

# OZANAM NETWORK



Issue N° 4 - December 2017

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- FamVin : Symposium with Pope Francis in Roma
- World Day of the Poor
- CGI in actions
- Strategic plan : a guideline
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# EDITORIAL



Dear fellow members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul,

## *Happy Christmas!*

It is with a great joy that I address you today, from the International General Council, this message of peace, unity and fraternity, in this holy time of Christmas.

- Christmas is Christ living in our hearts, not only on December 25th but every single day of our lives, and living in our Conferences.
- Christmas is the Holy Family of Nazareth, which taught us how to live, in our family and in the struggle for the values and principles of the Gospel.
- Christmas means to receive the poor, the pilgrim, the prisoner, the hungry, the thirsty, the sick and finally to welcome all those who suffer any kind of need, as the Child Jesus taught us.
- Christmas is also when we reject terrorism, hunger, injustice and suffering, as the Lord Jesus condemned evil and took us in with his infinite kindness.

Each of us, Vincentians, are part of this main role, together with Christ and with the Church, in order to build a better, more just and less unequal world, a world with more opportunities for everybody.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our light, be the source of inspiration in our lives! The encounter with Christ, through charity, will take us to the salvation.

May all of you live a holy and blessed Christmas with your families; and may we renew our Vincentian zeal throughout 2018, which will be "the International Year of Lallier", one of the founders of our dear Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

May Mary, our Mother, protect us!

Receive a fraternal embrace in Saint Vincent and Frederic Ozanam!

Praise our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brother Renato Lima de Oliveira  
16th President General of the SSVP

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## Symposium of the Vincentian Family with Pope Francis in Roma

Within the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, the International Vincentian Family met for a Symposium in Rome, from October 11th to 15th, on the theme «welcoming the stranger».

Thousands of delegates, coming from the numerous branches of the Vincentian Family all over the world, travelled to jointly celebrate this event that was rich in interchanges, sharing, prayers and emotions. The top point of the event was the meeting at Saint Peter Plaza, on October 14th, for the public audience with Pope Francis.

There, he warmly congratulated all of the members of the Vincentian Family. At the time of his allocution, he called the Vincentians «to adore, to welcome and to go ahead.... » adding: «[...] *thanks to you because you are taking actions and you displace yourselves along the routes of the world as Saint Vincent de Paul would require from you nowadays. I eagerly ask you not to stop, but to continue offering each day in the*

*adoration of the love of God and to expand in the world regarding the sound diffusion of the charity, the availability and the concord. I bless you and I bless all of the poor persons whom you meet.[...] "*

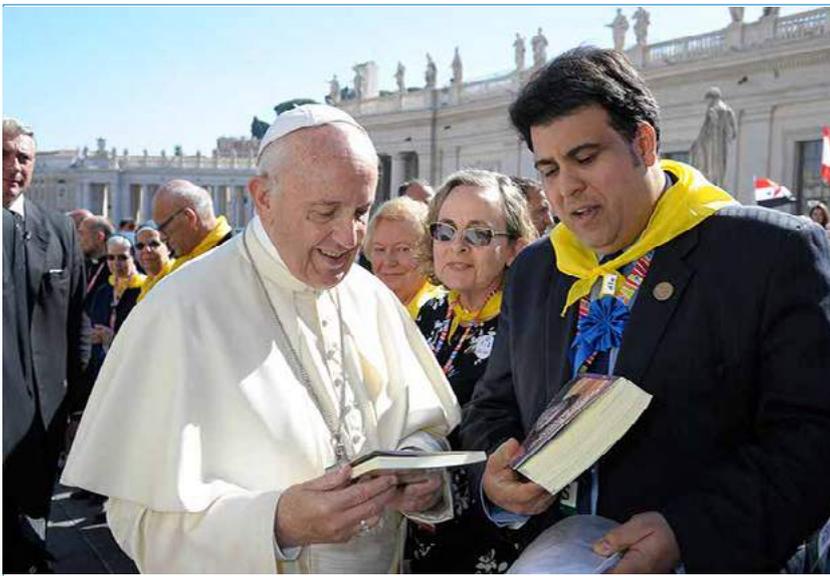
After the Pope, the other personalities manifested themselves, contributing their testimonies as Vincentians, such as the President National of the SSVP in Italy, Antonio Gianfico, regarding the victims of the earthquake in Italy, who evoked the field work of the Society.

