

**THE RULE OF THE SOCIETY OF
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL IN ZAMBIA**

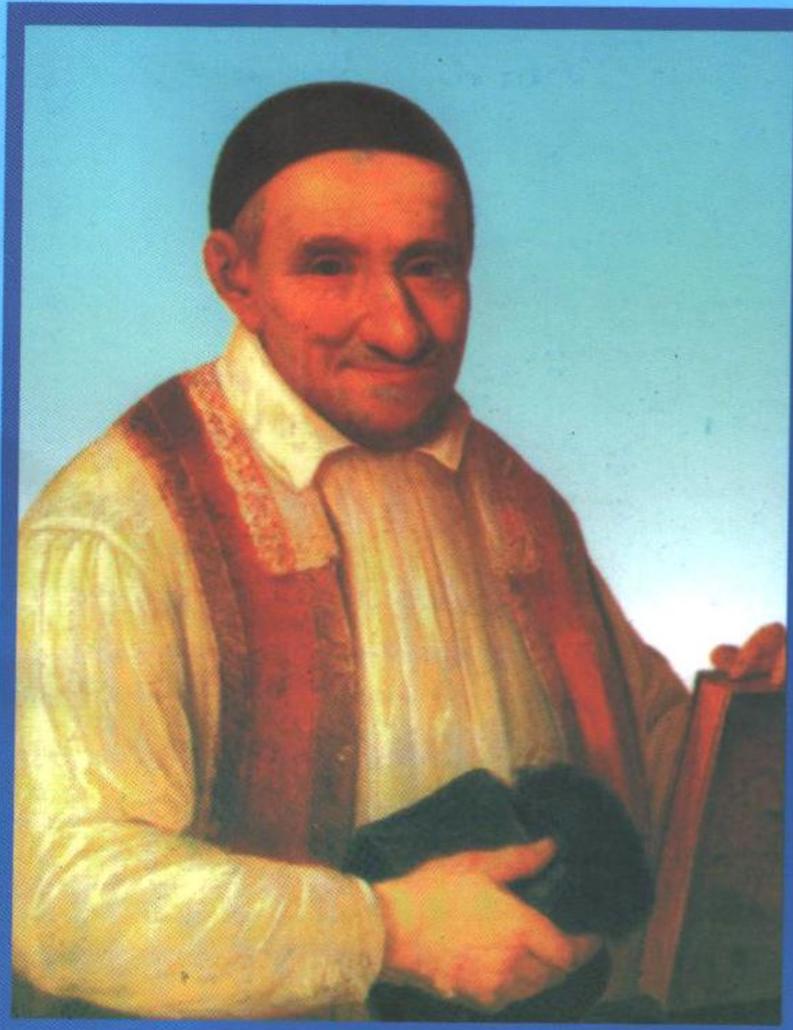


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FOREWORD

Being merciful is a divine gift from God. All members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have been given this gift which enables the Vincentians to be engaged in doing charitable work of alleviating human suffering among those who are in need. It is God's will that each individual should share his or her life with others, especially with those who are disadvantaged, so that the love of God may be revealed and shared with others in various communities. It should be remembered that for the sacrifices and suffering the Vincentians encounter on behalf of the less privileged people, God has promised mercy on the last day to those who are merciful.

The Rule comprises of three sections. Part One reminds us of the main purpose of the Society, the relief of the poor and needy and the sanctification of our members' souls. Part Two sets out the International Statutes by which the Society is governed. Part Three contains the specifically Zambian statutes in terms of which we are guided in the conduct of the Society's work. All three together comprise the "The Rule."

Short stories about our Patron Saint Vincent de Paul and founder member Frederic Ozanam, and the Origin of the Society in Paris in 1833 have been included to give historical background to the Rule.

It is in the interest of all members to read and sometimes study the Rule to acquaint themselves with the structure and guidelines that pertain to the Society, internationally and locally. This will help with the growth and development of the Society and its members as one big family. In this vein we will see and understand that our work of our brothers and sisters in our own small communities, and those throughout the world. We all have one motivation and one aim, that is to serve our God in his poor.

