



Special Message from President General to all SSVP Young Members around the World

“It is a joy for young people to join our modest ranks, being surrounded by truly Christian colleagues engaged with the poor, while tasting the sweetness of a holistic approach stemming from Catholic charity”
(Circular Letter dated July 2nd, 1845, written by the 2nd President General **Jules Gossin**)

Paris, 4 July 2020

Dear young members of the SSVP’s Conferences!

Today, I am very pleased to convey this message to all of you, young members, who take part in our beloved Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP), present in the 151 territories across the globe. We are commemorating the SSVP’s **INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY**, under the theme **“Young Vincentians: Sharing Hope and Charity”**. My congratulations to all of you, dear young members!

Established in 1833, in France, by a group of young people aged between 18 and 38, our Society arose from the divine inspiration that brought together these young people who launched an initiative that has provided essential services to mankind. Today, the Society is made up of 800,000 members in 48,000 Conferences. A miracle indeed!

Both then and now, the SSVP’s young members are prompted to be the heirs to the legacy of the seven founders, serving the poor with love, empathy, humility and zeal. The poor are precisely the ones who will open the doors of Heaven to us. Hence, the more we practice charity, the closer we will be to God.

The role played by the youth within the Vincentian Conferences is essential for the renewal of the SSVP. **Without youth, our rules die out, our procedures become stale, our energy diminishes, our joy fades away, our charity gets mechanized.** The presence of young Vincentians among us is essential for the survival of our institution.

Within the Council General, there is plenty of room for young people. The international strategic planning has a specific goal for young people, with a Vice-President representing them exclusively, alongside a team of 12 territorial delegates. To this end, several initiatives have been launched: a special collect for the youth is organised on a yearly basis; the SSVP’s International Youth Day has been established; International Youth meetings have been held, the second and most recent of which took place in Salamanca in 2018 (Spain); a world census will be conducted; and communication material (brochures, booklets and manuals) will be published mainly aimed at disseminating the Vincentian action in universities. Furthermore, in our annual Circular Letter, many references to the youth are always made. To sum up, great progress has been made within the Council General in the field of youth for the glory of God, and much more is to come...

For all the above reasons, young people need a place within the Vincentian Councils; otherwise, we will never know their potential and we would be hindering the renewal of our entity, which is not advisable. Even if well-intentioned, young people may make mistakes. These failures are human and must be taken for granted. At the SSVP’s 1847 General Assembly, Blessed Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam

spoke of youth: **"Youth are needed because of their boldness and audacity, even their imprudence. They provide us with new ideas and a new way of doing things that we had never imagined."**

Courageously facing life's challenges and never disregarding God's or family's issues, Ozanam's devotion to work and study has certainly made him a great role model for youth in this day and age. Another beacon of Vincentian youth is Blessed Peter George Frassati, a modern young man who consecrated his life to charity, friendship, fraternal fellowship and the politics of good. Both had much in common: born in Italy, where they lived only a few years, they both loved being Catholics while being unrepentant political activists; they died sick and were declared blessed by the Holy Church; however, their foremost common feature was their love for the Eucharist, family and the poor, as well as the devotion to Mary Most Holy.

May Ozanam and Frassati always be role models for all the young members of the SSVP around the world. Let us try to delve into the biography of our founders so that we, learning about the past, can also celebrate the present and improve the future that lies ahead.

I take this opportunity to embrace all the young members, wishing that they will never give up Vincentian charism. Be strong, especially now in times of pandemic! **We are on the opposite side of the world because of the virtues and values we stand for; that is why, we will surely encounter many hurdles in our journey.**

You can expect a lot from me. I joined the SSVP when I was only 15 years-old. I have no doubt that the Council General International will still yield many good fruits for the member countries of the Confederation and, of course, for the young people of our beloved Conferences. Count on me and pray for me.

Vincentian greetings with Clavé, Ozanam and Frassati.



Renato Lima de Oliveira
16th President General



LETTER TO YOUNG VICENTIAN OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

Paris, 1 July 2020

Dear friends, Young Vincentians, other members of the SSVP

I am writing this letter so that we can live together the 4th of July, the date of the commemoration of the International Day of Vincentian Youth of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, a date that motivates us to understand that, from its origins, our institution was initiated by young people, surrounded by young people, and grew up through the courage, boldness and testimony of many young people, who gave themselves to the mission of being Church alongside the most needy, the Poor.

