



CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT GENERAL

Paris, 31 January 2026

Praise be to Our Lord Jesus Christ!

My dear fellow members, applicants, employees of our headquarters and social works, esteemed collaborators and volunteers:

Introduction:

The year 2025 has just ended, a year in which Vincentian harmony has been clearly evident, remaining faithful to the presidential motto, a beautiful text by the main founder, Federico Ozanam, written in Pisa in 1853, when he was already mortally wounded:

"...Tears of joy escape from my eyes when I find our little family at such a great distance, always small because of the discretion of its works, but great because of God's blessing. Although we speak different languages, our hands are always clasped with such fraternal cordiality that we could well be recognised by the same sign by which the first Christians were recognised: 'See how they love one another!'".

Federico used this thought to describe the fraternal cordiality and the importance of the network of charity among us, which characterize our confreres independently of their language or nationality, and how this mutual love must be our distinctive sign. For him, it is the visible proof of our faith and a challenge to the society of his time, which we also make present now.

I ask you again for your availability, we know that only by the grace of God can we face this service in hope; it will be with our example of mutual love, when our joy, our Christian commitment, our challenge to this secularized society of our time is manifested, that we can grow in faith and promote a healthy growth in our Conferences by fraternally welcoming those who need to give meaning to their life.

We are one single Conference that extends throughout the world and we all must collaborate in matters of formation, youth, communication, governance,

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institutional relations and other strategic aspects, which from the General Council we are putting into practice. Because the **Society of St. Vincent de Paul is everyone's business**, it is an institution that, with our friendship and fraternal love, we must make it valid as a **sign of Christ's love**.

Our social action

This year we propose to claim Federico Ozanam as "**Precursor of the Social Doctrine of the Church**".

With these words, Saint John Paul II expressed it in the homily of his beatification in Notre Dame Cathedral, in Paris, on August 22, 1997:

"Ozanam has the clairvoyant courage of a first-rate social and political commitment, in a troubled time of his country's life, since no society can accept misery as a fatality without its honor being wounded. Thus, we can consider him a precursor of the Social Doctrine of the Church, which Pope Leo XIII developed some years later in the encyclical *Rerum novarum*".

We are the witnesses of maintaining that social and political commitment from our social action, because social progress is not only to alleviate material misery, it is also to provide integral development to people. That is why our education projects must be directed and titled as: **Education for integral development**. A holistic approach that goes beyond the academic to form complete persons (body, mind, spirit) based on faith, values and Christian principles providing capabilities to serve God and the community in all areas of life, from evangelization to social and professional action, seeking a personal and community transformation, as our principal founder thought.

Social progress in the Social Doctrine of the Church that Ozanam defended is therefore understood as the integral development of the person and society, based on principles such as human dignity, the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity. It seeks a social order that respects rights, promotes justice and the universal destination of goods, and is achieved through the participation of the faithful in public life, as Ozanam did who founded a political movement called "Party of Trust", that is what that Christian democrat movement was called, to build a more human society, guided by love and truth, not only by policies, but by a transformation of social structures.

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This transformation begins in the family, in the Conference, because here we develop in community, our mission is to **improve our neighbor, but having as the fundamental axis the purpose of improving ourselves**, for this is the best way to become transforming instruments to improve social structures. Assisentialism is precisely the option we want to eradicate, **our main commitment, in addition to providing closeness and help, is to evangelize**, let us never forget to ask him, how is your relationship with God".

Teach the truth from faith

When we comment on the lack of resources in our Vincentian mission, we always understand it as the lack of material means, but we know that there are Conferences with scarce material resources that are capable of carrying out their Vincentian mission simply with the human resources they have. But we know that our evangelical mission is amplified if we have certain material and technical resources that facilitate the communication of the message: from traditional tools to modern digital options. In this **the General Council is, in providing according to our possibilities the best possible options so that we can transmit from faith, the Love of God to all peoples**: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." Matthew 28:19.

Our growth will come from the attraction of truth and the love of Christ, as Pope Francis taught us and not from proselytism. Share our faith and our charism with humility, without judging, respecting the history and perspective of the other, creating a two-way space for communication. Because we know that faith is transmitted "by contact, from person to person, like one flame lights another flame".

