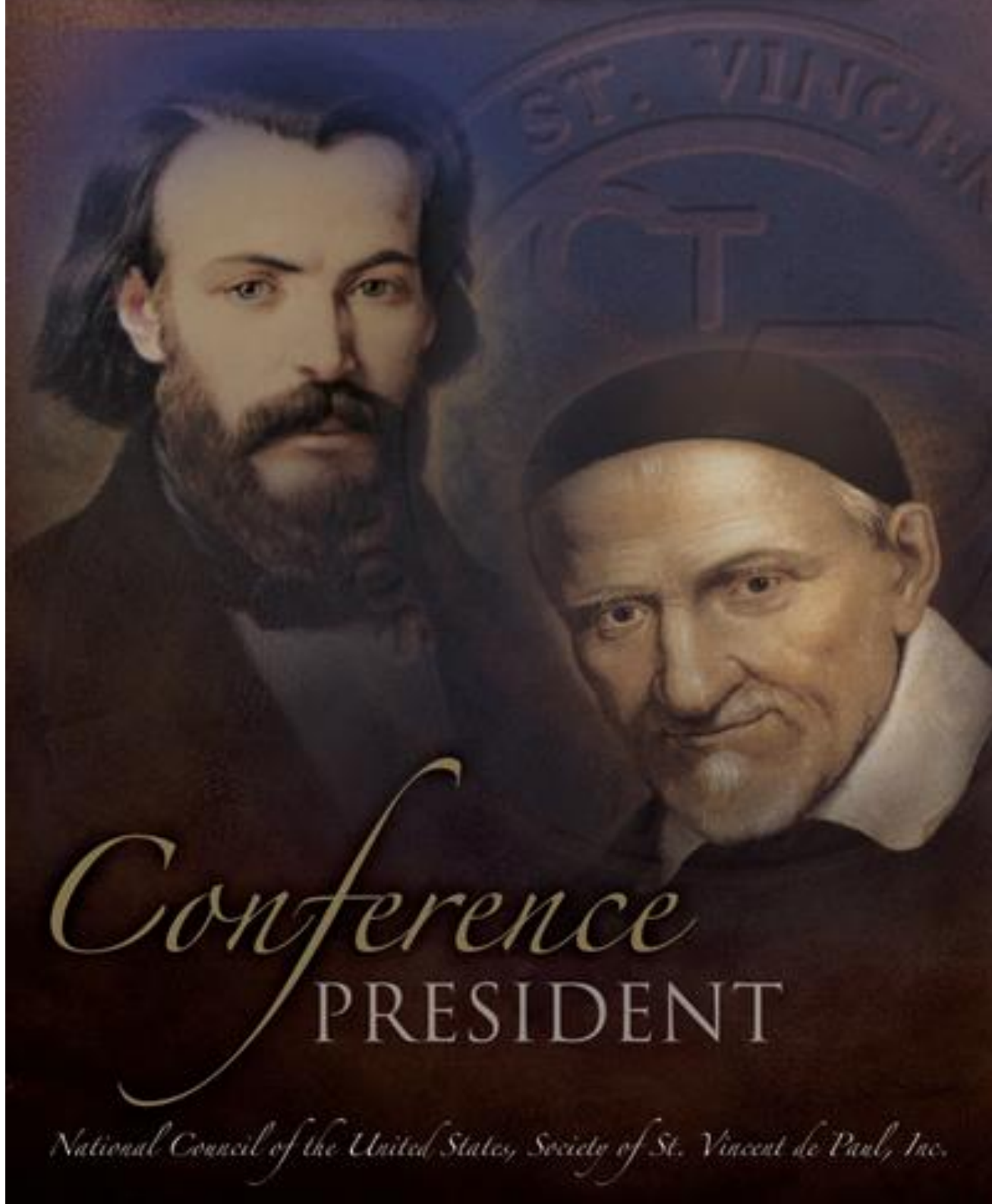


VINCENTIAN LEADERSHIP



Conference
PRESIDENT

National Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc.



The Vincentian Vocation

Rule 1.2

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.

IN GRATITUDE TO:

Governance Committee:

Tom Fahl, Chair
Roger Playwin
John Berry
Mike Syslo
Pam Hudson Johnson
Ralph Middlecamp
Dave Barringer
Sheila Gilbert
Joe Riley
Ron Meyer
Roz Gutierrez

Leadership Task Force Members:

Ray Sickinger, Chair
Kathy Iberle
Marty Cormack
Amanda Stricklin
Bill Soucie



SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
GUIDELINES
FOR
CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

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I: INTRODUCTION

Servant Leadership Positions

(Rule: Part 3, Statute 12)

For a specific period of time the Society chooses qualified members for the various Council and Conference leadership positions who will carry out their tasks with the same dedication with which they work within their own Conference.

It is important that officers, at all levels participate regularly in meetings and charitable activities of the Society and visit the poor as often as possible.

The term of office for President is three years, once renewable. Once a President has served for two consecutive three-year terms, that person will not be eligible for re-election as President until a three-year term has elapsed under a different President.

The Rule states: “Leadership positions in the Society, at any level, are always to be accepted as service to Christ, the members, and the poor. Servant leadership is done in imitation of Jesus who said: ‘For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mk 10:45)” (Rule Part 3, Statute 11). Therefore, successful SVDP leadership is indeed based upon a deep Vincentian spirituality.

These pages touch upon many aspects of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul organization at the "basic unit" or Conference level. The principal focus is to assist a new president in knowing the Society and his/her responsibilities as a Conference leader. A related purpose is to encourage members to accept the burdens of office when called to such duties by Conference members. Periodic changes in presidential direction are healthy and desirable. The SVDP Conference presidency is not a matter of personal aggrandizement but the sign of deepening commitment to the Society.

It is important to remember that “All decisions made by a Conference or Council must be made consistent with the Rule and Statutes of the Society, Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and governance policies of the Society.” (Rule: Part 3, Statute 16.)

It is also important to emphasize that ALL officers at all levels of the Society must “visit the poor as often as possible.” The ministry of the Society is to serve those who are in need. It is a natural expectation that Conference and Council leadership

THE SEVEN DUTIES

of an
Effective and Responsible Conference President
by Ray Sickinger

- **1st Duty: COMMITMENT**

A Conference President must make a solemn **commitment** to:

- grow in understanding and live out the Vincentian charism.
- attend the regularly scheduled meetings of the District Council.
- be adequately prepared to vote on the issues and policies that will be discussed.
- share ideas and concerns.
- serve no longer than two consecutive three-year terms before stepping down from that role so that new leadership might take over.
- support the mission of the Society.
- foster the spirituality of the Society.

- **2nd Duty: COMPREHENSION**

A Conference President must **comprehend** :

- the Rule of the Society and its applications.
- the essential structure, operations, and functions of each unit of the Society.
- the life and spiritual legacy of our Patron, St. Vincent de Paul, and the role of St. Louise de Marillac.
- the life and spiritual legacy of our founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and the role of Blessed Rosalie Rendu.

- **3rd Duty: COMMUNICATION**

A Conference President must **communicate effectively** in order to:

- share information about issues, decisions, and policies with their Conference members in a timely fashion.
- express in appropriate ways and through appropriate channels any concerns, issues, and ideas important to their Conferences.
- remain informed about national, regional, district, and local issues.

• **4th Duty: CULTIVATION**

A Conference President must **cultivate members** through formation by:

- developing members both new and old (through Ozanam Orientations, Days of Recollection, Retreats, Serving in Hope Modules, etc.)
- finding, training, and encouraging Spiritual Advisors.
- Increasing and encouraging both active and associate membership in the Conference.
- encouraging the establishment of a Voice of the Poor Committee.
- cooperating in the implementation of the National Strategic Plan.
- Providing training and other formation that helps all members understand and address the root causes of poverty. It is important for members of the Society to understand why those living in poverty act and react the way they do. Educational programs, such as those designed by Ruby Payne and Donna Beegle, are being used within the Society to help our Vincentians to better understand those they work with. This training helps eliminate many false stereotypes.
- developing processes that encourage Systemic Change (learn more on this below).

• **5th Duty: COLLABORATION**

A Conference President must **collaborate** with:

- other Conferences in the local area, the state, the region, in the United States or abroad (especially through formal Twinning arrangements).
- other members of the Vincentian Family.
- Other individuals and non-profit organizations, both secular and religious.
- the pastor and keep him informed about the work of the Society.

• **6th Duty: CHAIRPERSON**

As the **Chairperson**, the Conference President must:

- conduct regular, orderly meetings of the Conference.
- delegate duties in a reasonable manner.
- make appropriate appointments of officers and committee members to the Conference.
- facilitate and participate in discussions. Our Rule clearly indicates that “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 (Rule Part I, 3.10)” If a vote does occur, normally the Conference President would cast one vote only in the case of a tie.

• 7th Duty: CONTRIBUTIONS/COMPLIANCE
--

A Conference President oversees **contributions** to and compliance with the National Council, Local Councils, and the Region in order to:

- ensure that solidarity contributions are paid in a timely manner (when applicable).
- assure that the Conference submits annual reports on time, providing a complete accounting of all actions and income.
- Provide for a safe environment. Based on the concern of each diocese that children and vulnerable adults be safeguarded, the Society’s National Council has passed a Resolution calling for all Councils and Conferences in the United States to follow the rules established within their dioceses for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. These programs are called by various names throughout the country but are easily identifiable. The key component is that Vincentians follow the rules of the diocese in these matters, unless otherwise directed by the US National Council.
- be alert to the following issues of compliance/accountability:
 1. Does the treasurer provide a written financial report to the members present at each meeting?
 2. Does the Conference have a bank account separate from the parish? Are there appropriate signatories on the bank account(s)? The National Office has a treasurer's manual that may prove to be helpful.
 3. Does the Conference have its own 501(c)3 or is it covered under the Council 501(c)3?
 4. Are complete, accurate, confidential records for every person helped kept, updated regularly, placed in a safe, central location, and made available to the active members of the Conference?
 5. Has a complete list of local resources and contact people to aid in cases been prepared and maintained by the Conference?
 6. Has the Conference explored the need for insurance coverage?
 7. Does the Conference conduct appropriate and timely audits or financial reviews?
 8. Is there a need to file a form 990 with the IRS?
 9. Are there appropriate Bylaws? (The National Council Office has approved Bylaws that can easily be modified)

II. SVDP ORGANIZATION

Councils

(Rule: Part 1, 3.6)

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.

Conference

The Conference is the basic unit, "the grass roots" of Vincentian organization. It constitutes the heart of Vincentian life and charitable service. It is within the Conference setting that the members work as a unit and it is through that unity that service to those in need naturally grows. What is delineated in the Rule of the Society is a Vincentian way of life – a spirituality that develops both fellowship and service. Most of the Conferences in the United States are parish - centered, although other organizational units are allowed and can be recommended, e.g., School Conferences, Youth Conferences, University Conferences, Conferences of special interest groups, i.e. prisons, and Conferences that are organized around a Special Work such as a food bank or a thrift store.

District Council

District Councils keep individual Conferences in communication with each other and united in spirit. They embrace Conferences from the same city or county or other appropriate geographical division. District Councils represent a minimum of three and ideally a maximum of twelve Conferences in a diocese or Archdiocese.

Diocesan Council/Archdiocesan Council

A Diocesan Council, or an Archdiocesan Council, unites the District Councils, providing liaison and communication links between them, the National Council, and the Bishop.

National Council

The National Council of the United States, exercises jurisdiction over the Society throughout this country. It is divided into 8 Regions

International Council

The International Council animates and coordinates the activities of the Society throughout the world. The International Council General alone can institute new SVDP Councils and aggregate (affiliate) new Conferences.

NOTES

SVDP ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

International Council

Paris, France

**The International Council General represents the world-wide Society
Over 150 Countries—5 Continents— Over 44,600 Conferences
and 800,000+ Members**

National Council of the United States St. Louis, MO

**The US is divided into 8 Regions to facilitate the work of the National Council. In
these regions there are 65,892 Active Members and 32,650 Associate Members for a
total membership of nearly 100,000**

(Arch)Diocesan Councils

Over 54 (Arch)Diocesan Councils unite and support the District Councils

District Councils

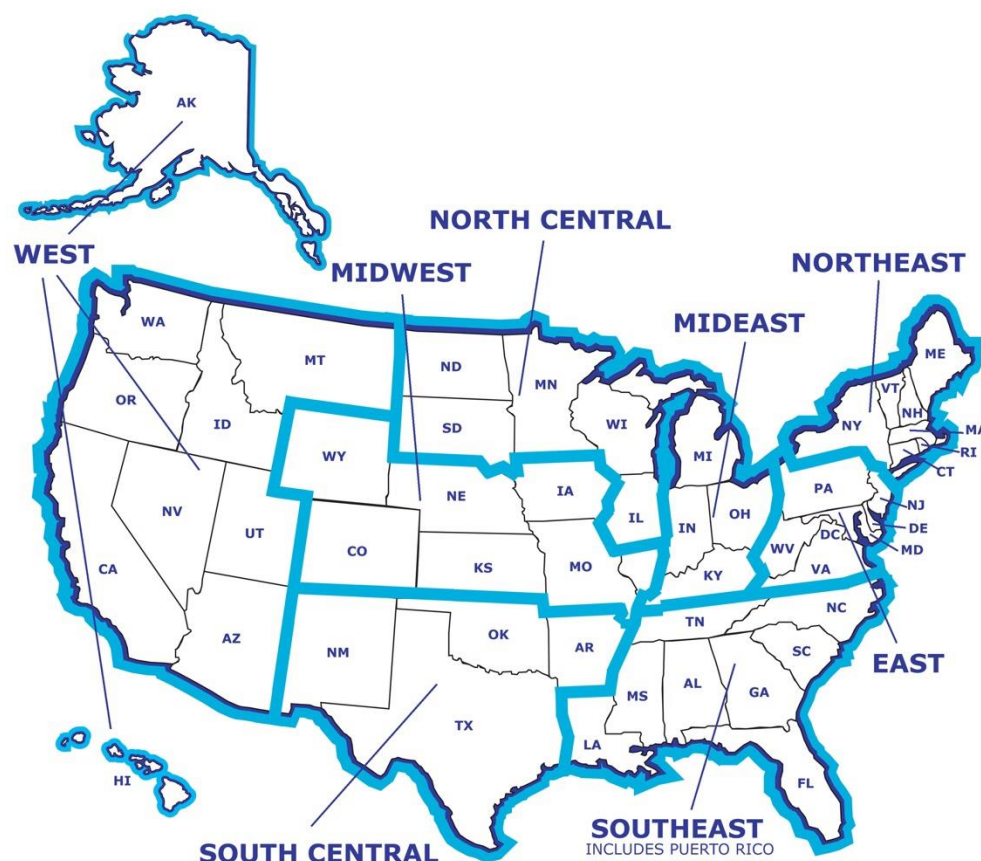
406 District Councils unite and support the Conferences

Conferences

4,441 Conferences, the basic unit of organization

December 2016

The Regional Structure



Eastern

Delaware
Maryland
New Jersey
Pennsylvania
Virginia
Washington DC
West Virginia

Southeastern

Alabama
Florida
Georgia
Louisiana
Mississippi
North Carolina
Puerto Rico
South Carolina
Tennessee

Northeastern

Connecticut
Maine
Massachusetts
New Hampshire
New York
Rhode Island
Vermont

Mideastern

Indiana
Kentucky
Michigan¹
Ohio

North Central

Illinois²
MI (Marquette)
Minnesota

North Dakota
South Dakota
Wisconsin

South Central

Arkansas
New Mexico
Oklahoma
Texas

Midwestern

Colorado
IL (Belleville and Springfield)
Iowa
Kansas
Missouri
Nebraska
Wyoming

Western

Alaska
Arizona
California
Hawaii
Idaho
Montana
Nevada
Oregon
Utah
Washington

¹excluding Marquette Diocese

²excluding Belleville and Springfield Dioceses

III. THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE SOCIETY

Servant Leadership

(Rule: Part I, 2.1)

“Vincentians are called to journey together towards 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.”

As a leader, the spirituality of the Society, as captured in our Mission and Identity Statements, Values, and Essential Elements, is now placed into your hands. It is also important for you to know and reflect on the lives of our Founders: St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac, Blessed Frederic Ozanam and Blessed Rosalie Rendu, so that you will know and understand the heart and soul of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It is then that you can inspire your members to become true Vincentians.

Our Mission Statement:

A network of friends, inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.

Our Identity Statement:

Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service, to those who are needy and suffering, in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

As a reflection of the whole family of God, members, who are known as Vincentians, are drawn from every ethnic and cultural background, age group and economic level. Vincentians are united in an international society of charity by their spirit of poverty, humility and sharing, which is nourished by prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings and adherence to a basic Rule.

Organized locally, Vincentians witness God’s love by embracing all works of charity and justice. The Society collaborates with other people of good will in relieving need and addressing its causes, making no distinction in those served because, in them, **Vincentians see the face of Christ.**

There are a few points in Our Identity Statement that should be emphasized:

- “leads men and women to join together:” The Society is an organization that started out in 1833 as an all-men organization, but eventually evolved into an organization of both men and women. There are men and women in all levels of leadership within the Society.
- “grow spiritually:” Of the three objectives of the Society (growth in holiness, community, and service), growth in holiness is the primary objective. Vincentians see this emphasis in all aspects of our Vincentian ministry.
- “tradition of its founder:” Blessed Frederic Ozanam along with six companions founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It is within the writings of Blessed Frederic and St. Vincent that Vincentians find the basis of our spirituality and focus of our work.
- “Vincentians, are drawn from every ethnic and cultural background, age group and economic level:” The invitation that we make to our fellow parishioners is to grow closer to God by helping our neighbors in need through the time of suffering that they are experiencing. It is an invitation from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to answer the call they are receiving from Our Lord. He has chosen us to be in this ministry.

Our Essential Elements:

HOLINESS OF LIFE

To bear witness to Christ and to His Church by showing that the faith of Christians inspires them to work for the good of humanity

FRIENDSHIP

To bring together men and women of good will and to assist them by mutual example and true friendship in drawing nearer to the Divine Model by fulfilling His essential precept, namely, the love of God in the person of others.

SERVICE TO THE POOR

To establish a personal contact between its members and those who suffer and to bring to the latter the most efficacious and charitable aid possible.

Our Cultural Beliefs:

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Grow in holiness through prayer, service, friendship and formation.

ONE SOCIETY

Contribute to the success of our Vincentian work when we support One Society.

SERVANT LEADERS

Develop ourselves and others to become Servant Leaders.

TODAY'S SOCIETY

Strengthen the Society by embracing new and diverse ideas and people.

EMBRACE ACCOUNTABILITY

Build a strong Society by holding each other accountable to our Mission, to the Essential Elements of the Society and to good Governance.

INCLUSIVE PLANNING

Foster ownership by involving all members in planning and decision making.

ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE

Advocate along with the poor, for just policies and practices at the local, state, and national levels.

OUR FOUNDERS: MODELS TO IMITATE



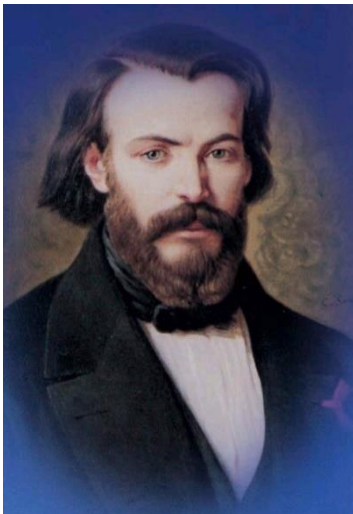
St. Vincent de Paul
(1581-1660)

Founder: Ladies of Charity 1617
Founder: Congregation of the Mission 1625
Co-Founder: Daughters of Charity 1633
Feast Day: September 27



St. Louise de Marillac
(1591-1660)

Co-Founder:
Daughters of Charity 1633
Feast Day: May 9



Frederic Ozanam
(1813-1853)

Principal Founder of the Society
of St. Vincent de Paul 1833
Beatified: August 22, 1997
Feast Day: September 9



Sr. Rosalie Rendu
(1786-1856)

Daughter of Charity
of St. Vincent de Paul
Beatified: November 9, 2003
Feast Day: February 7

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Vincent de Paul, "the Father of the Poor," had a life so varied and rich in the experience of charity that he has been the model for all kinds of good works within the Church. There were three foundations that would express his life work for the Poor. One was the Confraternity of Charity (Ladies of Charity) begun in 1617, which enlisted lay women in serving those in poverty in the parishes. The second was the Congregation of the Mission (priests and brothers), founded in 1625 with a mission to preach the gospel to those living in rural poverty and to form men for the priesthood. The third was in 1633, when Vincent co-founded with Louise de Marillac the Daughters of Charity, a community of women consecrated by vow to serve those in poverty.

ST. LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Louise de Marillac was a wife and widow, mother, teacher and co-founder of the Daughters of Charity. She took a small group of women and molded them into a community of total dedication of being "Given to God for the Service of the Poor." Louise trained the Sisters to read, to write, and to love and serve the poor in health care, social ministry, and education. Above all, she rooted the Daughters of Charity in the Vincentian spirituality of finding Jesus in the poor and the poor in Jesus, teaching them to be contemplatives in action.

Louise also organized, directed, and animated the Confraternities of Charity (Ladies of Charity). Louise was able to do this because she loved and hoped in God.

The presence of **Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac** filled the landscape of France. They addressed the needs of all kinds of people: refugees from the wars of religion, foundlings, beggars, galley slaves, and they sought to address the injustices that occasioned these conditions. Above all, they were champions of collaboration in apostolic service. They invited and made welcome everyone: cleric and lay, men and women, young and old, rich and poor into the mission of service. Their numbers are a witness that their all-embracing invitation is still being answered.

BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM

Frederic Ozanam was born in 1813, and so lived at a time when France was reeling from the aftershocks of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. These and other events had all but destroyed the fabric of the country. Materialism and secularism were rampant viruses. People were distancing themselves more and more from God and the Church. Individualism was becoming ingrained and the corporal and spiritual needs of the Poor were being neglected or ignored.

In the Providence of God, there emerged a man of faith, intelligence, and zeal, Frederic Ozanam. As a university student at the Sorbonne, Frederic helped to found the Conference of History. It was a kind of debating club formed to discuss historical and literary topics. The members would meet in the newspaper office of Emmanuel Bailly who became the facilitator of the meetings. It was at one of these meetings that Frederic and other Catholics were challenged to "Show us your works!" This pierced the heart of Frederic Ozanam, and so he told a friend that they needed another Conference, not for controversy or debate, but for the practice of charity. In April 1833, the Conference of Charity was born. It began with six students and Mr. Emmanuel Bailly as president and spiritual advisor.

BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU

Sister Rosalie Rendu, a well-known Daughter of Charity taught and mentored the first members of the Society to find the face of Christ in those they served, in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. She taught them to respect the dignity and personal worth of each of the people they visited. She guided them to go two by two to visit people in their homes in imitation of Jesus who sent the disciples two by two.

Sister Rosalie, together with Emmanuel Bailly, encouraged the founding members to name the Conference of Charity, the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, making him their patron. Frederic realized the need for a patron to inspire, motivate, and direct the membership. He said:

“To choose a patron does not mean simply adopting a figurehead which will help us cut a good figure in the religious world. He is a model whom we must imitate, as he has imitated the Divine Model, Jesus Christ.

It means carrying on the work he started, acquiring his warmth of heart, catching up the threads of thought which were in his brain. He provides a model for us to copy on earth and a protector who will watch over us from heaven.”

THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

The mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is like the mission of Jesus (Lk 4): to bring the good news to the poor, and to nurture life and hope where there is not much life and little hope. In the Vincentian spirit, it is not enough to bring the poor something to eat, but also to bring them God's love. Our Founders understood that Jesus calls us to love those who are poor, hungry, thirsty, naked, strangers, imprisoned and sick. They understood that Jesus identifies Himself with such as these (Mt 25: 35-40):

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me....Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

The foundation and establishment of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul by Frederic Ozanam in Paris got hundreds of lay people involved in active service to those in need. The Society offered the laity an opportunity to fulfill the dual mandate of Jesus: love God and love your neighbor.



Our Vincentian mission is indeed rooted in the virtues of charity and justice. Vincent said: “There is no charity that is not accompanied by justice.” And Frederic tells us: “Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveler who has been attacked. It is justice’s role to prevent the attacks.”

At Frederic Ozanam’s beatification ceremonies, August 22, 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II told the world that:

“Frederic observed the real situation of the poor and sought to be more and more effective in helping them in their human development. He understood that charity must lead to efforts to remedy justice. Charity and justice go together. Frederic had the clear-sighted courage to seek a front-line social and political commitment in a troubled time in the life of his country... So it is that we can see Frederic Ozanam as a pioneer of the social doctrine of the Church which Pope Leo XIII would develop some years later in the encyclical ‘Rerum Novarum.’” (On the Condition of the Working Classes). (Pope John Paul II, 1997)

Indeed, Frederic “envisioned the establishment of a network of charity and social justice encircling the world.” (Rule 2.4)

WORDS OF OUR FOUNDERS

“After the love of God, your principal concern must be to serve the poor with great gentleness and cordiality, sympathizing with them in their ailments and listening to their little complaints, for they look on you as people sent by God to help them. You are therefore intended to represent the goodness of God in the eyes of the poor.” **St. Vincent de Paul, 1657**

“As for your conduct toward the poor, may you never take the attitude of merely getting the task done. You must show them affection; serving them from the heart; inquiring of them what they might need; speaking to them gently and compassionately; procuring necessary help for them without being too bothersome or too eager.” **St. Louise de Marillac, 1647**

“Because you see Christ in his poor, I know you will approach each one you visit with humility as His servant. Always remember, that if we had been through the hardships they have had to meet —if our childhood had been one of constant want—perhaps, we too, would have given way to envy and hatred, as I must admit have many of the poor in this quarter. But be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you bring them.” **Blessed Rosalie Rendu, 1833**

“Knowledge of the poor and needy is not gained by pouring over books or in discussions with politicians, but by visiting the slums where they live, sitting by the bedside of the dying, feeling the cold they feel and learning from their lips the causes of their woes.” **Blessed Frederic Ozanam, 1845**

CHALLENGES

Through your leadership as a Conference President, you are an important part of the history of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Through your unselfish dedication to serve those in need you are continuing the "miracle" of spreading the Society throughout the United States. You will accomplish a great deal, but the challenges that remain are even greater. St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louis de Marillac have given us the mission and Blessed Frederic Ozanam and Blessed Rosalie Rendu the vision. It is our responsibility to carry on the works so well begun.

Today we are challenged in the same way. **We cannot wait for the poor to come to us.** We must be proactive. We need to “*seek and find the forgotten, the suffering, or the deprived*” so that we may bring them God’s love. This is our prayer at every Conference meeting.

In the years ahead the Society will remain firm in its purpose and will be called upon to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. We must become advocates where the cause is just. Vincentians through direct service to those who are poor have long been in a position to identify the causes that often result in poverty. Indeed, Vincentians are qualified to advocate for justice in addition to offering charity to those in need.

There are also challenges that we face internally within our Conferences and that Conference leadership must be prepared to deal with. Our Conference members are human and, as such, may not fully understand their roles within the Society. Guidance is needed. There will also be conflicts between members. The relationships that exist between members are both important and fragile. Remember that the second objective of the Society is fellowship (growth in community). It is the role of the President of the Conference to help form the members both in their roles within the Society and their relationships with each other.

Youth and Young Adults:

Pope John Paul II urges all of us to prepare for the Third Millennium with special emphasis on "active" care for those in need. It is as though he is speaking directly to us in the Society and to all the Vincentian Family in "Tertio Millennio Adveniente." His letter carries a special meaning for our youth since they are the future. He calls our young people "the hope of the Church". They are also the hope of the Society. Our Society members must consistently, and in an organized manner, at every level, offer youth a challenge to serve in the 21st century. It is a challenge we cannot ignore if we are to continue to bring new life and vitality to

our Society. The Society is blessed that ever-growing numbers of young people have found, in Society work, an opportunity to grow in God's love.

The Future:

What of the Society's hopes, plans and dreams as we walk into the future? We must make a sincere examination of our past and our previous services. We must be willing to admit to our shortcomings and be prepared to adhere more closely to our mission to grow spiritually by love and service to those in need and to each other. Our future calls for greater "extension" of the Society into more parishes in this country. We must look upon "extension" not only as mere growth of our organization, but also as a responsibility we have to provide others with the opportunity to share our mission of service.

The immediate future holds great opportunity for the Society to develop more effective ways of conducting collaborative works with those who share our common mission, especially with the whole Vincentian Family: Congregation of the Mission, Daughters of Charity, Sisters of Charity, and the Ladies of Charity.

We are also called to adhere more closely to our mission to grow spiritually by love and service to the poor and each other. In the above chapters, we emphasized how we are driven by our mission and that this helps us to grow in spirituality. We are evangelized by those whom we serve and so our service helps us to grow spiritually.

Moving into the future, the Society is embracing change. We are embracing change both internally and externally. Within the Society we are approaching our ministry by a change within our culture. We are learning more about those we serve and how we can serve them better. We are accepting accountability and endeavoring to grow the Society throughout the country. Both internally and externally we are promoting and implementing systemic change. We are working toward the improvement and replacement of failed and faltering systems that keep those we serve in the grips of poverty. Change must be embraced or the future will stagnate.

We look forward eagerly to the challenges of the future.

IV. SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Presidents as Servant Leaders

(Rule: Part 1, 3.11)

Following Christ's example, the Presidents at all levels of the Society endeavor to be servant leaders. They provide an encouraging atmosphere in which the talents, capacities and spiritual charism of the members are identified, developed and put to the service of the poor and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The President of the Conference or Council will have special responsibility for promoting Vincentian spirituality.

Robert Greenleaf in his book on Servant Leadership gives three foundational questions that you can ask to see if you are a servant leader:

- 1. Do those served grow as persons?**
- 2. Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?**
- 3. What is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?**

Vincent, a servant leader, was always concerned about the growth of those he served. He would strike a fire in their hearts to see Jesus in the face of the Poor. Vincent recruited ordinary people and asked of them extraordinary service. He looked for willingness and open hearts, and he always believed in them. Vincent gathered others to help with his projects. He did not look for stars, but grew them and encouraged them! Vincent knew the goodness in people's hearts and called it forth. This is why the followers of Vincent de Paul are rooted in the desire to grow in spirituality, respect and friendship with others, and in person-to-person service.

Indeed, St. Vincent came to be a servant leader through prayer and scripture. He was inspired by Jesus who said "Earthly kings lord it over their people. Those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. Yet it cannot be that way with you. Let the greater among you be as the junior, the leader as servant." (Luke 22:25-26) To be a servant leader, following in the steps of Vincent, means to be always searching, listening, expecting that a better solution is possible. Indeed, Vincentians must always be seeking new and better ways to serve the poor which are consistent with our Rule and heritage.

As Vincentians and servant leaders we should be asking Greenleaf's questions about those we serve:

1. Do those we serve grow as persons? Do WE who serve grow as persons?
2. Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? Do WE, *while serving*, become healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous?
3. What is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? What is the effect on us as Vincentians?

As Vincentians, we must always be aware of the impact of what we do both on those we serve and ourselves.

Mission and Vision

The very essence of leadership, going out ahead to show the way, demands an openness to inspiration. Too many who presume to lead do not see clearly, and often they argue to preserve the system. It is true, that the leader needs more than inspiration. The leader initiates, provides the ideas and structure, and takes the risk of failure along with the chance of success.

Therefore, leaders must know the mission and the vision. Leaders dream the dream and show the way. Every achievement starts with a goal—a yearning for something that is currently out of reach. Indeed, Frederic's mission and vision for the Society were strong and clear. He derived his inspiration from prayer, reflection, his friends, and the poor. He knew that everything depended on the Providence of God. He initiated a few things, listened to others and then on fire with grace and an overwhelming love for the poor, he organized for practical action. Frederic, a servant leader, honed his listening skills and became a listener-leader. Listening in respect and compassion gives the servant leader empathy and humility. The servant-leader always accepts the person, but always challenges them to grow as persons to become healthier, wiser, and freer.

Greenleaf tells us that leaders need to have “a sense for the unknowable and they need to foresee the unforeseeable.” Vincent did this by letting others come up with the initial idea; he trusted in Providence and then he organized like mad. Leaders act on hunches, but calculated ones. Vincent was practical in all he did. He learned by doing and he was results oriented. He consulted widely and reflected in prayer with great discernment, but his solutions were always practical, never theoretical. Frederic “envisioned the establishment of a network of charity and justice encircling the world.” (Rule: Part 1, 2.4) Indeed Vincent and Frederic were disturbers and awakeners. They planted their vision firmly in the minds of their followers and never wavered from it. Their vision now lives on in us.

A Vincentian Servant Leader

As a Vincentian servant leader, you will also learn that you are not expected to do all of the work, but that you are called to delegate, encourage, and inspire the members to work together to accomplish the mission. Leadership in the Society differs greatly from commerce and industry because of its voluntary nature. Accordingly, members need to be led rather than pushed, and persuaded rather than told. In the next several years, your Conference is going to depend very much on you for its growth and development. The role of President is very important in the Society. You have taken on a responsibility to both your Conference and the people whom they serve.

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V. YOUR GOALS

Adaptation to a Changing World

(Rule: Part 1, 1.6)

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.

As the President, you will want to set for yourself five goals that you wish to achieve during your term in office. Goals which will allow you to leave your successor with an even more active Conference than you are now leading.

Goal #1 – Help Form Your Members in the Society’s Principles and Practices

Instill in your members the Mission, Values, and the Essential Elements of the Society. Encourage them to become more knowledgeable members in order to better serve those in need. And, train members who would make good Presidents when your term is up.

Goal #2 - Work For Your Conference as a Servant Leader

Look constantly at the needs in your area, discuss them in your Conference and with others outside the Conference, formulate plans to meet them and put these plans into action.

Goal #3 – Develop Your Officers into a Working Team

Your officers will assist you in important ways so that the Conference is a genuine community of faith and love, prayer and action.

Goal #4 – Work with Your Spiritual Advisor for the Growth of Your Members

Your spiritual advisor is an essential member of your Conference and he/she will assist you in centering the Conference in our mission, vision, and values. It is important to have your spiritual advisor trained so that they can be an active member of the Conference.

Goal #5 – Regularly Recruit New Members for Your Conference

Regularly invite people to join the Society so that you will have sufficient members to do all that your Conference wants to achieve. Strive for diversity in culture, ethnicity, gender, and age.

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GOAL #1

Help Form Your Members in the Society's Principles and Practices

Formation of Members

Rule: Part 1, 3.12

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.

Basically, we belong to a simple, active Society. Our members wish to serve Christ by looking after the day-to-day needs of those who seek our help. We must try to improve the knowledge of our members. **The Supply Catalog and Order form** for all Vincentian materials can be found on-line at www.svdpusa.org. To order click on "Shop" which is located on the home page.

Developing the Spirit of the Society among members.

Vincentian Formation enables your Conference to grow in spirituality, to renew, and to revitalize. The most important place to form members is at the Conference meeting. It is also imperative for all members to attend the Ozanam Orientation. By a resolution of the National Council, all Active members are required to attend an Ozanam Orientation. This is especially required of Officers at all levels of the Society. It is highly recommended that Associate members also attend. The President should support your Spiritual Advisor in accessing and making use of the following Vincentian Formation materials that are available from the National Office:

- **Vincentian Reflections (Cycle A-B-C)**

This important resource is to be used for Prayer, Reflection and Sharing at Conference Meetings (Based on the Sunday Scripture readings and Vincentian Feasts).

Also available FREE on www.svdpusa.org

- **Serving in Hope: Video and Formation Guide Series**

Module I: Our Vincentian Vocation

Module II: Our Vincentian Spirituality

Module III: Our Vincentian Heritage

Module IV: Our Vincentian Mission

Module V: Our Vincentian Rule

Module VI: Our Vincentian Conference

Module VII: Our Vincentian Home Visit

It is important to note that the Serving in Hope Modules can be used effectively at Conference meetings. The Conference President needs to be supportive of the time this takes.

Other important resources:

- **Vincentian Celebrations: Rituals and Ceremonies**

Prayer services for Annual Commitments, Commissioning, Funerals, etc. Liturgies for our Founders, and other resource information.

- **Rule**

The Rule and International and National Statutes for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Reading and sharing on the Rule is recommended at Conference meetings.

- **Manual**

Fundamental information of the founders, history, spirituality, and organization of the Society.

- **Spiritual Advisor Handbook**

- **Voice of the Poor Guide**

- **Vincentian Guide to Multicultural/Diversity Issues**

- **Faces of Holiness: Portraits of some Saints in the Vincentian Family** by Father Robert P. Maloney

- **Mystic of Charity** by Father Robert P. Maloney

- **A New Century Dawns** by Father Robert P. Maloney

- **Tis A Gift** by Father Robert P. Maloney

- **Turn Everything to Love** by Father Robert P. Maloney

- **The Spirituality of the Home Visit: A Journal**

- **A Heart of Fire: Apostolic Reflection with Rosalie Rendu**
- **Members Handbook**
- **Vincentian Meditations I and II** by Father Tom McKenna
- **Walking the Vincentian Pathway: A Personal Guide**
- **Walking the Vincentian Pathway Conference**
President and Spiritual Advisor can be a big help in planning when and how to use the available materials to help your Conference grow in holiness over time.

<p>Improving our service to those we help.</p>

The use of brief discussions, during Conference meetings, about various Social Service methods of visitation and related subjects will help improve our service to those in need. By meeting and solving problems, seeking advice on problems from those able to help, and learning from our mistakes, we become more skilled in the art of helping people. When a problem is met, a good discussion about it at the Conference meeting will more likely than not bring up a solution.

Local Councils also provide training for members and you should encourage your members to attend as many of these gatherings as possible.

Brief study courses on various topics of interest to your members are frequently available. You should encourage your members to use them.

To survive as an effective organization in our changing world, the Society must provide a useful service related to current needs. This means that our thinking on social issues must be up to date. You are the person most concerned in making sure your Conference is aware of the needs and their possible solutions. You should keep yourself fully informed on current developments and how they affect the Society.



GOAL #2

Work for Your Conference as a Servant Leader

Servant Leadership

(Rule: Part 3, Statute 11)

Leadership positions in the Society, at any level, are always to be accepted as service to Christ, the members and the poor. Servant leadership is done in imitation of Jesus who said: “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many.

Every Vincentian knows that “No work of Charity is foreign to the Society.” Your Conference should be organized to meet the needs that occur in your own area and are within the capacity of your members. Periodically examine the changing role of the Conference; talk about new needs and look at ideas for new works; and then formulate plans for the future.

Below is mentioned the range of work that an ordinary Parish Conference could expect to cover. Special Works Conferences would be expected to concentrate on their own work.

TYPES OF WORK

- The **Home Visit** is the primary work of the Society, for it is in the home visit where we find:
 - **Material poverty caused by:**
 - unemployment
 - a deserted husband/ wife or a single parent
 - sickness and disabilities
 - disaster victims
 - inability to manage financial commitments (over committed to time payments, etc.)
 - lack of knowledge of government benefits
 - social conditions.

- **Social poverty caused by:**
 - aged people living alone
 - lonely people with no family
 - newcomers to a town or suburb
 - bereaved families.
- **Generational Poverty:**
 - families living in poverty for at least two generations
 - acceptance of poverty as a way of life
 - understanding and working the system
 - no hope for the future.
- **Situational Poverty:**
 - fallen into poverty because of current circumstances
 - no knowledge of how the systems work
 - non-acceptance of their situation
 - prayers and hope for saving grace.
- **People requiring help to find needed services:**
 - information on government benefits
 - referral to other agencies
 - help to complete forms, etc.
- **Visitation** to hospitals, nursing homes, institutions within the parish.
- **Providing a place** for people requiring help to contact us, such as itinerants.
- **Providing workers** at various special works of the Society (if applicable to your area) such as:
 - Society stores and dining centers
 - shelters for homeless people
 - homes for the elderly
- **Systemic Change** programs to help bring people out of poverty such as:
 - Bridges Out of Poverty/Getting Ahead Program (Ruby Payne/Philip DeVol)
 - Centro Rendu (Hispanic outreach)
 - Changing Lives Program
 - Circles
 - Communications Across Barriers (Donna Beegle, “If Not Me, Then Who?)
 - Faith in Family Togetherness Program
 - Loans
 - Neighborhoods of Hope
 - Re-entering Citizens Program
 - Side by Side
 - Stepping Stones
 - VOAN (moving low income families out of poverty)
 - Voice of the Poor

- **Twinning Program.** Twinning is a consistent commitment to another Conference, domestic or foreign, so that the receiving Conference has the ability to depend on the contribution. Each Conference should be encouraged to participate in Twinning. Some efforts will be required from your Conference to raise the required amount for the minimum of \$75/Quarterly. Regular correspondence should be kept up with the Conference, and all donations and procedures must be negotiated through the National Office for International Twinning.

There is another program similar to Twinning. It is known as Co-Pays. Twinning is a consistent commitment with a regular distribution of funds from a Conference to another Conference or Council. Twinning funds can be used by the receiver for any purpose. Co-Pays are a one-time assistance from one Conference to another to help a particular person or family with a bill to be paid. These have two separate purposes and, therefore, are accounted for differently.

- **Advocacy.** The society in which we live is changing rapidly and so are the needs of the people in it. The types of poverty are changing and so today, more and more, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is called to be a “Voice of the Poor.” Vincentians, through their experiences in home visits, are qualified to advocate for justice in addition to offering charity to those in need. The “Voice of the Poor” advocacy committees operate at all levels of the Society across the United States. In the spirit of Frederic Ozanam, we know that charity provides only temporary alleviation of pain and suffering, but it is not enough. The Society calls for the identification and elimination of the cause of the need in the first place. This demands charity and justice, and so we speak for the preferential protection of the poor and vulnerable particularly for those who are afraid to speak or cannot speak for themselves.

HOW TO LOCATE PEOPLE IN NEED

In making the following suggestions, it is emphasized that the better known the Society is, the more people will be seeking our help.

- **People approach the Society themselves.**
They may do this through a member, a Parish or other contact point. Every Conference should ensure that it is available to people by letting the community know how it can be contacted.
- **Friends and neighbors refer people.**
Here again we must advertise ourselves sufficiently so that when someone sees a family in need they think of the Society and make contact with us.
- **Referrals from Clergy, Government Officials, Police, Hospitals, Doctors, Schools, etc.**
Here again these people should know we exist, what we can do and where to contact us. Each Conference should make personal contact with these people at least once a year.

- **Referrals from other community organizations.**

All organizations should be aware of what services we can provide so that if, in the course of their work, they come across someone whom we can help, they will inform us. We may from time to time make contact with these organizations (such as Meals on Wheels) and ask for the suggestions of people to visit. SVdP information can be included in community referral lists as well as websites. Some communities also have special phone numbers for those who have emergency needs.

- **Members' own observations.**

You should encourage your members to be always on the lookout for people in need.

- **Surveys of your district.**

From time to time different organizations or people survey a district and this can provide us with opportunities for finding persons/families in need.

- **Brochures and Flyers.**

The Conference can develop brochures and flyers that briefly describe who we are, what services we offer, and how to contact us. These brochures and flyers can be given to the organizations listed above who can distribute them to those in need. There are some brochures and flyers available through the National Office order catalogue.