During the audience, Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General made good use of the opportunity to hold a short meeting with His Sanctity in order to deliver him a document regarding the canonization of Frédéric Ozanam and also two books:

- «Ozanam, Professor at the Sorbonne: his life and his work», written by Kathleen O'Meara in 1876, translated to Spanish by Javier Chento.

- «Fallen in Love with the Charity and the Justice» in Spanish, a new book written by the President General.

The Saint Paul Basilica was chosen for the closing of this Symposium, on October 15th, by means of a solemn Mass celebrated by the Superior General of the Mission Congregation, Father Tomaž Mavrič, CM, the culminant point of a meeting that has validated 400 years of the charism history, which made evident the advent of a very lively service vocation and it carries within it the message of the beautitudes.



The Symposium of the Vincentian Charism was a time of grace!

A stop for our daily activities,  
A pause for reflection,  
An enrichment of our spirituality.  
What a great man was our Saint Patron! Mr. Vincent de Paul!

400 years .....and the people continue invoking him, imploring him, extracting his love to Christ by means of the poor persons! What a beautiful lesson of love and humility! 200 associations, in 99 countries, implement and live his spirituality.

Did he knew, this little shepherd of Daw, that his love and his actions are being anchored for ever in the hearts of the most important persons in the world?

Did he knew that, some day, he would be the example of services to the fellow creatures? Would he have doubted that he would heightened over all of the altars??

Meditating a little about his life, we understand that only our acts of love will be kept marked for ever in the hearts of the people.

We are lucky for having been chosen by JESUS to serve Him with the Vincentian Charism.

Before arriving in Rome, I was in Algeria as the International Vice-President of Mid-East and North Africa of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Upon returning to Lebanon, I prayed the Lord so as we take care of our Churches, our Priests and our Faith.

The life of the Christians in Algeria is a great testimony of love. They live an extraordinary faith, a quotidian fight. We do not fully understand the value of our freedom, we have Christ at our reach, very much near to us and we do not see Him, we let us getting involved in the non-relevant and artificial things, forgetting the essence: JESUS.

Let us pray for those persons who have not yet met Him or for those individuals who ignore Him.

Let us pray for all of the persons who prepared this time of grace of the Vincentian Charism.

Let us give gratefulness to the Lord for having allowed us to live these days being jointly blessed within this great Vincentian family.

*By Ella Bitar*

*ITVP for middle East and North Africa*



# The Vincentians and the World Day of the Poor

On November 19th 2017, the Catholic Church invites all of us to reflect on the first “World Day of the Poor”. The theme of reflection was “Let us not love with words, but with works”.



## WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

NOVEMBER 19, 2017

The “World Day of the Poor” was established by the Pope Francis, on the celebration of the Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy, through the Apostolic Letter entitled “Mercy and Poverty”.

The celebration and specific actions take place on 19 November, each year.

For us, fellow members of the SSVP all over the world, the institution of the “World Day of the Poor” resonates prophetically before the care that we owe to the human being who is in this situation. The poverty of many of our fellow human beings is not a theoretical problem, but a shocking and tangible reality. We cannot have a simplistic view of this reality; our vision must be holistic, because it consists in the vision of the human being, made in the image and likeness of God. This day is important, because it reminds us to carry out more lovingly our Vincentian activities

in favour of the less fortunate, since one of the biggest existing poverty is precisely the lack of love.

For the Pope, the expectation is that this day will serve as stimulus to react to a culture of indifference that looks at the marginalized and the excluded as a normal thing; it is an encouragement to assume the “culture of the encounter” with concrete gestures of prayer and charity. For us Christians and for the whole world, it is required to evangelize further the poor. The poor “are not a problem, but a means to welcome and live the essence of the Gospel”, says Francis.

According to the World Bank, extreme poverty reaches 766 million people. Humanitarian organizations know well the issues about the inequality in the distribution of wealth in the world. However, the coldness of figures gives us a perspective more real and dramatic

of this issue. 85 of the planet’s richest people accumulate the same wealth as the poorer half of humanity. 46% of the world’s wealth is owned by 1% of the richest families. 7 out of 10 people live in countries where the unequal distribution of wealth has been exacerbated in the past 30 years (data of the World Economic Forum).

In addition to the material aspect, we must mention the great challenge of spiritual poverty. Among the 7 billion inhabitants of the Earth, only 2 billion declare themselves as Christians. Perhaps that is why the world is going through so many difficulties, namely wars, hunger, persecution, disease and other ailments. “The greatest poverty is the lack of Christ”, as the Pope Francis taught us.