With regards to this then, it is my hope that each member of our Society will acquire a personal copy of the Rule, to read and study closely, and thus be able to refer to it when need arises. Conference Presidents are so much encouraged to fit into their programme of Spiritual Reading some articles from the Rule. This could be done over a period of time. Let us not bluff ourselves that we can be loyal members to the Society without knowing its rules and its spirit. Let us continue to be servants of the poor, and implement the new Rule enthusiastically so that our beloved Society can grow from strength to strength.

It is indeed an honour and privilege for me to be President at this great time and write this preface.

Thomas Kangwa
National President

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL 1581- 1660

Vincent de Paul was born in 1581 to a peasant family in Gascony, France. His early life was spent in a determined struggle to escape his humble roots. His family shared his ambition, hoping that a career in the priesthood would better the family fortune. Thus as a boy, he was entrusted to the Franciscans and was ordained at the remarkably young age of nineteen. It appears that Vincent's early attitude towards his vocation was no less worldly than that of his family. The Priesthood was a way to escape the farm. Once in the seminary, he was visited by his father, but was so ashamed of the old man's shabby peasant clothes that he refused to see him.

After his ordination, Vincent applied himself to securing a series of lucrative benefits and to be at the service as a chaplain of very wealthy families of the highest level of society.

In mid-life, however he underwent a great transformation. The occasion was to hear the dying confession of a peasant on the estate of the rich family of the Gondis in Paris. After he had received absolution, the man happened to remark that he might well have perished in a state of mortal sin had the priest not heard his confession. He was determined that henceforth his priesthood would be dedicated to the service of the poor. Vincent was concerned about the spiritual impoverishment of the rural masses and the poor formation of the clergy. He founded a mission congregation, a society of secular priests, later known as the Vincentians, devoted to the training of the Parish clergy and to mission work in the countryside.

Later on, he convinced a number of aristocrat women to undertake a personal ministry to the poor and destitute. One exceptional woman, a widow, Louise de Marrillac became a particular close companion in his work. With her able help he founded the Daughters of Charity, a congregation of women devoted to serving the poor and the sick. In describing what was at that time a revolutionary model of religious life he wrote: "their convent is the sick room, their chapel the parish church, their cloister the streets of the city."

He founded hospitals, orphanages, as well as homes for the human care of the mentally infirm. He had a personal Ministry of Prisoners and galley slaves and also raised money for the ransom of Christian Slaves held captive in North Africa. Already in his life-time, Monsieur Vincent, as he was widely known, became something of a legend. The rich and powerful vied to endow his projects while the poor accepted him as one of their own. His spirituality was based on the encounter with Christ in the needs of one's poor neighbours as he instructed his priests and sisters: "The poor are your masters and you are their servants."

Love of the poor did not mean sentimental adoration, imaginary acts of charity. Our love of God must be "effective" he wrote: "we must love God...But let it be in the work of our bodies, in the sweat of our brows. For very often, many acts of love for God, of kindness, of good will, and other similar inclinations and interior practices of tender heart although good and desirable are yet very suspect when they do not lead to the practice of effective love."

Vincent's last years were spent in painful illness. In approaching the hour of his death, his prayer was: "We have done what you commanded, do now what you have promised." He died on September 27th, 1660 at the age of eighty. His canonization followed in 1737. Later Pope Leo XIII named him Patron of all charitable organizations. These included the movement dedicated to his name: THE SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY, founded in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam.

BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM (1813 -1853)

"We are below in order to accomplish the will of Providence."

Frederic Ozanam was born on the 23rd April, 1813 in Milan from a comfortable family. In 1815, the Ozanam Family came to live in Lyon, France, where the father, a physician got a post at the Hotel – Dieu Hospital.

In 1822, Frederic started his high school studies. In 1831, at the age of eighteen, when Ozanam arrived at the University of Paris to study Law, he was appalled to find an atmosphere of bitter hostility to Christianity. In the nineteenth century in France, there was the Revolution. The Church, which has suffered not only the loss of property and power but also many martyrs, tended to regard the Revolution as an unmitigated disaster.

So, Frederic with a number of his fellow students formed a study group to present a positive intellectual witness to their faith. He and his friends engaged in endless debates and public controversies on behalf of Christianity. But finally Ozanam was stung by one student's derisive challenge: "You Christians are fine at arguing but what do you ever do?" In that instant he was struck by fundamental insight: That Christianity is not about ideas but about deeds inspired by love.