- A Conference can be listed in the local 211 directory. And it can have a website, although, if no one knows how to maintain it over time, it is better not to start one.

WHAT CAN YOUR CONFERENCE DO FOR THOSE IN NEED

Your Conference has not the resources in money or trained personnel of Government; however, it does have the time and talents of its members to show personal concern for the individual/family and their problem and to work with them in solving it.

The role of the Society in social welfare work is such, that when a family approaches the Society for help, we must determine their real problem and help to find a long-term solution to it. In the meantime, we will give immediate assistance. If the Conference is unable to find a long-term solution to a problem, it is advisable to refer the family to a person or organization with some specialist skills. The Society could then cooperate in any solution arrived at as a result of this referral. The concern the Society should show to the individual/family will be evidenced in the following ways:

- Regular visits to get to know them better and to be able to give realistic and appropriate help.
- Neighbor to neighbor approach with no evidence of any superiority or judgment on them.

- Perseverance even when we don't seem to be achieving results.
- Follow up contacts, after the initial problem is solved.

In the visitation of the aged, lonely and socially poor we should follow the same guidelines. Not only should we visit them regularly, but we should do little extra things for them to demonstrate our personal concern.

One of the most important duties that you as a Conference President will have to carry out is the selection of the best members to visit each particular individual/family. The President may do this or delegate this task to a few members who are willing to take on this important task.

TYPES OF AID YOUR CONFERENCE CAN GIVE

It will be your duty to supervise the kind of aid your Conference gives. Various suggestions are:

- **Advice:**

Do not be quick to advise. People living in poverty want us to talk to them and especially to listen to them. Individuals/Families are often best helped by encouraging their own solutions. But when wanted and appropriate, give advice that is correct and practical. Make sure the individual/family clearly understands the advice given. If your Conference is not sure what advice it should give in a situation, consult your District Council. Your Conference should have advisors such as clergy, lawyers, doctors, social workers, agency officials, to whom it can turn for help. However, we must never force our will onto those we help. Be sure that you don't make your assistance dependent upon them actually taking your advice. People must decide for themselves what advice they will take and to what degree.

- **Helping Person Find Resources:**

Bring a referral sheet to leave with the family and point out the best items for their situation. Listening to and helping the person/family think through their next steps is very important often.

- **Material Help:**

- Give the type and amount of help that is required by the individual/family at the time. Be sure it is relevant to their present need. It is inappropriate for Conferences to limit their aid to a food voucher (for an insufficient amount) and clothing (even though the immediate problem is the rent or the electric bill).
- Do not hesitate to give financial assistance. It is the type of aid that meets the needs of the majority of those we serve. Also their need may be for things other

than food and clothing. Give sufficient aid to the individual/family to cover the period intended. Avoid the assembly line process. Do not simply give the same amount to everyone so you can feel that you are being fair to all. Treat each case on its own merit.

- There are some individuals/families for whom the best aid is a food voucher for meat, vegetables, bread and milk as well as other groceries. If the business accepts your vouchers, it is important they do not allow tobacco and alcohol in the redemption of the voucher. Make sure that the business which handles your orders understands the Society and does not embarrass those using the voucher. For some people the best way to help them is to bring the actual food, purchased by someone who is used to shopping for similar individuals/families.
- Be generous with clothing, furniture, etc. that may be donated to your Conference. The items are given to us primarily for those individuals/families we help.
- After careful review, don't hesitate to refuse a request for immediate material assistance if you think it is advisable to do so. We are asked to love those in need in the best way possible, even if the answer is "no."

- **Credit Counseling Services:**

The Conference should be aware of the need that many people have for counseling about issues of credit. The Conference should be prepared to make referrals to individuals trained in credit counseling.

- **Moving Out of Poverty:**

The Society has made some significant steps in helping those we serve toward moving out of poverty and achieving self-sustaining livelihood. Our programs developed out of our vision of Systemic Change are aiding many of those we serve to better understand themselves and how they can improve their state in life. These programs include mentoring, training, loans, and addressing the root causes of poverty.

- **Ourselves:**

The poor want us to talk to them and especially they want us to listen to them. Often the biggest gift we bring is our time and ability to listen. We may be able to do little jobs around the house for them (minor repairs, lawn mowing, etc.). Or we may be able to transport them to appointments, etc. Especially, when visiting these people who are lonely or aged, remember things like birthdays as they often need and appreciate a change that enlivens their lives. Whenever possible, arrange something special for them to enhance their dignity and feeling of self-worth. In every case just described, however, be sensitive that there are potential liability issues and avoid getting your Conference members in over their heads.

- **Service:**

Some people want assistance to do things that may be normal to our members. Obtaining and filling in forms for government benefits are some of the things the Society can do well.

- **Making Referrals: provide access to resources which require referral by another agency.**

It is often necessary to provide those we assist with access to resources which require referral by another agency. The approval of the individual/family concerned is necessary before referring them to other agencies. Confidentiality in what we do for those we serve is critical and imperative.

NOTES



GOAL #3

Develop Your Officers into a Working Team

Meetings of the Vincentian Members

Rule: Part 1, 3.3

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.

President

The Society does not operate as a "one person band." It is a team operation. The full team consists of all the members of the Conference. The Conference will only operate well if every member is given the opportunity to, and does, play their role. A good rule to follow is that if a member of the Conference can carry out a particular job - give it to them. Delegation of duties is not only necessary to help a president, but it is also essential for the health and vitality of the Conference.

Like any team, some members must be given particular duties. The selection of the right people for each job will help you be a better President. With your election as President, all other offices become vacant and your first duty will be to fill them. Officers may be appointed for any length of time but they retire at the end of your term as President.

It is possible to reappoint the officers of your predecessor and it may be the right thing to do in some cases. You also must bring in new blood to help secure and build the future of the Conference.

When you have made a selection - and it is your prerogative to make these appointments - you should discuss your nominations with the members of your Conference both individually and at your meeting before finalizing them. In selecting your officers, although favoritism should not be practiced, it is a good

idea to select people who can work well with you and who are available for consultation. The President should NOT appoint a family member or someone in close relationship as an officer. It is also not a good idea for one person to fill multiple officer roles at once. In no case should the President also be acting as Treasurer.

Vice President

It is suggested that in the first place you select two Vice Presidents, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. Your two Vice Presidents should be people who would be capable of taking over for you, as President. It is good training for a future President. The Vice Presidents should be available to take over for you in your absence, regularly attend your Conference meetings, and have full knowledge of Conference activities and especially your plans for the Conference. The Vice President organizes the election of the next President.

Secretary

The Secretary has an essential and important contribution to the fulfillment of the mission of the Society, and the daily operations and development of the Conference. Carefully kept records provide the basis for accurate information and contain material for evaluating the spirit and the works of the Conference. The reporting duties of the Secretary are explained in the official Minute Book obtained from the National Office in St. Louis, MO.

Treasurer

The Treasurer should regularly attend meetings and keep an up to date record of Conference finances. There should be a Statement of Receipts and Expenditures and current Balance at every meeting. The President, Secretary and Treasurer are responsible for completing the year end annual report and forwarding it to the Council. The National Office has financial record keeping resources. Conferences should not accumulate, or stockpile, large sums of money. The Society has always lived in the spirit of Frederic Ozanam who trusted that Providence would provide us with the means to serve those in need.

Spiritual Advisor

The Spiritual Advisor is an important appointment and an essential team member. For further information see the next section on a Goal # 4

Other Team Members

Besides these people, you can appoint other members to your team for a special purpose, if appropriate for your Conference:

- **Stores**
To liaison with your local Store Committee, arrange drives, etc.
- **Literature**
To keep your supplies up to date, check for literature sales, etc.
- **Hospital Visitation**
To ensure that all requests from hospitals are followed up and regular visitation is organized.
- **Special Programs**
To guarantee that special programs such as Back-to-School, Christmas, Thanksgiving, etc. are organized and coordinated.

Basic Information

- Regular communication between the Conference President and the Pastor/Parish Council is essential. This is one way of assuring the health of the Conference within the Parish. The Pastor should be notified when there is a change of Officers.
- It is recommended that each account have at least two or three signers; do not include priests or deacons. Signers must be re-evaluated each time there is a change in officers. The name on the account and the tax id number (EIN) must be that of the Society, and not that of the Parish or any of the members. If you don't know what to do here, talk to your District Council President or staff.

NOTES



Goal #4

Work with Your Spiritual Advisor for the Growth of Your Members

The spirit of poverty and encouragement

Rule: Part 1, 3.13

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.

A very important member of your Conference is your Spiritual Advisor. If you do not have a Spiritual Advisor, one of your first duties will be to encourage and support someone to attend the spiritual advisor formation program. In the United States we are finding that the demands on the priests in the Parish prevent them from regular attendance at our meetings. In the spirit of our heritage where the lay man, Emmanuel Bailly, served as the spiritual advisor of our founding members, it is recommended that a member of the Conference be invited to serve in this role.

You should involve your Spiritual Advisor fully in your activities and discussions. If the Spiritual Advisor is a deacon/religious, it is important that she/he be made welcome at your meetings and given an opportunity to express his/her views on matters being discussed by the Conference. Ordained Spiritual Advisors (priests and deacons) cannot vote, cannot be signors on accounts, and cannot be officers. Spiritual Advisors should be specifically requested to help in the spiritual formation of members, principally by providing the formation materials from the National Office (See Formation section). The National Office has a Spiritual Advisor Handbook for training and formation.

The Spiritual Advisor assists members to:

- deepen their faith
- grow in openness and respect for each other
- strengthen their vocation as Christians and Vincentians
- serve and minister to others
- grow in community with those they serve

The Spiritual Advisor fulfills the following duties:

- Leads/arranges meeting prayers, spiritual reflections and discussion
- Seeks moments for spiritual development: home visit attitudes, discussions regarding priorities, times of judgment and criticism, etc.
- Organizes Vincentian Celebrations: commissioning, installations, etc.
- Resolves difficulties involving members of the Conference.

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GOAL #5

Regularly Recruit New Members for Your Conference

The Journey together towards holiness

Rule: Part 1, 2.2

Vincentians are called to journey together towards holiness, because true holiness is 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.

RETAINING MEMBERS

Being a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, being a Vincentian, is indeed a special calling from God. The Vincentian vocation is the desire to grow in spirituality by directly helping those in need by person-to-person service. This is done by the gift of one's heart and friendship in a community of faith, the Conference of lay persons each inspired by the same vocation. Some people who join the Society will leave it. One of your duties will be to make sure that the Conference functions efficiently and the spirit that exists in the Conference is such as to encourage members to stay on. If your Conference seems to be losing too many members, it should consult with its Local Council to try and find out why. To do its job effectively the Society needs as many members as it can get.

Very few members have ever left the Society from overwork. It is important that every member of your Conference feels needed by the Conference and is given sufficient work to do. Members expect to have at least one visit or activity each week. A member who is too eager and wants to do all the work can be bad news for a Conference. Similarly a President must guard against the temptation of doing too much of the work and not delegating by handing out visits, etc. to other members of the Conference.

New members bring new ideas into a Conference - most of them are worth consideration. The Society wants to keep up with the changes in our community. We must welcome ideas and evaluate their usefulness to the service the Society can perform. Whenever a new member comes to your Conference, make them feel welcome. It is a good idea to appoint a member to specifically look after the new member for the first few weeks and help them understand what is going on in the Conference.

RECRUITMENT

Each Conference can expect to lose some of its members in a year. For this reason a President must recruit members and do all that is necessary to retain. Probably more has been said on this subject than any other in the Society. It is a continuing need but we offer a few suggestions.

- New people should not be automatically accepted as members. It is recommended that new people be given formation in the understanding of the Rule and Vincentian Spirituality, a time for discernment, and approval by the Conference members. Rule Part 3, Statute 3 outlines the procedure for admission into a Conference. The Member Handbook, available from the National Office, also gives excellent guidance on new members.
- The National Office has an excellent recruiting program called “Invitation to Serve.” This program is a proven recruiting method that has been used throughout the country to entice anywhere from 3 to 150 interested people.
- The most successful way to get new members is by personal invitation.
- We have a Society that gives many benefits to its members. We must not be selfish about it and should ensure that as many people as possible will have the opportunity to join us. We must not be disappointed if we are refused as not everyone is attracted to the Society. Every Conference President has been surprised at least once by the person least expected, accepting the invitation to join.
- At least once a year the Conference should take a little time to draw up a list of names of likely prospects for membership and arrange for them to be contacted.
- It is a good idea to invite prospects to an informal meeting before they are invited to join. This enables the Society to be explained to them and all the questions answered. If such an occasion can be preceded by a talk from the pulpit this is even better.
- Members should be encouraged to bring their friends along to a meeting and encourage them to join.

- Each Conference is responsible for its own membership and before anyone is approached to become a member, the Conference, through yourself, should be informed and approval given.
- Members who have left the Conference or who may have been previously contacted can always be asked at some later date to rejoin your Conference.
- Look to the shifting population (school teachers, bank officials, public servants, etc.) when recruiting members. When they move to a new area they are often looking for something to do.
- Consider whether your Conference practices are excluding part of the parish. For instance, weekday morning meetings are great for retired people, but it means you will not have any active members who work.

NOTES

VI. CONFERENCE REGULATIONS

Conferences Meet Frequently

Rule: Part 3, Statute 5

Members of the Society, traditionally gather in communities called “Conferences,” which meet weekly, or at least twice a month. This is to affirm the importance of the spiritual and social dimensions of Vincentians coming together as a community of faith and love, prayer and action.

MEETINGS

The Conference meeting is the pivot of all Society activity. It provides a place where members can experience the fraternal relationship that should exist in the Society and it is the place where all our work is organized.

Your Conference should meet at a time of the week that best suits your Conference members (and likely members). It is a good idea to review at least once a year the time in the week that your meeting is held. There are many experiences of Conferences changing their meeting times and at least doubling their membership. Make sure that your meeting place is reasonably comfortable, private enough to allow uninterrupted discussions and central enough to your area to allow all members to get to it easily.

Your Conference meeting should not be a long drawn out one. The way you conduct your meeting will go a long way to determining your success as President. You should spend a time before each meeting preparing for it so that during the meeting you are not looking for correspondence, details of phone calls, etc.

It is up to the President to ensure that a meeting agenda is followed and in doing so keep the length of the meeting to a reasonable time. You must also ensure that the members have a chance to speak on all issues but must not let the length of discussion of any issue become burdensome to the Conference. If topics become too time consuming or controversial, further discussion should be postponed to another time. A good practice is to ensure that members have clearly stated information about topics for discussion in advance of the meeting so they can be prepared for the discussion. When a topic becomes time-consuming, designate a few members to study the subject and bring a report or recommendation back to the Conference. This is, in essence, a temporary committee. You may find that some areas benefit from a permanent or "standing" committee to work outside the meeting and bring a report to the meeting. Proper use of committees can make meetings much shorter, more effective, and more enjoyable for all.

Conference Meeting Agenda

Conference meetings should be held at least twice monthly. In order to qualify to be a valid Conference meeting, the meeting must address the three primary objectives of the Society of spiritual growth, fellowship, and service. In addition, the meeting must have a quorum of Active Members present. The recommended agenda to be followed in every Conference meeting is specified in *The Rule*, Part 3, Statute 7:

- **Roll call**
- **Opening prayer** (See Manual, p.72). Prayer cards are available from the National Office.
- **Welcome to New Members.** Prospective members should be made to feel very welcome. It should be your practice to visit prospective members before they attend the meeting to explain the Society and its activities and procedures to them. Prospective members and other “guests” should be informed at this time about the importance of confidentiality and that nothing spoken about in this meeting should be shared outside of the meeting. This time of the meeting is also a good time each week to ask for the names of prospective new members. The Member Handbook available from the National Office explains clearly the proper procedure for admitting new members and recommends a discernment period before they become officially Active members.
- **Spiritual reading (or meditation)** on which members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith. Your Spiritual Advisor should be asked to prepare this, especially using the Vincentian Reflections and Serving in Hope prepared by the National Council. It is expected that the Reading be followed by a discussion and sharing among the Conference members.
- **Discussion of the Rule (Parts 1 and 3)** is something that has been recommended and followed by many Conferences right after the spiritual reading and discussion. One or more Articles or Statutes of the Rule should be read, understood and discussed by the members.
- **Approval of Minutes of previous meeting. If you email draft minutes in advance of the meeting, you can save much time at meetings.** Minutes should be brief and factual, recording only just what happened. The minutes are not a factual record of what people said, it is a record of the topics discussed and what was decided. There still may be a need for some discussion on the business arising from the minutes or to correct any error in them.
- **Home visitation report.** A report is given on those who have been visited during the week. The issue the conference must consider is whether the

decision to help or not will be made at this meeting. If yes, then all relevant details of all cases will be given. This procedure works best in conferences that meet every week. If, however, the decision is made elsewhere, then the Conference should only share briefly the challenging visits, visits where you learned something new, and visits which particularly affected you spiritually. The report should not be long. After the first visit, the report should give all relevant known details about the individual/family. Later reports need only note changes that have occurred. The visiting members should then make a recommendation on future action. The Conference should then, if necessary, discuss any problem that might have arisen and decide what future action to take. Any reports on Visits to Hospitals, Institutions, and Special Works should be brief and any future action recommended.

There are many Conferences who have so much need in their area that they do more than 50 visits each week. For these Conferences, it is impractical and unnecessary to discuss each visit at the meeting. Only some of the more important or interesting visits should be discussed. There should never be a meeting when no visits are discussed.

After each report, or when all Reports are made (depending on your own preference) and, if a follow up is necessary, visitors for the following week should be identified and appointed. The President may often be the person who is in the best position to assign visitors. It is imperative for many reasons, and it is in our Rule, that members always visit individuals/families in pairs.

- **President's report.** Please keep in mind that you as president can eat up a lot of the meeting time with your report. Think about whether or not you want to do this or what you absolutely need to report.
- **Secretary's report** (including correspondence received, information about the Society or training points)
- **Treasurer's report.** A written statement of Receipts, Expenditures and present Balance of ALL Conference accounts should normally be presented at every meeting. Payment of bills and issue of vouchers noted.
- **Committee reports (including Formation Committee report).** Committee reports are given.
- **Correspondence.** The Secretary should have opened and studied all correspondence beforehand and need only summarize it at the meeting. Only selected letters need be read in full at the meeting.

- **Membership reports** on meetings and other activities attended by members on behalf of the Conference.
- **Resolutions** General Business. Plans for advancing Society charitable involvement, growth or funds.
- **Special Works reports**
- **Old business**
- **New business**
- **Time and Place of next meeting** (the calendar should include Festival meetings and Conference Liturgies)
- **Secret collection**
- **Closing prayer**
- **Adjournment**

RECORDS

Some record must be kept of Conference Activities. Once a year each Conference is asked to submit an Annual Report on its activities to the next higher Council. This is a simple report that is easy to complete if records are kept regularly. The National Office has resources for Conference records in the Secretary Minute Book. This is a very useful place to keep your records. It contains record sheets for compiling reports on individual/families, sheets for keeping membership records, details of Conference activities, Society prayers, sheets for the Quarterly and Annual Reports. The database for your Conference membership is also available on the National Website, if you are authorized by your Council.

Many Conferences keep their case records in a database. There are several available by subscription now. If your Conference chooses to develop its own system, please consider the long-term maintenance. Maybe a Member can write a great system for you, but who will be able to fix it ten years from now when that member is no longer around?

Further information regarding the National Data base is specified at the end of this booklet.

AUDIT

It is required in the Rule of the Society (Part III, Statute 23) that each Conference have an annual audit/financial review. This is an informal audit for the typical Conference that does not have Special Works. A formal audit is more appropriate for Conferences with Stores or other Special Works. Audits are especially

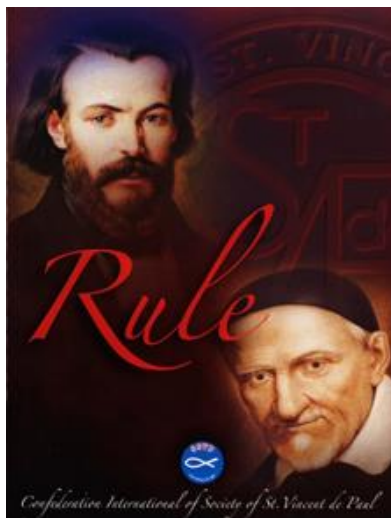
appropriate when new officers are appointed. In the Extension Portal of the National Website (www.svdpusa.org), you will find a detailed description of how to perform the informal audit and the worksheets needed for this task.

GOVERNANCE

For membership in the National Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent De Paul, Inc. it is a requirement that every organizational unit (Conference and Council) have Bylaws. Bylaws are significant written rules by which an organization is governed. Bylaws determine how the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is structured and, along with state law, determine the rights of participants in the structure. Model Bylaws that have been approved by the National Council can be found on the National Website (www.svdpusa.org).

The Rule is the paramount authority of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Should any Bylaw, rule or regulation adopted by a Conference or Council conflict with the Rule and regulations of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul as now promulgated or hereafter adopted by the International Council General or the National Council of the United States, then and in that event such elements of the Bylaws, rules or regulations are void and of no effect.

To remain in good standing, Conferences and Councils must maintain their Bylaws (including any and all amended articles) in updated and amended form. They must keep a copy of the Rule with their Bylaws. Bylaws should be reviewed no less frequently than once every three years for the purpose of determining if there is a need that they be revised or updated and that the advice of legal counsel be sought where deemed advisable according to the society's POLICY ON REVIEW OF CORPORATION/ORGANIZATION BYLAWS.



VII. RELATIONSHIPS

A close relationship

Rule: Part 1, 5.1

Faithful to the clear intentions of Blessed Frederic 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.

The adoption of practical initiatives

Rule: Part I, 6.3

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.