The Catholic Church - which is the Church of Christ - has always fought, from its origins, against the causes of poverty. Frederic Ozanam, the main founder, always asked to

reflect on the causes of poverty, not only mitigate its consequences. Pope Francis points out that the fight against “material, moral and spiritual” poverty should be the priority of the Church. “When power, luxury and money become idols, they end up being above the requirement of an equitable distribution of wealth. Therefore, it is necessary that the consciences convert to justice, equality, moderation and sharing”.

(1966), about the development of peoples, already recommended the “more privileged” countries to give up some of their advantages in order to offer, with more generosity, their property to the “poorer peoples”. Instead of insisting on the assertion of their rights, the richest economies should pay attention to the clamour of the poorest (cf. 289).

The SSVP international General Council takes advantage of the date

is not just a day, but a daily regular action of fraternal and solidarity assistance, for the good of humanity and for the honour and glory of Jesus Christ.

I finish this text quoting a very emotional passage of Pope Francis’ message on the celebration of the “World Day of the Poor” in 2017: “Let us not think of the poor only as recipients of a good work of volunteering, practiced once a week,



The Pope’s message stresses that destitution “does not coincide with poverty”; destitution is “poverty without confidence, without solidarity, without hope”. “Many people are forced to endure destitution due to unjust social conditions, lack of work that deprives them of the dignity of bringing sustenance home, due to a lack of equality, of access to the right to health and education”, regrets the Pope (Lent message in 2014).

In human and social relations, the defence of individual rights can leave the poor even more distant from the recognition of their basic rights and their human dignity. Poverty is, largely, the result of the absence of a true solidarity, social justice, and Christian spirit. The same may happen among peoples. The Pope Paul VI, in his Encyclical “Populorum Progressio”

of the “World Day of the Poor” to invite all the Vincentian Conferences in the world to reflect on the situation of exclusion, vulnerability and poverty (material and spiritual) in which we live. From the very beginning, in 1833, our founders set for us these purposes: to pray and to work for the eradication of the various forms of poverty, seeking the dignity of the underprivileged for their integration in the community life, bringing them the joy of the Gospel. Saint Vincent de Paul tells us: “Give me a man of prayer and he will be able of anything”.

The General Council firmly reiterates that all our international structure is always ready to act on the eradication of all the forms of poverty. Let us join other entities, organizations, and initiatives having the same purpose, so that the “World Day of the Poor”

let alone of improvised gestures of good will to soothe our consciences. These experiences, although valid and useful (which certainly meet the needs of so many of our brothers and make up for the injustice that we often cause), should open us to a true encounter with the poor and give rise to a sharing, which would become a way of life”.

I beg all Conferences and Councils to engage effectively in the different activities scheduled in the Catholic parishes and dioceses in order to reflect on the “World Day of the Poor”.

Brother Renato Lima de Oliveira  
16th President General

*(On behalf of the Board of the international General Council)*

## The President General will visit african SSVP countries in early 2018

This is a very much expected trip, forecasted quite a long time ago, that Bro. Renato Lima de Oliveira will make in the months of February and March 2018.

As announced during his investiture in September 2016, the XVI President General will go to Africa for a visit of 20 days that will cover 7 countries : Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana and South Africa.

In each country, along his journey, confrere Renato will be accompanied by the Territorial Vice-Presidents and the Regional Coordinators.

The initiative for this visit dates back to October 2015, at the time of the «All Africa Assembly» meeting (Johannesburg – South Africa): up to date, no President General had the opportunity to visit the SSVP countries of the African Continent, excluding the international meetings. In Johannesburg, at the time of an interview of Dr. Michael Thio (then President General) with the group of francophone countries, the voices were heard asking him the favour of a visit. Unfortunately, it became impossible due to the lack of available time facing the end of confrere Michael's term of office end. This request was consequently transmitted to Renato Lima de Oliveira, elected in June 2016, who includes the African Continent into his schedule of visits to the countries of the SSVP world-wide.

According to Liévin Andangha, Muamba (ITVP Africa 3), «Bro. Renato's trip is very much looked forward. It is understood as a relief and a consolation, on the side of this President General, who will come from very far to visit the countries, where the CIAD (International Commission for Aid and Development) finances numerous projects.[...] Many Vincentians will

*travel and they will also cross the borders to come to greet him !»*

Renato Lima's schedule is already full of activities, covering the visits to the National Councils and their works of the SSVP at the region, also meeting with the members of the Clergy and the Vincentian Family.