Ozanam resolved to start a fellowship of Christian LAY PEOPLE who would immerse themselves in the world of the poor; performing acts of charity as personal sacrifice. This became THE SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY.

The world of Ozanam in Paris and other cities was inhabited by the poor whom Victor Hugo immortalized as "The Miserable." An example: a child of a factory worker will not live more than nineteen months. In entering this world, Ozanam and his companions were crossing a divide of bitter class hatred, entering a world as little known to most of the clergy as it was to the bourgeois intellectuals so enamoured with "liberty, and fraternity."

Ozanam had no programme of social reform. Indeed there was little that his program of charity could do to change the fundamental conflicts of the society. But his experience allowed him to see below the surface, so he wrote: "It is the battle of those who have nothing and those who have too much, it is the violent collision of opulence and poverty which makes the earth tremble under our feet."

Ozanam's response was Christian charity. His concern was not only the welfare of the poor but the credibility and integrity of the Gospel. The poor he said are "messengers of God to test our justice and our charity and to save us by our works."

In brief, in 1833, Frederic Ozanam, then a twenty-year old student in Paris and some young friends of his, felt inspired with M. Bailly, their senior, to unite themselves in the service of the poor in the most direct and humble way and within the frame work of their professional and family lives as laymen.

At the outset, these young men felt the need to “bear witness” to their Christian faith by actions rather than words. They regarded the unfortunate as their brothers whoever they were and whatever the nature of their sufferings. In them they saw the suffering of Christ. They recognized in them the dignity of men faced with the world and its miseries and also their dignity as those to whom, first of all, the Kingdom of God is given.

Their method: personal contacts with those who suffer, to live united together in such a spirit that is the very essence of the original character of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. In the light of the age in which they lived and as laymen Ozanam and friends showed a prophetic foresight.

Broken in health if not in spirit from fighting, he resigned from teaching and public activities. He died soon after, on September 8, 1853 at the age of forty. Ozanam’s motto was: “The equality between men operates with sharing.”

The first conference meeting was held in Paris on the 23rd April, 1833. Frederic Ozanam was beautified on August 22nd 1997.

SOME REFLECTIONS BY PIRRE CHOUARD INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT GENERAL 1968.

A vocation, a call: The direct service to the poor.

A “Vocation” is in the wide sense, a call of the conscience enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit. To find oneself one day wanting to make the effort to become a “brother(or sister) of St. Vincent de Paul, or a “Vincentian” (however it is put according to place and language) is to translate into action a consequence of our Christian faith. It is not just the absolutely universal call of Christ to the spirit of charity. The specific characteristic of this call is the intimate desire personally and directly to participate in the service of the poor by a contract between man and man, by a personal gift of the heart and friendship, and to do this in a brotherly community of lay people inspired by the same vocation.

This vocation can be expressed in any number of ways and with different shades of expression. Concrete translation into action, meditation, adaptation to the diverse and changing world – all this is life of every Vincentian, the life of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

In the beginning, in Ozanam’s time, it was expressed as “the Visitation of the poor people in their home” which is regarded as the prototype of Vincentian activity. The sense of this must now be translated into more modern language. It is not simply a matter of being content with “alms giving”; it is necessary to reach personal dialogue with those who suffer (no matter what the suffering is) without the slightest trace of paternalism, in an attitude of mutual trust with respect for people and

that sacred place, their home with a sharing of friendship and reciprocity of service, with all the delicacy of love.

All charitable activity capable of being animated by such an attitude can be a work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Such a vocation could be lived in isolation, but it is fully felt and sustained only in a community. There one experiences the joy of the brotherly sharing of the same ideal and a more exact respect to the dignity of the poor helped anonymously by the group whose agents can be the poorest or the richest.

The spirit of poverty amongst the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

The word "poverty" can be complex and ambiguous in meaning. For example it can be said that poverty is an economic condition, but poverty is also an interior disposition. The translations of the Bible employ the word in both senses, which interpenetrate each other. It is most important, at this point, to analyse briefly the virtue of poverty, which goes hand in hand with the virtue of charity. It is possible to enter into dialogue with the poor only if one is poor oneself in some way. A fellow feeling in this sense is one of deepest graces, which the visitor of the poor can receive. For each according to his own vocation, it amounts to being witness to the first of the Beatitudes by living the spirit of poverty, inseparable from some kind of need voluntarily or accidentally experienced and accepted in a concrete and existential manner.

