

# Rule



*Confederation international of Society of Saint Vincent de Paul*

*“Love your Rule and keep them as the road  
which God intends to lead you to Himself.”*

St. Vincent de Paul



SERVING IN HOPE—MODULE V: OUR VINCENTIAN RULE  
offers a spiritual formation for Part I of the Rule.



# Rule

PART I:

## Rule

OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

PART II:

## Statutes

OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

PART III:

## Statutes

OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES  
OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, INC.

*Confederation international of Society of Saint Vincent de Paul*



PART I:

# *Rule*

of the

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION  
OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

**Approved:**

General Assembly  
Rome  
October 2003



## PART I:

### RULE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

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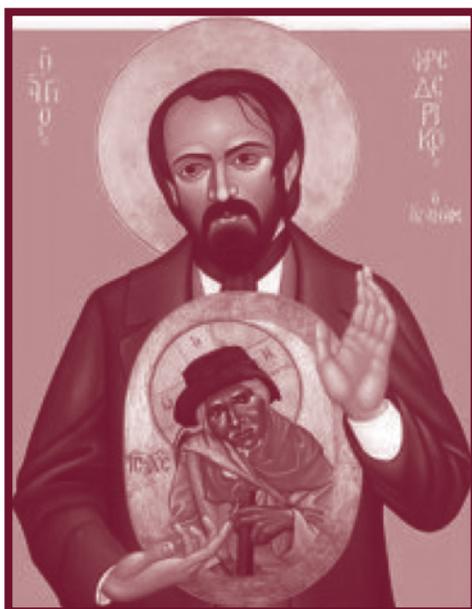
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## PART I:

# *Rule of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul*

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

### 1.1 Origins

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

The Holy Spirit was undoubtedly present in all of them at the founding of the Society, fostering the charism of each one. Among them, Blessed Frederic Ozanam was a radiant source of inspiration.

The Society has been Catholic from its origins. It remains an international Catholic voluntary organisation of lay people, men and women.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF OUR SERVICE

### 1.2 The Vincentian Vocation

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

### 1.3 Any form of personal help...

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

### 1.4...to anyone in need

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

## **1.5 To Seek Out the Poor**

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

## **1.6 Adaptation to a Changing World**

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

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

### **1.7 Prayer Before Personal Encounters or Visits**

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

### **1.8 Reverence for the poor**

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

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

### **1.9 Empathy**

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

### **1.10 Promotion of self-sufficiency**

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

### **1.11 Concerns for deeper needs and spirituality**

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

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

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

### **1.12 Gratitude to those we visit**

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

## **2. VINCENTIAN SPIRITUALITY & VOCATION**

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

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

### **2.1 Love in Union with Christ**

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

### **2.2 The journey together towards holiness**

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. They aspire to burn with the love of God as revealed by Christ and to deepen their own faith and fidelity. Vincentians are aware of their own brokenness and need for God's grace. They seek His glory, not their own. Their ideal is to help relieve suffering for love alone, without thinking of any reward or advantage for themselves.

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

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

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

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

### **2.3 Prayer in Union with Christ**

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

### **2.4 The Spirituality of Blessed Frederic Ozanam**

The spirituality of one of its founders inspires Vincentians profoundly. The Blessed Frederic Ozanam:

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

### **2.5 The Spirituality of St. Vincent**

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

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

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

### **2.5.1 Essential virtues**

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 – a passion for the full flourishing and eternal happiness of every person.

### **2.6 A vocation for every moment of our lives**

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

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

### **3.1 Membership**

The Society is open to all those who seek to live their faith loving and committing themselves to their neighbor in need. (See Article 6.4 of the Rule).

### **3.2 Equality**

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

### **3.3 Meetings of the Vincentian members**

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

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

The Conferences meet regularly and consistently, usually weekly, but at least every fortnight (twice a month).

### **3.4 Fraternity and simplicity**

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

### **3.5 Preserving the spirit**

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

### **3.6 Councils**

Conferences are grouped under various levels of Councils.

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

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

### **3.7 Young members**

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

### **3.8 Aggregation and Institution of Conferences and Councils**

The visible unifying link within the Society is the Aggregation of the Conferences and the Institution of the Councils declared by the Council General.

### **3.9 Subsidiarity and freedom of action**

The Society embraces the Principle of Subsidiarity as its basic standard of operation. Decisions are made as close as possible to the area of activity to ensure that the local environment and circumstances (cultural, social, political, etc.) are taken into consideration. In this way, the Society promotes local initiatives within its spirit. This freedom of action of Conferences and Councils, which has been kept faithfully since the origins of the Society, enables them to help the poor spontaneously and more effectively, free from excessive bureaucracy.

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

### **3.10 Democracy**

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

### **3.11 Presidents as servant leaders**

Following Christ's example, the Presidents at all levels of the Society 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.

### **3.12 Formation of members**

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

### **3.13 The spirit of poverty and encouragement**

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

### **3.14 The use of money and property for the poor**

Vincentians should never forget that giving love, talents and time is more important than giving money.

Nevertheless, the Society uses money and property to help relieve the suffering of those in need. The Society's funds must be handled with the utmost care, prudence and generosity. Money must not be hoarded. Decisions regarding the use of money and property are to be made after reflection in the light of the Gospel and Vincentian principles. Accurate records must be kept of all money received or spent. The Society may not allot funds to other organisations, except occasionally for other branches of the Vincentian Family, save under exceptional circumstances.

### **3.15 Communication**

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

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

### **4.1 Twinning**

Conferences and Councils help others in need, both at the national and international level. This is one of the activities most cherished by the Society. The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries and the Vincentian preferential option for the poor spurs Conferences and Councils to assist others with less resources or in particular situations. This direct link between two Conferences or Councils, consisting of sharing prayer, a profound friendship and material resources, is called twinning. This activity contributes to world peace and to understanding and cultural exchange among peoples.

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

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

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

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

#### **4.2 Emergency assistance**

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

#### **4.3 The Vincentian Family**

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

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

#### **5.1 A close relationship**

Faithful to the clear intentions of Blessed 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.

#### **5.2 Autonomy**

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

#### **5.3 Moral recognition**

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

## 6. OTHER RELATIONSHIPS — ECUMENICAL & INTER-FAITH RELATIONSHIPS

### 6.1 Every member should foster ecumenism

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

### 6.2 The Society is committed to ecumenical and inter-faith cooperation

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

### 6.3 The adoption of practical initiatives

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

### 6.4 Ecumenical and inter-faith membership

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

### 6.5 Preserving the Catholic credo and ethos

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

### 6.6 Affiliated groups can work very closely with us

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

## **6.7 Relationships with state agencies & other charities**

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

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

### **7.1 The Society gives immediate help but also seeks mid-term and long-term solutions**

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

### **7.2 A vision of the civilization of love**

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

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

### **7.3 Vision of the future**

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

### **7.4 The practical Vincentian approach to social justice**

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

### **7.5 A voice for the voiceless**

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

## **7.6 Facing the structures of sin**

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

## **7.7 Striving to change attitudes**

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

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

## **7.8 Political independence of the Society**

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

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

## **7.9 Working with communities**

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



PART II:

# *Statutes*

of the

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION  
OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

**Approved:**

General Assembly  
Rome  
October 2003



## PART II:

### STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

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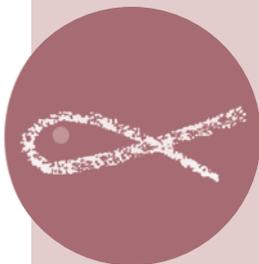
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- 7.4 Interpretation of the Rule
- 7.5 General rules governing interpretation



### **INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL**

The symbol of the fish surrounded by a blue circle is the of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The Greek word for fish used by the first Christians stands for “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.” The circle symbolizes the world, the vision of Blessed Frederic Ozanam, “of establishing a network of charity and social justice encircling the whole world.” The eye of the fish is red symbolizing charity: “the love of God and neighbor, the motive for Vincentians’ service.” The line drawing of the fish depicts a loop, a contemporary symbol of solidarity.