In addition to having the opportunity to discover the local realities of the Vincentians in the various countries, the President, while being the official representative of the General Council, will deliver a message of unity, charity, peace and friendship, which are the fundamental

values of the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

## Five new countries as members of the IEC (International Executive Committee)

Every two years, five new National Councils are designated to become members of the International Executive Committee (IEC), which meets once a year.

Members of the IEC:

1. Full members (General President, General Vice-President, General Secretary, General Treasurer, and Deputy General Vice-Presidents).
2. Representatives of countries with more than 1,000 active and combined conferences. These representatives are the National President (elected within each National or High Council). Today, there are nine representatives.
3. Five guest members (member country with less than 1,000 conferences).

This last group of five guest members aims to promote the participation of countries where the SSVP is not strong in the annual meetings and decision-making processes that determine the Society's strategy at the international level. As a result, it promotes the diversity of views within the organization, a better representativeness of the countries and stronger democratic power of the Councils.

**The countries designated for the next period are: Cambodia, Mexico, Samoa, Sao Tome, and South Tyrol.**

The respective National Councils received a letter informing their participation on 27 September and they will join the International Executive Committee until 27 September, 2019.

## Albania, the new country to join the Society of St Vincent de Paul

On last November 28th, something fully exceptional and very much encouraging, regarding those people who work for the expansion of the Society in the world, has occurred: the first Conference of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society was organized in the city of Mollas, in Albania.

Located in Southern Europe, surrounded by the Adriatic Sea, this country, where the name literally means «the country of the eagles», was, along its history, the region of numerous foreign occupations, which caused the massive exile of Albanians to neighbouring countries, such as Italy. The Catholic Church was interdicted there during some centuries, particularly under the Ottoman occupation up to the 20th century, when the Republic of Albania was taken over by the communist regime up to 1991.

Based on its history, its geographic location and the movements of the population, the country has always kept relations with Italy. Considering this natural logic, the Italian SSVP, led by the President National, Antonio Gianfico, gave her support and her aid for the organization of the Saint Mother Theresa de Calcutta Conference, which was inaugurated some days ago.

For this occasion, the President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira, sent a message of congratulations:

*«It is with great happiness that I am pleased to send you this message of congratulations for the organization of the Conference of Saint Mother Theresa of Calcutta in the city of Mollas, the first group of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Albania,*

*after a formidable work performed by our Vincentian brothers of Italy . [...] Do not never discourage yourselves. You will pass through innumerable adversities, but God will always be with you (Proverbs 19, 21). Please remember that our founders had also to live together with many difficulties.*

*The world presents us various challenges, not just those ones related to the economic and material aspects, but mainly the spiritual ones, such as the atheism, the indifference towards the poor people, the modern diseases (depression, stress and anxiety) and the solitude. These new challenges cause that the Vincentian Conferences world wide must be prepared, in order to work with charity and responsibility.*

*May Mother Theresa of Calcutta intercedes to God in order that the first Conference of Albania grows in love, number of members and quality. It will be an immense happiness for me, in one year, to sign the Incorporation Letter of the Mother Theresa of Calcutta Conference. I would also like, in a short time, to pay you visit. The IGC and I, personally, are at your disposal for anything that the Conference needs and that is feasible.»*

During this first year, Albania will be integrated to the Europe 1 - Zone 3 region, so as to be close to its «proponent» country, Italy. Its definitive place, within the international structure, will be discussed at the time of its request for agregation.



## VI SSVP Ibero-American Meeting

From 15-19 November, 2017, the International General Council of the SSVP, through the International Territorial Vice Presidencies America 1 (North America and the Caribbean), America 2 (Central America and the Caribbean), and America 3 (South America), conducted the VI SSVP Ibero-American Meeting.

The meeting was held in Quito, capital of Ecuador, coordinated by the SSVP National Council in Ecuador. In total, 62 participants representing 27 American countries and Spain, and members of the SSVP International Structure, participated in the meeting.