Relationship with Other Members

The most important relationship that must be maintained in any Conference is that of the Members with each other. Keep in mind that the second primary objective of the Society is fellowship. Nothing should exist in a Conference setting that can jeopardize those relationships.

Important Ways to Improve the Relationship with your Pastor

- First, pastors, as well as parishioners, should be regularly informed about the income, expenses, and works of the Conference in order to demonstrate that all funds received from the parish are being handled in an appropriate and responsible manner. Any such reports must certainly respect the confidentiality of those served, but are necessary to assuage any fears and to ensure the trust and cooperation of a pastor. The normal process is to provide a summary of activities and finances to the pastor at the end of each quarter.
- Second, if a pastor cannot attend regular meetings of the Conference, some mutually convenient time should be arranged between the Conference president and the pastor, providing each with an opportunity to share ideas, express concerns, and ask questions.
- Third, although the Society is a lay organization, it has always supported and respected priests. There is a mutual and necessary collaborative relationship

that must exist between pastor and Conference for our Society to thrive. In view of this, a Conference president should always be careful how Conference members treat a pastor, who, ultimately, has the final say about whether the Conference can function in the parish. In turn, pastors who are kept informed are more likely to provide support to and encouragement of the Conference.

- Fourth, establishing clear guidelines of operation with every newly assigned pastor is essential. What has been done under the administration of one pastor might make another uncomfortable. As long as the Rule of the Society is not violated in the process, compromise is a necessary and good thing.
- Fifth, providing a pastor with information about the Society and informing him regularly about what is going on, not just in the parish, but also regionally, nationally, and internationally is absolutely vital to the preservation of a solid relationship with a pastor and to a pastor's continued growth in knowledge of the Society's mission and purpose. In addition, a Conference president should help the pastor by providing the parish (most likely through the parish bulletin) with at least an annual report of the works of the Society in the parish, although more frequent reporting to parishioners is certainly encouraged.

Your Conference is an integral and important part of two Communities:

- The Catholic (and in a wider field, the Christian) community.
- The community at large.

It has an important role to play in both and it is important that your Conference plays this part.

The Catholic Church

The Society exists to bear witness to Christ by serving the Poor. Our particular role as Christians is to find those in poverty and give them the aid they need. The Society must do this as well as is humanly possible. A second-rate attempt is really not the most effective witness to Christ.

We are not the only Christian Organization that is devoted to helping those in need. Your Conference should develop a close working relationship with other Christian, civic and ecumenical organizations engaged in service of those who are poor in your area, to develop complementary services for those in need. There should never be any sign of competition between the various organizations. In working with other agencies, it is important to be aware of their respect for the doctrines of the Catholic Church.

There is an obligation on all Christians to practice Christian charity. Many want to carry out this obligation without joining any organization. The Society should be prepared to help them and encourage our fellow parishioners to undertake some

activity in this field. In any project we undertake we should welcome assistance from anyone who is prepared to help - even if only in a small way.

The Community

There is a growing awareness in our time of the needs of the disadvantaged members of our community. Many organizations are working to meet these needs either generally or in a specific area. Lately there is a tendency to coordinate this work and provide a better, more efficient and comprehensive service. Our Conferences should not only cooperate in these plans, but should also play a leading role in implementing them. The knowledge and experience we have gained must be available to others who wish to care for community needs.

At the same time we are a Society which recognizes our limitations. In your own community you must be prepared to cooperate with others to provide this comprehensive service. Before providing a service you must determine if the need still exists. If there is a need in the community that is not met, you can either decide to meet it in your own Conference or become the spearhead in a community effort to provide it.

As a President of the Conference, you will represent the Society in your community. In dealing with other organizations you must show the Society's willingness to cooperate in projects to improve the lot of the disadvantaged individuals/families in your area. You should make sure that organizations in your area know of the Society's existence, what it can do, and how it can be contacted.

Publicity

Although we do not seek publicity, it is the duty of every Conference to let the people in its parish and community know what it is doing. The National Office offers sample Bulletin Announcements corresponding to the Liturgical year and these are a very effective way of communicating with the parish. You should arrange for the distribution of the summaries of the Annual Reports to parishioners and other residents (especially benefactors) so that they are aware of what you are doing. This lets them know how you are spending the money they give you and encourages their support of your work and, above all, people will know that we are available to help if we are needed.

The National President is the only official spokesperson of the Society on national issues. The elected Council President is the official spokesperson for the society on local issues.

VIII. THE COUNCIL

Conference and Council Annual Review

Rule: Part 3, Statute 22

At least once a year, each Conference and Council must evaluate their service to the members, to the poor, the effectiveness of their special works, etc., and explore ways to provide better service. They should also consider new types of needs they may seek to alleviate and how to find those who are in need.

There should be very close contact between Conferences in the same area or town by regular contact between Presidents and members. There should be cooperation in any joint projects and constant discussion on a common approach to the needs facing the Society.

One of the worst things a President can do is to shut the Conference off from the Council. The only losers are the Conference and those we serve. That is why it is essential for the Conference President to attend every Council Meeting and pass on to Conference members whatever information is shared at that Council meeting.

You should encourage as frequent contact as possible between your members and the members of your Council and other Conferences.

CORRESPONDENCE

All organizations require a certain amount of correspondence to function. At your meetings not all correspondence should be read out loud, 90% of it can just be summarized.

An effective Conference will reply immediately to any correspondence needing a reply. It should be our #1 rule that any correspondence about individuals/families in need will be addressed within twenty-four hours. Someone may be waiting for a reply at the other end. Any Conference which does not attend to a case as soon as it is referred is not justifying its existence.

Similarly, Society correspondence should be answered quickly. Most Society letters are written by part-time volunteers like yourself who have undertaken an extra duty for the Society. The fraternal spirit of our Society demands that Presidents do their best to make everyone's job easier. Do not be afraid to communicate with other units of the Society. It is a quicker, easier and more efficient way to get a job done.

Most Councils have Conference Directories available so that your Conference can be easily put in contact with any Conference, Council or Special Work in the area.

REPORTS

Your Conference is asked to make a report once each year (known as the Conference Annual Report) to your Council of its activities. It is a simple report requiring a few basic details of your activities plus a financial statement. If your bookkeeping is up to date, it can be completed in less than an hour. Some Conferences use quarterly reports to help with this task. Check with your local a Council President for the recommended procedure.

The information supplied is needed to publicize the Society and to provide an Annual Report to Church Authorities, without whose support our activities could be severely curtailed.

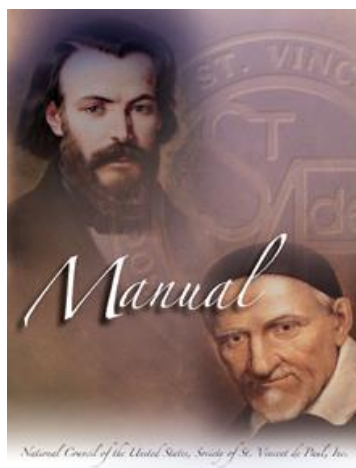
Unfortunately, many Conferences do not realize the seriousness of this Annual Report and there are undue delays in its completion causing severe embarrassment at the State and National level. The Society's year ends on September 30th. Please do your best to complete your Conference's Annual Report as quickly as possible after that and forward it to your Council. The traditional and reasonable deadline for an Annual Report is November 30. However, if your Conference does a Thanksgiving project, it would be best to complete your annual report by Oct 31.

FORMATION AND TRAINING

The National Office sponsors a leadership formation program for current and emerging Vincentian leaders, called **“Invitation for Renewal.”** The program is conducted twice a year in St. Louis, and the National Council has scholarships available to help people attend.

THE MANUAL

Further information on Councils and Conferences is found in the **Manual**.



IX. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OFFICE

The National Council Office for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of the United States is located in St. Louis, Missouri. It was in St. Louis, at the Basilica of St. Louis (the Old Cathedral), that the first Conference of the Society started in the United States in 1845, only twelve years after the founding of the Society in Paris.

The National Council Office provides leadership, formation, technical assistance, management training and resource development to the Councils and Conferences in the United States. The National Council Office is managed by the National CEO.



**National Council of the United States
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National Council Services:

The National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul provides leadership and support for the growth and health of the Society's Councils, Conferences and Special Works.

The National Council enables the Society to better serve its local communities by creating materials for the spiritual formation of the members; networking information on advocacy and justice issues; facilitating the response to the needs

of those who are poor throughout the world by Twinning and giving assistance to victims of disaster.

National Database/“Member Portal”

Every organization depends upon effective communication to achieve its goals. **(Rule: Part I, Article 3.15)** The Society’s Strategic Plan calls for improved communications at all levels. The National Office staff strives to make sure that the National database/“Member Portal” has accurate and complete information on all members, so that they can keep everyone informed about important matters affecting the Society.

The National Council Office has an obligation to keep our contact information current. The vision of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is to “embrace the world in a network of charity.” Our membership database is the nucleus of that network. By keeping every portion of it accurate and up-to-date, we ensure that Vincentians across America stay connected and can embrace the world together. However, the National Office can only do this if Vincentians in Conferences and Councils throughout the US consistently update their information so it is accurate.

(Arch)Diocesan Council Presidents can request a username and password from the National Information Technology Specialist. Once they get their username and password they can give access to all District Council Presidents and Conference Presidents, who serve with them, to manage their own membership lists. In addition to managing Conference and Council membership lists, you can also do the Annual Report, Stores Annual Report and Special Works Annual Report online.

Note: The National Information Technology Specialist will issue a Username and Password for all Isolated Conference Presidents and District Council Presidents that do not have a Diocesan Council in place. If there is a National Council Member in the Diocese they are the issuing authority for that entire Diocese.

It is important to note that if your Conference puts its leaders in the National Database with appropriate leader titles, they will get email specific to their roles from National, Region, and possibly Council levels. All members in the database will get the weekly E-gazette. The National Office does not sell the mailing lists derived from the national database, although National will send members its own fundraising requests.

The online Annual Report, Stores Annual Report, and Special Works Annual Report will be available to you from September through February.

- Only isolated Conferences can send reports to the National Council office. If reports are sent from Conferences that have Councils, Membership services will return them or send them to the Council.

-
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Inside back cove



Strategic Plan



Society of St. Vincent de Paul USA | Strategic Plan

A network of friends, inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.

EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN OUR NETWORK OF FRIENDS



- Create a culture that encourages and values servant leadership
- Strengthen organizational capacity at Council and Conference levels
- Increase the number of members, Conferences and Councils
- Promote Vincentian cultural beliefs of "One Society" and friendship

ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT VINCENTIANS ON THEIR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY



- Celebrate our essential element of Vincentian spirituality
- Enhance the formation, and grow the number, of spiritual advisors at all levels in the Society
- Increase opportunities for Vincentian spiritual formation

ADVOCATE FOR AND WORK TOWARDS A MORE JUST WORLD



- Inspire membership to embrace Catholic Social Teaching
- Establish St. Vincent de Paul as a thought leader on poverty and justice
- Be a Voice for the Poor at national, state, and local levels

PROMOTE DEEPER AND MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE WE SERVE



- Deepen our understanding of the challenges of poverty
- Advance acceptance of those who are different from us
- Reinforce the importance of the Home Visit as a mutual transformational experience

DEVELOP, IMPROVE, AND EXPAND SERVICES



- Formalize a national process to share and promote model programs that can be replicated by member councils
- Strengthen and expand retail operations
- Strengthen and support Councils in providing housing and services to those without shelter
- Promote efforts to fulfill unmet community needs using the talents of our members

The Strategic Plan is continually updated in order to enable the Society to grow and become more effective in serving Christ's poor. The Strategic Plan is the plan for the entire Society in the United States. It belongs to each and every Vincentian.



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PART I:

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL COUNCIL PRESIDENT

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I. THE CALL AND DISCERNMENT

The Call to Leadership

“Leadership positions in the Society, at any level, are always to be accepted as service to Christ, the Church, the members, and the poor. Servant leadership is done in imitation of Jesus who said: ‘For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many.’(Mk 10:45)”

(Rule: Part 3, Statute 11)

Planning, Organizing, Implementing and Evaluating are the key elements for any organization’s success. As we read the New Testament Scripture we find that Jesus instilled these key elements during his life on earth. Jesus’ teaching formed the plan; choosing his Apostles and disciples and defining their roles was the organization; implementing his message became real and alive by the way he touched the lives of people; and his evaluation criteria was seeing how those who heard and experienced his plan were then able to live life to the full.

Leadership is what makes this process work. Therefore, Calling, Discerning, Accepting and Forming leaders become a central requirement for the continued viability of the organization. The mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul will only succeed if these elements are present in its life and work.

CALLING:

Every Vincentian responds to a call to live a life similar to Christ’s life in holiness and uplifting the lives of others especially those in poverty. This call and response is called a vocation. It raises one’s dedication as a total life experience rather than a ministry which calls for a partial commitment of time, talent, and treasure.

A Vincentian leader is called to cultivate the Vincentian vocation of their members and to lead by example. A leader is called to be a servant as Christ exemplified in his washing of the feet of his disciples. This call to leadership may take many forms: Your Vincentian community may ask you to lead them; current leaders may ask you to accept a leadership position; or the Holy Spirit may ignite a fire in you to step up and lead. Every Vincentian must be open to such a call as were Jesus’ disciples.

It is imperative that current leaders of a District or (Arch)Diocesan Council create opportunities to seek out ways for potential leaders to better understand and receive support to answer the leadership call. A powerful method is for the District or (Arch)Diocesan Council annually to conduct a leadership workshop to outline what a leader is and provide ways for potential leaders to discern their call.

DISCERNING:

It is important for a potential leader to take time to pray, reflect, study and discern their call to be a servant leader. Prayer and reflection with a Spiritual Advisor is recommended. Study of the Rule and Manual as well as this Council President Manual is important. Mentors can also be assigned to help potential leaders sort out the questions and to understand the Vincentian way to organize and lead.

ACCEPTING:

If you feel that God is indeed calling you to accept the role of leadership, trusting in his grace, make known your decision to the members who will then nominate you for election or appointment to an office.

FORMING:

The Vincentian Pathway

On the National Website, www.svdpusa.org, on the SVdP Members Information Site home page, there is a tab for Programs and Tools. Click on Pathway Toolbox and you will find a description of the resources available to fulfill the competencies needed for each leadership role. When you get to the Vincentian Pathway Toolbox page, you will find WALKING THE VINCENTIAN PATHWAY.

This web page provides a resource list for the Vincentian Pathway program. There are four phases to the Vincentian formative journey: Discovering, Developing, Deepening and Discerning. The first three phases define the journey of all Vincentians. Phase IV, Discerning, is that part of Vincentian formation in which we explore and prepare for our roles as leaders within the Society.

You will find that there are a lot of resources available. The possibilities for growth are tremendous. As more resources become available, the Toolbox can be expanded. When additional Vincentian roles are identified, formation resources for those roles will also need to be identified.

Invitation for Renewal

The *Invitation for Renewal* is a Vincentian Servant Leadership Formation Program for current and emerging Vincentian Leaders. It is offered twice a year. This program invites leaders to move forward in ways that are true to both our spiritual foundation and the needs of those who are living in poverty today. Participants accept the call to renew the Society today and beyond. If you have not participated in this program, plan to attend as soon as possible after assuming your leadership role.

Vincentian Leadership: Council President Manual

This manual attempts to address the key elements of forming Vincentian leaders to go forth in carrying out the mission of the St. Vincent de Paul. Leaders must review this manual frequently and the (Arch)Diocesan and District Councils will conduct training using this manual as the guide.



II. VINCENTIAN LEADERSHIP

Servant Leadership Positions

For a specific period of time the Society chooses qualified members for the various Council and Conference leadership positions who will carry out their tasks with the same dedication with which they work within their own Conference. It is important that officers at all levels participate regularly in meetings and charitable activities of the Society and visit the poor as often as possible.

The term of office for President is three years, once renewable. Once a President has served for two consecutive three-year terms, that person will not be eligible for re-election as President until a three-year term has elapsed under a different President. (No exception can be made.)
(Rule: Part 1, 3.6)

Our Rule calls us to a profound understanding of our call to become a Vincentian leader by telling us that “leadership positions in the Society, at any level, are always to be accepted as service to Christ, the Church, the members, and the poor.” **(Rule Part 3, Statute 11)**

A Conference helps people, a District Council helps Conferences, and (Arch)Diocesan Council helps District Councils. Whatever the group, they must be a team, especially at the Council level where Conference or District Council Presidents have a dual responsibility of representing the Conference at Council meetings and representing the Council at Conference meetings.

Successful SVdP leadership is based upon a deep understanding of the Vincentian vocation and spirituality. The ability to listen to others and to catalyze group decisions are evidences of capable leadership. The Society endeavors to cultivate this kind of Vincentian Servant Leadership.

“All decisions made by a Conference or Council must be made consistent with the Rule and Statutes of the Society, Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and governance policies of the Society.” **(Rule: Part 3, Statute 16)**



III. THE FOUNDATIONS AND SPIRITUALITY OF THE SOCIETY

Servant Leadership

“Vincentians are called to journey together towards 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.”

(Rule: Part 1, 2.2)

The mission of the Society is rooted in the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church. As a leader, the spirituality of the Society, as captured in our Mission, Essential Elements, Virtues and Key Beliefs, is now placed into your hands. It is also important for you to know and reflect on the lives of our Founders: St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac, Blessed Frederic Ozanam and Blessed Rosalie Rendu, so that you will know and understand the heart and soul of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It is then you can inspire your members to become true Vincentians.

Our Mission Statement:

Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, **leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually** by offering person-to-person service, to those who are needy and suffering, in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

As a reflection of the whole family of God, members, who are known as Vincentians, are drawn from every ethnic and cultural background, age group and economic level. Vincentians are united in an international society of charity by their spirit of poverty, humility and sharing, which is **nourished by prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings and adherence to a basic Rule.**

Organized locally Vincentians witness God’s love by embracing all works of charity and justice. The Society collaborates with other people of good will in relieving need and addressing its causes, making no distinction in those served because, in them, **Vincentians see the face of Christ.**

Our Essential Elements:

HOLINESS OF LIFE

- To bear witness to Christ and to his Church by showing that the faith of Christians inspires them to work for the good of humanity.

FRIENDSHIP

- To bring together men and women of good will and to assist them by mutual example and true friendship in drawing nearer to the Divine Model by fulfilling his essential precept, namely, the love of God in the person of others.

SERVICE TO THE POOR

- To establish a personal contact between its members and those who suffer and to bring to the latter the most efficacious and charitable aid possible.

Our Essential Virtues: (Rule: Part 1, 2.5.1)

Vincentians seek to emulate St. 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 charism, 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, sweetness 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:** 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.

Our Cultural Beliefs:

SPIRITUAL GROWTH: I grow in holiness through my prayer, Vincentian service and friendship.

ONE SOCIETY: I contribute to the success of our Vincentian work when I support ONE Society.

SERVANT LEADERS: I develop myself and others to become Servant Leaders.

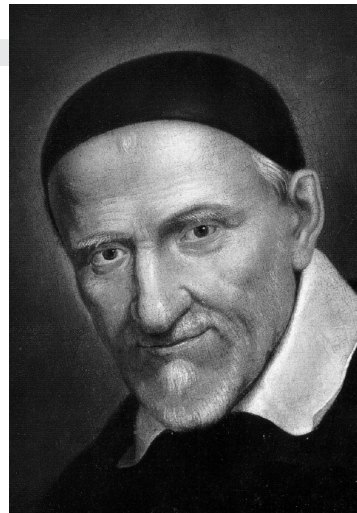
TODAY’S SOCIETY: I strengthen the Society by embracing new and diverse ideas and people.

EMBRACE ACCOUNTABILITY: I build a strong Society by holding myself and others accountable to our Mission, the Essential Elements, and good Governance.

INCLUSIVE PLANNING: I foster ownership by involving membership in planning and decision making.

ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE: I advocate with the poor for just policies and practices at local, state and national levels.

Our Founders: MODELS TO IMITATE



St. Vincent de Paul
(1581-1660)

Founder: Ladies of Charity 1617

Founder: Congregation of the Mission 1625

Co-Founder: Daughters of Charity 1633

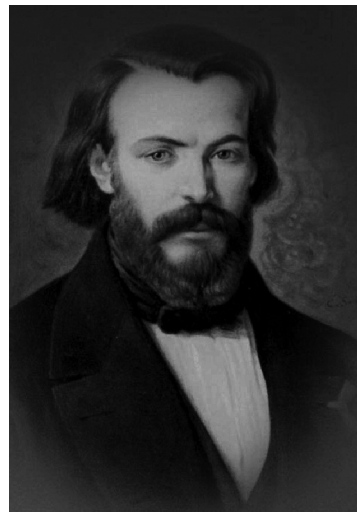
Feast Day: September 27



St. Louise de Marillac
(1591-1660)

Co-Founder: Daughters of Charity 1633

Feast Day: May 9



Bl. Frederic Ozanam
(1813-1853)

Founder of the Society of
St. Vincent de Paul 1833

Beatified: August 22, 1997

Feast Day: September 9



Bl. Rosalie Rendu
(1786-1856)

Daughter of Charity of
St. Vincent de Paul

Beatified: November 9, 2003

Feast Day: February 7

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Vincent de Paul, “the Father of the Poor,” had a life so varied and rich in the experience of charity that he has been the model for all kinds of good works within the Church. There were three foundations that would express his life work for the poor. One was the Confraternity of Charity (Ladies of Charity) begun in 1617, which enlisted lay women in serving the poor in the parishes. The second was the Congregation of the Mission (priests and brothers), founded in 1625 with a mission to preach the Gospel to the rural poor and to form men for the priesthood. The third was in 1633, when Vincent co-founded with Louise de Marillac the Daughters of Charity, a community of women consecrated by vow to serve the poor. St. Vincent de Paul is the patron saint of all charitable works.