The year 2020, is a year that will be marked in the history of humanity, we are living in a period of Covid-19 pandemic, which affects not only health, but also the economy, politics and social life. And, of course, the poor are the most affected in this period. To all of you I send my wishes for comfort, my affection and my prayers, especially for the missing victims, for their families and friends who are still feeling the pain of loss, we believe in the Resurrection, and this faith helps us and will continue to help us overcome this moment.



Knowing this, I want to encourage all Vincentian Youth around the world, to **share Hope and Charity**, in the week of July 4th, which marks our day as Young members of the SSVP.

The International Committee for Youth, Children and Adolescents of the International Council General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, has understood that it is good to maintain the celebrations of 4 July of this year, as a way of honoring all those who are on the front line in the fight against the pandemic and also to motivate you, young Vincentians, to be a channel of hope for a new time and to continue to exercise our mission of embracing the world in a great network of charity.

The theme we chose for this year is **“Young Vincentians: sharing Hope and Charity”**, a theme that helps us to understand two pillars that are characteristic of the Young SSVP member. Youth is a channel of **hope**, especially in these times of uncertainty in which we live. The Holy Scriptures affirm this when they say: "Suffering produces perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope. And hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:3-5a).

The Catechism of the Holy Church says the following about the theological virtue of Hope: “The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity...” (Catechism 1818).

In this sense, we want Young Vincentians to be able to spread Hope around the world, using at this time when we need to distance ourselves physically, social networks, the internet, in short, different platforms, so that it is possible that many people receive messages that calm their heart and renew their hopes.

Charity is well known to us Vincentians, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, teaches us that “Charity is Love”, and Saint Paul in one of his letters says that “Charity will never end”. We want to encourage Young Vincentians, in this time of pandemic, whenever possible, with due care for safety and health preservation, to continue the mission of helping those who need it most, the Poor: do not abandon them. This is the time for us young Vincentians to show our leadership at this time, to assume responsibility, to take care that the poor are receiving the necessary help. We need to be creative to maintain the SSVP mission around the world.



So, dear friends, dear young people, let us live the 4th of July and every other day sharing Hope and Charity, I reaffirm the position of the SSVP Council General International: you, Young person, are very important, this day was thought to remember, to celebrate the importance of the Youth for the entire structure of the SSVP.

We need young leaders, young people who take responsibility in the various Councils and Committees, young people who stand in favor of the Poor, young people who are weekly in the Conferences (physically or virtually) making the choice to change the reality of poverty for families in need. SSVP does not only need young people to report once a year, SSVP needs young people with a voice, with action, with courage, with boldness, with joy, with a commitment to continue the mission initiated by Frédéric Ozanam and his companions.

SSVP needs you, Young one!

I want to leave 4 pieces of advice for all the Vincentian Youth of the SSVP, so that they can fulfill their mission well every day:

I - Live the **Joy** that is characteristic of young Christians. (At the World Youth Day 2016 in Krakow, Pope Francis reminded us that the young Christian cannot be sad, he must live the Joy that flows from God's merciful heart).

II - Live the **Charity** that is so necessary for SSVP members. (Virtue chosen by our founders to achieve holiness).

III - Live the **Boldness** that belongs to the followers of Frédéric Ozanam. (Ozanam was a daring young man, who knew how to respond with courage and wisdom to God's call to care for the poor and to care for the Church).

IV - Live the **love of the Eucharist** that belongs to those who have Blessed Frassati as their patron. (Our life, our spirituality, our mission have meaning only within the Catholic Church, and the Eucharist is the center of the Church's life, and Frassati had a great love for the Eucharist and the Mass).

Let us live these 4 councils every day, so that we may succeed in our mission to renew the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and continue the work started by those 7 young people in 1833.

May Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, patron of Vincentian youth, intercede to God for each one of us, Young Vincentians of the SSVP, so that we may be healthy and willing to fulfill our mission of sharing Hope and Charity in everyone, today and forever.

Happy International Day for Young Vincentians!!!

Hugs from the International Youth Committee of the Council General International of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Confreire Willian Alves
*International Vice President for
Youth Children and Adolescents*