The spirit of poverty is, above all, a spirit of sharing, the will not to retain wealth without using it well. Save in exceptional case, the vow of poverty (as taken by those in religion) is hardly compatible with the layman's responsibilities. But it is still a kind of poverty to feel our wealth and talents as unconditionally appropriated to the service of the common good and, in the first place to the services of our neighbour the poor.

The spirit of sharing shows itself at least in the wish to share something completely. One person gives his time and practices the virtue of availability, another gives of his money, another gives his knowledge, another uses his health, and still another offers the comfort, which radiates from his person. Without exceptional heroism, every Christian, even the most needy, can take part in such sharings and on doing so will gradually freely learn to give himself in the way revealed to him through the personal graces he receives. Sharing is something different from a present and altogether different from alms, it is made up of reciprocity and exchange.

THE RULE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

1. THE SOCIETY AND SERVICE TO THE POOR

1.1 . ORIGINS

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is an international Catholic Organization of lay persons, founded in Paris in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam and his companions, placed under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul, it derives its inspiration from his thinking and work, and seeks in a spirit of justice and charity of its members to help alleviate suffering. The Society wishes to remember the founders with gratitude, as they set an example of dedication to the poor and to the Church. From Le Taillandier, who received the first inspiration, to Blessed Frederic Ozanam, Paul Lamance, Francois Lallier, Jules Deveaux, Felix Clave, all of them knew, in their humility, how to seek the wise advice and support of the one who would become the first President General of the flourishing Society, Emmanuel Bailly.

The Society has been Catholic from its origins. It remains an International Catholic Voluntary organization of lay people, men and women. It is open to all who live their faith by loving and serving their neighbour. In certain cases, circumstances may lead to the acceptance of Christians of other faiths or members of other creeds who accept its principles. Faithful to its founders, it constantly strives to renew itself to changing conditions of the world.

No work of charity is foreign to the Society. It works through a person-to-person contact, encompasses every form of aid that alleviates suffering and promotes the dignity and integrity of mankind. The Society strives not only to alleviate need but also to discover and redress the situations, which cause it. It serves everyone in need, regardless of creed, opinion, colour, origin or caste.

Members of the Society are united together in the spirit of poverty and sharing. They form with those they help, one and the same family throughout the world.

1.2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF OUR SERVICE

1.2.1. THE VINCENTIAN VOCATION

The Vocation of the Society members, who are called Vincentians, is to follow Christ through service to those in need and to bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love. Members show their commitment through person –to-person contact. Vincentians serve in hope.

1.2.2. Any form of personal help.

No work of charity is foreign to the Society. It includes any form of help that alleviates suffering or deprivation and promotes human dignity and personal integrity In all their dimensions.

1.2.3. To anyone in need

The Society serves those in need regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinion.

1.2.4. To seek out the poor

Vincentians strive to seek out and find those in need, the forgotten, and the victims of exclusion or adversity.

1.2.5. Adaptation to a changing world

Faithful to the spirit of its founders, the Society constantly strives for renewal, adapting to changing world conditions. It seeks to be ever aware of the changes that occur in human society and the new types of poverty that may be identified or anticipated. It gives priority to the poorest of the poor and those who are most rejected by society.

1.3. OUR PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE POOR

1.3.1. Prayer before personal encounters or visits

Vincentians pray that the Holy Spirit may guide them during their visits and make them channels for peace and joy of Christ.

1.3.2. Reverence for the poor

Vincentians serve the poor cheerfully, listening to them and respecting their wishes, helping them feel and recover their own dignity, for we are created in God's image. In the poor, they see the suffering Christ. Members observe the utmost confidentiality in the provision of material and any other type of support.

1.3.3. Empathy

Vincentians endeavour to establish relationships based on trust and friendship. Conscious of their own frailty and weakness, their hearts beat with the heartbeat of the poor. They do not judge those they serve. Rather, they seek to understand them as they would a brother or sister.