## PART II:

# *Statutes of the International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul*

## 1. THE CONFEDERATION, HEAD OFFICE AND MEMBERS

### 1.1 The Confederation

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

### 1.2 The name of the Society

The International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is the sole owner of the Society’s name. Only the Council General may, on behalf of the Confederation, authorise or prohibit the use of its name.

### 1.3 The international head office

The Confederation’s head office is based in Paris, France, the city where the first Conference was founded.

The head office may be transferred to any other location in the world by resolution of the Council General Assembly; this resolution shall be adopted by a majority of two thirds of the votes of the members present and represented.

In order for this resolution to be validly adopted by the Assembly, the point must have been included on the agenda prepared previously and sent to the members of the Council General.

#### 1.3.1 Other international Confederation centres

Other work Centres may be established in different cities around the world.

### 1.4 Official language

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

### **1.4.1 Other co-official languages**

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

## **1.5 The Assembly of the Council General**

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

## **1.6 Legal members**

Each Superior or Assimilated Council that duly joins the Confederation, and is instituted accordingly, shall become a legal member of the Confederation's Council General.

They must be constituted within the scope of their national legislations as non-profit or similar organisations, and duly Instituted by the Council General.

Although the tradition of our Society prefers to use the term "Superior Councils", which is used throughout the wording of the Statutes, special provisions in legislation or other circumstances may warrant the use of the term "National Council".

### **1.6.1 Representatives on the Council**

The Council General is formed by the duly elected Presidents of the Superior or Assimilated Councils, which they represent, and which are instituted in the different countries and clearly-defined regions around the world.

### **1.6.2 Definition of Assimilated Councils**

Assimilated Councils are Councils that have been Instituted or Conferences that have been Aggregated, and which are legally constituted within the scope of their national legislations as non-profit organisations representing a country or region in which a Superior Council has not yet been Instituted.

## **1.7 Affiliation to the Confederation**

Any Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council (as defined in Article 1.10.1 of the International Statutes) of the Society around the world that wishes to join the Confederation must request this in writing and submit such request to the President General of the Confederation.

### **1.7.1 Requirements for the affiliation**

The abovementioned written request for affiliation to the Confederation must state that such Council complies, pursuant to national legislation, with the provisions established in Article 1.6 of the International Statutes of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and must also indicate the area for which it is responsible.

Likewise, it shall expressly accept all aspects of the Rule and Statutes of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which consists of three parts: the Rule of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The Statutes of the International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The Basic Requirements for Drafting the Internal Statutes for Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils.

### **1.7.2 Legal liability**

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

## **1.8 Institution of Superior Councils**

In order to achieve a better service for members and the poor in the same country, two or more Superior Councils may be Instituted in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 1.9 of the International Statutes.

### **1.8.1 The Conditions**

The following conditions must be met in order to justify this need:

- a) Excessive territorial scope.
- b) Difficulties in communication
- c) Large number of Conferences and Councils
- d) Large number of members and Special Works

## **1.9 Procedures for instituting new Superior Councils**

The following conditions must be met in order for a new Superior Council to be instituted in a country where there is already a Superior Council:

### **1.9.1 Establishment on the request of a Superior Council**

- a) Existence of more than 3,000 Conferences working in the country of the applicant Superior/Assimilated Council.
- b) The new Council, which is the object of the institution request, has more than 1,000 Conferences.
- c) The request is presented by the existing Superior Council, authorising the institution of the new Superior Council.
- d) The legislation in the country in question permits the institution of two Superior Councils in that country, with different jurisdictions.
- e) Favorable report by the Territorial Vice-President.
- f) Express authorisation from the Council General through its Permanent Section

### **1.9.2. Institution following an Official Request**

The Council General, through its Permanent Section, may officially institute Superior or Assimilated Councils for specific regions around the world, regardless of the frontiers of the countries in question, whenever socio-political, geographic reasons or the service make this necessary.

When the Institution of these Councils affects already Instituted Superior Councils duly aggregated to the Confederation in accordance with the provisions established in Article 1.6 of these International Statutes, the aforementioned Council must be consulted beforehand. This consultation obligation shall be binding on the Permanent Section of the Council General.

## **1.10 Other Members of the Council General**

Different circumstances may mean that there are other members of the Council General, in accordance with the following classification:

### **1.10.1 Associated Councils**

These are Councils that cannot achieve full legal member status due to limitations in their national legislations or to the fact that they have availed themselves of legal instruments governing legal members other than those established in Article 1.6 of these International Statutes.

### **1.10.2 Temporary Members**

These are members appointed by the President General in countries or regions where the Society is not present and until the corresponding Superior or Assimilated Council can be instituted.

The same shall apply to the provisional Presidents of the Superior Councils instituted by the Council General, in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 6.5 of these International Statutes.

### **1.10.3 Missionary Members**

These shall be members appointed by the President General to perform specific tasks and services. They shall always include members that have served as International Presidents General.

## **1.11 Right to speak but not to vote**

All the other members of the Council General, that is: Associated, Temporary or Missionary members shall be entitled to speak but not to vote at Council General Assemblies.

## **1.12 Related Special Works**

Special Works related to the Society that may use the Society's logo in the places and situations that are considered appropriate, shall be deemed to be those Special Works in which the Society of St. Vincent de Paul participates at any level of the organization; the aforementioned participation shall enable the Special Work to be controlled by Vincentian members on an effective, majority and real basis.

### **1.12.1 Use of the Society's logos**

Every Superior or Assimilated Council shall authorize the use of the Society's logos within its jurisdiction in accordance with the provisions established in the previous paragraph.

### **1.12.2 Employees**

The employees of these Special Works and in general those employed by the Confederation may not hold Offices on the Councils of the Society, with the exception of the technical and executive position corresponding to them at the Special Work or Council where they render their services.

## **2. THE COUNCIL GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

### **2.1 The General Assembly of the Confederation**

The senior body of the Confederation is the Council General, which meets in a General Assembly as provided in Article 1.5 of these International Statutes. Each Superior Council and Assimilated Council which is a legal member is represented by one vote. The President General shall likewise have one vote which, if the case may be, shall be considered the casting vote.

#### **2.1.1 Quorum and voting**

The valid adoption of resolutions by the General Assembly shall require the attendance or representation of at least 30% of its full members. Should a second call be necessary, this shall be issued at least 24 hours later, and shall be considered as validly constituted regardless of the percentage of members present or represented. Resolutions shall be validly adopted by a simple majority.

### **2.2 Frequency of Assembly meetings**

The Council General Assembly normally meets once every six years.

### **2.2.1 Extraordinary General Assemblies**

The President General may convene Extraordinary General Assemblies whenever circumstances make this advisable.

An Extraordinary General Assembly must be convened when so requested by more than 50% of the legal members of the Council General.

### **2.3 Participants**

These Assemblies may be attended by the representatives of the Councils indicated in Article 1.6 herein as well as those indicated in Articles 1.10.1 and 1.10.2 and 1.10.3 of these International Statutes, each by virtue of the powers granted to them in the aforementioned Articles.

### **2.4 Agenda**

The agenda of the Assembly meeting and the notice convening the meeting are determined by the General Secretary in agreement with the President and taking into account any suggestions by members of the Council to whom this notice is delivered.

### **2.5 Prayers and meditation**

According to tradition, the meeting begins and ends with a prayer, consisting of a spiritual reading or meditation, which may lead to a brief exchange of opinions. The International Spiritual Adviser gives this reading. The corresponding secret collection is always taken among attending members.

## **3. THE PRESIDENT GENERAL, THE BOARD OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL AND THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE STRUCTURE**

### **3.1 The President General**

The President of the Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and its Council General represents the Society before the Holy See and all international religious or civil organisations, and in general, before any public or private organization.

Since the founding of the first Conference, this figure has represented the nexus of union and moral authority of the Society in periods when the Council General Assembly has not met.

The President General personifies the unity of the Society worldwide.