For this we are creating the Global Foundation, as a tool for evangelization and transmission of our Vincentian charism, a tool that provides material and human resources, to grow in faith and in the expansion of our charism.

The Vincentian community as a path to holiness:

The Vincentian vocation arises as a response that wants to transform one's own life, thus **the Conferences are born, they are born from a group of lay people from friendship, with a vocation for sanctification**. In fact, there are many people who are anxious for this change to occur in their lives.

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The Second Vatican Council tells us that the laity are called by God to contribute from within to the sanctification of the world in the manner of leaven, fulfilling our own task and guided by the evangelical spirit. In this way, we must manifest Christ to others, shining above all with the testimony of our life, with faith, hope and charity.

For Federico Ozanam, faith without charity, understood as the concrete expression of faith through social action seeking not only to alleviate immediate material and spiritual misery, but also to promote social justice, has no meaning. That is why, when he addresses his young friends, his advice sometimes seems like a reprimand: "The earth has cooled, it is we Catholics who must rekindle the vital heat that is extinguished, it is we who must begin again the great work of regeneration, even if it were necessary to begin again the era of the martyrs".

The new Conferences must be tutored, an community environment must be created where healthy fraternity among us is breathed, where holiness is sought, where the foundational stone is maintained. **The Conference meetings or celebrations, as Federico said, must be that fraternal feast that we never want to miss.** The Conferences need people who know how to transmit joy, spirit of authenticity, spirit of that foundational stone: Confreres who know how to live the charism and infect it. Be faithful servants of Christ who excite and infect. We have the best product, to give meaning to life and transform the world!

Federico Ozanam writes: **"It seems to me that there is something of the spirit of holiness of prayer in this sweet relationship of friendship, and that one should only indulge in it with respect and preparation".**

Sanctification is mutual: The relationship is bidirectional; while one gives material help and human and spiritual support, the needy in turn "generously fulfills" by praying for the benefactor, resulting in the one who gives receiving more than what he offers.

Pope Leo XIV:

After the death of Pope Francis, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost was elected as the new Pope on May 8, who assumed the name Leo XIV. Born in Chicago in 1955, he becomes the first American pontiff in the history of the Church. His election has been welcomed with enthusiasm especially in Latin America, where **International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul**

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he developed much of his pastoral life.

I have maintained two personal visits with the Holy Father, in one I delivered a bust of Federico Ozanam, commenting on **Federico's commitment as "precursor of the Social Doctrine of the Church"** and on the second occasion I asked him for support to promote his sanctification process and I delivered a bottle of wine made by our Brazilian confreres with the effigy of Ozanam and the corporate logo, and also Ozanam's letters in English, translated and published by our brothers from the United States.

Canonization of Federico Ozanam:

I held an interview with His Eminence Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. The cardinal, accompanied by Monsignor Giampaolo Rizzotti, head of the secretary's office «Studium», after recalling the great Christian virtues of the blessed, shared the canonical file of the cause, from which it is deduced that the process for his sanctification remains open, but is slowed down.

When discussing the different strategies to adopt, **the cardinal encouraged us to present a request for review of the first miracle**, as long as the intervening doctors were experts in this type of case. In addition, he suggested that we can present a second miracle at the same time.

The General Council requests prayers for the achievement of the sanctity of Federico Ozanam.

New Vincentian saint, Pier Giorgio Frassati:

Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati was sanctified on September 7, 2025.

Pier Giorgio is “one of ours”: he joined a Conference at the age of 17 and, until the end of his life, made home visits, financially supported specific families and encouraged other young people to serve those who suffer the most.

He promoted the Social Doctrine of the Church and organized direct help to working families and sick people in Turin; he died at the age of 24 due to polio and was beatified by Saint John Paul II in 1990.

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Saint Pier Giorgio is the patron of the Vincentian youth of the SSVP since 2017.

Presidential program:

- ***Growing together in faith:*** So that this Vincentian mission gives greater meaning to our life, which is one of the pillars that keep the Conferences alive, the spiritual program in charge of our spiritual advisor, Father José Francisco Orozco, CM, continues.
- ***Formation plan:*** The framework of the Formation Plan “Growing Together in Faith”, seeks to continue fostering in the members the personal search for God and his Kingdom through a personal relationship with Christ and service to the poor.

