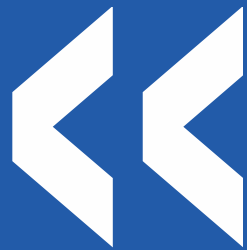


SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT  
DE PAUL INTERNATIONAL  
COUNCIL GENERAL

GLOBAL TRAINING

# LIFE OF THE CONFERENCE





Our main aim was not to come to the aid of the poor, no; that was only a means for us.

Our aim was to keep ourselves firm in our Catholic faith and to spread the faith to others through charity

BLESSED FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM, 1853



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- 2 WHO CAN BECOME A MEMBER
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# “I WILL SHOW YOU MY FAITH THROUGH MY WORKS”

James 2, 18



## COMMUNITY OF FAITH

- Spirituality
- Fraternity



## ... AND ACTION

- Charity: person to person contact
- Social: social laboratory: transform the world, finding solutions to poverty and uprooting evil

## A COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Meeting in the name of Jesus Christ

A place to encourage Faith and practice Charity

“See how they love one another!”

- ✓ Friendship
- ✓ Festival meetings, Vincentian gatherings: we need to meet together
- ✓ With one heart, following the example of the first Christians



## A COMMUNITY OF ACTION

*“Let us love God by the work of our hands  
and the sweat of our brow”*

St Vincent de Paul

Our primary work: Visiting those in need

- ✓ person to person contact
- ✓ long-term commitment

Addressing all forms of suffering, an  
attitude of service



## COMBINING FAITH AND ACTION THROUGH REFLECTION

- Be the voice of people in trouble
- Reflecting on innovative solutions
- Offer plans for reform to civil society, and denounce injustice
- Work for peace in society, act as a mediator



## THE CONFERENCE IN 4

1. The Conference is not money-based
2. Its way of working is through poverty  
Its primary mission is to give time, affection, skills
3. Its heart is fruitful. So there can be at once
  - A small conference with few resources
  - A conference rich in worksAnd so a conference can be modest, with limited means, but a wealth of good work
4. The Conference is universal  
The model can be transposed to societies both rich and poor



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## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT MEMBERS

- The Conference is open to everyone
- President, Vice-president and Spiritual Adviser must be Catholics (Article 6.5 of the Fundamental Principles of the Rule)
- 6 to 20 members maximum  
Conferences of over 20 members split
- Commissioning ceremony for new members 6 months after joining



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEADERSHIP TEAMS

### **President**

Catholic Elected by secret ballot. Appoints the other officer members

### **Vice-President**

Catholic Appointed, stands in for the President if absent

### **Secretary**

Appointed, produces annual reports

### **Treasurer**

Keeps the accounts of income and expenditure

### **Spiritual adviser**

Catholic. Encourages the spiritual life of the Conference. No right to vote



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## A FIELD OF ACTION

- The Conference is at the service of the people in an area
- It is not an isolated group. It is connected
  - To its own home territory
  - To other Conferences
- Most Conferences are parish-based, but they can also be found in other places:
  - Hospital
  - School
  - University
  - Workplace, etc.



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## REGULAR MEETINGS

Basic requirement (BR) 3.3.1 of the internal statutes of the Rule (part 3)

**The meeting is held every week, or at least every fortnight**

Why?

- Regular meetings create conditions for authentic family, relationships among members
- They give an opportunity to pray together, to deepen faith
- They ensure our care for those we visit is a shared task

## THE MEETING AGENDA

The agenda of the meeting is the same now as it was when the first conference was founded

(BR 5 of the Internal Statutes of the Rule, part 3)

- Opening prayers
- Spiritual reading and sharing
- Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting
- Approval of accounts
- Report of visits and discussion
- Date of next meeting
- Secret collection
- Prayers



## PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

- Home visits with 3 features
  1. long-term commitment for every member
  2. person to person contact
  3. meeting Christ in the person visited
- Other initiatives to help those in need: special works, different services, etc.
- Festival meetings and meetings with other Conferences, at national and regional level...and through twinning



## SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

Participation in the following liturgical celebrations  
BR 14 of the Internal Statutes of the Rule, (Part 3)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent
- 8 December: feast of the Immaculate Conception (patron of the Society)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent (season notable for charitable works)
- 23 April: Ozanam's birthday
- 9 September: Ozanam's feast day
- 27 September: Saint Vincent de Paul
- 9 November: Blessed Rosalie Rendu

Once a year

- Mass for the intentions of the Conference and of its benefactors
- Mass for the four intentions: Church, Pope, Society, our country



## 6 INDICATORS OF A HEALTHY CONFERENCE

1. Regular meetings
2. Practicing home visits as its main work
3. Spiritual life
4. Finding more people who need to be visited
5. A living community open to others
6. Recruiting new members including young people



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### 3 DUTIES

1. Annual review for internal self examination
2. Annual reports for external use
3. The special collection



## ANNUAL REVIEW

To ensure that members suggestions or frustrations can be openly discussed

It also provides an opportunity to review the life of the Conference

### Visiting, Service to the Poor

Should the type of visiting we do be expanded?

Can we be more effective in our work?

### Meetings

Can we improve meeting day, time, duration, focus, recording?

Can our Vincentian friendship be deepened?

### Spiritual aspects

Can these be improved? e.g. prayers said more slowly or spontaneous prayers added, days of recollection?



## REPORTS

- Once a year (BR 7 of internal statutes, part 3 of the Rule)
- The purpose of the report
  - Expresses the bond between the Conference and its surroundings
  - Evaluates the service rendered to the Conference area
  - Publicises the work of the Conference
  - A means to thank the Conference benefactors
- The recipients of the report
  - The National Council
  - The Council immediately above the Conference
  - The parish (BR 18 of internal statutes, part 3 of the Rule)

## THE SPECIAL COLLECTION

Unlike the ordinary (secret) collection that happens at every meeting

Once every quarter (BR 20 of internal statutes, part 3 of the Rule), a percentage of income or a special collection is sent to National Council

The special collection expresses the solidarity of the Conference with other local Conferences and those around the world.

The allocation of the funds collected in either way could be:

- 1<sup>st</sup> quarter: for poorer Conferences in the same country
- 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter: for poor Conferences in other parts of the world
- 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter: for the Society's operating expenses in the same country
- 4<sup>rd</sup> quarter: for operating expenses for the International Council



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## OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

**The Conference's aggregation to the Society's Council General marks the start of the Conference's full membership of the Society. It means the Conference is living by the Rule of the Society**

### Conditions for requesting aggregation

- being a Conference, and not a special work
- Operating for 12 months without a break and has sent an annual report

### Loss of the status of aggregation

- If the Conference ceases to operate
- If the Conference no longer sends reports to its National Council