### **3.2 The functions of the President General**

The President of the Council General, supported by a team within the International Structure, supervises, fosters and coordinates the Society's activities worldwide and, for this purpose, makes any decisions deemed appropriate, implementing the resolutions of the Council General Assemblies in compliance with the provisions established in the Rule, the International Statutes and pursuant to the Society's tradition.

#### **3.2.1 Report on the progress of the Society**

In January every year, and for general information of all the members and Councils, the President General drafts a moral report for all the members of the Council General, reflecting the progress of the Society during the previous year and the prospects for the future.

### **3.3 Election of the President General**

The President General is elected by all the members of the Society, represented by the Presidents of the Superior, Assimilated and Associated Councils, who exercise this right on their own behalf and on behalf of the members they represent.

### **3.4 Duration of the term of office**

The term of office of the President General is six years; this term of office may be renewed once only.

### **3.5 Age limit**

The President General may not be more than 65 years of age when elected.

### **3.6 Election procedure and deadlines**

When an President General must be elected because the term of the existing President has reached its end, the Vice-President General must announce this at least ten months prior to the time of the election to the members of the Council General, who are then responsible for notifying the members accordingly.

#### **3.6.1 Electoral Board**

The electoral board is presided over by the Vice-President General and is formed by the latter, the Secretary General and the Treasurer General, provided that none of them is a candidate. If any of the aforementioned three persons is a candidate, he/she shall be replaced by a legal member of the Council General.

### **3.7 Presentation of candidates, forms and limitations**

During the two months following the notification of the elections, the members of the Council General, either individually or in groups, may present the candidates that they deem suitable and worthy, chosen from among those members who have belonged to the Society for more than fifteen years and who do not hold remunerated service posts in the Confederation at any level or in any of the participated or related Special Works.

### **3.8 Announcement of candidates**

At least three months prior to the Council General Assembly meeting, the Vice-President General shall announce the candidates who fulfil the required conditions and whose proven acceptance has previously been obtained by the Vice-President General.

This announcement shall be accompanied by a short Vincentian “curriculum vitae”, together with the candidate’s action programme if elected, presented on a maximum of two sheets.

### **3.9 Time and form of election**

The new President General shall be elected at the General, Ordinary or Extraordinary Assembly called for this and other purposes.

#### **3.9.1 Quorum for election**

In order for the General Assembly to be validly constituted to elect a new President General, a quorum of 30% of the members with voting rights pursuant to Article 2.1.1 of these International Statutes shall be required.

#### **3.9.2 Voting procedure**

The voting system used shall consist in two rounds and shall be effected by secret ballot. The first round shall include the postal votes of those electors who are unable to attend in person. In the second round, which shall only be required if no candidate obtains one half plus one of the votes presented, the candidates shall be the two members who have obtained most votes in the first round. Due to time restrictions, this second voting round shall be performed directly and by secret ballot; no postal votes shall be accepted.

Voting shall take place on the afternoon of the first day of the Council General Assembly meeting in which the voting is included on the agenda and shall have priority over any other matters.

### **3.9.2.1 Limitation**

If an existing President General is presented for a second term of office having passed the first round without any candidate reaching half plus one of the votes, in order for his/her election to be valid, he/she must obtain at least one half plus one of the votes presented in the second round . Otherwise, the voting process shall recommence twenty-four hours later with the proposed candidates, excluding the existing President.

### **3.9.3 Taking of office**

The President General shall take up the Presidency on the next Feast of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, namely on 9 September, in the city of Paris.

### **3.10 Termination of functions**

The President General may cease to perform his/her service functions for the following reasons:

- a) End of the term of office for which he/she was elected.
- b) Not selected for a second term of office.
- c) Expiry of the maximum of two terms of office.
- d) Resignation during the period of service.
- e) Incapacity.
- f) Death.
- g) Loss of civil rights.

### **3.11 Resignation from service**

In the event a President General should resign, in order for such resignation to take effect it must be formally presented before the International Executive Committee, pursuant to Articles 4.1 and subsequent of these International Statutes, and accepted by the aforementioned Committee.

### **3.12 Incapacity**

Should any incapacity impede the President General's performance of service, the Board Members, i.e. the Vice-President General, the Secretary General and the Treasurer General shall jointly call an extraordinary meeting reserved solely for the International Executive Committee in order to deal exclusively with this matter. This meeting shall be held within a maximum of 30 days.

In order for the meeting to be validly constituted, the attendance of 30% of the members established in Article 4.3 of these International Statutes shall be required.

### **3.12.1 Consideration of incapacity**

The Committee, meeting on an extraordinary and emergency basis to deal exclusively with this matter on the agenda, shall examine on a charitable and reserved basis, the alleged incapacity of the President General based on founded and documented arguments presented by the members of the Board of the Council General. During the period elapsing between the convening of the Committee and its decision, no international Vincentian office undertaking may be suspended, replaced or cancelled.

### **3.13 Guaranteeing the decision about incapacity**

In order for the incapacity decision to be legally executed and validated, it must be supported by at least two thirds of the votes present and represented at the meeting of the International Executive Committee. The Secretary General of the Society shall immediately take detailed minutes of all the events at the Committee meeting, which, on this specific occasion, must be signed by all the attendees.

### **3.14 Replacement of the General President**

In any of the events envisaged with respect to the termination of services and functions on the part of a President General, the Society's Vice-President General shall be responsible for the international management of the Society.

In all cases he/she shall notify the other members of the Council General and particularly the President General when specifically declaring the latter's incapacity.

### **3.15 Deadlines for the election of a new President General in the event of resignation or incapacity.**

In the event of resignation or incapacity, and within the maximum and non-extendible period of 90 days, the International Vice-President General shall call elections in accordance with the provisions established in Articles 3.3 to 3.10 of these International Statutes.

### **3.16 The Board Members of the Council General**

The President General, after making the appropriate enquiries, shall appoint a Vice-President General, a Secretary General and a Treasurer General for a limited renewable period; these persons, together with the President General, shall form the Board of the Confederation's Council General, and shall provide the President General with counsel and shall also have the functions described in Article 7.4 of these International Statutes.

The President General shall preside over the Board. All the members indicated pursuant to Articles 3.16 through 3.18 of these International Statutes shall be entitled to vote at the Board meetings, with the exception of the Spiritual Advisor. Meetings of this Board shall not require a quorum and resolutions shall be adopted by simple majority vote.

### **3.16.1 The Board's Mission**

The Board shall collaborate with the President General in order to develop the strategy required to implement the agreements reached by the Council General Assemblies and the recommendations of the International Executive Committee.

It shall also collaborate with the President General in designing the strategy to be proposed to the Council General Assemblies and to the International Executive Committee.

It is the closest Vincentian body to the President General, whom it advises and counsels on any matter.

The President must consult the full Board at least three times a year, in between International Executive Committee meetings

### **3.16.2 The International Spiritual Adviser**

The International Spiritual Adviser always belongs to the Board of the Council General, as a member, with a right to speak but not to vote; this person shall also be appointed by the President General with the authorization of his direct superior.

### **3.16.3 The International Youth Delegate**

The member entrusted with the International Youth Delegation shall also always form part of the Board of the Council General.

### **3.16.4 Other Board Members**

Depending on the Board's needs, other members may be appointed as deputies to the Vice-President, Secretary or Treasurer.

## **3.17 The Vice-President General**

The Vice-President General shall replace the President General if the latter is prevented from attending, absent or disqualified and all the latter's functions shall be delegated to the former.

### **3.17.1 The special mission**

The Vice President General is responsible for ensuring and organising the election of a new President General, whenever the post becomes vacant, and in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 3.6 et seq. of these International Statutes, and announces the election results and submits these to the Society.

### **3.18 Deputy Vice-Presidents General**

Whenever necessary, and for specific general Areas of considerable responsibility within the Vincentian Society, the President General shall appoint Deputy Vice-Presidents General to whom certain functions shall be delegated; these Deputies shall automatically form part of the Board of the Council General.

### **3.19 The Secretary General: functions**

Under the authority of the President General, the Secretary General ensures the smooth running of the different administrative services and bodies worldwide that report directly to the Council General. The Secretary General prepares the schedule of Council General Assemblies, organising its agendas and drafting the Minutes. The Secretary General performs the same mission for the International Executive Committee, the Permanent Section and the Board.