ST. LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Louise de Marillac was a wife and widow, mother, teacher and co-founder of the Daughters of Charity. She took a small group of women and molded them into a community of total dedication of being “Given to God for the Service of the Poor.” Louise trained the Sisters to read, to write and to love and serve the poor in health care, social ministry and education. Above all she rooted the Daughters of Charity in the Vincentian spirituality of finding Jesus in the poor and the poor in Jesus, teaching them to be contemplatives in action. Louise also organized, directed, and animated the Confraternities of Charity (Ladies of Charity). St. Louise de Marillac is the patron saint of social workers.

The presence of **Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac** filled the landscape of France. They addressed the needs of all kinds of Poor: the refugees from the wars of religion, the foundlings, the beggars, the galley slaves, and they sought to address the injustices that occasioned these conditions. Above all, they were champions of collaboration in apostolic service. They invited and made welcome everyone: cleric and lay, men and women, young and old, rich and poor into the mission of service. The number of followers are a witness that their all-embracing invitation is still being answered.

BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM

Frederic Ozanam was born in 1813, and so lived at a time when France was reeling from the aftershocks of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. These and other events had all but destroyed the fabric of the country. Materialism and secularism were rampant viruses. People were distancing themselves more and more from God and the Church. Individualism was becoming ingrained and the corporal and spiritual needs of the poor were being neglected or ignored.

In the Providence of God there emerged a man of faith, intelligence and zeal, Frederic Ozanam. As a university student at the Sorbonne, Frederic helped to found the Conference of History. It was a kind of debating club formed to discuss historical and literary topics. The members would meet in the newspaper office of Emmanuel Bailly who became the facilitator of the meetings. It was at one of these meetings that Frederic and other Catholics were challenged to “Show us your

works!” This pierced the heart of Frederic Ozanam, and so he told a friend that they needed another conference, not for controversy or debate, but for the practice of charity. In April 1833, the Conference of Charity was born. It began with six students and Mr. Emmanuel Bailly as president and spiritual advisor.

BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU

Sister Rosalie Rendu, a well-known Daughter of Charity taught and mentored the first members of the Society to find the face of Christ in the Poor, in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. She taught them to respect the dignity and personal worth of each of God’s poor. She guided them to go two by two to visit the poor in their homes in imitation of Jesus who sent the disciples two by two.

Sister Rosalie, together with Emmanuel Bailly, encouraged the founding members to name the Conference of Charity the “Conference of St. Vincent de Paul,” after its patron saint. Frederic realized the need for a patron to inspire, motivate and direct the membership. He said:

“To choose a patron does not mean simply adopting a figurehead which will help us cut a good figure in the religious world. He is a model whom we must imitate, as he has imitated the Divine Model, Jesus Christ.

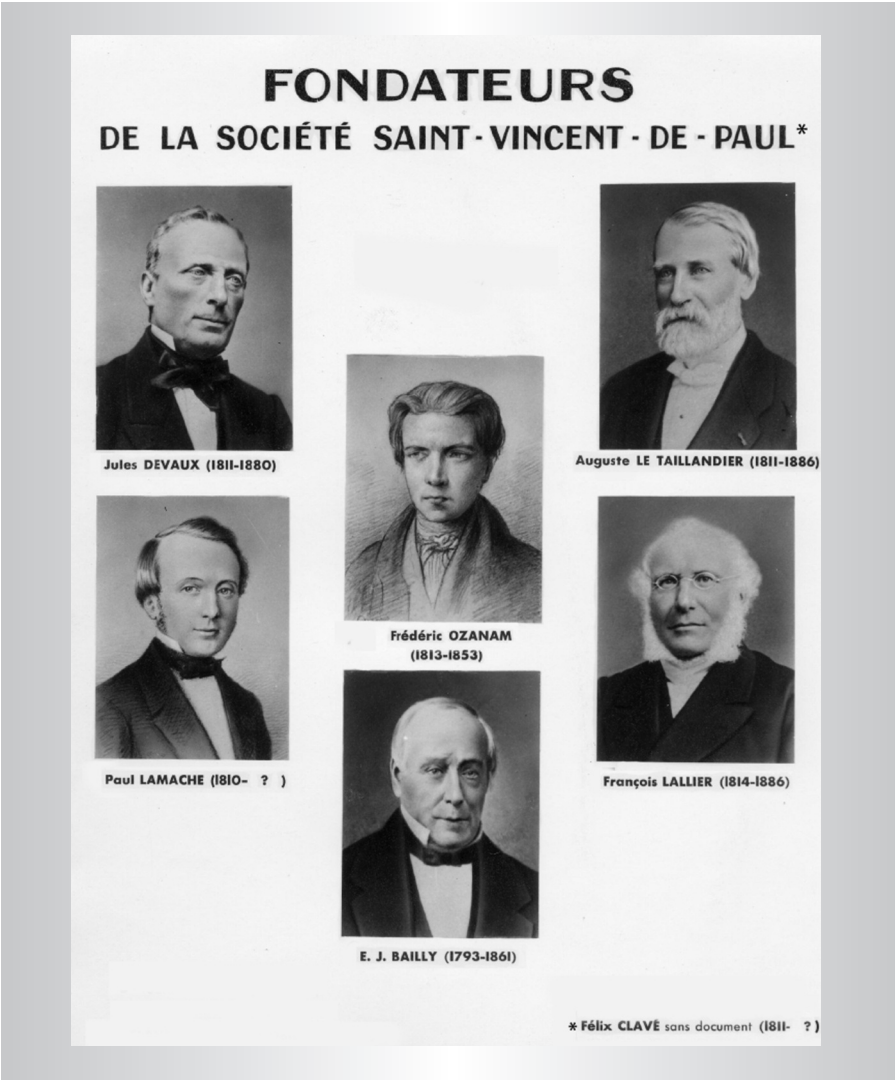
It means carrying on the work he started, acquiring his warmth of heart, catching up the threads of thought which were in his brain. He provides a model for us to copy on earth and a protector who will watch over us from heaven.”

THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

The mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is like the mission of Jesus (Lk 4): To bring the good news to the Poor, and to nurture life and hope where there is not much life and little hope. In the Vincentian spirit, it is not enough to bring the poor something to eat, but also to bring them God’s love. Our Founders understood that Jesus calls us to love those who are poor, hungry, thirsty, naked, strangers, imprisoned and sick. They understood that Jesus identifies Himself with such as these (Mt 25: 35-40):

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me....Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

The foundation and establishment of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul by Frederic Ozanam in Paris got hundreds of lay people involved in active service to the poor. The Society offered the laity an opportunity to fulfill the dual mandate of Jesus: Love God and love your neighbor.



Our Vincentian mission is indeed rooted in the virtues of charity and justice. Vincent said: “There is no charity that is not accompanied by justice.” And Frederic tells us: “Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveler who has been attacked. It is justice’s role to prevent the attacks.”

At Frederic Ozanam’s beatification ceremonies, August 22, 1997, Pope John Paul II told the world that:

“Frederic observed the real situation of the poor and sought to be more and more effective in helping them in their human development. He understood that charity must lead to efforts to remedy justice. Charity and justice go together. Frederic had the clear-sighted courage to seek a front-line social and political commitment in a troubled time in the life of his country... So it is that we can see Frederic Ozanam as a pioneer of the social doctrine of the Church which Pope Leo XIII would develop some years later in the encyclical ‘Rerum Novarum.’”(On the Condition of the Working Classes). (Pope John Paul II, 1997)

Indeed Frederic “envisioned the establishment of a network of Charity and social justice encircling the world.” (Rule: Part 1, 2.4)

WORDS OF OUR FOUNDERS

“After the love of God, your principal concern must be to serve the poor with great gentleness and cordiality, sympathizing with them in their ailments and listening to their little complaints, for they look on you as people sent by God to help them. You are therefore intended to represent the goodness of God in the eyes of the poor.”
St. Vincent de Paul, 1657

“As for your conduct toward the poor, may you never take the attitude of merely getting the task done. You must show them affection; serving them from the heart; inquiring of them what they might need; speaking to them gently and compassionately; procuring necessary help for them without being too bothersome or too eager.”
St. Louise de Marillac, 1647

“Because you see Christ in his poor, I know you will approach each one you visit with humility as His servant. Always remember, that if we had been through the hardships they have had to meet—if our childhood had been one of constant want—perhaps, we too, would have given way to envy and hatred, as I must admit have many of the poor in this quarter. But be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you bring them.”
Blessed Rosalie Rendu, 1833

“Knowledge of the poor and needy is not gained by pouring over books or in discussions with politicians, but by visiting the slums where they live, sitting by the bedside of the dying, feeling the cold they feel and learning from their lips the causes of their woes.”
Blessed Frederic Ozanam, 1845

CHALLENGES

Through your leadership as a Council President, you are an important part of the history of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Through your unselfish dedication to serve those in need you are continuing the “miracle” of spreading the Society throughout the United States. You will accomplish a great deal but the challenges that remain are even greater. St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac have given us the mission and Blessed Frederic Ozanam and Blessed Rosalie Rendu the vision. It is our responsibility to carry on the works so well begun.

Today we are challenged in the same way. **We cannot wait for the poor to come to us.** We must be proactive. We need to **“seek and find the forgotten, the suffering, or the deprived”** so that we may bring them God’s love. This is our prayer at every Conference meeting.

In the years ahead the Society will remain firm in its purpose and will be called upon to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. We must become advocates where the cause is just. Vincentians through direct service to those who are poor have long been in a position to identify the causes that often result in poverty. Indeed, Vincentians are qualified to advocate for justice in addition to offering charity to those in need.

Youth and Young Adults

Pope John Paul II urged all of us to prepare for the Third Millennium with special emphasis on “active” care for those in need. It is as though he is speaking directly to us in the Society and to all the Vincentian Family in “Tertio Millennio Adveniente.” His letter carries a special meaning for our youth since they are the future. He calls our young people “the hope of the Church.” They are also the hope of the Society. Our Society members must consistently, and in an organized manner, at every level, offer youth a challenge to serve the poor in the 21st century. It is a challenge we cannot ignore if we are to continue to bring new life and vitality to our Society. The Society is blessed that ever-growing numbers of young people have found, in Society work, an opportunity to grow in God’s love.

The Future

What of the Society’s hopes, plans and dreams as we walk into the future? We must make a sincere examination of our past and our previous services for the poor. We must be willing to admit to our shortcomings and be prepared to adhere more closely to our mission to grow spiritually by love and service to the poor and each other. Our future calls for greater “extension” of the Society into more parishes in this country. **We must look upon “extension” not as mere growth of our organization but as a responsibility we have to provide others with the opportunity to share our mission of service to the poor.**

The immediate future holds great opportunity for the Society to develop more effective ways of conducting collaborative works with those who share our common mission, especially with the whole Vincentian Family: Congregation of the Mission, Daughters of Charity, Sisters of Charity and the Ladies of Charity.

We look forward eagerly to the challenges of the future. We have risen to the demands of over 175 years of an evolving socio-political nation and will continue to pair the solutions with the needs in the years ahead.



IV. SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Presidents As Servant Leaders

Following Christ's example, the Presidents at all levels of the Society endeavor to be servant leaders. They provide an encouraging atmosphere in which the talents, capacities and spiritual charism of the members are identified, developed and put to the service of the poor and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The President of the Conference or Council will have special responsibility for promoting Vincentian spirituality.

(Rule: Part 1, 3.11)

Robert Greenleaf in his book on Servant Leadership gives three foundational questions that you can ask to see if you are a servant leader:

1. Do those served grow as persons?
2. Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?
3. What is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived?

Vincent, a servant leader, was always concerned about the growth of those he served. He would strike a fire in their hearts to see Jesus in the face of the poor. Vincent recruited ordinary people and asked of them extraordinary service. He looked for willingness and open hearts, and he always believed in them. Vincent gathered others to help with his projects. He did not look for stars but grew them and encouraged them! Vincent knew the goodness in people's hearts and called it forth. This is why the followers of Vincent de Paul are rooted in the desire to grow in spirituality, respect and friendship with others, and in person-to-person service.

Indeed, St. Vincent came to be a servant leader through prayer and scripture. **He was inspired by Jesus** who said, "Earthly kings lord it over their people. Those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. Yet it cannot be that way with you. Let the greater among you be as the junior, the **leader as servant**." (Luke 22:25-26) To be a servant leader, following in the steps

of Vincent, means to be always searching, listening, expecting that a better solution is possible. Indeed, Vincentians must always be seeking new and better ways to serve the poor which are consistent with our Rule and heritage.

Mission and Vision

The very essence of leadership, going out ahead to show the way, demands an openness to inspiration. Too many who presume to lead do not see clearly, and often they argue to preserve the system. It is true, that the leader needs more than inspiration. The leader initiates, provides the ideas and structure, and takes the risk of failure along with the chance of success.

Therefore, leaders must know the mission and the vision. **Leaders dream the dream and show the way.** Every achievement starts with a goal—a yearning for something that is currently out of reach. Indeed, Frederic's mission and vision for the Society were strong and clear. He derived his inspiration from prayer, reflection, his friends and the poor. He knew that everything depended on the Providence of God. He initiated a few things, listened to others and then on fire with grace and an overwhelming love for the poor, he organized for practical action. Frederic, a servant leader, honed his listening skills and became a listener-leader. Listening in respect and compassion gives the servant leader empathy and humility. The servant leader always accepts the person, but always challenges them to grow as persons to become healthier, wiser and freer.

Greenleaf tells us that leaders need to have "a sense for the unknowable and they need to foresee the unforeseeable." Vincent did this by letting others come up with the initial idea, he trusted in Providence and then he organized like mad. Leaders act on hunches, but calculated ones. Vincent was practical in all he did. He learned by doing and he was results-oriented. He consulted widely and reflected in prayer with great discernment, but his solutions were always practical, never theoretical. Frederic "envisioned the establishment of a network of charity and justice encircling the world." (Rule: Part 1, 2.4) Indeed Vincent and Frederic were disturbers and awakeners. They planted their vision firmly in the minds of their followers and never wavered from it. Their vision now lives on in us.

A Vincentian Servant Leader

As a Vincentian servant leader, you will also learn that you are not expected to do all of the work, but that you are called to delegate, encourage and inspire the members to work together to accomplish the mission. **Leadership in the Society differs greatly from commerce and industry because of its voluntary nature.** Accordingly, members need to be led rather than pushed, and persuaded rather than told. In the next several years your Conference is going to depend very much on you for its growth and development. The role of President is very important in the Society. You have taken on a responsibility to both your Conference and the people whom they serve.



V. VINCENTIAN FORMATION

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.

(Rule: Part 1, 3.12)

The formation and training of Presidents and members are the responsibility of Councils. Members seeking to help those who suffer must be so careful in their attitudes lest they offend. They must be conscious always of the dignity of people and conscious of the need to exercise justice and charity. We offer necessities in justice and luxuries in charity. Because these attitudes need to be learned, formation through seminars or meetings should be held at regular intervals so that members can learn and re learn them and the techniques of other members who are more experienced. **The Supply Catalog and Order form for all Vincentian materials** can be found on-line at www.svdpusa.org, click on “Shop” which is located on the home page.

Formation Resources

Vincentian Formation enables your Council to grow in spirituality, to renew and revitalize. The following Vincentian Formation materials are available from the National Office:

- **Vincentian Reflections (Cycle A-B-C)**
This important resource is to be used for Prayer, Reflection and sharing at Conference meetings (Based on the Sunday Scripture readings and Vincentian Feasts).
Also available FREE on www.svdpusa.org
- **Serving in Hope: Video and Formation Guide Series**
Module I: Our Vincentian Vocation
Module II: Our Vincentian Spirituality
Module III: Our Vincentian Heritage
Module IV: Our Vincentian Mission
Module V: Our Vincentian Rule
Module VI: Our Vincentian Conference
Module VII: Our Vincentian Home Visit
- **Vincentian Celebrations: Rituals and Ceremonies**
Prayer services for Annual Commitments, Commissioning, Funerals, Liturgies for our Founders, and other resource information.
- **Rule**
The Rule for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Reading and sharing on the Rule is recommended at Conference meetings.
- **Manual**
Fundamental information on the founders, history, spirituality and organization of the Society.
- **Spiritual Advisor Handbook**
A comprehensive training and resource handbook for spiritual advisors.
- **Seeds of Hope: Stories of Systemic Change**
Responds to the challenge of helping the poor emerge from poverty.
- **Voice of the Poor Guide**
An educational guide regarding the issues impacting the poor today.

- **Faces of Holiness: Portraits of Some Saints in the Vincentian Family**
by Father Robert P. Maloney.
- **Governance: Council and Board**
A manual describing the various aspects of governance for Councils and Board of Directors.
- **Governance Training**
A DVD and Participants Manual covering necessary information on how to effectively and efficiently run a Council. Intended for all present and potential officers, board members, committee members and others.

Ozanam Orientation

Membership in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is both a vocation and a ministry. It is a ministry not only to the poor and to those in need, but also to our own membership. Since our primary goal is growth in holiness, we should be striving constantly to help each other, to guide each other, to encourage each other in that growth. Therefore, it is imperative for all members to attend the Ozanam Orientation. The purpose of Ozanam Orientation is twofold. First, it is to introduce to new members **“who we are and what we are all about.”** Second, it is to re-acquaint existing members with our **“spirituality and heritage.”**

All elements of the National Ozanam Orientation Program are expected to be presented by the formators. **There are no optional items – no substitutions.** This is necessary in order to present a consistent message throughout the United States. Each Region and Council is expected to select and train people to be **Formators**. It is anticipated that two or three people should work together to present the **Ozanam Orientation**.



VI. SVDP ORGANIZATION

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.

(Rule: Part 3, Statute 11)

Conference

The Conference is the basic unit, “the grass roots” of Vincentian organization. It constitutes the heart of Vincentian life and charitable service. Virtually all of the Conferences in the United States are located in a Catholic parish, although other organizational units are allowed and can be recommended, e.g., School Conferences, Youth Conferences, University Conferences and Conferences of special interest groups, i.e., prisons.

District Council

A District Council unites Conferences from the same city or county, or other appropriate geographical division. Council size varies greatly. District Councils represent a minimum of three and ideally a maximum of twelve Conferences in an (Arch)Diocese. If no (Arch)Diocesan Council exists, the District Council keeps the Society in relationship with the Bishop.

(Arch)Diocesan Council

An (Arch)Diocesan Council unites the District Councils within a (Arch)Diocese, providing liaison and communication between them and the National Council. The (Arch)Diocesan Council keeps the Society in relationship with the Bishop.

National Council

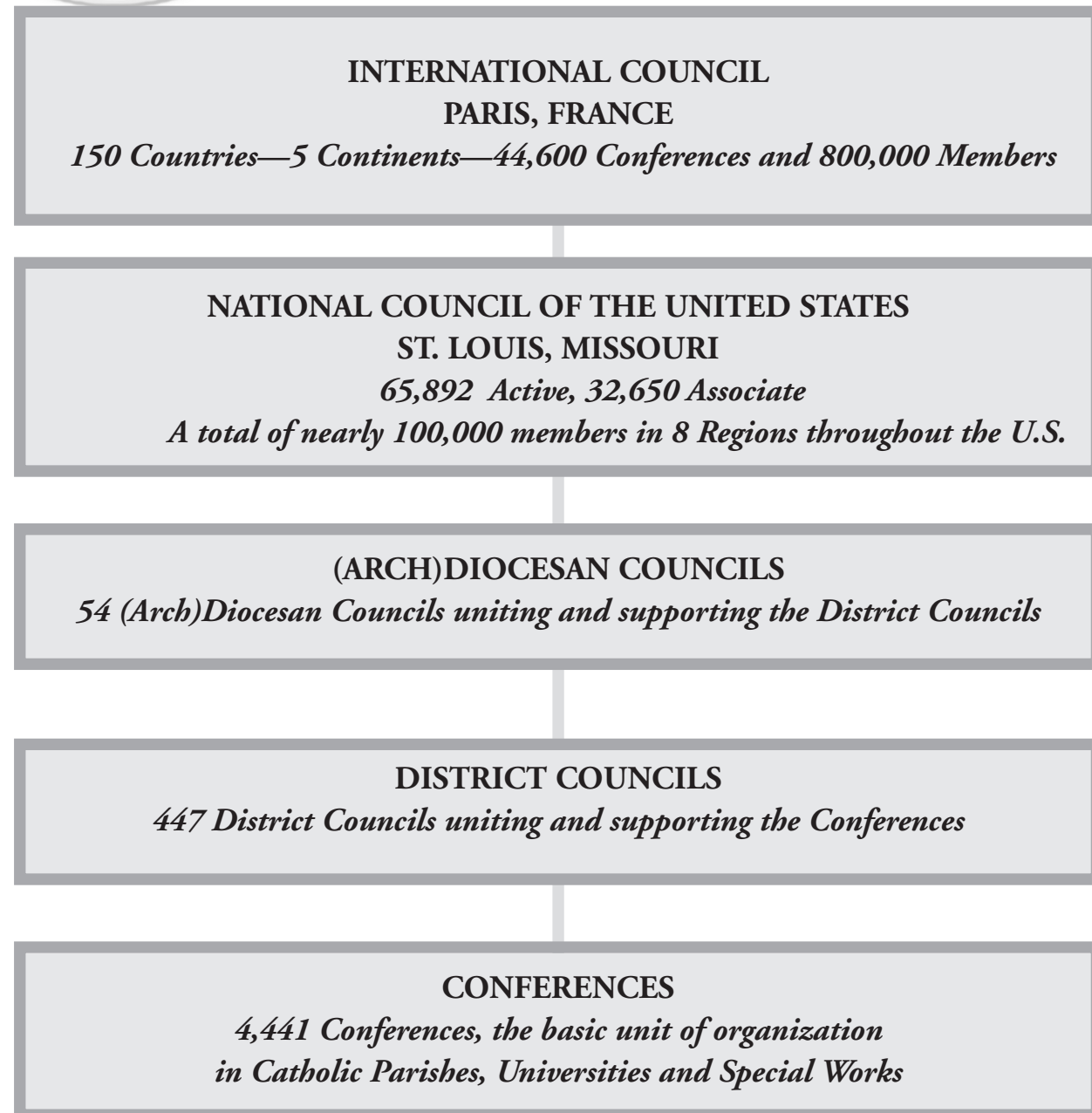
The National Council of the United States exercises jurisdiction over the Society throughout this country. The National Council approves the creation of (Arch)Diocesan and District Councils. The National Council President approves and requests their Institution from the Council General in Paris. The United States is divided into eight Regions.