The central theme of the meeting was the coordination role of the SSVP National Councils in each country. The topics they presented and discussed were related to the "Organisation, planning, and development of the Councils." The following topics were addressed during the event:

- History of the SSVP Ibero-American Meeting, presented by Júlio César Marques de Lima, Vice President of the IGC for South America;
- One-year balance: achievements and challenges, presented by Renato Lima de Oliveira, General President of the SSVP;
- Legal Aspects of the organization of the National Councils, presented by Sebastian Gramajo, 3rd Assistant Vice-President of the IGC;
- Vincentian Training Planning, presented by Maria Luísa Téllez, Vice President of Training of the IGC;
- Strategic Planning of the IGC and the National Councils, presented by Eduardo Marques, Coordinator of IGC Strategic Planning;
- SSVP: from the First Conference to the Creation of Councils, presented by Ralph Middlecamp, President of the

National Council of the United States.

Besides the themes above, other activities were conducted during the meeting: Billboards, with experiences exchanged among the participants regarding the service structure of the SSVP in each country, parallel meetings with the coordinator of twinning for the Americas and meetings of the three IGC Vice Presidencies for the Americas

Other highlights of the meeting: launch of a new IGC video with images of the Vincentian sites in Paris, and three new Vincentian publications issued by the

National Council of Spain:

- Frédéric Ozanam, professor at Sorbonne, his life and work, biography written by Kathleen O'Meara;
- Frédéric Ozanam and Rerum Novarum, by Eduardo Marques Almeida and Juan Manuel Gómez;
- Book of Anecdotes - Frédéric Ozanam.

The next SSVP Ibero-American Meeting will be held in Spain in November 2021, after a unanimous decision of the participants and approval of the General President.



## Strategic Plan 2016-2022: a guide to help the mission of the Society worldwide

Some people would ask why should a Council of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have a strategic plan. We are not a business, one could say! This article aims at presenting a brief summary of the reason and the content of the strategic plan defined for the International General Council of the SVdP for the period of 2016 to 2022.

Designing a strategic plan is a key opportunity for any community to reflect about the story to be told by its members at the end of a certain period of time. For example, it should express in black and white the legacy the members of a Council want to leave to the future generations of the Society. In addition, it should also show the way to walk to build this story over this period of time, indicating the "how" to accomplish the strategy. Finally, the strategic plan should be used as a guide for decision making. In other words, whenever there is a strong doubt about what to do, a basic question should be made: what is the impact of this decision to the goals we want to accomplish by the end of our leadership period.

A strategic plan should also be as simple as possible, so it can be easily communicated and assimilated by all. However, in the case of the ICG of the SVdP, it has to contain at least four elements: its mission, its vision, its institutional values and its strategic goals.

The mission statement of the ICG is a simple definition of the essence (the reason of existence) of the SVdP. The vision is (also a simple) way of stating the dreams of the ICG for 2022; some people say that "a vision is a dream with a deadline". The institutional values are the virtues

to be enhanced among all the members of the ICG. Finally, the goals should be the measurable indicators to be accomplished by 2022, which reflect the mission, the vision and the virtues.

In 2017, the General President of the SVdP (Renato Lima) requested me to make a global poll to ask the members of the Society worldwide about what they think should be the content of each of the first three elements of the strategic plan. The results were compiled in key words as follows. The mission should contain: service to the Poor, holiness, Catholic institution, defense of justice and network of charity. For the vision statement: integral dignity of the human being, innovation, youth, spirituality and formation. The main values should be: service, spirituality, zeal for the Poor, charity, empathy, faith, friendship, simplicity and holiness.

After a deep discussion, the board members of the ICG defined the mission, vision and values statements, as indicates Figure 1 below:



# CGI in actions

To complete the strategic plan, the board members of the IGC agreed on ten strategic goals, which should guide the work and the projects of the Council for the next 5 years, as indicated in by Figure 2



More important than the detailed description of the strategic plan is that it would be discussed, digested, and implemented at all levels, down to the grass roots of the Society.

We encourage the Conferences and Councils of the SVdP all over the 150 countries where it is present to organize workshops or journeys to discuss important questions about our vocation, such as the following ones. What is the meaning of the mission statement for me as a member of the Society? Am I following the three principles of the mission (service to the Poor, search for holiness and advocacy for justice)? Do we share the vision and the institutional

values proposed by the IGC? What does each one of the IGC strategic goals have to do with my Conference and Council?

We wish you a great dialogue and we encourage you to build a strategic plan for your Conference or Council!

*By Eduardo Marques Almeida  
Strategic Plan Coordinator  
November 2017*

## Salamanca 2018 - The preparations have started!



II SSVP Youth International Meeting

15th - 21st June  
2018  
Salamanca/Spain

### Young Vincentian

As protagonist of the present and of the future.