The Secretary General handles habitual and regular relations between the Permanent Section and the different Councils and Conferences of the Society.

The Secretary General is responsible for the Council General's Archives and may be assisted by Deputy Secretaries.

#### **3.19.1 Annual Report**

In July every year, the Secretary General shall draft an Annual Report on the Society's worldwide activities, based on the information obtained from the Superior Councils. This Report shall also be publicised internally and externally.

### **3.20 The Treasurer General: functions**

Under the authority of the President General, the Treasurer General is responsible for the financial management of the Council General. The Treasurer General keeps the accounts, which must be checked at least once a year by a financial Commission appointed by the Council General and by a professionally qualified independent body.

The Treasurer General may be assisted by Deputy Treasurers.

### **3.21 The Budget of the Council General**

The Treasurer General establishes the budget for the Administration of the Council General: the income and expenses accounts are approved by the Permanent Section, in its capacity as the Governing Board, before being presented at the Council General Assembly. In years in which no ordinary Assembly is convened, the International Executive Committee shall be responsible for approving these Budgets.

### **3.21.1 Income**

The ordinary budget of the Council General in terms of income is generated by:

- Contributions from the Superior, Assimilated and Associated Councils.
- Collections taken during Council meetings.
- Donations with or without special applications.
- Subsidies from any type of public or private institution.
- The personal contribution of each member of the Society, through secret collection in the last quarter of each year, as a sign of solidarity with the Council General.
- Others.

### **3.21.2 Expenses**

The main expenses are as follows:

- Expenses incurred to finance actions in any country in order to develop, extend and support the Society.
- Expenses incurred by the Secretariat and with respect to Council General publications.
- Expenses incurred in the organization of Vincentian meetings that serve the international structure.
- Expenses incurred in connection with strictly essential trips.

### **3.21.3 Extraordinary Budgets, Global or Special Funds and others**

Besides the ordinary budget, a provision may be allotted for creating Global or Special Funds, which are managed in the same way and intended for use in emergencies or as aid in specific circumstances for the benefit of one or various Councils, Conferences, countries, geographical regions of the world, in the event of catastrophes, or for any other purpose that is deemed appropriate.

## **3.22 The remaining international service structure**

The President General appoints Territorial Vice Presidents and Area Coordinators from among the Society's worldwide members.

### **3.22.1 Enquiries**

Prior to making the appointments to the International Service Structure, the President General shall, on a non-binding basis, always consult with the countries affected by the appointments.

The countries affected by an appointment to service in the Structure of a Coordinator or International Vice President, with which they do not agree by majority vote, shall inform the President General of such a decision. The President General shall be obliged to revoke his appointment and to appoint a different Coordinator or Territorial Vice President within the shortest possible time.

### **3.23 Territorial Vice-Presidents**

In close cooperation with the President General and in his/her name, the Territorial Vice-Presidents shall support, advise, protect, help and coordinate the Society in large geographical areas around the world.

#### **3.23.1 Regional meetings**

In the parts of the world where they supervise and are responsible for rendering their services, they may organise regional Meetings with the authorisation of the President General.

### **3.24 The Coordinators**

The Territorial Vice-Presidents are assisted in their supervisory and promotional tasks by members who report to them and to whom they delegate specific service tasks for specific groups of countries.

They shall also respect at all times the freedom of action of the Superior, Assimilated and Associated Councils, which they serve as a nexus of union and means of communication.

### **3.25 International Commissions**

For specific purposes, the President General may delegate different members the task of presiding over work or representing Commissions established to achieve specific targets.

#### **3.25.1 The members of the International Commissions**

Whenever proposed by the different Commission Presidents, the President General shall appoint the members of these Commissions.

### **3.26 Individual responsibilities**

Likewise, and for specific missions that do not require a larger number of collaborators, the President General may delegate specific missions to individual members.

### **3.27 Members with international missions**

All members summoned to render important international services to their fellow members and to the poor shall do their utmost not to abandon their obligation to perform these tasks simultaneously with their commitments to the Conference to which they belong.

### **3.28 The end of terms of office**

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

The new President General may shorten this period if it is deemed appropriate.

## **4. THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **4.1 The mission of the Committee**

The International Executive Committee of the Confederation (hereinafter referred to as the “Committee”), shall be responsible for co-ordinating the Society’s international strategy in the interim periods between Council General Assemblies, giving special attention to the need to ensure that this complies with the requests and matters approved during in the aforementioned General Assemblies.

It shall also assist and advise the President General in the task of supervising all the Conferences and Councils, examining the general progress of the Society and making decisions on the strategy for the following year, as well as aspects that the President General considers must be corrected from previous administrations.

#### **4.1.1 The mission of the Committee as an Ordinary Assembly of the Confederation**

In the years in which the ordinary Assembly of the Council General is not convened, the Committee shall be responsible for performing the Assembly functions of the Confederation as provided in French legislation governing non-profit associations.

### **4.2 Report to the General Assembly**

At the beginning of each Council General Assembly meeting, the Committee shall report to the Assembly through the Secretary General on the results of its management and administration during the years in which the Assembly was not convened and shall request the ratification of its performance.

### **4.3 Permanent and legal members**

Permanent Committee members are, apart from the President General, those members who are responsible for the effective presidency of the Committee, namely the Vice-President General, the Secretary General and the Treasurer General. Likewise, they shall include, where appropriate, the Deputy Vice-Presidents General envisaged in Article 3.18 of these International Statutes.

Legal members of the Committee are the Presidents of the Superior or Assimilated Councils with more than 1,000 active and aggregated Conferences within their jurisdiction.

Moreover, the President General shall appoint, on the proposal of the other permanent and legal members of the Committee, five members from the Superior or Assimilated Councils with a lower degree of Vincentian representation around the world; these members are appointed on a biannual basis.

Each Superior or Assimilated Council, which is a legal member, is represented by one vote. The President General shall likewise have one vote which, if the case may be, shall be considered the casting vote.

#### **4.3.1 Quorum and voting**

The valid adoption of resolutions by the International Executive Committee shall require the attendance or representation of at least 30% of its full members. Should a second call be necessary, this shall be issued at least 24 hours later, and shall be considered as validly constituted regardless of the percentage of members present or represented. Resolutions shall be validly adopted by a simple majority.

Each Superior or Assimilated Council, which is a legal member, is represented by a vote. In the same way, the vote of the President General shall be considered, if the case may be, the casting vote.

#### **4.4 Guest participants**

The Territorial Vice-Presidents, the Presidents of the existing International Commissions and members especially delegated by the President General with individual tasks of an international nature, shall always be invited to attend Committee meetings with a right to speak but not to vote.

The International Spiritual Adviser shall also be invited especially because of his/her spiritual work.

##### **4.4.1 Special invitations**

Any person holding a post of responsibility within the Society's international structure may be called to explain his/her management and administration performance to the Committee, and this shall be subject to approval by the latter; the corresponding observations shall also be made by the Committee itself.

#### **4.5 Special reports**

The Deputy Vice-Presidents General, the Secretary General, the Treasurer General, the Territorial Vice-Presidents, and the members delegated by the President General with Commissions or special missions shall be specifically obliged to report on the work performed.

#### **4.5.1 The Secretary General's Report**

The Secretary General, who shall also act as the Secretary of the Committee, shall report on the management of the Permanent Section and on the administrative situation and service of the Offices of the Council General of the Society.

Except for the extraordinary meetings envisaged in paragraph two of Article 4.7 of these International Statutes, the Secretary General shall obtain confirmation from all the Superior or Assimilated Councils, at least two months in advance of the meeting of the International Executive Committee, regarding the inclusion or exclusion of any point on the agenda of the meeting.

The Secretary General shall be the spokesperson for Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils that do not form part of the Committee and do not attend its meetings, with respect to any reports or opinions that have been sent in writing.

#### **4.5.2 The Treasurer General's report**

Specifically with respect to the Treasurer General, he/she shall report on his/her management and administration performance to the Committee, which shall represent, for him/her, the financial Commission envisaged in Article 3.20 of these International Statutes.

