

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

To Serve in Hope



A Guide for Conference Presidents

**Building a successful conference
and
A deeper relationship with our Lord**

**Education/Formation Committee
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Introduction

This booklet contains suggestions to assist elected Presidents and appointed conference officers. It should answer some of the typical questions. For the purpose of this booklet the term *Rules and Canadian Statutes* will be abbreviated as R&S. In developing this booklet we have endeavoured to capture the essence of the R&S, the *Mission and Values*, and our *Opening and Closing prayer*.

The element that makes the Society different from others is the personal contact we have with those we serve. As Vincentians we bring Christ's love to the poor we serve by our person to person contact in their homes. This has never changed. We do exactly the same things that Frederic and his companions did many years ago on the streets of Paris during the French revolution. Each Conference is unique in its service to the poor, but our own Spiritual growth and a love for the poor is something we all share. We are servants of the poor. We must treat the poor with friendship as Christ would do.

We must always remember when we were baptized our parents committed our lives to Christ and we affirmed this at our Confirmation when we received the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts, if we put them to use, are all we need to be a good Vincentian and Vincentian leader.

May God bless you for accepting your office and your family for the sacrifices made to those we serve - Thank You.

SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
National Council of Canada

MISSION

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is:

To live the Gospel message
by serving Christ in the poor
with love, respect, justice and joy.

VALUES

The Mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians we:

- Come together as a family
- Have personal contact with the poor
- Help in all possible ways
- See Christ in anyone who suffers

SERVE IN HOPE



The logo has the following meaning:

- The fish is the symbol of Christianity and in this case represents the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.
- The eye of the fish is the vigilant eye of God seeking to help the poor in our midst.
- The crossing at the tail or the tail-knot represents unity and oneness among members and also the union with the poor.
- The circle bounding the logo signifies the global or worldwide stature of the SSVP, an international Society.
- The words *serviens in spe* means *to serve in hope*, the hope that comes from our Lord Jesus Christ.



Our Principal Founder - Frederic Ozanam

Feast Day – September 9

Enjoy the privilege of serving the poor by visiting them in their homes. Know them and love them as Frederic did. They are our friends, we are their servants.

Born in Milano, April 23, 1813, died - Marseilles, September 8, 1853. Pope John-Paul II beatified him in Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris on August 22, 1997. Frederic started the Society of Charity on April 23, 1833, (his birthday. The name was later changed to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul after their patron. Ozanam's feast day September 9. Frederic is a wonderful role model for all Vincentians.



Our Patron - St. Vincent de Paul

Feast Day - September 27

Come Holy Spirit Fill the Hearts of the faithful; enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your spirit and our hearts shall be regenerated and the whole face of the earth will be renewed. St. Vincent is the patron of charities. He was born in southwest France in 1581, died 1660 at Paris, Canonized 1737 by Pope Clement XII.



Our Patroness Mary

Feast Day of Immaculate Conception – December 8

Frederic Ozanam insisted that the Society be under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Although the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was not defined until 1854 by Pope Pius IX, the first members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul chose this feast as their special Marian feast twenty years before the formal proclamation of the dogma. Frederic Ozanam had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin from his youth until death. He had visited many of the then popular shrines of Mary in France, Italy and Spain during his lifetime. Frederic often had invoked the Blessed Mother's intercession and prayed her rosary.

The President

If you ensure that the rule book is at your meetings, you should be on safe ground. Know the Rule and Statutes of the Society in Canada inside out.

The Rule will give a history of the Society, its objectives, items pertaining to National and International as well as opening and closing prayers and formats for a meeting.

The Rule book will give you much information on how to do things. You should also have a Formation/training manual which will help you with carrying out specific projects and duties. The Manual and the Rule book will make you a well-informed President. When you have doubts, check the Rule.

If you do not have a Formation/training manual please contact the president of your next highest level for your training.

Choosing a President

The choice of President is a very important function of the Conference. The success of any organization is its leader. Although you are an equal among your peers, you must get them going in the right direction. You set the pace for the conference. You will not be the same as the person you are replacing. Be yourself, look for advice, especially from your Spiritual Advisor, delegate and listen well. Most of all be true to yourself and do what is right.

Some Characteristics of a Good President

Although being a President is a privilege, it is task oriented. Before letting your name stand, pray for discernment and ask God for direction. The person taking on this role must be prepared to complete the task.

A President should possess:

- Love and understanding of the Society, its members and structure; but most importantly a love for those whom we serve;
- The ability to be a peacemaker and diplomat never showing favoritism, or letting personality differences take over;
- Always be prepared to apologize, to forgive and be forgiven;
- Be prepared to rule with an iron fist in a velvet glove, always ready to listen to opposing positions, but never allowing members to bully or belittle one another;
- A spirit of prayer, openness to new ideas, wisdom and innovation with a broad vision all while respecting tradition;
- The time and strength to lead with devotion and acquire a passion for the work; and
- Faithfulness and truth to oneself, the Society and those whom we serve.

Role and Responsibilities of the President

The duties of the president are covered in R&S sections 2.2.4 – 2.2.6

It is also the president's responsibility to read newsletters and correspondence from other levels, and pass this information on to the members. Read and educate yourself, attend training offered by the Society and other training offered within your Parish and community. The more you learn the more confident you will be and the more familiar with the spirit of the work, and the more you are able to lead, teach and share your spiritual growth with your conference.