International Council

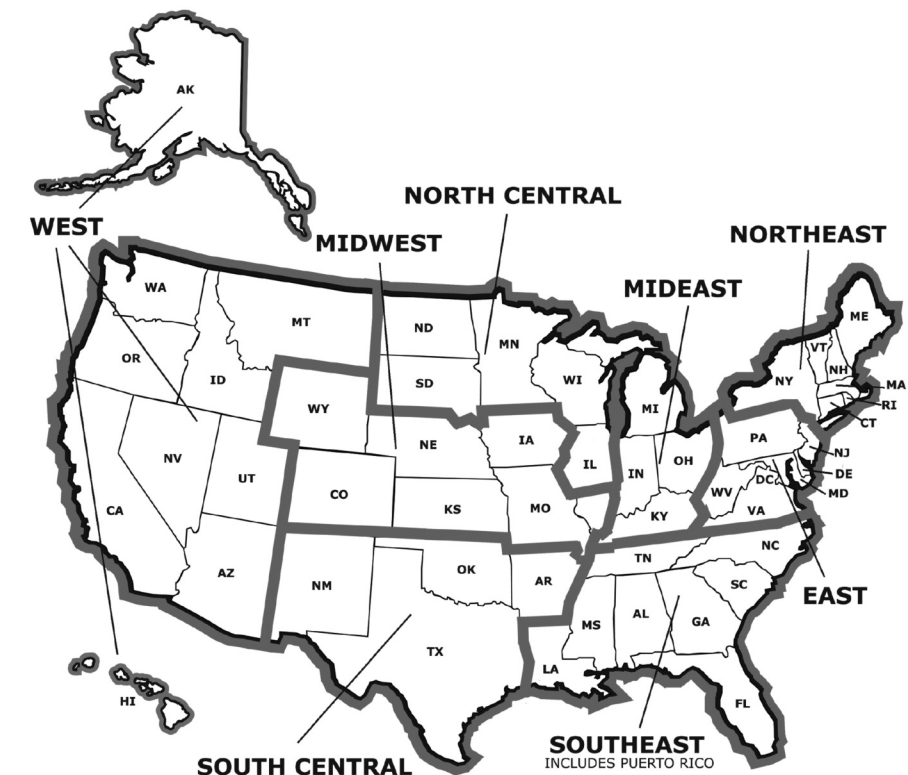
The International Council animates and coordinates the activities of the Society throughout the world. Presidents of National Councils are ex-officio members of the International Council. The International Council General can institute new SVdP Councils and aggregate (affiliate) new Conferences.



SVdP Organizational Chart



The Regional Structure



Eastern Delaware Maryland New Jersey Pennsylvania Virginia Washington DC West Virginia	Northeastern Connecticut Maine Massachusetts New Hampshire New York Rhode Island Vermont	North Central Illinois ² MI (Marquette) Minnesota North Dakota South Dakota Wisconsin	Midwestern Colorado IL (Belleville and Springfield) Iowa Kansas Missouri Nebraska Wyoming
Southeastern Alabama Florida Georgia Louisiana Mississippi North Carolina Puerto Rico South Carolina Tennessee	Mideastern Indiana Kentucky Michigan ¹ Ohio	South Central Arkansas New Mexico Oklahoma Texas	Western Alaska Arizona California Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada Oregon Utah Washington

¹excluding Marquette Diocese
²excluding Belleville Springfield Dioceses



VII. COUNCILS

Councils

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,
- provide communication to and from Conferences and higher Councils.

In summary, to promote the sense of belonging to a Society which encircles the world.

(Rule: Part 1, 3.6)

DISTRICT COUNCILS

As the first Conference grew in numbers, division into smaller groups became necessary. The founders were determined, however, to maintain the original spirit of belonging and membership. As one means of achieving this unity, District Councils were formed. Under this arrangement, all Conferences in a given city or area were brought together through representation and delegate participation. Each Conference President was accepted as an ex-officio member of the area District Council. Meetings, at least monthly, were and are recommended.

Helping is a keyword in every Vincentian dictionary. It describes not only the day to day services of the Society but also relationships among members and within the SVdP organization. *Mutual helping* is the kind of rapport between Conferences and Councils that Council organization is intended to encourage.

Conferences give to the Council their experiences, their ideas, a willingness to assist other needy Conferences and a sharing of responsibility for whatever special works are undertaken by the Council. Conferences take from the Council the knowledge and inspiration of all participants. Because of these insights, they are helped to expand their Vincentian horizons and sense of worldwide responsibility.

The Seven Duties of an Effective and Responsible District Council President

• 1st Duty: COMMITMENT

A District Council President must make a solemn **commitment** to:

- grow in understanding and living out the Vincentian charism. attend the regularly scheduled meetings of the (Arch)Diocesan and/or District Council.
- be adequately prepared to vote on the issues and policies that will be discussed.
- share ideas and concerns.
- serve no longer than two consecutive three-year terms before retiring so that new leadership might take over.
- make certain that Conference presidents serve no longer than two consecutive three-year terms before retiring so that new leadership might take over

• 2nd Duty: COMPREHENSION

A District Council President must **comprehend** and:

- understand fully the Rule of the Society and its applications.
- know the essential structure, operations and functions of each unit of the Society
- grasp the life and spiritual legacy of our Patron, St. Vincent de Paul, and the role of St. Louise de Marillac.
- identify with the life and spiritual legacy of our founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and study the role of Blessed Rosalie Rendu.

• 3rd Duty: COMMUNICATION

A District Council President must **communicate** in order to:

- share information received from the National Office, the National Council Member (formerly known as Trustee), or the Regional Vice President about issues, decisions, and policies with Conferences.
- express in appropriate ways and through appropriate channels any concerns, issues and ideas important to your District Council and the Conferences under it to the National Office and the National Council Member.
- remain informed about National, Regional, District, and Local issues.

• **4th Duty: CULTIVATION**

A District Council President must provide **cultivation** through formation in order to:

- help develop members both new and old (through Ozanam Orientations, Days of Recollection, Retreats, Serving in Hope Modules, etc.).
- help find, train and encourage Spiritual Advisors (delegating duties here can help).
- help develop new Conferences (delegating duties here can help).
- visit existing Conferences to build bonds of friendship.
- help develop special works if appropriate.
- encourage the formation of a Voice of the Poor committee and advocacy.
- work to implement the National Strategic plan.
- share Governance Training.

• **5th Duty: COLLABORATION**

A District Council President must **collaborate** with:

- Conferences and with other Councils (especially through approved Domestic and International Twinning arrangements).
- other members of the Vincentian Family.
- local pastors and the local bishop.
- other non-profit organizations, both secular and religious.
- Conferences to encourage close collaboration with pastors and to keep them informed about the work of the Society.

• **6th Duty: CHAIRPERSON**

As the **Chairperson**, the District Council President must:

- conduct regular, orderly meetings of the Council.
- delegate duties in a reasonable manner.
- make sure that all Conference Presidents are voting members of the Council Board.
- make appropriate appointments to the Council.
- facilitate and participate in discussion, helping to reach consensus, but cast one vote only in the case of a tie.

• **7th Duty: CONTRIBUTIONS**

A District Council President oversees **contributions** and financial matters and must protect the **credibility** of the Society by insisting on accountability to:

- insure that solidarity contributions (where applicable) are paid in an appropriate and timely manner.
- assure that the all Conferences submit annual reports, providing a complete accounting of all actions and income.
- be certain that the following issues are addressed:

1. Has the District Council insured that Conferences have tax exempt status and that this tax exempt status is maintained?
2. Has the District Council or each Conference complied with requirements of the IRS that organizations with annual receipts of \$50,000 or less must file a 990-N, and those with receipts under \$200,000 and assets under \$500,000 must file a 990-EZ? Others with receipts and assets exceeding these limits must file an IRS Form 990.
3. Does the District Council and each Conference have its own, or an appropriately assigned, EIN number needed for bank accounts.
4. Has the District Council explored the need for insurance coverage?
5. Does the District Council and each Conference conduct appropriate and timely audits?
6. Is the District Council incorporated? Should it be?
7. Are there appropriate Bylaws? (The National Council Office has approved Bylaws that can easily be modified.)

Unity

District Councils serve both to preserve the individuality of each Conference and to combine all in a strong union. Through the efforts of a Council it is possible to multiply the number of Conferences, increase the number of poor visited, increase funds collected and the good accomplished. The District Council promotes unity of direction, while maintaining the autonomy and freedom of its affiliate Conferences. The Council is a protection against the dangers of isolation, of fighting the battle alone. It provides support.

The District Council is so very important. It can and ought to be a powerful catalyst for SVdP enthusiasm, charitable action and Christian friendship. The Society's history makes it clear that, although the core of Vincentian effort is person to person on the Conference level, this spirit of charity needs to be sustained by the opportunity of meeting with one's brothers and sisters from other areas.

Responsibilities

Presidents of District Councils coordinate Conferences, and so they carry an important responsibility in the Society. They must:

- Conduct meetings.
- Visit Conferences.
- Install Presidents.
- Collaborate with other organizations.
- Oversee special works.
- Encourage twinning and projects.
- Make the work of the Society known.
- Be an effective unit in the National and (Arch)Diocesan Councils.

Communication

Letting everyone know what is going on is an important task. It is the responsibility of the District Council to keep the Conference Presidents advised of SVdP notices and activities. The District Council prepares special and annual reports of Vincentian works. As a responsible community organization, the District Council gives an accounting of its stewardship to the Church, the Community, and, where the structure exists, to its (Arch)Diocesan Council.

Some Committees and Special Works

Through committees, District Councils help maintain Vincentian mission and solidarity. They nurture the religious quality and practices of the Vincentian spirit; they seek to extend SVdP membership and charitable activities. District and (Arch)Diocesan Councils promote, organize and direct projects having community wide aspects. Some committees may include:

- **Extension** is a paramount and continuing responsibility. It includes the orientation and training of new Conferences and new Conference members. The Society must actively seek to recruit and retain members without regard to race, creed (with the exception of active members), color, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, age or physical handicap.
- **Formation** requires periodic but regular sponsorship of the Ozanam Orientation, workshops and retreats through which members can grow in holiness and become knowledgeable about ways of helping people and community resources.
- **Youth Work** includes efforts to recruit young people into the Society and to meet their special needs.
- **Networking** maintains contacts with public and other private social welfare groups.
- **Domestic and Overseas Twinning** establishes partnership ties between affluent and needy Conferences through the National Council.
- **Stores Committee** helps to define changes in policies and procedures for SVdP facilities for the distribution of contributed clothing and household goods.
- **SVDP Planning** entails study of community challenges relating to charity and justice issues and of the Society’s role in addressing these “unmet” needs.

(Arch)Diocesan Councils

The (Arch)Diocesan Councils have diocesan wide responsibility. Their work is similar to that of District Councils but there are differences. District Councils relate, as a rule, to Conferences in a more restricted geographical area, such as a city, or city district, or county. (Arch)Diocesan Councils, on the other hand, provide coverage for an entire diocese, including all cities and counties within that Diocese. There is another difference. District Councils minister to Conferences. (Arch) Diocesan Councils serve District Councils and some very Isolated Conferences within the diocese and, only indirectly, the Conferences that are already associated with their District Councils.

Because SVdP organizational life tends to be dynamic rather than highly formalized, the functioning of (Arch)Diocesan Councils has not been uniform throughout the United States. In dioceses where the Vincentian spirit is in full bloom and District Councils have progressively developed, the major task of the (Arch)Diocesan Council may be to serve as a forum for the regular exchange of ideas and progress reports. In such cases, quarterly meetings of those who constitute the (Arch)Diocesan Council may suffice. At least one general meeting annually for the total diocesan membership is ordinarily scheduled. In other dioceses, the (Arch)Diocesan Council may be given major responsibility for special works and projects, particularly when these involve considerable staffing and qualified management.

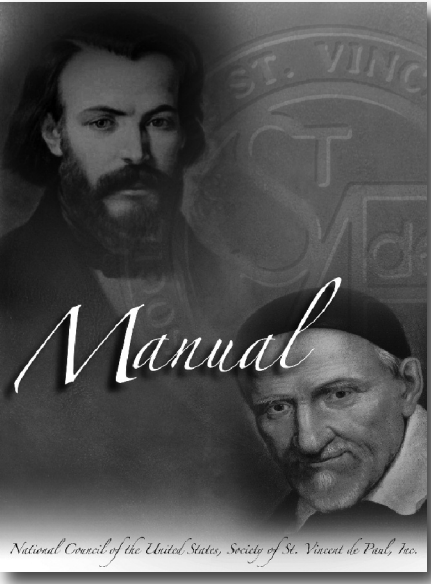
Responsibilities

(Arch)Diocesan Councils have responsibilities in such SVdP endeavors and programs as the following:

- They animate and coordinate the activities of the District Councils in their diocese.
 - They encourage initiatives and strive to bring about the establishment of Councils, Conferences and new works. They cooperate with District Councils in this sphere of activity.
 - They provide or help arrange formation and training sessions for District Council Presidents and officers.
 - They develop, or assist in developing, a diocesan wide disaster preparedness plan in accord with the National Council Disaster Plan.
 - They review and analyze the regular and annual reports of affiliated District Councils.
 - They represent the Society before the local Bishop and in diocesan planning bodies.
 - They constitute a principal point of contact between the SVdP National Council and the Society in any particular diocese.
 - They publish, if possible, monthly bulletins and distribute these among members and friends of the Society.
- (This is not meant as an inclusive list.)

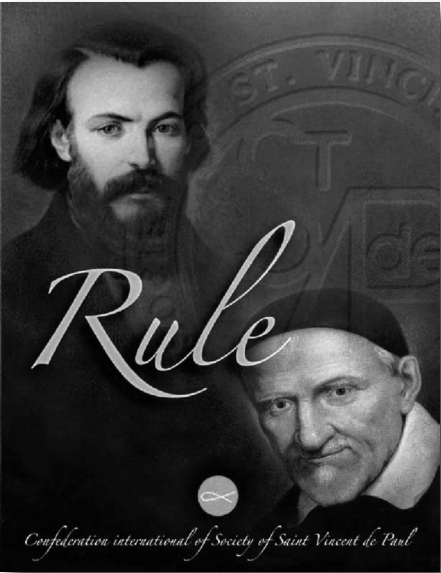
Rule

St. Vincent said, “Love your Rule and keep them as the road which God intends to lead you to Himself.” Therefore, the Rule is the primary document for the heart and soul of the Society. The latest Rule approved by the International Council, together with the U.S. Statutes, was published by the National Office in 2006.



Manual

Further important information may be obtained in the Manual, which is also available from the National Office.





VIII. ARCH(DIOCESAN) AND DISTRICT COUNCIL GUIDELINES

Conference and Council Annual Review

At least once a year, each Conference and Council must evaluate their service to the members, to the poor, the effectiveness of their special works, etc., and explore ways to provide better service. They should also consider new types of needs they may seek to alleviate and how to find those who are in need.

Each Conference and Council must, at all times, maintain accurate records and submit an annual report to the next higher council on forms provided by the National Office.

(Rule: Part 3, Statute 22)

The (Arch)Diocesan/District Council President

The President, as a servant leader, is the first among equals and, in the spirit of the Rule, must be the most humble of all. The President must be dynamic and patient, gentle and firm, have the spirit of youth, the wisdom of age, the capacity to lead, and implement the decisions of the Council. Clearly, the President must be a person of prayer, for who could possibly be all this without Divine guidance? The President's leadership must embrace the principles of subsidiarity and democracy.

The strength of the President lies in their example of living the Vincentian spirit and vocation. The effectiveness of a Council depends on the leadership of its President who should occasionally ask the following:

- Are the poor being found?
- Are they being effectively helped?
- Do the Conferences have sufficient members?
- Do members attend the meetings regularly?
- Are Conferences constantly seeking new members who are diverse in race, ethnicity, age, and gender?
- Is the Spiritual Advisor involved?
- Can the Conferences see beyond local needs?
- Is there collaboration with other organizations?
- Is the work of the Conferences known to others?

The Presidents should be prepared to confront many responsibilities and demands during the three to six years of their term in office. It is suggested that Council Presidents give first priority to Council duties after those of their family and livelihood.

The Board

A Council must have one **Vice President**, but may need two. The first task of a newly-elected President is to look for a possible successor. In addition to replacing the President when he/she is absent, a Council Vice President should visit Conferences when asked and specialize in some aspect of Council activities; e.g., recruitment, training, special works, collaboration with other organizations; depending on his/her talent and interest. A Secretary is needed to record the minutes of meetings, is responsible for correspondence, arranging meetings and other clerical work. A Treasurer is needed to maintain an up to date record of Council finances, and is responsible for completing the year-end report.

Installation of the President and Officers

The President and Officers are officially installed in their office through a Commission Ceremony conducted during a Council Meeting. The Prayer Services used for these occasions are found in the *Vincentian Celebrations: Rituals and Ceremonies* resource available from the National Office.

Meetings

One of the important tasks of a President is to conduct meetings. Anyone can conduct a meeting, but not everyone can conduct a good meeting, and a good chair draws people to his/her meeting while a poor one repels them. St. Vincent de Paul members, being committed to their vocation, attend meetings better than most; so, if members do not attend meetings they must be dull or ineffective meetings.

A good meeting is:

- **Interesting:** It must flow from topic to topic, with adequate time to discuss problems, without it becoming a bore. Preparation is a must.
- **Spiritual:** Prayer, reflection and sharing are important for the spiritual growth of the members. Spiritual Formation deepens the understanding of the Rule and helps the members grow in holiness.
- **Decisive:** Decision-making is the basis of most effective meetings. We are a collegial Society that is a body of equals, and members must feel that they make the decisions and not simply confirm the President's opinion. Whenever possible, all should be invited to express their view, especially the quiet ones. Decisions are often reached by consensus and not by voting. If contention arises, a decision should not be forced. The matter should be deferred for further prayer and reflection and raised at a later meeting.

- **Fraternal:** The most important characteristic of a Vincentian meeting is the fraternal spirit, for without that the meeting is a sham. The President sets the tone by his/her obvious concern for all the members. Meetings are the most effective form of communication in the Society structure. Councils should time their meetings to conform with other Councils at different levels so that communication flows up and down as well as across. Non attendance breaks this chain.
- **Agenda for District and (Arch)Diocesan Council Meetings:**
 - Opening Prayers and Spiritual Reading
 - Minutes of previous meeting
 - Treasurer’s Report
 - Welcome to new members
 - Announcements of interest
 - Correspondence summarized if necessary
 - Reports by Conferences, District Councils if a (Arch)Diocesan meeting, and Special Works (These are not given at every meeting, but staggered over the year.) or
 - Discussion on a new work
 - General Business (old and new)
 - Reflection by Spiritual Advisor
 - Closing Prayers
- **Agenda for District and (Arch)Diocesan Festival Meetings:**
 - Mass
 - Opening Prayers and Welcome
 - Report by Council President, membership, other Society works, finance, etc.
 - Report on Special Work, or Formation Talk by member, or
 - Guest Speaker on Social Welfare or appropriate topic
 - Spiritual Reflection by Bishop or Spiritual Advisor
 - Closing Prayers

Visitations

A President visits Conferences/Councils. In visiting, the President goes both to teach and to learn, to be a friend rather than a superior, to observe the agenda and waits to be invited to speak. Appreciating that a Conference/Council is almost autonomous, except in adherence to the Rule and the Bylaws, the visiting President should combine suggestions with support so the fraternal spirit of the association is not damaged. The President should be conscious that there is more than one way of doing things, and perhaps his/her way is not always the best.

Collaboration

The SVdP Rule requires that Councils cooperate with other organizations. Cooperation should not be restricted to information, but include activity, too. Vincentian Family collaboration is greatly encouraged.

Correspondence

Communication between Conferences and Councils is best made by personal contact. Even the telephone is second best. However, there are many times when the written word must be used. As the Conference forms part of the Council team, it can only be an effective team member if it has knowledge of the team’s goals and problems. Contact must be regular, informative and encouraging. If at all possible, Council Presidents should communicate monthly, mentioning points which arose at the last Council meeting, matters for discussion at the next meeting, items of general interest and, of course, the names of deceased members and benefactors.

Isolated Conferences working alone may be without regular meeting contact. Such Conferences especially should communicate with the National Council regularly, seeking guidance on problems, giving annual reports of activity and on matters of finance.

Records

Effective administration requires easy and quick reference to what has gone before, and this means records. A Conference President needs a minute book with provision for details of families adopted, roll call and general items of information found helpful. A Council President needs this and some files for specific subjects. Suggested files include spiritual formation or training information, one for each special work and one for each Conference or Council attached to the Council. These confidential records are best kept in secure locked files. Consult the Manual of the Society for advice on record retention.

Publicity

It is necessary to publicize the works of the Society for the following reasons:

- those who need help learn where to find it;
- those who wish to join learn where to find it;
- those who wish to help learn how; and
- so that our works will bear witness to Christ.

Annual reports must be compiled by Councils for the information of the National Council and ultimately the International Council General. Regional, Diocesan and District Councils should publish annual reports so that the Church, civil authorities, the community and our benefactors know what has been achieved.