Likewise, the Treasurer General shall present the budget and obtain its approval in those cases envisaged in Article 3.21 of these International Statutes.

#### **4.6 Correspondents and Coordinators**

In addition to the members with the responsibilities mentioned in the previous Articles, the Committee may specifically summon any Correspondent or Coordinator, etc., and included within the performance of their services, to ask questions with respect to any aspect of their service.

#### **4.7 Committee and International Structure Meetings**

The Committee shall meet at least once a year, during the first six months of the year, except in years in which the Council General Assembly is convened.

Extraordinary meetings may be convened when the President General considers that these are necessary and also whenever requested by one half plus one of its voting members.

##### **4.7.1 Service structure meetings**

The entire International service Structure shall meet in a Plenary Session each two years, except in years in which the ordinary Assembly of the Council General is convened, on the days after those on which the Committee is convened.

#### **4.7.1.1 Participants**

All the Vincentian members that are delegated international services and are the so-called components of the International Structure shall be invited to participate in these meetings.

#### **4.7.1.2 Objectives**

The aim of these meetings shall be to provide information and to exchange experiences among the different members serving the International Structure of the Confederation. In this way, the members of the International Executive Committee shall learn about the difficulties of the International Structure and the latter shall gain knowledge of the international strategy to be designed by the former – the Committee – during inter-Assembly periods.

These shall be mainly training and informative meetings for the entire structure.

#### **4.8 Prayer and meditation**

In accordance with the Society's tradition, the Committee meeting shall begin and end with a prayer. A spiritual reading or a meditation, which may lead to a brief sharing, shall be presented by one of the attending members, normally by the International Spiritual Adviser. A collection shall then be taken among the participants.

### **5. THE PERMANENT SECTION/GOVERNING BOARD**

#### **5.1 Head office and convening of meetings**

A Permanent Section shall be established at the head office of the Council General of the Confederation; it shall be presided over by the President General. It may be convened anywhere around the world, whenever the President General considers that the situation makes this advisable.

##### **5.1.1 The mission of the Permanent Section**

Its mission is to closely supervise and monitor the activity of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul around the world, helping the President General to achieve a better international service for members and the poor. It makes any appropriate decisions within the scope of the Rule and Statutes and the Society's Tradition, and also complies specifically with the resolutions adopted by the Assemblies of the Council General and the recommendations of the International Executive Committee.

The Permanent Section shall specifically monitor resolutions adopted at the last Assembly meeting of the Council General or the International Executive Committee, as well as their degree of implementation in the different Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils and by the Council General itself whenever appropriate.

### **5.1.2 The mission of the Permanent Section as the Governing Board of the Confederation**

Whenever appropriate, and at least once a year, the Permanent Section shall be responsible for performing the role established by French Law for the Governing Boards of non-profit Associations.

In such circumstances, the Permanent Section shall be convened with a special agenda that shall make special mention of the fact that it acts as the Governing Board of the Confederation.

## **5.2 Permanent Section members**

By virtue of the service that they render, the Board Members of the Council General, the Territorial Vice-Presidents and the Correspondents are members of this Permanent Section.

### **5.2.1 Voting**

Save on the occasions when the Permanent Section meets as the Board of Directors of the Confederation, pursuant to Article 5.1.2 of these International Statutes, all Presidents of Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils who attend a session of the Permanent Section shall be entitled to a voice and vote, as if a full member of this body.

## **5.3 Territorial Technical Liaison Officers**

Members of the Section are those professionals who are recruited whenever possible, and on a preferential basis, from among the members from different geographical origins. Their mission is delegated by the President General for a specific renewable period. They are appointed with the right to speak but not to vote.

### **5.3.1. The mission of the Territorial Technical Liaison Officers**

Each Liaison Officer is appointed at the designated Council General Work Centre determined pursuant to Article 1.3.1 of these International Statutes, as an assistant to the Territorial Vice-Presidents and Coordinators of the geographical area to which they are assigned.

From time to time, other Technical Liaison Officers, with or without territorial responsibilities, may be entrusted with special missions reporting directly to the Secretary General or the President General.

### **5.3.2 Exclusion**

These Members of the Permanent Section shall not belong to this Section when this is meeting as the Governing Board of the Confederation, as provided in Article 5.1.2 of these International Statutes.

## **5.4 Correspondent members and others**

The members traditionally referred to as Territorial Correspondents who are appointed by the President General for a specific renewable period, as well as other members with specific missions, also form part of this Section.

### **5.4.1 The mission of the Territorial Correspondents**

The mission entrusted to the Territorial Correspondents is that of maintaining a constant relationship and effective cooperation with the different Territorial Technical Liaison Officers who depend on the former. They shall be close and fraternal representatives before the international structure, of the Superior, Assimilated and Associated Councils, to whose service they have been assigned.

## **5.5 Permanent guests**

The Presidents of the Superior or Assimilated Councils, when present at head office, shall always be invited to attend the meetings of the Permanent Section.

## **5.6 The Secretary of the Permanent Section**

As envisaged in Article 3.19 of these International Statutes, the Society's Secretary General is also the Secretary General of the Permanent Section.

# **6. INSTITUTION, AGGREGATION AND DISSOLUTION**

## **6.1 Aggregation and Institution powers**

Only the Council General is empowered to institute new Councils and aggregate new Conferences to the Society, after consulting the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils accordingly.

## **6.2 Aggregation and Institution Proposals. Speaker.**

The Aggregation of Conferences and Institution of Councils are presented by a Speaker appointed by the President General, in a session of the Permanent Section. The Speaker receives the proposals and recommendations of the competent Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils on behalf of the President General and obtains opinions from the members of the Permanent Section specifically responsible for handling relations with the Council which has requested the Aggregation or the Institution.

The Speaker presents the request to the Permanent Section, which either approves or rejects the Aggregation or Institution request.

### **6.2.1 Deadline for presenting and requesting the Aggregation of Conferences**

The Conference, object of an Aggregation request presented by the Speaker, must have been created and must have provided services to the poor for at least twelve months.

### **6.2.2 Preservation of aggregated or instituted status**

The Conferences and Councils, once Aggregated or Instituted, shall retain that status as long as circumstances do not require the President General to proceed to their temporary suspension (see Article 6.8 and subsequent of these International Statutes), or to the firm exclusion by the Society of any Conference or Council. (delete “member”).

## **6.3 Extraordinary circumstances**

The Permanent Section, through the Aggregations and Institutions Speaker, may sometimes request supplementary reports from the International Territorial Vice-Presidents.

## **6.4 Communication**

The Aggregations or Institutions declared by the Permanent Section are notified by the President General to the President of the interested Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council, as well as to the beneficiaries.

### **6.4.1 Aggregation and Institution Letters**

The Aggregation or Institution Letters shall be signed by the President General and the Secretary General; a space shall be left for the signature of the President of the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council. The Speaker shall provide notification of any Aggregation or Institution requests that have been rejected for different reasons.

## **6.5 The Institution of a Superior Council. Appointment of a provisional Board.**

When the Council General, through the Permanent Section, institutes a Superior Council, the President General appoints a provisional Board, whose term of office is limited to one year and which may be renewed only twice. The President of this provisional Board is a Temporary member of the Council General, as established in the provisions contained in Article 1.10.2 of these International Statutes.

## **6.6 Missions of the Provisional Board**

During this year, the provisional Board shall prepare and ensure the adoption of the Internal Statutes of the new Society for the members in their geographical area and shall establish the legal procedures required for it to subsequently join the International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul as a fully legal member, in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 1.6 of these International Statutes.

The Council General, through its Permanent Section, shall finally, and whenever necessary, approve the text of the proposed Internal Statutes, including those of any Assimilated or Associated Council. Then, and within the scope of the new Statutes, the members shall elect a new President of the Superior Council and notify the Council General accordingly.