1.3.4. Promotion of Self-Sufficiency.

Vincentians endeavour to help the poor help themselves whenever possible, and to be aware that they can forge and change their own destinies, and that of their local community.

1.3.5. Concerns for deeper needs and Spirituality.

Vincentians are sincerely concerned with the deeper needs and the spiritual well-being of those they help, always observing a profound respect for their conscience and their religious belief, listening and understanding with their hearts, beyond both words and appearances.

Vincentians serve in hope. They rejoice in discovering the spirit of prayer in the poor, for in the silence, the poor can perceive God's plan for every person.

The acceptance of God's plan leads each one to nurture the seeds of love, generosity, reconciliation and inner peace in themselves, their families and all those whose lives they touch. Vincentians are privileged to foster these signs of the presence of the Risen Christ in the poor and among themselves.

1.3.6. Gratitude to those we visit

Vincentians never forget the many blessings they receive from those they visit. They recognize that the fruit of their labours springs, not from themselves, but especially from God and the poor they serve.

2. VINCENTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND VOCATION

2.1. Love in union with Christ.

Faith in Christ and the life of grace: Since we are justified by faith, Vincentians have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him they have obtained access to his grace in which they stand, and rejoice in their hope sharing the glory of God (Romans 5:1-2).

Convinced of the truth of the Apostle Saint Paul's words, Vincentians seek to draw closer to Christ. They hope that some day it will no longer be they who love, but Christ who loves through them (Gal2:20..."I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in flesh I live by faith in the Son of God"), and that even now, in their caring, the poor may catch a glimpse of God's great love for them.

2.2. The journey together towards holiness

Vincentians are called to journey together towards holiness, because true holiness is of perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which is central to their vocation and the source of its truthfulness. They aspire to burn with the love of God as revealed by Christ, and to deepen their own faith and fidelity. Vincentians are aware of their own brokenness and need for God's grace. They seek his glory, not their own. Their ideal is to help relieve suffering for love alone, without thinking of any reward or advantage for themselves.

They draw nearer to Christ, serving him in the poor and one another. They grow more perfect in love by expressing compassionate and tender love to the poor and one another.

Therefore their journey together towards holiness is primarily made through:

- Visiting and dedicating themselves to the poor, whose faith and courage often teach Vincentians how to live. Vincentians assume the needs of the poor as their own.
- Attending the meeting of the Conference or Council, where shared fraternal spirituality is a source of inspiration.
- Promoting a life of prayer and reflection, both at the individual and community level, shared with their fellow members. Meditating on their Vincentian experiences offers them internal spiritual knowledge of themselves, others, and the goodness of God.
- Transforming their concern into action and their compassion into practical and effective love.

Their journey together towards holiness will be all the more fruitful if the members' personal lives are characterized by prayer, meditation on the holy scriptures and other inspirational texts and devotion to the Eucharist and the virgin Mary, whose protection we have always sought, and to the teachings of the Church.

2.3. Prayer in union with Christ.

In every Conference throughout the world and in their personal lives, Vincentians raise their prayers to God, united with the prayer of Christ. On behalf of one another and their masters the poor, whose suffering they wish to share.

2.4. The spirituality of Blessed Frederic Ozanam:

The spirituality of one of its founders inspires Vincentians profoundly.

Blessed Frederic Ozanam :

- Sought to renew faith, among all people, in Christ and in the civilizing effect of the teachings of the church through all time.
- Envisioned the establishment of a network of charity and social justice encircling the world.
- Attained holiness as a layman through living the Gospel fully in all aspects of his life.
- Had a passion for truth, democracy and education.

2.5. The spirituality of St.Vincent

Having been placed under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul by the founding members, members of the Society are inspired by his spirituality, manifests in his attitudes, his thoughts, his example and his words.