Newspapers, local and Catholic, should be informed of Society events which are taking or have taken place in the area. Radio and TV are interested in news, and they will often help with an appeal for a special project or objective. “Open” days for special works are a worth while publicity venture, whether or not funds are required. Include social media when appropriate.

Signs and the National logo on Society buildings should identify the Society with the work, even if the name of the work does not.

The National President is the only official spokesperson of the Society on national issues. The elected Council President is the official spokesperson for the Society on local issues.

Foreign Twinning

Conference twinning with foreign Conferences should be encouraged, and it would be ideal if every American Conference had an overseas twin. The spiritual aspect of overseas relief should not be forgotten. Councils must approve the twinning of their Conferences and guarantee the financial commitment. Conferences are expected to raise their own twinning money by church collection, social function, Conference funds, etc., and Councils should encourage them to do so. Council twinning assists overseas Councils in their administration. It involves an exchange of ideas, literature, etc., and a variable financial commitment. All foreign twinning is coordinated through the National Council.

Advocacy

Vincentians, through their experiences in home visits, are qualified to advocate for justice in addition to offering charity to those in need. The “Voice of the Poor” advocacy committees operate at all levels of the Society across the United States. In the spirit of Frederic Ozanam, we know that charity provides only temporary alleviation of pain and suffering, but it is not enough. The Society calls for the identification and elimination of the cause of the need in the first place. This demands charity and justice, and so we speak for the preferential protection of the poor and vulnerable particularly for those who are afraid to speak or cannot speak for themselves.

Special Works

Councils are responsible for the management of special works, and special work chairpersons are appointed by Council Presidents after consultation with the Council. Special works are developed to satisfy needs that arise in the Council area. Council Presidents should regularly consider the services provided in their area with the aim of proposing new special works to their Council should the need be there. Existing special works include, but are not limited to:

- Stores for clothing, furniture, etc.
- Food Pantries and meal service
- Specialized Facilities for Alcoholics
- Criminal Justice Ministries
- Summer camps
- Sheltered work centers
- Homes for aged
- Temporary shelters and housing programs
- Free Pharmacies

Contracts to buy property or build should be carefully drawn up in accord with legal requirements and all pertinent building statutes and should have the approval of the District and (Arch)Diocesan Council Boards.

Finance

A Council needs a treasurer, a bank account and funds to work with. Its income is derived from dues from Conferences or Councils, income from special works, donations, collections at festival meetings and other money raising activities. Where there is a store or center within a Council area, it is usual for it to be overseen by a committee representing and reporting to that Council. Income resulting from the work should be transferred to the Council on a regular basis. Council expenses include formation and training, postage, stationery, traveling expenses of Council officers, grants to needy Conferences, Councils and special works, expenses of meetings, twinning payments, central office rent and staff services.

Formation and Training

The National Office sponsors a leadership formation program for current and emerging Vincentian leaders called “**Invitation for Renewal.**” The program is intended to help the Society return to its roots to better understand its mission and values, and to develop and strengthen leaders to move the Society forward in ways that are true to both our spiritual foundation and the needs of those who are poor today. The program is conducted twice a year in St. Louis, and the National Council and/or the Local Council has scholarships available.

Spiritual Advisor

As a Catholic organization, the Society is spiritually-based, and our Rule calls for the participation of a Spiritual Advisor. The spirituality of members is an important responsibility of the President. Therefore, all Conferences and Councils need Spiritual Advisors who need to have the formation necessary to understand their role and should be supported in fulfilling it.

Councils encourage the spiritual life of their members by mentoring them in use of the formation materials produced by the National Office. Councils observe the patronal feasts of the Society with liturgy on a day close to it that is convenient for the members. They also arrange retreat days for spiritual recollection and formation.

The Council Spiritual Advisor has the following responsibilities:

- Be the direct liaison and advocate on spiritual matters with the bishop
- Assist the Council President to communicate the value, works and needs of the Society to the local Diocesan administration and parish communities
- With Council and Conference members, seek ways in which the Society’s ministry and mission have a complementary role in relationship to Diocesan programs and social services
- Attend, when and where possible, regional and national meetings and participate actively in the spiritual components of these meetings
- Understand and encourage the development of Vincentian spirituality in him/herself and in the members of the Council.

In collaboration with the Spirituality/Formation/Training Committee, the Council Spiritual Advisor:

- Assures that Spiritual Advisors have the qualities necessary and appropriate to their role.
- Organizes formation/training sessions and materials for Conference Spiritual Advisors
- Frames the spiritual portion of Society gatherings. This will necessitate attendance and participation at these gatherings
- Guides Conference Spiritual Advisors on matters of Vincentian spirituality
- Supervises the spiritual growth and development of the Conferences
- Arranges for retreats, days of recollection and Vincentian liturgical opportunities for Ozanam Sunday, the feast of Blessed Frederic on September 9th and the feast of St. Vincent de Paul on September 27.

Council Executive Director

Many Councils hire an Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who serves as the primary resource to the Council Board of Directors, participating as a partner with the elected and appointed Council leadership in the promotion, development, and support of the Society. As a specialized ministry within the Society, this position provides stability, consistency, and professional administrative services to the Council and its affiliated Conferences.

The Executive Director is under the direction of the President of the Council, who, after consultation with the Council’s Board of Directors, fills and terminates this position. The Board of Directors determines the duties and responsibilities of the Executive Director based on the needs of the Council. The Executive Director consults with the Board President regarding all St. Vincent de Paul operations and acts as a consultant to Council officers, Conference Presidents and Society members. The Executive Director keeps the Board informed of the state of the Council and its ministries, the needs of the community, and welfare trends.

This is a key position requiring full-time commitment, loyalty to and knowledge of the mission and values of the Society, together with professional skills. The Executive Director is responsible for the fiscal and operational management of the Council as it relates to local policy and the Rule of the Society.

Further information about this position may be obtained from the National Office.



IX. NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER

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.

(Rule: Part I, 3.9)

The (Arch)Diocesan Council President assumes the additional role of service as a National Council Member of the United States. This National Council position is accepted with the humility of Frederic, the strength of Vincent and the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ for His Poor.

The Council of the United States was instituted by the International Council General on November 21, 1915 with authority over all of the Society in the United States of America. The United States Manual of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul states that “the National Council of the United States represents the Society in this country, animating and coordinating its various activities and assisting the Councils attached to it.” (Manual p.42) It is fully empowered to deal with the religious and civil authorities of the country.

Governance and Leadership

The National Council is directed by a President, the National Board and the National Council Members who ensure that the Rule and the basic principles and policies of the Society are respected and carried out. The corporate Bylaws of the Council of the United States requires an annual meeting of its National Council Members and makes provision also for a Midyear meeting of this governing body. National Council Members of the United States have the honor, privilege and, most importantly, the obligation to advance the Mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and to assist its National President in providing the governance and leadership necessary for its operation.

National Council Members have the added responsibility of assisting their brother and sister members of the Society to “grow spirituality” by their person-to-person service to the needy and suffering, in the traditions of our Founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, our patron, St. Vincent de Paul, and our Patroness, Mary, Our Mother Immaculate.

- The National President (elected by the general membership).
- The duly-elected and currently serving President of the highest level Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in each (Arch)Diocese. If there are several Councils of the Society of equal level in any (Arch)Diocese, then the President of the first Instituted Council among these is qualified as the National Council Member (Resolution, Boston, 1996).
- Former National Presidents.

The Seven Duties

of an
Effective and Responsible National Council Member

• 1st Duty: COMMITMENT

- A National Council Member must make a solemn **commitment** to:
- grow in understanding and living out the Vincentian charism.
 - insure that solidarity contributions are paid in a timely manner.
 - attend the regularly scheduled meetings of the National Council and the Region.
 - be adequately prepared to vote on issues and policies that will be discussed.
 - serve on a National Committee, if asked to do so.
 - share ideas and concerns.
 - serve no longer than two consecutive three-year terms before retiring so that new leadership might take over.

• 2nd Duty: COMPREHENSION

- A National Council Member must **comprehend** and:
- understand fully the Rule of the Society and its applications.
 - know the essential structure, operations, and functions of each unit of the Society.
 - be familiar with the life and spiritual legacy of our Patron, St. Vincent de Paul, and of our Founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

• 3rd Duty: COMMUNICATION

- A National Council Member must **communicate** in order to:
- share information about issues, decisions, and policies with Councils and Conferences.
 - express in appropriate ways and through appropriate channels any concerns, issues, and ideas important to the Council and its Conferences.
 - remain informed about national, regional, district, and local issues.
 - be prepared for public relations issues.

• 4th Duty: CULTIVATION

- A National Council Member must provide **cultivation** through formation in order to:
- help develop members both new and old (through Ozanam Orientations, Days of Recollection, Retreats, Serving in Hope Modules, etc.).
 - help find, train, and encourage Spiritual Advisors.
 - visit existing District Councils and Conferences to strengthen bonds of friendship.
 - encourage the formation of Voice of the Poor committees and advocacy.
 - work to implement the National Strategic plan.
 - share in Governance training.

• 5th Duty: COLLABORATION

- A National Council Member must **collaborate** with:
- other Councils and Conferences in the local area, the state, the region, in the United States or abroad (especially through formal Twinning arrangements).
 - with other members of the Vincentian Family.
 - with other non-profit organizations, both secular and religious.
 - the local Bishop and keep him informed about the work of the Society.

• 6th Duty: CHAIRPERSON

- Every National Council Member is also a Council President and as such will be the **Chairperson** of meetings that will discuss and share National Council matters at home. The Nation Council memeber should then always be prepared to:
- conduct regular, orderly meetings of the Council.
 - delegate duties in a reasonable manner.
 - make sure that all Conference Presidents or District Council Presidents are are voting members of the Council Board.
 - make appropriate appointments to the Council.
 - facilitate and participate in discussion, helping to reach consensus, and casting one vote only in the case of a tie.
 - discuss and make plans to implement any policies or decisions made by the National Council.

- **7th Duty: CONTRIBUTIONS**

A National Council Member oversees the **contributions** and financial matters and must protect the **credibility** of the Society by insisting on accountability to:

- insure that solidarity contributions are paid in an appropriate and timely manner.
- assure that the all Councils and Conferences submit annual reports, providing a complete accounting of all actions and income.
- be certain that the following issues are addressed:
 1. Has the National Council Member insured that all Conferences and/or Councils have tax exempt status and that this tax exempt status is maintained?
 2. Has the District Council and each Conference complied with requirements of the IRS that organizations with annual receipts of \$50,000 or less must file a 990-N, and those with receipts under \$200,000 and assets under \$500,000 must file a 990-EZ? Others with receipts and assets exceeding these limits must file a Form 990.
 3. Does each Council or Conference have its own, or an appropriately assigned, EIN number needed for bank accounts?
 4. Has each Council or Conference explored the need for insurance coverage?
 5. Does each Council or Conference conduct appropriate and timely audits?
 6. Is the Council incorporated?
 7. Are there appropriate Bylaws and have they been regularly reviewed (usually every three years)?

Responsibilities

- **National:** Each National Council Member is expected to attend the National Council of the United States Annual Meetings. The Member is expected to register by submitting the Registration Form and Credential Form which are sent in advance of the National Meetings. He/she is also expected to read, study and be prepared to vote on issues and policies in the best interests of the Society.

In attending the National Council Meetings, the Member represents his/her Council and has the responsibility to represent other District Councils in the Diocese where there is no (Arch)Diocesan Council, and should express issues and concerns of the local Council(s).

Although attendance at the business meeting of the National Meetings takes priority over all other meetings at the National Meeting, National Council Members may also be asked to attend and serve on National Committees. These Committees meet regularly during the National Council Meetings but do not conflict with the National Business Meeting.

Following each National Meeting and on an ongoing basis throughout the year, the Member should report to Vincentians in his/her Council, and to any other District Councils in the Diocese, relevant National Council issues, decisions and policies. The Member is the key link in the communication process of keeping the first-line Vincentian informed and a participant in the work of the Society nationwide.

- **Regional:** The National Council Member is expected to attend Regional Meetings also on an annual basis and to serve on Regional Committees for the good of the Society. Members should maintain close contact with and provide support to the Regional Vice President on a regular basis.
- **District Council:** The National Council Member should attend the Council meetings and functions of District Councils within his/her jurisdiction as often as possible. This will assure that he/she is informed and aware of activities and issues within the (Arch)Diocese and that the Council can lend support as appropriate. The National Council Member should also urge District Council Presidents to visit the Conferences in their District Council to support, educate, inform, and offer suggestions to Vincentians and to stress the importance of Aggregation of Conferences.
- **Local:** The National Council Member must:
 - understand the spirituality of the Society, and have a commitment to Vincentian Formation.
 - have a working knowledge for application of the Society’s Rule at all levels: National, (Arch)Diocesan, District and for Conferences.
 - know the basic and essential structure, operations and functions of each Society unit.
 - have a well developed plan for Conferences to recruit new members, and/or District Councils to develop new Conferences and to extend the Society within the Diocesan area.
 - establish an active plan to assist the Conferences and/or District Councils to form Youth Conferences with their eventual integration into the local Conferences and/or District Councils and consider including youth members on the Board.
 - review the Council’s Bylaws to assure they are in accordance with the Society’s Rule and Bylaws; send a copy to the National Council to ensure Rule adherence and for not-for-profit status. Be sure your Council is tax exempt either through your own 501(c)(3) IRS Status or by inclusion with the National SVdP Group Exemption.
 - assure your Council has adequate insurance coverage for its operations (liability, property, auto/truck, etc.). There is a limited group insurance program available through the National Office for small Councils and Isolated Conferences without property. For information contact the National Office.
 - make use of the Council Self-Evaluation /Accountability Questionnaire annually which is distributed by the National Council.
- **Council Meetings:** The National Council Member is the convener of Council meetings. He/she should set the schedule of meetings for the Council, establish agendas and ensure that they are mailed out in advance. With the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting and pertinent materials related to the agenda should also be sent.

- **Vincentian Spirituality and Formation:** During the course of a year, at selected intervals, the National Council Members should ensure that the Ozanam Orientation and Days of Recollection are scheduled for all Vincentians. Vincentians need to be introduced to and strengthened in the concept of Vincentian spirituality, the Rule of the Society and the many ways to assist the Poor.
- **Committee Chairs:** The National Council Member should appoint committee chairs and urge that committees function on an ongoing basis. At a minimum the Council should have the following standing committees: Vincentian Formation and Spirituality, Disaster, Special Works (Stores, etc.), Voice of the Poor and Development.
- **Publicity:** In a modest but straight forward manner, the work of the Society within the (Arch)Diocese should be known to the greater community. This is essential for community support and to encourage prospective Vincentians to join the Society. Good vehicles of a public information program include newspaper articles, radio, television and parish bulletins. To foster effective public information it is suggested the National Council Member appoint a standing public information or communication committee. Include social media when appropriate.
- **Contact with the Bishop and other (Arch)Diocesan Officials:** The National Council Member should send a letter with a copy of the Council's Annual Report to the Bishop. Also, the Bishop, church officials and pastors should be kept aware of the Society's activities and issues as a matter of courtesy and to maintain their support.
- **Twinning:** All Vincentians should shun parochialism and be willing to reach out to the Poor beyond the Conference or Council boundaries as resources permit. In this regard, the National Council Member has the responsibility of promoting Twinning within the Council from Conference to Conference, Council to Council within the Region, throughout the United States from Council to Council, and, throughout the world, from local Conference to local Conference.
- **Collaboration:** In the spirit of cooperation, the National Council Member should maintain contact with other charitable organizations in the (Arch)Diocesan community. There are many ways in which organizations can assist each other in the common goal of helping the poor without sharing financial resources. Likewise, in these days of limited resources, duplication of services in a community is a waste of resources. Vincentians should not be competing with other organizations in service to the poor.

- **Communication:** All Vincentians in the (Arch)Diocese should be kept informed by the National Council Member about activities and issues within the Council, throughout the United States, and the International Council. The National Council Member must take steps to ensure that each Vincentian receives Frederic's E-Gazette by updating the member's contact information in the database at the National Council of the United States, as well as any other National and Regional newsletters. Likewise, the National Council Member must ensure that someone continues a local newsletter or letter from the National Council Member periodically.
- **Legal Requirements:** The filing of local, state and federal documents by each (Arch)Diocesan Council is the responsibility of the National Council Member. Obviously, this function can be delegated to the Treasurer of the Council or the Executive Director as appropriate.

The National Council Member should also ensure that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Council Annual Report be completed and filed with the National Council on an annual basis by March 1. Likewise, the Solidarity Contributions are due to the National Council as soon as possible after the start of the fiscal year, October 1. The National Council coordinates the work of the Society nationwide and maintains the unity of the Society.
- **Special Works:** In order to ensure financial viability and good business practice, the National Council Member must oversee all Special Works of the Council. The actual day-to-day activities should be delegated to a Special Works Committee which must report at every Council meeting. Minutes of the Special Works Committees and their financial statements should be disseminated to the National Council Member, as well as to all Council Board members on a monthly basis.
- **Good Governance:** The National Council Member ensures that the Council is structured in compliance with the Rule, has Bylaws that are reviewed on a regular basis, adopts Governance Process Documents if required, has a Conflict of Interest Policy, provides insurance, and follows good governance principles.

As a National Council Member you have the honor and the obligation to advance the Mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. If your Council has a professional business like operation, tempered with Vincentian spirituality, flexibility, sensitivity, compassion and love for your sister and brother Society members, you will have the organizational support of the Society to serve the Poor in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and Bl. Frederic Ozanam.



X. VISIONING AND PLANNING

The Strategic Plan

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.

(Rule: Part 1, 7.1)

The Society is called to look to the future with ways and means not only to sustain those in poverty but to search and implement plans to eliminate poverty. Many feel it is impossible when they recall Jesus' words: "The poor will always be with you." This statement is true because of the human state. However, Jesus strived his entire life to change this vision of life to a new paradigm of faith, hope and love, and anyone who followed this way would have life to the full.

St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam shared these possibilities creating organizations and structures to guide this vision. Thus was born the Vincentian Family and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Today the Society in the United States has created a Mission Statement and Vision to achieve Jesus' aspiration of humanity. We have placed our plans and actions in the hands of Divine Providence to lead our way.

St. Vincent de Paul understood achieving visions and ideals require that they must be clearly defined, thoroughly planned and clearly achievable for those working in the "vineyard." Today we call this process strategic visions and plans to achieve the vision.

Strategic Plan

In 2000, under the leadership of then-National President Eugene Smith, the National Council of the United States approved a Strategic Plan for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The Strategic Plan is continually renewed in order to enable the Society to grow and become more effective in serving Christ's poor. The Strategic Plan is the plan for the entire Society in the United States. It belongs to each and every Vincentian.

In 2011, the National Council under National President Sheila Gilbert approved a wide-ranging updating of the Strategic Plan of the Society with the theme to "End Poverty Through Systemic Change." The plan redirects our efforts to change the lives of those in poverty not only by sustaining their existing life conditions but also by giving them tools and mentors to move them out of poverty.

Goal 1. Enable spiritual growth and leadership development throughout the Society.

Goal 2. Develop communication resources to serve persons living in poverty, members, donors and collaborators.

Goal 3. Achieve unity at every level of the Society.

Goal 4. Embrace systemic change to deepen solidarity for and with those living in poverty.

Goal 5. Establish collaborative relationships with diverse organizations around issues of poverty.

Goal 6. Execute a comprehensive development program for coordinated national and local giving to fund the Society's mission and values.

The Servant Leaders and the Strategic Plan:

- Study, reflect and pray for God's Spirit in leading the Society in this endeavor.
- Share your enthusiasm with the members you lead and invite them to join you in the effort.
- Make a local implementation plan that is realistic and pragmatic for your area.
- Train membership in the Building Bridges out of Poverty process.
- Identify and begin collaboration initiatives with organizations.

Transforming the Culture

To guide the Society into the future, the National Council decided in January of 2015 to simplify the elements embodied in its Strategic Plan and to build a culture of accountability in the Society that would lead the Society forward in achieving its goals. To do so, during 2015 and 2016, it received input from many Vincentians across the country as well as from an outside consultant (Partners in Leadership). From this input the Society learned that what we believe as part of our organization's culture moves us to actions which in turn lead to final results. Although this may sound simplistic, nevertheless it really works. Acting on this input and information, the Society decided to embrace the seven Cultural Beliefs identified by members as part of our organization's culture and it hopes to achieve the following four Key Results by being faithful to and acting on these beliefs:

CULTURAL BELIEFS

SPIRITUAL GROWTH:

I grow in holiness through my prayer, Vincentian service and friendship.

ONE SOCIETY:

I contribute to the success of our Vincentian work when I support ONE Society.

SERVANT LEADERS:

I develop myself and others to become Servant Leaders.

TODAY'S SOCIETY:

I strengthen the Society by embracing new and diverse ideas and people.

EMBRACE ACCOUNTABILITY:

I build a strong Society by holding myself and others accountable to our Mission, the Essential Elements and good Governance.

INCLUSIVE PLANNING:

I foster ownership by involving membership in planning and decision-making.

ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE:

I advocate with the poor for just policies and practices at local, state and national levels.

KEY RESULTS 2016-2021(See the website www.svdpusa.org <<http://www.svdpusa.org>> for the most current target metrics.)

1. Increase Number of Active and Associate Members (from 96,000 to 250,000)

- Increase Formed and Revitalized Vincentians
- Increase Diversity in Membership and Leadership
- Increase Conferences and Councils

2. Increase Number of Councils/Conferences utilizing Systemic Change Strategies (from 20% to 80%)

- Focus on getting people out of poverty

3. Increase Number of People Served (from 14 million to 20 million)

- Increase and renew home visits
- Increase Services through Special Works

4. Increase Income of all Councils/Conferences (from \$375 million to \$925 million)

5. Local Council Key Result



THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OFFICE

The National Council Office for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of the United States is located in St. Louis, Missouri. It was in St. Louis, at the Basilica of St. Louis (the Old Cathedral), that the first Conference of the Society started in the United States in 1845, only twelve years after the founding of the Society in Paris.