### **6.7 The dissolution or suspension of the Aggregation or Institution of a Conference or Council**

For reasons prompted by the seriousness of a particular event, the President General may suspend temporarily or permanently exclude a Conference or Council, after notifying the Permanent Section accordingly. In case of a permanent exclusion, this shall always entail the cancellation of the Aggregation or Institution. (see Article 6.9 and subsequent)

### **6.8 Extraordinary Delegation.**

Each President of a Superior or Assimilated Council is, on a precautionary basis by virtue of his/her election received and accepted accordingly at the head office of the Council General, delegated the powers to temporarily suspend a Conference, Council or member which are the prerogative of the President General. In other words, in cases of extreme seriousness and urgency, a President of a Superior or Assimilated Council may suspend a Conference, Council or member, exclusively as a precautionary measure, within his/her territorial jurisdiction.

#### **6.8.1 Communication**

In such circumstances and regardless of the direct communications to those involved, the President General shall be notified of such decision, and the justified reasons for the same, within a maximum of 15 working days (as provided in Article 6.9.1.1 of these International Statutes); the member, Conference or Council in question may appeal to the aforementioned President in order to be heard. The President General shall approve or reject the appeals that are presented.

### **6.9 Commencement of dissolution or suspension procedures.**

Two procedures may be used to suspend, cancel or, where appropriate, withdraw an Aggregation or Institution procedure.

#### **6.9.1 On the request from the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council**

On request from the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council within whose jurisdiction the relevant member, Conference or Council are operating.

### **6.9.1.1 Necessary documentation**

When a Superior Council requests the intervention of the Council General in the event of any problem, it must send, together with the request, full documentation for the information of the President General, particularly the documentation resulting from the intervention of the Conciliation Committee of the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council, where appropriate.

### **6.9.2 Ex officio**

The President General ex officio, i.e. on the initiative and request of one of the International Territorial Vice Presidents, shall start the procedure of suspension or exclusion in the event of any serious circumstances. The President General shall report this serious situation to the Permanent Section.

## **6.10 Execution of the decision**

The Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council that has supervised the Conference or Council is responsible for taking the necessary steps, in agreement with the Council General, in order to execute the sanction and to ensure the transfer of property and files of the dissolved organisation. In the event of suspension or dissolution of a Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council, the President General shall appoint a Provisional Board pursuant to the provisions contained in Article 6.5 of these International Statutes.

## **6.11 Extraordinary procedures**

In agreement with, and normally on the request of, the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council concerned, the Council General may intervene in disputes arising at Conference and Council level. Its proposed decision shall take into account the spirit of the Society and any specific aspects of the Society's Statutes at the location in question, provided that they are approved in conformity with the provisions contained in the Rule and these International Statutes and ratified accordingly by the Permanent Section.

### **6.11.1 Civil and other Tribunals**

Any member, Conference or Council that takes legal action through civil or other Tribunals, without express authorisation from the Council General, in order to resolve disputes between members, Conferences or Councils, shall be automatically separated from the Vincentian friendship by virtue of this action and shall be excluded, for all intents and purposes, from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

## **7. AMENDMENTS TO AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RULE AND THE STATUTES**

### **7.1 Rule and Statutes reform procedures**

This Rule and the Statutes, in their three Parts, may be modified by means of two procedures.

### **7.1.1 General reform**

Firstly, on a general basis, by replacing it with another newly-worded version.

### **7.1.2 Partial reforms, Amendments**

Secondly, by so-called “Amendments”. By means of this procedure, the different amendments approved shall be attached to the end of the text of the Rule and Statutes and shall have the same effect as those that they rectify, complement or replace.

## **7.2 Rule and Statutes reform periods and methods**

In both cases, proposed changes to the Rule and Statutes or Amendments to any of its Articles must be presented one year before the date scheduled for the Council General Assembly meeting at which these changes or amendments are to be discussed.

## **7.3 Quorum**

In order for the change or amendment by means of one of the two procedures mentioned above (reform of the entire Rule and Statutes or partial Amendment) to enter into effect, it must be approved by 2/3 of the legal members of the Council General present or represented, including those members who have voted by post.

## **7.4 Interpretation of the Rule.**

Any matter that is not specifically governed by any Parts of the Rule and Statutes shall be governed by Tradition and, in the final instance, by the decision issued by the Board of the Council General.

## **7.5 General rules governing interpretation**

Despite the fact that the entire Rule and Statutes in their three Parts must be treated as a single legal document, the first of these parts entitled “Rule of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul” prevails with respect to the other two Parts in terms of its contents.

Likewise, the “Statutes of the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul”, are subordinate to the Rule but prevail over the Internal Statutes.

There are also the corresponding Internal Statutes for the Superior Councils. For their drafting, we have the Basic Requirements for the Drafting of the Internal Statutes of the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils.

The Internal Statutes, which must be prepared by each Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council, shall comply fully with, and be subordinate to the Rule and to these International Statutes and shall be treated as a single legal document, as provided in Article 1.7 of these Statutes. They must always be approved by the Permanent Section of the Council General in order to be valid.



PART III:

# *Statutes*

of the  
NATIONAL COUNCIL  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF THE SOCIETY OF  
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, INC.

**Approved:**

Council General International  
Paris, France  
December 2018



## PART III:

### STATUTES OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, INC.

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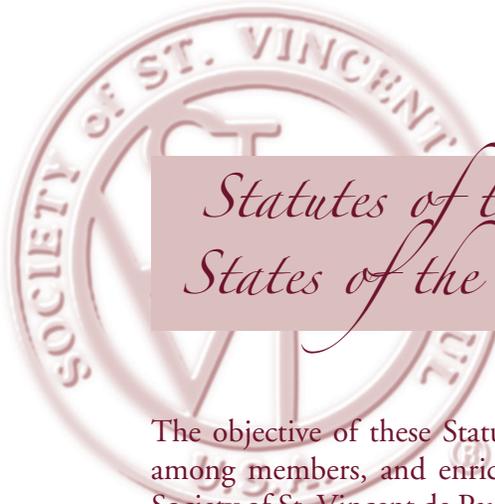
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## PART III:

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

The objective of these Statutes is to help nurture Vincentian Spirituality, enhance the relationship among members, and enrich Vincentian service to those in need – the Essential Elements of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The Essential Elements are fully described in the Rule (Part I) of which Statute 1 provides a brief summary.

### **Statute 1: The Essential Elements**

The Essential Elements of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are Spirituality, Friendship and Service.

### **Statute 2: Cultural Beliefs**

The following are the Cultural Beliefs that make up the Society's creed and therefore define our Ministry so that as Vincentians we are committed to:

**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

**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.

## MEMBERSHIP

### **Statute 3: Membership and Admission**

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States has two types of membership: Active Members and Associate Members. Active means Full membership.

**Active Members** are those who participate regularly in the prayer life, meetings, and charitable activities through personal contact with the poor of the Vincentian Conference or Council into which they have been received.

**An Active Member** accepts the Rule and Statutes of the Society, belongs to the Catholic Church, and is received as a Vincentian brother or sister into the Society's Conference or Council with which he or she is affiliated. Normally, membership implies Conference affiliation. Less commonly is membership obtained through direct Council affiliation. Only Active (Full) Members hold office in the organization.

### **Admission Process for Active Members**

The names of persons proposed for Active membership are to be submitted to the President of the Conference or Council concerned. The President will provide information concerning the recommended person to the Conference or Council. If approved, the candidate will be admitted as a member and given a Vincentian welcome at the next meeting. If a prospective member wishes to test their Vincentian vocation, that person may defer for a time formal admission into the Society. A candidate for Active membership is afforded a period of training and discernment which includes formation in the Essential Elements and values of the Society as well as its Rule.

Before being commissioned as a member, according to Statute 4, the Conference President or the Spiritual Advisor should consult with the candidate to discern readiness for Active membership. The Conference then takes formal action, normally by a resolution, to accept the candidate into Active membership.

**Associate Members** are those affiliated with the Society by formal action of the Conference or Council with which the member will be joined. Associate Members include those who sincerely and publicly accept the Society's Rule but may or may not belong to the Catholic Church and may or may not attend Conference meetings or engage in the works of the Society on a regular basis. Associate Members are kept informed of the developments and activities of their immediate groupings, as well as the general progress of the Society, particularly in the local area or diocese. They are invited to attend the general meetings and special observances of the Society and to participate in its charitable activities.