For Vincentians, the key aspects of St.Vincent's spirituality are:

- To love God, our Father, with the sweat of our brow and the strength of our arms.
- To see Christ in the poor and the poor in Christ.
- To share the compassionate and liberating love of Christ the evangelizer and the servant of the poor.
- To heed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

2.5.1. Essential Virtues.

Vincentians seek to emulate St.Vincent in the five virtues essential for promoting love and respect for the poor:

- **SIMPLICITY**:- Frankness, integrity, genuineness.
- **HUMILITY**:- Accepting the truth about our frailties, gifts, talents and charismas, yet knowing that all that God gives us is for others and that we can achieve nothing of eternal value without his grace.
- **GENTLENESS**: - Friendly assurance and invincible goodwill, which means kindness, sweetness and patience in our relationship with others
- **SELFLESSNESS**: - Dying to our ego with a life of self-sacrifices; members share their time, their possessions, their talents and themselves in a spirit of generosity

- **ZEAL: - A passion for the full flourishing and eternal happiness of every person.**

2.6. A Vocation for every moment of our live.

The Vincentian affects all aspects of members' daily lives, making them more sensitive and caring for their family, work and leisure activities. Vincentians are available for work in the Conferences only after fulfilling their family and professional duties.

3. MEMBERS, CONFERENCES, COUNCILS, COMMUNITIES OF FAITH AND LOVE.

3.1. Membership.

The Society is open to all those who seek to live their faith loving and committing themselves to their neighbour in need. (see 6.1.4 and 6.1.5 of part one of the Rule)

3.2. Equality

The Society in each of its Conferences (the primary basic unit of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul), makes no distinction regarding gender, wealth, occupation, social status or ethnic origin.

3.3. Meetings of Vincentian members

The members meet as brothers and sisters, with Christ in the midst of them, in Conferences that are genuine communities of faith and love, of prayer and action. Spiritual bonds and friendship between members are essential, as is the common mission to help the poor and marginalized. The entire Society is a true and unique worldwide community of Vincentian friends.

3.3.1. Frequency of the meetings

The Conferences meet regularly and consistently, usually weekly, but at least every fortnight.

3.4. Fraternity and Simplicity

Meetings are held in a spirit of fraternity, simplicity and Christian joy.

3.5. Preserving the spirit

Members of all ages strive to preserve the spirit of youth, which is characterized by enthusiasm, adaptability and creative imagination. They are willing to make sacrifices and take risks for the benefit of the poor wherever they maybe: by sharing their discomfort, needs, and sorrows and defending their rights.

3.6. Councils

Conferences are grouped under various levels of Councils. Councils exist to serve all the Conferences they co-ordinate. They help the Conferences to develop their spiritual life, to intensify their service and to diversify their activities so that they may always be responsible to the needs of those who suffer.

Councils at appropriate levels are particularly called to: create new Conferences, to help existing Conferences to expand, to promote special works, to prepare training courses and encourage Vincentians to attend them, to foster interest in cooperation with the Vincentian family, to promote cooperation with other organizations and institutions, to develop friendship between members in the same area, to provide communication to and from Conferences and higher Councils. In summary, to promote the sense of belonging to a society which encircles the whole world.

3.7. Young members

Young members keep the Society young. They see with new eyes and often look far ahead. The Society works constantly to form youth Conferences (committees) and welcomes young members into all Conferences. Their experience in a community of faith and love and their exposure to poverty deepen their spirituality, spur them to action and help them to grow as human beings. The senior members assume the responsibility of assisting them along their path of training, respecting their personal choices and their aspirations of Vincentian Service.

3.8. Aggregation and Institution of Conferences and Councils

The visible unifying link within the Society is the aggregation of the Conferences and the Institution of the Councils declared by the Council General

3.9. Subsidiarity and freedom of action.

The Society embraces the principle of subsidiarity as its basic standard of operation. Decisions are made as closely as possible to the area of activity to ensure that the local environment and circumstances (cultural, social and political etc.) are taken into consideration. In this way the Society promotes local initiatives within its spirit. This freedom of action of Conferences and Councils, which has been kept faithfully since its origins of the Society, enables them to help the poor spontaneously and more effectively, free from excessive bureaucracy.

In exercising this freedom of action to face the challenge of poverty in their area, Vincentians feel called to pray together for guidance and strength and for that creative imagination which is the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, "Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions"(Joel 3:1).

3.10. Democracy

All decisions are made by consensus after the necessary prayer, reflection and consultation. The democratic spirit is fundamental at all levels of the Society and, when appropriate, matters are put to a vote.