National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul

58 Progress Parkway
Maryland Heights, MO 63043 3706
Telephone: (314) 576 3993
Fax: (314) 576 6755
E mail: svdpusa.org
Website: www.svdpusa.org

The National Council Office provides leadership, formation, technical assistance, management training and resource development to the Councils and Conferences in the United States. The National Council Office is managed by the Chief Executive Officer.

National Council Services:

The National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul provides leadership and support for the growth and health of the Society's Councils, Conferences and Special Works. The National Council enables the Society to better serve its local communities by creating materials for the spiritual formation of the members; networking information on advocacy and justice issues; and facilitating the response to the needs of those who are poor throughout the world by Twinning and giving assistance to victims of disaster.

National Database

Every organization depends upon effective communication to achieve its goals (Rule: Part 1, 3.15). The Society's Strategic Plan calls for improved communications at all levels. The National Office staff strives to make sure that the National database has accurate and complete information on all members so that they can keep everyone informed about important matters affecting the Society. The National Council Office has an obligation to keep our contact information current. The vision of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is to "embrace the world in a network of charity." Our membership database is the nucleus of that network. By keeping every portion of it accurate and up to date, we ensure that Vincentians across America stay connected and can embrace the world together.

(Arch)Diocesan Council Presidents can request a username and password from the National Information Technology Specialist. Once they get their username and password they can give access to all District Council Presidents and Conference Presidents who serve with them to manage their own membership lists. In addition to managing Conference and Council membership lists, you can also do the [Annual Report](#) and [Stores Annual Report](#) online.

Note: The National Information Technology Specialist will issue a Username and Password for all Isolated Conference Presidents and District Council Presidents that do not have a Diocesan Council in place. If there is a National Council Member in the Diocese they are the issuing authority for that entire Diocesan Council.

Notes

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE US SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Council President Guidelines Errata

P. 3

Under the section discerning, **Council President Manual** should read **Council President Guidelines**

P. 4

Vincentian Leadership: Council President Manual

This manual attempts to address the key elements of forming Vincentian leaders to go forth in carrying out the mission of the St. Vincent de Paul. Leaders must review this manual frequently and the (Arch)Diocesan and District Councils will conduct training using this manual as the guide.

This should instead read:

Vincentian Leadership: Council President Guidelines

These Guidelines attempt to address the key elements of forming Vincentian leaders to go forth in carrying out the mission of the St. Vincent de Paul. Leaders must review these guidelines frequently and the (Arch)Diocesan and District Councils will conduct training using these guidelines as the standard.

P. 5

The lead-in quote from the Rule, Part I, 3.6, is no longer in the current version of the Rule. We offer the following to replace both the lead-in and the first paragraph:

Part III, Statute 11: Servant Leadership

Leadership positions in the Society, at any level, are always to be accepted as service to Christ, the members and the poor. Servant leadership is done in imitation of Jesus who said: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk 10:45)

Our Rule calls us to a profound understanding of our call to become a Vincentian leader by telling us, as indicated in the quote above, that "leadership positions in the Society, at any level, are always to be accepted as service to Christ, the Church, the members, and the poor." (Rule Part 3, Statute 11)

Replace last paragraph with the following:

It is important to note that when decisions are made consensus is the usual approach taken. Our Rule indicates:

Rule Part III, Statute 16:

"To ensure democracy in the Society decisions are often made by consensus. Consensus decision-making requires that everyone agree with a decision, not just a majority as occurs in majority-rule processes. In consensus-based processes people must work together to develop an agreement that is

P. 6

good enough, though not necessarily perfect. In rare circumstances, if consensus cannot be reached the decision may be put to a vote.”

The listed Mission Statement is now referred to as the Identity Statement of the Society:

“Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service, to those who are needy and suffering, in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

As a reflection of the whole family of God, members, who are known as Vincentians, are drawn from every ethnic and cultural background, age group and economic level. Vincentians are united in an international society of charity by their spirit of poverty, humility and sharing, which is nourished by prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings and adherence to a basic Rule.

Organized locally Vincentians witness God’s love by embracing all works of charity and justice. The Society collaborates with other people of good will in relieving need and addressing its causes, making no distinction in those served because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ.”

The new Mission Statement is:

“A network of friends, inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.”

P. 7

Holiness of Life

Friendship

Service to the Poor

These should instead read as they are in The Rule Part III, Statute 1:

Spirituality

Friendship

Service

The description of ZEAL is incorrect. It should instead read as follows: “a passion for the full flourishing and eternal happiness of every person.” (See Rule Part I, 2.5.1)

P. 9

The Congregation of the Mission was formed in 1625 for the purpose of preaching missions to the poor country people.

It was Emmanuel Bailly, not Ozanam, who founded the Conference of History. Frederic Ozanam joined, encouraged other young men to join, and actively participated in the discussions of the Conference of History.

P. 15

The following sentences should have the word Council instead of Conference:

In the next several years your Conference is going to depend very much on you for its growth and development. The role of President is very important in the Society. You have taken on a responsibility to both your Conference and the people whom they serve.

P. 17

Important to add to this list of Formation Resources the New Member Handbook that has been developed by the National Council.

P. 18

It is important to note that you should consult with the Diocesan Council or Regional Formation Chair for more information. You can obtain a copy of the latest Formation Guidelines on the national website: <https://www.svdpusa.org/Portals/1/Vincentian%20Formation%20Guidelines-%20Revised%20November%202019.doc>

P. 19

Quote at the top of the page is from the Rule Part I, 3.6 and not from Part III, Statute 11.

P. 24.

4th Duty bullet 6: Along with advocacy various systemic change programs and initiatives should also be considered.

6th Duty bullet 3: This refers to Councils that do not have separate boards. Some Councils have a separate Advisory Boards.

P. 25

1 the word “insured” should be “ensured.”

2 Be alert that IRS guidelines can and do change. Always check for the current ones.

5 This should read “audits or financial reviews.” So there is no confusion. The professional accountants always point out that audit has a very specific meaning to them.

Under Responsibilities, 3rd bullet. It does not necessarily have to be a formal installment ceremony. That may prove to be impractical in some cases.

Under Responsibilities, 5th bullet. The following phrase should be added for clarification: “or ensure that there is an appropriate board and/or paid staff who can do so.”

P. 28

Quote from Rule at the top of the page is from Rule Part III, Statutes 22 and 23.

P. 32

Special Works: Please note as clarification that most special works are run by paid staff, who are hired by an advisory board. Standard Bylaws typically have the Council President appoint members of advisory board with approval of the Council.

At bottom Contracts: The best advice we can is the following: if you intend to own property or have paid staff, your Council should institute an advisory Board of professionals with appropriate and up-to-date skills to oversee these works. This board may be up to 50% non-Vincentians.

P. 43

The newest strategic plan is the following:

Society of St. Vincent de Paul USA | Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021

A network of friends, inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.

EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN OUR NETWORK OF FRIENDS

- Create a culture that encourages and values servant leadership
- Strengthen organizational capacity at Council and Conference levels
- Increase the number of members, Conferences and Councils
- Promote Vincentian cultural beliefs of “One Society” and friendship

ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT VINCENTIANS ON THEIR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

- Celebrate our essential element of Vincentian spirituality
- Enhance the formation, and grow the number, of spiritual advisors at all levels in the Society
- Increase opportunities for Vincentian spiritual formation

ADVOCATE FOR AND WORK TOWARDS A MORE JUST WORLD

- Inspire membership to embrace Catholic Social Teaching
- Establish St. Vincent de Paul as a thought leader on poverty and justice
- Be a Voice for the Poor at national, state, and local levels

PROMOTE DEEPER AND MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE WE SERVE

- Deepen our understanding of the challenges of poverty
- Advance acceptance of those who are different from us
- Reinforce the importance of the Home Visit as a mutual transformational experience

DEVELOP, IMPROVE, AND EXPAND SERVICES

- Formalize a national process to share and promote model programs that can be replicated by member councils
- Strengthen and expand retail operations
- Strengthen and support Councils in providing housing and services to those without shelter
- Promote efforts to fulfill unmet community needs using the talents of our members

P. 44

Key Results are no longer the ones listed here.

P. 45

The National Office moved in early 2020 from 58 Progress Parkway to a larger building nearby. The new address is:

66 Progress Parkway
Maryland Heights, MO 63043 3706

P. 46

In view of recent changes the section on the National Database should read as follows:

Every organization depends upon effective communication to achieve its goals. (Rule: Part I, Article 3.15) The Society’s Strategic Plan calls for improved communications at all levels. The National Office staff strives to make sure that the National database/“Member Portal” has accurate and complete

information on all members, so that they can keep everyone informed about important matters affecting the Society.

The National Council Office has an obligation to keep our contact information current. The vision of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is to “embrace the world in a network of charity.” Our membership database is the nucleus of that network. By keeping every portion of it accurate and up-to-date, we ensure that Vincentians across America stay connected and can embrace the world together. However, the National Office can only do this if Vincentians in Conferences and Councils throughout the US consistently update their information so it is accurate.

(Arch)Diocesan Council Presidents can request a username and password from the National Information Technology Specialist. Once they get their username and password they can give access to all District Council Presidents and Conference Presidents, who serve with them, to manage their own membership lists. In addition to managing Conference and Council membership lists, you can also do the Annual Report, Stores Annual Report and Special Works Annual Report online.

Note: The National Information Technology Specialist will issue a Username and Password for all Isolated Conference Presidents and District Council Presidents that do not have a Diocesan Council in place. If there is a National Council Member in the Diocese they are the issuing authority for that entire Diocese.

It is important to note that if your Conference puts its leaders in the National Database with appropriate leader titles, they will get email specific to their roles from National, Region, and possibly Council levels. All members in the database will get the weekly E-gazette. The National Office does not sell the mailing lists derived from the national database, although National will send members its own fundraising requests.

The online Annual Report, Stores Annual Report, and Special Works Annual Report will be available to you from September through February.

- Only isolated Conferences can send reports to the National Council office. If reports are sent from Conferences that have Councils, Membership services will return them or send them to the Council.
- Council Presidents can give Conference Presidents access to enter annual reports online. Conference reports are entered individually and then consolidated at the District and Council level.
- The Web application will consolidate the conference reports at the District and Council levels. Council or District Presidents will verify and finalize consolidated reports.

Please Note: It is the Diocesan Council President's responsibility to see, at a minimum, that the 501c3 status and Leadership roles for the Council are kept up to date in the National DB, and that District Councils and Conferences do the same. Without that, National cannot send focused information to people in different roles.

These errata approved by the Leadership Task Force in August 2020.



The Spirituality of Leadership: Becoming a Conference President - A wonderful way to serve the poor.

(SVdP National Task force in Leadership)

Potential leaders often say, “The reason I joined the Society is to serve the poor”: the implication being that becoming a leader will somehow diminish this admirable reason. One might consider the following dialogue:

Potential leader: “I only want to serve poor people”.

Experienced Vincentian Leader: “That is admirable. You don’t need us, go ahead and serve those in need”.

Potential leader: “But where do I get the money to help with the rent and utilities?”.

Experienced Vincentian Leader: “Good question. You will need to find some donors”.

Potential leader: “But people who donate want to deduct their donations on their taxes.”

Experienced Vincentian Leader: “Well, to do that we need to form an organization, specifically a 501(c)(3) organization which includes proper governance and legal guidelines”.

Potential leader: “I see. So, then we need leaders of this organization. I am beginning to understand. Then it does take an organization and its leaders to fulfill the mission of serving the poor?”.

Experienced Vincentian Leader: “You have said it well. Indeed, an organization’s leaders are definitely serving the poor and in no way is a person’s desire to serve the poor diminished by the act of leadership”.

Organization is essential to serving the poor in a sustainable manner. It then follows that for an organization to succeed it must have good leadership and therefore becoming a leader in the Society is very much involved with growing in holiness and serving the poor. *In order to serve the mission of an organization, the organization is sustained by both its members and its leaders*

Our Identity Statement says we lead “men and women to join together to grow spiritually.” As baptized Catholics, we should all have spiritual growth as a priority in our lives. We are called daily to know, love and seek to imitate Jesus, the ultimate servant leader. He tells us that without Him we can do nothing. As Jesus took Peter, He takes us and, although we can give Him little, He takes what we give and multiplies it as He did with the loaves and fishes. As one assumes the leadership role, Jesus is there to guide and help. Leadership is a wonderful opportunity to grow closer to Jesus and He generously provides.

Consider that *serving as president of the conference provides a different platform from which to enhance a leader’s own spiritual life and allows leaders a unique opportunity to promote spirituality to other Vincentians.* It gives leaders the opportunity to associate with other leaders and develop new friendships while at the same time, sharing common experiences and exchanging ideas.

It also allows leaders to broaden their perspectives and skills, some of which are even transferable to other occupations or vocations. Serving in a leadership position allows a member to gain a greater appreciation of the worldwide network of charity that was the vision of Blessed Frederic Ozanam. If you are considering such a position, it is important to incorporate prayer in your discernment process in order to open yourself to the opportunity and prepare the conference for new leadership.

Leadership in the Society is based on an understanding of our Vincentian vocation and our spirituality. Its success is based on servant leadership and an ability to listen and promote group decisions. The servant leader is a servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, and a conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society: Will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived?

After you have reflected on the above discussion and prayed about how you can serve the Society, let the Holy Spirit lead you. What a wonderful opportunity to increase your service to those in need in our communities.

Reference

Who Me? Why in the World Should I become a Vincentian Leader; SVdP White Paper (Revised March 23, 2016) [svdpusa.org > Members > Documents > Governance in a Box > Governance Initiatives > Item no. 2]

Succession Planning Requires Preparation and Training

What does succession planning really mean within the Society of St. Vincent de Paul? Essentially it refers to Conferences and Councils being prepared, at the time that a President's term of office nears its end, to present to membership Vincentians who are qualified and willing to take on the role of Conference or Council President. Realistically, succession planning relates to all officer positions, as well as committee chairs, etc. Achieving this goal requires preparation and training. To be more specific, it requires three parts preparation and three parts training.

1. **Preparation Part 1:** Throughout the life of the Conference member, he/she should be exposed to regular re-enforcement of the idea of growing into some role in Conference and/or Council leadership. This is something each member should be encouraged to consider from the day he/she joins to Society.
2. **Training Part 1:** The Ozanam Orientation is the basic formation/training that all Vincentians need to experience. The National Council recommends that all members not only attend an Ozanam Orientation at least once but suggests attending again every few years as a refresher. It is also recommended that all members read the document "Who Me? Why in the World Should I Become a Vincentian Leader?"
3. **Preparation Part 2:** Promotion for the election of President should begin when the newly elected President takes office. He/she should identify a few members of the Conference or Council with leadership potential and begin encouraging/coaching them so they will be ready and willing to put their names in as candidates for the election. One year before the next election, the election process and the need for a new President and officers should be promoted.
4. **Training Part 2:** Throughout the term of the President, he/she should be coaching those selected for leadership roles. The greatest encouragement (or discouragement) comes from the personal example shown by the current President and officers. How they view and execute their roles will make those roles look enticing or frightening.
5. **Preparation Part 3:** The election process for President should be moved back by at least six months. This gives time for the newly elected President and his/her appointed officers to shadow the current officers and become prepared to take on their new roles on October 1.
6. **Training Part 3:** Before the new officers take office and soon afterwards, the President and other officers should take advantage of all training programs and resources available to help them understand their roles. There are many resources to help in this area that can be found on the National Council website (such as Conference President Training, Servant Leadership Workshop, and many others).

Succession planning is not difficult but it does require effort. It is easy to put off doing anything in this respect, but it is not wise. You don't want to come to the time of election and only have one candidate – the one who steps in because no one else will. This may not be the right person for the job.



WHO ME? WHY IN THE WORLD SHOULD I BECOME A VINCENTIAN LEADER?

Vincentians have a general misunderstanding of what taking on leadership positions within the Society truly means, especially when it comes to assuming the office of president of a conference or council. Members might not appreciate the benefits of assuming the role of a conference or council leader. With this in mind we sought input from a number of council presidents around the country who were selected randomly.¹ This paper is based in large part on their feedback and experiences. Believe it or not, leaders told us there were personal benefits to be gained from serving as a conference and council president and of course there are benefits to the Society which translate into being better able to serve those in need. Please read on.

Growth in Personal Spirituality and Fellowship

Our Mission says we lead men and women to join together to grow spiritually. As Catholics, we should all have spiritual growth as a priority in our lives. We are called daily to know, love and seek to imitate Jesus, the ultimate servant leader. He tells us that without Him we can do nothing. As Jesus took Peter, He takes us and, although we can give Him little, He takes it and multiplies it as He did with the loaves and fishes. As one assumes the leadership role, Jesus is there to guide and help. Leadership is a wonderful opportunity to grow closer to Jesus and He generously provides.

Consider that *serving as president of a conference or council provides a different platform from which to enhance a leader's own spiritual life and allows leaders a unique opportunity to promote spirituality to other Vincentians.* It gives leaders the opportunity to associate with other leaders and develop new friendships while at the same time sharing common experiences and exchanging ideas.

It also allows leaders to broaden their perspectives and skills, some of which are even transferable to the job or business world. Serving in a leadership position allows a member to gain a greater appreciation of the worldwide network of charity that was the vision of Blessed Frederic. If you are considering such a position, it is important to incorporate prayer in your discernment process in order to open yourself to the opportunity and prepare the conference/council for new leadership.

Benefits to the Society

At the same time leaders provide a major service and benefit to the Society. Without leadership, service to the poor becomes ineffective and chaotic, and sustainability of individual conferences and councils becomes a concern. St. Vincent de Paul stated that for charity to be efficient it must be organized. It is a time-tested truth that leadership is as important to the service of the poor as any other role in the Society.

Leadership is essential to help make the Society a more effective source of help to the needy and allows fresh ideas to be brought into the operation of conferences and councils. It helps take the stress off other Vincentians and enables one to move the Society forward by promoting the Rule and the formation of goals and objectives.

¹ In July 2014 we sought input from council presidents in different areas of the United States and received feedback from council presidents in seven of the eight regions.

Using Time Wisely Through Delegation

Among the concerns expressed to us for why members are reluctant to step into leadership by running for conference or council president is that leadership positions take too much time away from family and career, involve too many expectations, require too many meetings, and that there is not enough training and formation available. As presidents and leaders we depend on others and as members we follow our Rule that tells us family and business needs come first. As a first among equals and as servant leaders *presidents help others to grow into leadership roles by appointing officers and committee chairs so that leadership becomes a team effort*. They should consider people of diverse gender, ethnic and racial background in their leadership team. By spreading the work among officers such as vice presidents, secretaries and treasurers, and by making use of committees, the work can be shared and others become vital parts of the leadership team. Presidents do not need to attend all committee meetings. They appoint committee chairs who will accurately report back to them and to the membership. Committees provide the opportunity to identify capable candidates to move into future leadership roles thus ensuring succession of good leaders.

Building Experience

One of the recommendations we offer is to move the timing of the presidential nomination process and election up by several months. A number of leaders who responded to our request for input agreed. *We recommend beginning the nomination process one year in advance of the expiration of a president's term and holding the election up to six months before the start of the term of the new president*. The natural question is: Why should this be done? There are many professional organizations that elect presidents a year in advance so that there is a president-elect for up to one year before his or her term begins. *It gives an incoming president more of an opportunity to learn what has been going on, both the good and bad, and helps foster objectives going forward*. It allows for a much smoother transition. It allows newly elected presidents to not only develop more knowledge about the Society but also size up membership in order to feel comfortable with selecting officers and appointing board members and committee chairs.

Developing Knowledge

Some qualified Vincentians think they won't know what to do or how to handle the position of president or any other leadership position for that matter. Resources available from the national office that will assist Vincentians include:

1. The Rule
2. The Manual
3. Standards of Excellence
4. Governance: Council/Board handbook
5. Governance-in-a-Box
6. Conference and Council President handbooks
7. Guide to Diversity/Multicultural Issues handbook
8. Council President and Executive Directors: Process for a Successful Partnership document
9. National mentoring program materials
10. DePaul University's Values-Centered Leadership Course (online)²

² <http://leadership.depaul.edu/vcl-level-i.html>

Recommended resources from your local council may include:

- Bylaws
- Legal documents (e.g., 501(c)(3), 990s, etc.)
- Job description(s)
- Annual budget
- Year-end financials from previous years
- Minutes from council board meetings from previous months and years

These are concise handbooks and documents that provide all a leader will need to know about the Society's rules, procedures and policies – documentation that will put to shame many large commercial organizations. *In addition, the Society has developed a Governance Training program available to all members.*

Recommended activities for presidents-elect during the transition period:³

- Participate in the national mentoring program.
- Observe local board meetings.
- Meet with current president to discuss (arch)diocesan or district council operations on a monthly basis.
- Meet with current president to discuss activities at regional, midyear and national meetings.
- Meet with current leadership team to discuss the inclusion of gender, ethnic and racial diversity on the future board.
- Attend regional, midyear and/or national meetings.
- Attend Invitation for Renewal leadership retreat.
- Meet with regional vice president (in person if possible).
- Meet with national council member.
- Include past president as ex-officio member of your future board and council.

Leadership in the Society is based on an understanding of our Vincentian vocation and our spirituality. Its success is based on servant leadership and an ability to listen and promote group decisions. The servant leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve and a conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society: Will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived?

After you have reflected on the above discussion and prayed about how you can serve the Society, take a look at our proposed plan of action. Let the Holy Spirit lead you.

³ Assuming a six-month overlap with president and president-elect.