"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain."  
(John 15, 16)

After the end of the summer in Europe, the General Council has become involved in the active phase of the preparations for the meeting of the young Vincentians in Salamanca, come this June 2018. These coming months, with regards in this great meeting for the 130 attendees who are expected, the organizing team will work without interruptions in order to ensure the good development of the event.

The crucial stage was completed by sending invitation letters at the beginning of the month of October 2017. All the National Councils and, particularly, the Continental Coordinators for the Youth, should have by now received the official invitation.

In a parallel way, two members of the team, belonging to the General Council, travelled for some days to Salamanca in order to determine the places for welcoming, lodging and the meeting, and also to coordinate the work with the SSVP Spain. This visit was led by Willian Alves, International

Vice-President for the Youngsters, the Children and the Teenagers, who was also at the site in June 2017.

According to Claire Hélène de Parseval, Administrative responsible for the International Head Office in Paris, "*Knowing the sites was very much necessary in order to advance in the project; we have an excellent collaboration by the Spanish team, who has helped us to clarify numerous points and who has ensured us their support as we still have a lot to do.*"

To have a smooth flow of communications among the members of the organizing team, a devoted e-mail address has been created: **youth-salamanca@ssvpglobal.org**

May Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati enlightens all of the Vincentian youngsters at our Second International Meeting of the SSVP Youth.

### Important information

**DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION:  
15 January 2018**

**Meeting date: 15 to 21 June, 2018**

- 15 June: Arrival in Madrid airport, transfer to Salamanca and welcome
- 16 June: Beginning of the Meeting Formation - Sharing and Activities
- 17 June: Formation – Spirituality – Sharing and Activities
- 18 June: Training - Closing of the meeting - Festival
- 19 June: Transfer to Madrid - Mission Activities
- 20 June: Activities in Madrid – Sharing time
- 21 June: Transfer to the airport - Return to the countries of origin

For any further details, contact :  
**youth-salamanca@ssvpglobal.org**

# News from countries

**During these last months, elections took place in some countries members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Among them, the United States, Brazil and Spain elected their new National President**



## **United States: Ralph Middlecamp**

Middlecamp has a 30-year history with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He previously served as the executive director of the Society's Madison, Wis. Council for 18 years. Under Middlecamp's leadership, the Society developed local housing programs, built a central customer-choice food pantry and service center, opened Wisconsin's first charitable pharmacy not connected to a health care network, grown the Society's base of Madison-area members and volunteers, and added six more thrift stores that sell and give away donated goods to support the organization's mission of helping neighbors in need.

*"I am deeply honored to have been elected to serve at the national level an organization that I love and to which I have devoted 30 years of my life" Middlecamp said. "As a National President, I will work to promote continued growth in friendship, service and spirituality at all levels of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul."*

By succeeding Sheila Gilbert he becomes the 13th President and will serve for a 6-year term.



## **Brazil : Cristian Reis da Luz**

Brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General, attended at the inauguration ceremony of the new president of the National Council of Brazil, Brother Cristian Reis da Luz, and his Board of Directors, held last 03 September 2017 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Around 600 people attended the gathering. The Holy Mass was celebrated by Father Alexandre Nahass CM, Spiritual Adviser of the National Council of Brazil. President Renato Lima expressed his special thanks to the outgoing president, Sister Emilia Fernandes Figueiró Jerónimo and the members of her board. "You have made a significant contribution to the growth of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Brazil in various sectors and departments, which have produced innumerable fruits for our organization", said Renato Lima.

The term of Brother Cristian is four years, and will last until September 2021. The motto of his term is "In the network of charity, serving our masters, the Poor"



## **Spain : Juan Manuel Buergo**

The new National President of Spain, Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez, member of the Conference 'San Isidro', in Madrid, took office of his service position at the head of the Spanish Vincentians on 30 September 2017.

During the inauguration ceremony, a letter of Renato Lima de Oliveira, International President General of the SSVV, was read. The letter was addressed to the SSVV of Spain and especially to Marisa Téllez, who left her position at the head of the Entity, and to Juan Manuel Buergo, who starts his path of service as National President of the Spanish Vincentians. Renato Lima emphasized his personal friendship with Juan Manuel, defining it as "intense, loyal and true".

He also highlighted the qualities that he sees in the new National President of Spain: *"always active, tireless, idealistic, exciting, lover of good literature, efficient, worried about the quality of the Vincentian practice, an expert on Ozanam and the other founders; In short, an ideal President for this position of high responsibility. His enthusiasm can wake up new talents and setting new courses for the benefit of the Conferences and their assisted people"*.