With bimonthly periodicity, practical catechetical sheets of reflection on the core themes of this formation plan are published on the international website so that those Conferences that wish can use and work on them.

They appear on the web in “SSVP Office” in the upper right part:

Sheet 1: Lord, that I may see

Sheet 2: Blind looks

Sheet 3: Mary's gaze

Sheet 4: The frog's gaze vs. A global gaze

Sheet 5: the distant gaze

Sheet 6: The eyes of envy

Sheet 7: Called to holiness

Sheet 8: SSVP, Vincentian spirituality and Social Doctrine of the Church



This is the last sheet published, No. 8, in its epilogue, Father Pepe Orozco writes:

“The Social Doctrine of the Church, as an ethical and social dimension of the Gospel, is a proposal to build a world where the Kingdom of God can become visible in concrete gestures of justice, solidarity and service. Inspired by the reading of Saint Vincent that Federico Ozanam made, we Vincentians are called to contemplate, judge and act in the light of the Gospel, discerning in each circumstance the paths of charity that transform both the person and society”.

This year our commitment is to proclaim Federico Ozanam as “Precursor of the Social Doctrine of the Church”

By addressing these key themes, “Growing Together in Faith” aims to empower SSVP members to deepen their faith, live as committed disciples of Jesus Christ and contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God on earth.

A broad program open to everyone's participation, which from the General Council we hope will be fruitful.

In addition, I want to briefly highlight the progress of the strategic priorities of this presidential term, –the complete program, for more details, is on our corporate website–, which are rooted in our Rule, which sustains our unity and friendship:

- ***International Vincentian Day.*** The object is to make our institution and its social action better known. Last year on December 4 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) the presentation of the International Report 2024 took place, under the motto “Your embrace renews the world”, because **our embrace wants to be a gesture that strengthens, dignifies and accompanies, that transmits affection and confidence.**

The Day was a great showcase of international dimension and that thanks to the communication department gave us great visibility throughout the world, making our Vincentian mission better known and in a more authentic way. These fruits that we are collecting will undoubtedly strengthen our capacities to obtain greater human and material resources and thus grow the Conferences for the greater glory of God.

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- ***Support for international twinning and solidarity projects.*** For this, in addition to the mission entrusted to the Development Aid Commission and the Solidarity Fund (CIAD and FIS), we are specifying different international cooperation projects that are in accordance with the encyclical Laudato Si', to obtain more resources and always with the support of our Conferences and Councils. I hope that soon we will see the first fruits.

We are promoting **twinning and contributing to alleviate the dramatic consequences of environmental degradation** in the lives of the poorest in the world. The Twinning Commission continues to work on a plan with two main objectives: continue promoting the proper use of the twinning manual and find more donor countries.

An annual appeal is promoted for the International Solidarity Fund (FIS). This vital fund, managed by the International Commission for Aid and Development (CIAD), allows the International General Council to act quickly and help our brothers and sisters who do everything possible to respond compassionately to catastrophes and other emergency needs throughout the world.

- ***Youth presence in local and international events and activities.*** In the Jubilee Year 2025 we have had two major calls for Vincentian youth in Rome: one, the Jubilee Day of Youth held in Rome from July 28 to August 3 and the second during the same dates, the III International Meeting of SSVP Youth, where the international Youth delegates were mainly convened in representation of the youth of the 155 countries, with the assistance of more than 120 young people.
- ***Annual Report of the International General Council.*** In order to demonstrate the global impact that the SSVP represents in the world, to increase its credibility and obtain more material and human resources, the Annual Report 2024 with the consolidated figures of the Confederation was presented last December 4 before the media and attendees in general, highlighting the impact of more than 5,000 special works and 18,000 social projects in 155 countries and five continents, with a global figure for social action of €1,650,000,000. The day highlighted the 192 years of history of our institution and the capacity to transform lives.

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Willian Alves, vice president of the National Council of Brazil was the conductor of the act that, among other personalities, confreres and confreers, benefactors and friends, counted on the assistance of the Minister of Development and Social Assistance, Family and Fight against Hunger, Dr. Wellington Dias and also with some Brazilian national deputies who honored the act with their presence.

