

SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
National Council of Canada

Twinning Guidelines

revised April '07

What does twinning mean?

Definition: Twinning is a sharing of the Societies prayers, contact and resources with other conferences. It is a special work of the Society, an activity of familial union and sharing. We are able to make a difference to our twinned brothers and sisters in our twinned country, and fulfil our spiritual yearning to share with the poor.

History: Twinning has been an informal part of the Society for many years at the international level. Twinning became more established with a statement that came from the 1979 Plenary Meeting of the Council-General of the Society, "All monies collected in the name of the Society anywhere, belong, in principle, to the poor of the world."

Canada started developing its twinning process in the 1990s. Our first twinning co-ordinator under National President Bob Martineau, was Rolande Lachance. Under National President Ellen Schryburt, Heidi Minuti made changes: she sought twinning representatives on the provincial/regional councils; she established procedures i.e. application and transmittal forms; and she promoted twinning at the National level.

In June '99, the co-ordinator was June Hart. She clarified the process of twinning with the assistance of the Canadian National General Secretary, Nicole Schryburt. June experienced the complexity of twinning with a multitude of countries that have various banking and exchange problems, and that have varying degrees of organisation of National/Superior Councils. These experiences established the need to further refine the twinning process, as we make twinning a possible activity of conferences and councils across Canada.

Types: In Canada, we can twin externally, with another country of the designated countries available, and internally between conferences and council within Canada. See the steps that you would need to take to become a twin.

What would inspire us to twin?

The National Council of Canada has encouraged twinning committees to organize at all levels, in order to promote this fundamental activity of our Society. Twinning forges links with members in the Society in different countries of the world, both spiritually and materially, through prayer, correspondence, and financial assistance

As with all Society activities, the call to recognize and serve Christ 's people, the poor, means that no activity that we do for our friends is foreign to us. Spiritual, written and financial links with our international colleagues can emphasize the universality of the Society and enables us to be a witness of Christian charity in action. Funds provided by twinning can help give dignity to the poor through education, training and the opportunity to help themselves and their families.

What is essential for a successful twinning?

1.) Prayer

The spiritual basis of the Society necessitates that all twinning links should involve a union of prayer. This can be done when we pray for the intentions of all members of the Vincentian family, especially in those countries with which we are twinned. Another practice, that can be a spiritual link, would be the offering of a Mass by both the conferences on a particular day, and if convenient, at a particular time on that day, when members of both the conferences unite in common prayers and spiritual banquet.

2.) Correspondence

A regular exchange of correspondence between twins is encouraged, to strengthen the bonds of understanding and friendship. It is preferable that it is done three times a year, but you can write as often as you wish. The correspondence could be personal, friendly, and full of details about members, your work, your local area and interests, and Society activities. It can also deal with the cultural, moral and spiritual aspects of life. Photographs are also helpful. This kind of correspondence evokes mutual interest, understanding and encouragement, and helps the twinning conference to assess conditions and needs, and concerns of the people. A friendship cuts through many cultural and language barriers.

It is essential that you receive a reply to your correspondence on a regular basis. If, after 6 – 12 months, no reply has been received, write a further letter and ask the Canadian National General Secretary to organize its delivery. Do not send any further funds until you have received a reply.

3.) Financial and Material Assistance

Regular contributions are guided by the policies on twinning. Currently, funds are sent 4 times a year (February, May, August, and November, of funds received by the 30/31st of the month previous) to twinned countries, through the National Council, for sums of \$50.00 to \$250.00 per quarter. (See the next section as to

the way to send these funds.) These regular payments help those who are receiving the funds to plan their services. It is important that you are realistic, sincere and punctual. Amounts exceeding \$250.00 per quarter cannot be sent, except for partnership projects. Sums of money are usually worth more in twinned countries. Larger sums can be used for works such as educational grants (typing or commercial classes, basic technical training like welding or sewing, or childcare classes), self-help or job oriented projects (small-scale industry, book binding or convenience shops run by the poor), or welfare projects (medical clinics, Homes or Centers). The partnership project process is usually done between twinned conferences or councils. Please contact your twinning representative or the National Twinning Chairperson for guidelines and forms for projects.

What steps would you take, as a representative for your conference or council, to become a twin?

Twinning is an *aggregated* conference- or *instituted* council-based activity. The decision to twin needs the *awareness* of the poor outside of your own conference or council area, and the *acceptance* of this special work by a majority of your members.