While membership in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States is open to all ages, in honor of the youthfulness of our founder Frederic Ozanam youth and young adults are encouraged to become members. Youth and young adults may be Active or Associate Members of any Conference or Council or of a Conference designated as a Youth or Young Adult Conference.

#### **Statute 4: Commissioning and Renewal Ceremonies**

The commissioning of new members of the Society should take place at an appropriate time and occasion after they have gained experience in the Society.

All members shall annually renew their promise of service to the members and to the poor, thereby deepening the spiritual dimension of their vocation.

The normal occasion for commissioning and renewal is at a Conference or Council liturgy or at a Festival Meeting.

### **CONFERENCES/COUNCILS AND THEIR WORK**

#### **Statute 5: Conferences Meet Frequently**

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.

After prayerful consideration of all circumstances involved, Vincentians should apply themselves to their maximum ability in fulfillment of the mission and Essential Elements of the Society. Vincentians are available for work in the Conferences after fulfilling their family and professional duties.

Conference members consistently strive to develop a three-fold relationship with God, the poor and one another – mutual support and friendship.

#### **Statute 6: Aggregation and Institution**

All Conferences and Councils are full members of the Society when they are respectively Aggregated or Instituted by the Council General International.

All Conferences seeking Aggregation and Councils seeking Institution are required to follow the procedures established by the National Council at the time of application. The National Council complies with the appropriate criteria of the Council General International.

#### **Statute 7: Conference Meeting Essentials**

A Conference meeting shall incorporate Spirituality, Friendship, Service and our Cultural Beliefs, and could include the following components:

- A punctual call to order
- Roll call
- Opening prayer (which should always include a prayer to the Holy Spirit, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary and a prayer for those whose suffering they wish to share)
- Spiritual reading (or meditation, address) on which members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith
- Approval of Minutes of previous meeting

- Home visitation reports
- President's report
- Secretary's report (including correspondence received, information about the Society or training points)
- Treasurer's report
- A review of one or more parts of the Rule
- Committee reports (including Formation Committee report)
- Membership reports
- Resolutions
- 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

**Statute 8: Visits to the Poor are made in a Vincentian Spirit (Rule, Part I, 1.7 to 1.12)**

Visits to those in need should be made in their environment. This contact with friends in need should always be made in a spirit of friendship, respect, cordiality, empathy and affection. It should also promote self-sufficiency whenever possible for those who suffer and show concern for their deepest needs.

Services are provided regardless of race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, criminal justice status, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, age or physical handicap.

Home visits always are made in pairs.

**Statute 9: Festival Meetings and Conference Masses**

Conferences and Councils celebrate liturgical ceremonies, particularly Vincentian ceremonies, throughout the year, endeavoring to maintain a spirit of friendship among the members.

The Council of the United States has designated six days for religious observances. On these occasions the members of Conferences and Councils demonstrate the spiritual nature of the Society by attending the Eucharist together:

- Ozanam Sunday (the last Sunday of April)
- The feast day of Blessed Frederic Ozanam (September 9)

- The feast day of St. Vincent de Paul (September 27)
- The Immaculate Conception, Patroness of the Society (December 8)
- A Conference Mass celebrated at least once a year for all members, including spouses and children. During this Mass, it is most appropriate to commission new members into the Conference, pray for those we have visited, pray for our benefactors, pray for the poor, pray for deceased members, and for continued good work.
- Another feast day of local custom, such as December 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

**Statute 10: Councils: The Minimum Number of Levels**

Conferences are organized under the following different levels of Councils in the simplest manner possible:

- 1) The National Council which coordinates and represents the general activity of all the Conferences in the United States.
- 2) (Arch)Diocesan Councils which represent a minimum of three District Councils and represent Conferences in a specific (Arch)Diocese to which they belong.
- 3) District Councils, which represent a minimum of three and ideally a maximum of 12 Conferences in an (Arch)Diocese. Existing District Councils with more than 12 Conferences are encouraged to consider at least dividing into smaller groupings for the purpose of holding informational meetings or reviewing matters to be voted upon by Conference Presidents at a full District Council meeting. The District President will select a chairperson for each smaller grouping using whatever procedure and criteria he or she shall choose. Ideally, large District Councils are best divided into smaller Districts for efficiency and effectiveness of Servant Leadership.

The National Council approves the creation of the (Arch)Diocesan and District Councils. The National Council President approves and requests their Institution from the Council General International in Paris.

Councils are at the service of all Conferences under their jurisdiction. They help Conferences develop their spiritual life, promote friendship among members, intensify the service of the group, and diversify their activities so that they will be constantly attentive to the needs of those who suffer (see Rule, Part 1, 3.6).

Without creating a parallel organization, Councils at appropriate levels should particularly promote Youth Committees, helping them to be fully integrated into the life of the Society. Youth Committees shall have the same relationship with the Council under which they operate as the rest of the Committees linked to the same Council.

## GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

### **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)

### **Statute 12: 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.

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

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.

### **President**

The election of Conference and Council Presidents is held by secret ballot in accordance with an approved set of procedures (by the local Council) that are consistent with the Rule, Statutes and Bylaws of the Society.

The term of office of a Conference, District or (Arch)Diocesan Council President is three years, once renewable; for Youth Conferences the term is one year, 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 term of office of the National President is six years, not renewable. The President is elected by secret ballot in accordance with the National Council Bylaws.

### **Officers**

Each Conference or Council should have at least a Vice President who exercises all the functions of the President when the latter is absent, a Secretary and a Treasurer, all of whom are appointed by the President after consultation with the members. The President may appoint other officers.

All officers named by the President serve at the pleasure of the President. Such appointments terminate automatically when a new President takes office. An incoming President may reappoint an officer or officers and others who served under the previous President. To safeguard the good reputation of the Conference or Council and, therefore, that of the Society itself, appointees must not be related to the person empowered to make the appointments. In no event should any one person hold more than one officer position in the same Conference or Council at the same time.

### **Statute 13: Regions and National Vice Presidents for Regions**

The National Council of the United States is divided into Regions. There shall be a National Vice President for each Region who shall represent the National President.

The term of office of the National Vice President for a Region coincides with the term of office of the National President and ends when a new National President takes office.

The election of National Vice Presidents for each respective Region is held in accordance with an approved set of procedures that are consistent with the Rule, Statutes and Bylaws of the Society.

### **Statute 14: Employees in the Society**

The Vincentian vocation by its very nature does not eliminate participation in Vincentian works by employees. It can be of benefit to the poor and the employee if they are afforded the opportunity to put into practice the spirit of the Society. Leaders of the Society are encouraged to create opportunities for employees to become members of a Conference.

Employees of the Society, of its Special Works or of organizations controlled by the Society may serve in a Conference with membership rights and privileges other than that of holding any office within the Society.

An employee of the Society who fulfills the criteria for being an Active Member, may be a candidate for any office in the Society as long as his/her employment is terminated before taking office. An existing officer within the Society may become an employee of the Society as long as he/she resigns from office before starting employment.

### **Statute 15: The Spiritual Advisor in the Society**

Since the beginning of the Society, a Spiritual Advisor has been appointed to help foster spiritual life within the Conferences and Councils under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in conformity with the Rule and Statutes of the Society.

Should a member of the ordained clergy, namely a priest or a deacon, not be available to act as the Spiritual Advisor, the President of the Conference or Council may appoint a Catholic layperson who has had training consistent with the policies of the National Council regarding the formation and training of Spiritual Advisors. At the Conference and Council levels appropriate church protocol should be observed when appointing ordained or non-ordained Spiritual Advisors. Priests and deacons are not eligible to be elected or appointed in the Society to any office outside their spiritual role.

If a parish priest who has declined to be the usual Spiritual Advisor does occasionally attend a Conference meeting, he will always be invited by the President to contribute to the sharing during the Spiritual Reflection.