# News from countries

## Slovakia and New Zealand: celebrating their 150th anniversary of foundation

On Saturday 23th September 2017, the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Slovakia celebrated the founding of the very first conference in Bratislava 150 years ago. At the same time, the members were celebrating the 20th anniversary of the beatification of Frederic Ozanam.

The celebration took place in the town of Levice where the rebirth of the society in Slovakia took place in 1991. During the times of communism (1946-1990) the society was forbidden.

The day started with a Holy Mass performed by the Archbishop of Trnava, Monseigneur Ján Orosch. Then the members met in a school nearby, where Libusa Miháliková, President of the National Board of the SSVP Slovakia welcomed them. Lectures were given about the history of the society in the country and about the life of Frederic Ozanam (by Magdaléna Boledovicová, former and first president of the national board after the rebirth in 1991). Different conferences presented the work and special projects that are carried out for the poor in Slovakia.

At the meeting, all the conferences in Slovakia were represented, as well as other branches of the Vincentian Family, such as the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission who played an important role in the rebirth of the society.

The SSVP in Slovakia is twinned with the society of the Netherlands. Brother Alfons ten Velde represented the SSVP Netherlands at the meeting and also spoke some words to the Vincentian brothers and sisters.

Were also present Dieter Monitzer and his wife from the SSVP in Vienna (Austria). The Vincentians in Vienna support the conferences in Bratislava (which is only 50 km away from Vienna) for the last five years.

As a representant of the International General Council (CGI), the International Vice-President for Europe Group II, Erwin Tigla, attended the meeting. He congratulated the society in Slovakia on behalf of the CGI. He told the members that the society in Slovakia is one of the strongest branches among the Eastern-European countries that used to be under the communistic influence of Russia.

The society in Slovakia exists of 25 conferences throughout the country. Next to the basic Vincentian work, the SSVP runs some special works, like holiday camps for children, day care centres for elderly and housing of homeless people, people with alcoholic problems and former prisoners.

The SSVP in Slovakia is flourishing and has a promising future. The celebration of 150 years of SSVP in Slovakia and the 20th anniversary of the beatification of Frederic Ozanam was a successful meeting which gave the attendants new courage and spirit to continue there work in the footsteps of Frederic Ozanam.



# News from countries



Sitting in the Indian Ocean, south east of Australia, the New Zealand branch of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is perhaps the best witness to the international dimension of the SSVP: 18,000 km separate this Vincentian land from the Society's birthplace in Paris.

Its story began in 1867, with a French Marist priest: Jean-Baptiste Chataigner. Soaked in the work of Frédéric Ozanam, and inspired by the work of the SSVP in France, he founded the very first Saint Vincent de Paul Conference in Christchurch. 22 members formed the original team, along with 7 women as helpers.

In 1876, Fr Chataigner was joined by Charles O'Neill, a Scottish engineer, who emigrated to New Zealand. Acknowledged as one of the founding parents of the Society in New Zealand, he certainly played a very important part in its development throughout the country.

## The New Zealand SSVP today

With 150 Conferences (2009 estimate) the Society is found all over the country. It is one of the largest charitable organisations in New Zealand, known particularly for its "thrift stores", which offer low-priced, secondhand goods to the general public. The profits from sales go to fund the SSVP's social works.

The Society also benefits from the support of the clergy, with a strong involvement by bishops, priests and religious who have contributed to its flourishing over the years. Cardinal Thomas William (former archbishop of Wellington) spoke at the celebrations for the 150th anniversary: *"I am immensely proud of the Society, as is every New Zealand Bishop past and present, over the 150 years-period during which Conferences and Councils were established, diocese by diocese, parish by parish [...] A constant concern for every bishop is how to provide*

*opportunities for men, women and youth to commit themselves to serving church and community in response of Christ's teaching. Their concern has been met in wonderful measure by the Society and its members over the past decades"*

The Society in New Zealand can also boast of its dynamic, strong youth membership, known as "Young Vinnies". The youth conferences formed in schools and universities have helped thousands of young people to explore the spiritual life and work of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Closely involved in their local community, the Young Vinnies put all their energies into organising collections, running projects to meet local needs in small towns, or to run training sessions and larger projects in bigger towns.