A conference president is elected for a term of office of 3 years. This term of office maybe renewed once only for a period of 3 years or less.

The term of office of the retiring executive offices ends only when the newly elected president appoints new executive officers and a spiritual advisor. R&S section 2.2.5

Specific duties could change from Conference to Conference or Council. The following is a summary of the official duties:

- 1) Upon election, the President appoints the following executive officers;
 - a. vice-president(s) up to a maximum of three;
 - b. secretary;
 - c. treasurer;
 - d. Spiritual advisor.
- 2) The President:
 - a. responsible for the smooth operation of the conference;
 - b. ensure surplus funds are sent to next higher level;
 - c. meets with non-attending members to discern their situation;
 - d. ensures members work for the good of the Society and those whom we serve;
 - e. promotes and encourages recruitment;
 - f. is attentive of succession planning;
 - g. represents the Society in the area.
- 3) Meets with other organizations to demonstrate the Society's willingness to cooperate with any projects to help those whom we serve. No funds should go to another Charity; only to those in need we serve.
- 4) The President appoints committee chairs and is kept informed on their activities.
- 5) The President ensures all members go through the Screening Process including a criminal record check; all confidential records are stored in a secure location.
- 6) The President convenes all regular and special meetings, conference calls and annual meetings.
- 7) The President ensures a proper agenda is prepared and circulated for all meetings.
- 8) The President sends excess funds to the next higher level. Conferences do not hoard funds. The next higher level should be treated as an extension of the conference as family members who have no other means of income, other than from the conferences. All our funding is collected in the name of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and is to be used exclusively in the pursuit of the Society's Mission and Values.

- 9) The President ensures all annual reports are completed in a timely fashion.
- 10) The President or designate attends all higher council meetings to vote on behalf of the conference. Two members should attend Particular Council.
- 11) The President encourages and assists members to participate in training and to attend regional and national meetings.
- 12) The President may serve on committees at other higher levels, but shall not hold two elected offices at the same time.

Role of the Vice-President(s)

- 1) The vice president should:
 - a. be familiar with the R&S section 2.2.7.1;
 - b. support the President of the Conference;
 - c. assist where needed;
 - d. be familiar with all activities of the Conference;
 - e. replace the President when necessary;
 - f. exercise responsibilities of the President at all other meetings and events as directed by the President;
 - g. take on tasks as the President assigns.

These tasks could be planning, or overseeing specific projects or activities.

It is very important for the vice-president(s) to support the President in developing the spiritual growth of the conference. The vice-president(s), like the President should take advantage of all training available and encourage members to do likewise.

Role of the Treasurer

- 1) The treasurer should
 - a. be familiar with the R&S section 2.2.7.3;
 - b. be familiar with the treasurer's terms of reference in the National Operations Manual;
 - c. have an understanding of budget and financial records;
 - d. make bank deposits and reconciles bank statements;
 - e. give financial reports at meetings and to the President upon request;
 - f. disburse funds for expenses as approved;
 - g. keep a record of all expenses for each committee and executive member;
 - h. assist with the preparation of the conference annual reports.

Role of the Secretary

- 1) The Secretary should:
 - a. be familiar with the R&S section 2.2.7.2;
 - b. record the actual history of the Society through the minutes;
 - c. maintain an updated official book of minutes;
 - d. ensure that all members receive copies of the minutes;
 - e. maintain an updated membership list;
 - f. assist with the preparation of the conference annual report;
 - g. produce correspondence and other reports and records as assigned by president;
 - h. follow the rules of records retention in R&S 3.15'

- 2) Without proper records keeping and retention the work of the Vincentians would be lost to future generations.

The Spiritual Advisor

This is one of the most important roles in the conference. If there is no Spiritual Advisor, the President takes on this role, or appoints someone. The Spiritual Advisor works closely with the President. The Spiritual Advisor may attend all meetings but has no voting rights.

The Spiritual Advisor should be priest, permanent deacon, religious or Catholic layperson. The Spiritual Advisor is responsible for the spiritual growth, development and life of members in accord with the mission and ministry of our Society. The advisor prepares and leads the spiritual reflections to provoke questions and discussions at meetings, participates in the development of spiritual programs for special events and communicates with other Spiritual Advisors.

The Spiritual Advisor plays a valuable role in settling conflicts within the Conference. The Spiritual Advisor as a member of the election committee sets the tone of a prayerful election.

One of the most important aspects of the Spiritual Advisor is to be the spiritual animator of the conference, therefore must always remain neutral. Being a nonvoting member enables spirituality to flow freely and avoid conflict.

The Spiritual Advisor's Handbook is available on the Society's website – <http://ssvp.ca/spirituality-ressources>

PRAY ALWAYS

The Five Virtues of a Vincentian:

Simplicity – frankness, integrity, genuineness

Humility – accepting the truth about our frailties, gifts and talents knowing what God gives us is for others

Gentleness – invincible goodwill to share kindness, tenderness and patience in our relationships

Selflessness – sharing time, possessions, talents and yourself

Zeal – passion for the full flourish and eternal happiness of all

I continue to ask God for his blessings for you and pray that He will grant you the grace to persevere in your vocation in order to serve Him in the manner He asks of you. Take good care of the service of the poor.

St Louise de Marillac

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL IN CANADA

