is there within the conference?
- Are decisions reached by consensus (or, if necessary, by vote)?
- Is enough help provided to the president?

## **COMMITMENT**

- Is there an adequate sense of commitment to attend the meetings and to carry out the allocated visits or tasks?
- How comfortable do we feel with the degree of our commitment towards the poor and the Church?
- Are the contributions to the secret collection a meaningful sacrifice?

## **RECRUITMENT**

- Is enough being done to recruit new members (including the young and those from various ethnic groups)?
- Does the timing of the meeting make recruitment difficult?
- Are we aware that if the conference does not grow, it is giving the impression that it is not fully alive?

## **LINKS**

- Is the conference isolated or involved?
- How many particular council meetings were attended in the last year by the president, or by the vice-president in the absence of the president?
- Could feedback from the area council meetings be significantly improved?
- Is there a good attendance at festival meetings, retreat days, etc.?
- What kind of annual report to the parish would be the most useful?
- Is the conference twinned?
- Does the conference receive sufficient copies of the Society's newsletter?

- Does the conference ever submit interesting items for publication in the Society's newsletter?
- Have members attended the available training and formation sessions?
- Do members have their own copies of the main document provided to assist them? (This may be the Operations Manual, the Canadian *Rule and Statutes* book, etc.)

## ANNUAL COUNCIL REVIEW MEETING

### SUGGESTED AGENDA

Councils may adopt the suggested agenda or develop one they feel is more appropriate for their needs.

### MEETING AND ADMINISTRATION

- What is the approximate average attendance/absences by conferences?
- Is the meeting held at the correct frequency, and at the best time and on the best day for the voting members?
- Is the meeting too long or too short?
- Is the location the most convenient? Would there be an advantage to holding it in different parishes within the area, inviting all local conference members to attend?
- Is there any other way to achieve nearly 100% attendance?
- Are essential records in place, such as names, mailing and email addresses and phone numbers of voting members (with copies for each member), minutes, treasurer's records, a council diary so that there are reminders of key Vincentian meetings and events and other relevant community events?
- Is the current written agenda the most appropriate for this council? Are the matters on which the council spends the most time of significant interest to the conferences?

- Annual reports: How can we better support conference treasurers and secretaries to ensure they produce those reports on time?
- What are the most interesting points that have emerged from the analysis of the annual reports? Has this been mentioned to the next higher council?

## **SPIRITUALITY**

- Is there a spiritual advisor?
- Is sharing of opinions always invited after the spiritual reading?
- Are the prayers said slowly and reflectively?

## **UNITY**

- How much harmony and friendship (or friction) is there within the council?
- Are decisions reached by consensus (or, if necessary, by vote)?
- Is enough help provided to the president and other officers of the council?

## **COMMITMENT**

- Is there an adequate sense of commitment to attend the meetings and to carry out the allocated tasks?
- Do conference vice-presidents (or other representatives) attend when the conference president cannot?

## **LINKS**

- Does the president or vice-president always attend the meeting of the next higher council?
- How can the feedback from that council to the particular council and conferences be improved?
- How can we ensure that the conference members receive adequate feedback on the key results of the particular council meeting?
- Are there any interesting aspects of the council's work worth writing up for the Society's newsletter?

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