You then need to decide whether you will support a Conference/Council in another part of the Americas, within Canada, or in a Mission diocese. The two types of twinning in Canada are: external - *with another country*; and internal - *with an aggregated conference in Canada*.

Policies are specific as to which countries in Central and South America are available for external twinning. Canadian Conferences/Councils will be offered external twins with Columbia (Spanish), Dominican Republic (Spanish and English), El Salvador (Spanish), Guatemala (Spanish), Haiti (French), Nicaragua (Spanish), and Peru (Spanish). If you are currently twinning with another country, you can seek to change your twin or remain as you are, but no new twins will be made with countries other than those in the policy. You can twin with more than one conference or country, or in more than one type of twinning. Particular or Central Councils will probably be twinned with other particular or central councils respectively.

1.) To be an external twin: Obtain an application form from your provincial /regional chairperson of twinning, the National General Secretary, or the web site. Forward the completed form to the Canadian National General Secretary. She will forward the application to the National twinning Chairperson, who receives applications from our external twins. She/he will make the twinning, and notify you and the provincial/regional chairperson. As stated in the International Guidelines, "Vincentians would violate their duty of accountability owed to the donors of the Society if they were to 'twin' with a person, group or organization, which was not a member of SSVP."

The information about your twinned conference or council will be sent to you, along with external transmittal forms, these guidelines, and the Annual Report form. Funds are to be sent to the Canadian National General Secretary, payable

to Society of Saint Vincent de Paul National Council, using the external transmittal form. The National General Secretary sends the funds to the National Council of the twinned country, along with your correspondence, if you have included it. You may write at any time, preferably separately from your transmittal, but should not send more funds until you have received a reply to your correspondence and contribution from your twinned conference or council. All funds that are to be sent out of our country *must* be sent through National Council, to ensure security and accountability, and compliance with Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.

2.) To be an internal twin: To be a recipient – Obtain an application form from your provincial/regional representative, and forward the completed form to the Canadian National General Secretary, who sends it to the National Twinning Chairperson. The twinning chairperson will select or seek an aggregated conference or instituted council who wishes to twin internally, and notify them of your request. Upon agreement, the National twinning chairperson will forward your information to that conference or council for their follow up.

To be a donor - Obtain an application form from your provincial/regional representative, and forward the completed form to the Canadian National General Secretary, who sends it to the National Twinning Chairperson. The National twinning chairperson will select or seek a conference or council who wishes to twin internally, and notify them of your request. Upon agreement, the National twinning chairperson will forward your information to that conference for their follow up.

Funds are sent using the internal transmittal form.

What happens after the application?

Twinning has been described as a lingering labor of love. It may take 3 to 6 months, or longer, to establish a twinning. Keep up the correspondence. The cost of paper, envelopes and stamps is very costly in some countries, so you may be able to help with these items. Language could also be a problem, if translation is required. Be patient as it may take several months before you get an answer.

Twinning is meant to help people to help themselves, so that they will move away from dependence on you. Partnership projects with your twinned conference may help your twin work towards becoming self-sufficient.

You are not limited to sending money to your twinned conference. Tools, seeds, medication, equipment, etc. can be sent. Check with customs for regulations that apply. Personal visits, as you can afford, can be a part of your twinning. Prayers should be offered for them, as they will be for you.

As with any organization, reports have to be made. Your twinning report will be due on March 15 of each year, to your provincial/regional chairperson of twinning. This enables your representative to prepare their report for your provincial/regional AGM, and for the National annual report.

What can you do as an individual Vincentian?

Prayer is the key aspect of all twinning activity, and members are asked to pray regularly for each other, because without God's help, nothing will be achieved.

You can urge your conference to participate in a twinning program. Offer to be part of a twinning committee, or a twinning correspondent. Let your conference president know that you support him or her in your twinning program. Pray as an individual, and ask your conference to do so as well, such as remembering your twin in the closing prayers of your meetings.

Conclusion, from International Council General Guidelines related to Foreign Twinning

“There is a need to create a new culture of international solidarity and cooperation, where all – particularly the wealthy nations and private sector – accept responsibility for an economic model which serves everyone. There should be no more postponement of the time when the poor Lazarus can sit beside the rich man to share the same banquet and be forced no more to feed on the scraps that fall from the table (cf. Lk. 16: 19-31). Extreme poverty is a source of violence, bitterness and scandal, and to eradicate it is to do the work of justice and therefore the work of peace. (*Incarnationis mysterium*, par. 12, Pope John Paul II, November 29, 1998).