The presentation offered a panorama of the work of the SSVP on the five continents, sustained by the commitment of 1.5 million volunteers and 800,000 members. From America, the combination of home visits with social canteens, food banks, shelters and reinsertion programs was highlighted; in Europe, emotional accompaniment, mental health care and actions against loneliness; in Asia and the MENA region, educational, health and immediate response initiatives to disasters; in Africa, daily support to vulnerable families and minors in the 42 countries where the entity is present; and in Oceania, programs for homeless people, accompaniment to the elderly and intervention in remote islands with strong geographical obstacles.

The act concluded with the presentation of various projects collected in the Report that show the impact and diversity of Vincentian work: the network of solidarity pharmacies in the United States, the "13 Houses" Campaign to offer decent housing solutions, the Solidarity Baths in Brazil, childhood support programs in Peru, the improvement of basic infrastructures in Sri Lanka, the floating school in Benin, university training promoted by young people in Syria, the The Home home in Fiji or the work with indigenous communities in the Philippines; Initiatives in Europe, such as the national meetings held in France, recalled the importance of the human bond as the axis of the SSVP mission, which adapts its action to each territory and maintains personal closeness as the essence of its global service.

To conclude, I wanted to highlight that the annual Report is the reflection of our commitment to accountability, but "**what has more value and cannot be accounted for is the loving, personal and close attention to the needy to promote their integral human development**, faithful to the Christian spirit of our founders".

The International Social Report 2024, for any presentation or need of Councils and Conferences, is available on the corporate website, in "SSVP Office".

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- **New creative forms of financing.** With the object that the Councils and Conferences address the changing types of poverty we face in our countries, as well as for the search and capture of resources to finance these initiatives, from the General Council a commission has been created that is putting into operation an International Global Foundation, based in Geneva (Switzerland), which was presented in Rio de Janeiro. The previous work consists of studying its structure, mission and objectives. The commission is born from the team that forms the International Aid to Development Commission (CIAD) and it is intended to be ready for the summer of this same year.
- **Governance, transparency and unity of the SSVP.** From the Vice Presidency for the Structure, work is being done with its team to improve training regarding the international Statutes and Rule, likewise the Vice President of Formation joins them to plan the training of the Presidents of the National Councils. On the other hand, the new International Commission of Audit, Finances and Risks has expanded its scope and is composed of five people for a five-year term.

This year 2026, it has the mission to develop a program to promote and improve the training of national leaders of the different countries of the SSVP. We need to be prepared in administrative, legal and financial skills, teamwork and also obtaining human and financial resources.

Strategic Plan:

The General Vice President for the Strategic Plan Mark Gaetani from Australia, advances in four points the fundamental lines to develop: 1.- Spirituality, Vincentian identity, leadership and Youth. 2.- Community development and international solidarity. 3.- Strengthening of the CGI, governance and accountability. 4.- Digital transformation.

FAMVIN

The Vincentian Family wanted to celebrate the Jubilee of Hope 2025 together with some of those who need it most: the homeless. This shared dream gave life to the “13 Houses Campaign”.



On the Day of the Poor, November 16 and coinciding with the 400th anniversary of the Congregation of the Mission, the Holy Father Leo XIV delivered 13 symbolic keys to 13 beneficiary families from different countries of the world. These keys represent more than 130 projects in 79 countries, with 2,786 homes built and more than 11,030 people benefited since 2018.

The ceremony was presented by the Superior of the Congregation of the Mission, Father Tomas Mavric CM, and all the Branches of the FAMVIN were represented; I represented the SSVP together with our brother Pat García from Australia. After the Angelus, and offered by the FAMVIN, with the collaboration of the Italian SSVP, the Pope held a lunch with 1,300 poor people in the Paul VI Hall. On the other hand, I inform that Sister Ellen Hagar HC, is the new executive director in the International FAMVIN Office.

Other issues of interest for 2026

a.- *Communication*: As in the previous year, comment that the exchange of communication, participating giving the best of ourselves, is what forms a more integral community, that is why I ask for your participation, contributing initiatives, sending chronicles, photos and news of everything you do to International Communication, to awaken consciences with our example, and to make us valid as messengers of the word of God.