### **Statute 16: Subsidiarity and Democracy**

The Society embraces the Principle of Subsidiarity as its basic standard of operation. Decisions are made as close as possible to the area of activity to ensure that the local environment and circumstances (cultural, social, political, etc.) are taken into consideration. In this way, the Society promotes local initiatives within its spirit. This freedom of action of Conferences and Councils, which has been kept faithfully since the origins of the Society, enables them to help the poor spontaneously and more effectively, free from excessive bureaucracy.

In exercising this freedom of action to face the challenge of poverty in their area, Vincentians feel called to pray together for guidance and strength and for that creative imagination which is the promised gift of the Holy Spirit.

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

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.

### **Statute 17: Suspension of Members, Conferences, and Councils**

The President General can suspend members, Conferences and Councils. However, the President General has delegated authority to suspend members, Conferences or Councils to the National Council President. When the National Council President has made such a decision, the member, Conference or Council suspended will cease to exercise any office and may not act on behalf of the Society under any circumstances.

An appeal of the suspension may be made to the National Council's Conciliation Committee which shall make a nonbinding recommendation to the National President. Should the member, Conference or Council choose not to accept the final decision of the National President, a final appeal may be made to the President General.

Any member, Conference or Council using means other than those provided by the Society to resolve internal disputes renounces Vincentian communion and leaves the Society, unless the Council General International expressly agrees that the matter should be placed before the courts.

### **Statute 18: Annul the Election of a President**

The President of the National Council may, for serious reasons, annul the election of a member as President of a Conference or Council. Such member will immediately cease to exercise the office and may appeal to the Board of the National Council.

Upon notification of a complaint for an election, the National Council President must issue a final decision within 60 days.

### **Statute 19: Removal of a President**

Periodically, difficulties due to various causes such as medical, physical, mental, time management, lack of the conciliatory spirit a servant leader needs, or even insufficient ability for the role of President, may impair the ability of a Conference or Council to carry out its work. If the situation becomes unmanageable, and the next higher Council cannot resolve the matter and the President refuses to resign, the next higher Council, through delegation of the National President, may remove a President in order to protect the Society. The person removed may appeal to the Board of Directors of the National Council.

### **Statute 20: Special Works**

Only after prayer and discernment should a Council or Conference establish Special Works. Special Works can either remain part of normal operations or be separately incorporated.

In the event that the Special Work remains part of a Council's or Conference's normal operations it will be governed and managed in accord and in compliance with that Council's or Conference's Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, standing operating procedures, reporting policies and Human Resource policies. It is essential that a Special Work remain loyal to the policies and strategies agreed to by the Council or Conference to which it belongs and reports.

The President of a Council or Conference wishing to incorporate a Special Work should first consult with and obtain the approval of Council or Conference members and should also consult with the President of the next higher Council.

The Council or Conference should ensure that at the outset the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and other governance and management documents of such incorporated Special Work recognize the relationship of said Special Work to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul including but not limited to name, logo use, asset acquisition and asset disposal, and that the legal and business consequences of separately incorporating have been thoroughly evaluated.

The Bylaws of the incorporated Special Work should reserve to the Council or Conference which has incorporated it the right to replace members of the Board of Directors of the incorporated Special Work, provide that the majority of the members of the Board of Directors be active Vincentians or that the ultimate control of the Special Work is by active Vincentians, and include policies which ensure that appropriate reporting is made to the Council or Conference so that a harmonious, faithful and fruitful relationship is maintained and safeguarded.

### **Statute 21: National Council's Conciliation Committee**

1. Appeals that arise out of Statute 17 are brought to the National Council's Conciliation Committee.
2. Councils, Conferences and members may bring their issues to the National Council's Conciliation Committee if an issue has not been resolved at the local level after sustained prayer, goodwill and a desire to reconcile.

Members of the National Council's Conciliation Committee shall be as defined by Resolution approved by the National Council.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **Statute 22: Conference and Council Periodic Review**

Periodically, but not less frequently than once every three years, each Conference and Council must evaluate their service to the members and the poor, the effectiveness of their special works and all activities, 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.

### **Statute 23: Annual Finance and Activity Reports Are Published by the National Council, Other Councils and Conferences**

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

The Society preserves its good reputation for honesty and responsible stewardship. It produces finance reports that include revenue, expenses and assets, and activity reports, at least annually. Each Council and Conference shall conduct an annual audit of such type as is required.

These reports are published internally and externally and are made available to all members and the public in general. The reports are sent to the (Arch)Diocesan Bishops, and federal, state and local officials for their information.

The annual report of the National Council should also be sent to the Council General International.

### **Statute 24: Property and the Distribution of Funds**

Councils and Conferences zealously manage and maintain the Society's assets. The authority to manage the Society's assets remains exclusively with Councils that may delegate this authority in accordance with the Rule of the Society and the Bylaws and Resolutions of the National Council.

Faithful to the spirit of non-accumulation of wealth, the next higher Council may determine annually the percentage of the funds of each Council or Conference within their area that may be made available to them. The next higher Council will work with the Council or Conference

to determine an appropriate reserve for unanticipated events and direct the allocation of funds which exceed the anticipated demands, which may not be hoarded as a capital sum, to the service of the poor in their own area or abroad in the poorest areas of the world.

In the event of the dissolution of a Council or Conference, all debts and liabilities legally incurred by and on behalf of the Council or Conference shall be fully discharged by the next higher Council of the Society. Remaining money or property and all files and documents must be passed promptly to the next higher Council that is in compliance with the requirements of the Internal Revenue Service and is in good standing with the National Council.

#### **Statute 25: Collections for the Poor and to Maintain the Structures**

In the United States, a variety of means exist to ensure the proper collections for the poor and to maintain the Society's structure, nationally and internationally, i.e., special collections, solidarity contributions, fundraisers, twinning, and special works. All collections are conducted in the spirit of friendship, solidarity, and sharing.

#### **Statute 26: Use of Funds**

The funds of the Society shall be used for the works of the Society, including Vincentian twinning and collaboration in payments for people we serve. However, no matter how worthy the cause, funds shall not be diverted in the form of donations or contributions to other organizations or charities, except, occasionally, for other branches of the Vincentian Family. The Treasurer is charged as the responsible officer to ensure adherence after consultation with the Conference or Council.

#### **Statute 27: Council Presidents' Right to Audit and to See Correspondence**

When deemed appropriate Council Presidents should require audits or audit reviews of the Conferences (at minimum, an internal review), or of Councils, and Special Works under the auspices of their Council.

Council Presidents are also entitled to have access to all correspondence sent by any Conference or Council on behalf of the Society.

#### **Statute 28: Refund of Expenses**

Vincentians entrusted to undertake previously and duly authorized offices, missions, or tasks for the Society are entitled to the refund of the expenses incurred.

#### **Statute 29: Relationship with Civil Society – Work for Social Justice – Political Independence of the Society (see Rule, Part I, 7.1 to 7.9)**

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

It is good that some members follow and fully participate in their political vocation in such a way that they bring Christian values to political matters.

Those members who hold political offices will be asked, always with charity, not to hold any mission of representation in the Society during their term of political office.

**Statute 30: Amendment of Statutes**

Statutes of the National Council may be amended, altered or repealed at any regular or special meeting of the National Council with the concurrence of the majority of the National Council membership present provided, however, that 60 days written notice of the meeting at which proposed amendments, alterations or repeals of any Statute be sent to all National Council members prior to the meeting. Final approval of the Council General International is needed for validation.

**Statute 31: Interpretation of the Statutes**

These Statutes of the U.S. Council received the approval of the Permanent Section of the Council General International. They are subordinate to and interpreted according to the “Rule of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul” and to the International Statutes, and shall be treated together with them as a single legal document.





## BYLAWS

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.

*The Rule is the paramount authority of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.* Should any Bylaw, rule or regulation adopted by the 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 Bylaws, rules or regulations should be 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.

**THE CONFERENCE OR COUNCIL MUST KEEP A COPY OF  
THE RULE WITH THEIR BYLAWS.**

*Confederation International of Society of Saint Vincent de Paul*



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