## Celebrations

The ceremony was held in Christchurch, birthplace of the New Zealand SSVP, in the presence of its leaders, including the National President Terry Comber and many invited guests. The International Council General was represented by Frank Brasil (Territorial Vice-President for Oceania), Thomas Tan (Territorial Vice-President for Asia), Tony Muir (Twinning Coordinator) and Luke Bower (Youth Coordinator for Oceania). Representatives of twinned countries also attended: Sri Lanka, Samoa and Tonga.

Mass was celebrated by his Excellency Archbishop Martin Krebs. A congratulatory message was displayed on a large screen during the ceremony from the President General Renato Lima de Oliveira, who had visited New Zealand a few months before.

# News from countries

## In Quebec (Canada), the SSVP encourages the students to stay in the school with the "Opération Bonne Mine".

In view of the statistics showing that children living under the low-income cut-off were more exposed to school dropping out, the young of the SSVP Regional Council of Quebec (Canada) decided in 1985, to launch an initiative called first "the Service of Aid to Young Students" (SAJE). Objective: to help families face the financial charges related to the beginning of the school year and allow young people to acquire a positive vision of the school.

Turned into "Opération Bonne Mine", the program spread across the whole province, which represents more than 300 Conferences, thus becoming the flagship project of the Regional Council. Today, the SSVP in Quebec works with students of primary and secondary school whose parents have limited financial capacity. It implements actions that allow the young participants to increase their self-confidence and to see the future with optimism.

Besides contributing to meet the basic needs of children and teen-agers, *Opération Bonne Mine* acts directly on key components of school success such as self-esteem, belonging to a group and the valorisation of surpassing oneself.

To fight against school dropout also has the effect of reducing the number of young people falling into problems related to delinquency, precarious employment, homelessness and drug addiction.

The programme includes 3 segments:

- Support for the new school year: the objective is to meet the essential and material needs of a child. From July to September, families and



children prepare themselves for the school start. This is a big issue; the SSVP helps young people live a great experience from the beginning of the school year by providing them with suitable equipment, clothing in good condition and supporting families in paying the school bills.

- To encourage perseverance: the objective of this second stage is to meet a child's need of belonging by helping him to develop his talents in a process of personal and social learning. Community and artistic socio-cultural projects are implemented with children in partnership with schools, local organizations, museums, etc. They allow young people to actively participate in a collective achievement, encourage motivation, self-esteem and enhance the potential of everyone.

- To reward the effort: the objective of this third phase is to meet the child's need of self-esteem by valuing his efforts and his contribution to the community. Scholarships are given to students who have shown

a progress or continuity in their learning, their social integration, their involvement and their autonomy. These are granted to merit rather than academic performance. Amounts of \$250 to students of primary education and \$500 to high school students are handed out at a gala at the end of the year. This recognition before their parents and teachers encourage them to continue making the necessary efforts to further their education.

*We believe that offering everybody equal opportunities to discover their full potential promotes the retention of children in schooling and contributes to break the cycle of poverty in a concrete way.*

(SSVP Montreal)

In 2016, 8,269 young Quebecers were able to enjoy the benefits of the Opération Bonne Mine and cling to success.

# Literacy

## The *Book of the Sick* available in Chinese

Written in 1853 by Bl. Frédéric Ozanam, the Book on the Diseases has just been translated to Chinese. Started by Bro. Maurice Yeung (Territorial Vice-President - Asia 1) and Reverend Aloysius Budijanto, C.M. (Spiritual Counsellor of the Central Council in Taiwan), this initiative was composed of five-member team of the Taiwanese Council, who volunteered for this mission. The full translation was made in three years. Bro. Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th President General, wrote the preface.

The Book of the Sick is a collection of thoughts, meditations and prayers that Bl. Frédéric Ozanam composed during the last months of his life, when he was seriously affected by a disease. He delivered three handwritten sheets that his wife Amélie wished to share a lot, in order that other sick people could benefit by these meditations and thus have spiritual support. The work was published once in 1858, later, it was out in circulation around 1913.

It was in consequence of a miracle, the healing of a little child in Brazil, which occurred through intercession to Ozanam, that the French Federation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul stimulated to enhance this work in 2005, under the direction of Bro. Amin de Tarrazi, former President General (1981-1993) and assigned to the Ozanam's cause after 1980. The current version dates back to 2013; it was particularly enriched by the preface that the author's widow, Amélie Ozanam, wrote in 1856.

The Book of the Sick is now available in five languages: French, English, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese.

More information about the Chinese version:

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