Thank all those who collaborate, because we have improved a lot in this aspect. We have strengthened the team and **improved the web to make it more visual and less technical, in the sense that it is a more precise tool to promote the dissemination of social activity, international cooperation and twinnings.**

b.- Regarding awareness of the negative impact of climate change: In addition to maintaining our status in ECOSOC, we are in the process since last year, so that the SSVP can become an Observer of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

c.- *Aggregation system*. We inform that a new online system has already been introduced to improve and validate aggregations more quickly and that there will no longer be paper forms.

d.- *International events*: In addition to the meetings of the Board and the Territorial Vice-Presidents, the following meetings are scheduled for 2026: in **International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul**

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Paris, a meeting of English-speaking countries from 9 to 13 March; the General Assembly in Lisbon from 15 to 19 June; the International Training Meeting in Paris from 8 to 11 September; an International Communication Training Workshop in Florida (USA) from 9 to 12 November; and, finally, the presentation of the 2025 Annual Report in Canberra (Australia), scheduled from 9 to 11 October.

Requests and thanks:

Requests: First of all, I ask for a prayer in memory of Pope Francis deceased last April 21, His life and pontificate were marked by a deep dedication to the service of the poor, social justice and mercy. Since his election in 2013, he inspired millions with his call to a “Church going forth”, committed to those who suffer and in constant renewal.

From the SSVP we remember him with special gratitude; the closeness and support that Pope Francis always provided to our organization was notable. During his stage as archbishop of Buenos Aires, he maintained a close bond with the Argentine SSVP, personally accompanying its members in home visits to families in poverty, which strengthened his affection and closeness towards the Vincentian charism. As pontiff, he publicly recognized the work of the SSVP on repeated occasions, describing it as **“an extraordinary force of good at the service of the poor”**.

I also want to especially remember our brothers who fulfilled service in the General Council: To Jerome Perrín, general secretary, to Clement Venter, member of International Formation, and to Jean Denis Likonya, national president of the D.R. of the Congo, deceased two years ago.

Last year, these confreres who held positions of responsibility also died: Magdeline Setsetse, national president in Botswana, Liévin Andangha, International Territorial Vice President in Africa 3, Abraham Focko who was president of the National Council of Liberia and our brother José Alves deceased in Brasilia, member of the CIAD Projects Team. They are already in the presence of the Lord and guiding us from the other shore. Likewise, I ask for prayers for the soul of all the Vincentians deceased this last year who were an example for many of us on the path of faith. In our Conference prayers we always ask for the deceased Vincentians and for our deceased relatives.

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We continue forward in our mission, bringing the love of God to others as a tribute to them and for the glory of Our Lord.

Thanks:

Finally, I want to thank on behalf of the General Council, the confreres who for various reasons leave their responsibility in the CGI structure in specific areas, although we know that, due to their experience and love for the SSVP, we can always count on their valuable knowledge. Also show my gratitude to the new members who join the structure and who have accepted the service position, as well as to all the confreres and volunteers in general, for their self-sacrificing work, always recognized in the eyes of God.

I also want to thank, on behalf of the General Council, all the employees, all the benefactors and friends of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for their support in favor of a socially more just society. Thanks to the Congregation of the Mission, to the Daughters of Charity and to all the Branches of the Vincentian Family with which we collaborate to try to make a better world, in the spirit of the teachings of St. Vincent de Paul, our holy patron.

I also want to make a **special mention of thanks to the spouses and families of the confreres from all over the world, who with patience endure the absences** and sometimes also suffer changes in family plans due to some service commission.

Farewell:

In this year 2026 that begins, I beg the Miraculous Virgin to protect the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Vincentian Family, us, our families and the people we welcome in need.

Receive from your servant and president, a fraternal embrace in St. Vincent and in the blessed Federico Ozanam, with the sincere desire that the friendship and Vincentian values that unite us continue to strengthen every day, inspiring us to continue **walking together as a single Conference that moves through the world in the spirit of service and commitment that we have set ourselves to renew the world.**

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