3.11. Presidents as Servant Leaders

Following Christ's example, the Presidents at all levels of the Society endeavour to be servant leaders. They provide an encouraging atmosphere in which the talents, capacities and spiritual charisms of the members are identified, developed and put to service of the poor and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The President of the Conference or Council will have special responsibility for promoting Vincentian Spirituality.

3.12. Formation of members.

It is essential that the Society continually promotes the formation and training of its members and officers, in order to deepen their knowledge of the Society and their spirituality, to improve the sensitivity, quality and efficiency of their service to the poor, and help them to be aware of the benefits, resources and opportunities that are available to the poor.

The Society also offers members higher training in order to better help raise the cultural and social level of those who request this support.

3.13. The Spirit of poverty and encouragement.

Members of the Society are united in the same spirit of poverty and of sharing. They encourage one another to live a profound spiritual life and spirit of prayer. For this purpose, the role of a spiritual adviser is very important.

3.14. The use of money and property for the poor.

Vincentians should never forget that giving love, talents and time is more important than giving money. Nevertheless, the Society uses money and property to help relieve the suffering of those in need. The Society's funds must be handled with the utmost care, prudence and generosity. Money must not be hoarded. Decisions regarding the use of money and property are to be made after reflection in the light of the Gospel and Vincent principles. Accurate records must be kept of all money received and spent. The Society may not allot funds to other organizations, except occasionally to other branches of the Vincentian Family, save under exceptional circumstances.

3.15. The vitality of the Society's network of charity depends on the regular and rapid exchange of news and information. Such communication broadens the member's horizon and enhances the interest of members in the experiences and challenges of their brothers and sisters throughout the world. The Vincentian response to communication is a willingness to learn and a desire to help.

4. RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE VINCENTIAN AND CATHOLIC NETWORK OF CHARITY

4.1. Twinning

Conferences and Councils help others in need, both at the national and international level. This is one of the activities most cherished by the Society. The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries and the Vincentian preferential option for the poor, spurs Conferences and Councils to assist others with less resources or in particular situations.

This direct link between two Conferences or Councils, consisting of sharing prayer, a profound friendship and material resources, is called twinning. This activity contributes to world peace, to understanding and cultural exchange among peoples.

4.1.1. Prayer as the basis of friendship.

Twinning promotes spirituality, deep friendship, solidarity and mutual help. Funds and other material resources can be provided to enable a Conference or Council to help local families.

Financial, technical, medical and educational support is given to projects which are commended by the Society locally, and which encourage self-sufficiency. Even more important is support given through prayer, as well as through mutual communicating among Vincentians in each area.

4.1.2. Vincentians' personal commitment

The Society urges Vincentians to consider undertaking a personal commitment for a particular period of time to work with Vincentians in other countries or promote the spread of Conferences.

4.2. Emergency assistance

When disasters, war, or other major accidents occur, the Society launches emergency initiatives on the spot and provides funds for the local society to help victims.

4.3. The Vincentian Family

Members throughout the world, together with other communities inspired by the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul and with those whom they help, form a single family. Gratefully remembering the support and encouragement the first Conference received from Blessed Rosalie Rendu, the Society maintains and develops close relationships with other branches of the Vincentian Family, while preserving its identity. It cooperates with them in spiritual development and common projects, as well as with the Church's charitable pastoral initiatives at each level, whenever this may be mutually enriching and useful to those who suffer.

5. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH HIERARCHY

5.1. A close relationship

Faithful to the clear intentions of Blessed Frederic Ozanam and his companions, the Society has a close relationship with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Respect of the members for the hierarchy provides the foundation for harmonious reciprocal cooperation.

5.2. Autonomy

The Society is legally autonomous in its existence, constitution, organization, rules, activities and internal government. Vincentians freely choose their officers and manage the Society's activities and assets with full autonomy, in accordance with their own statutes and legislation in effect in each country.

5.3. Moral recognition

The Society recognizes the right and duty of the diocesan bishop to confirm that none of its activities is contrary to the Catholic faith and morals. The Society, wherever possible, informs the diocesan bishops of its activities annually, as a sign of ecclesial communion.

6. OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

6.1. Ecumenical and inter-faith relationships

6.1.1. Every member should foster ecumenism

Each Vincentian should seek to deepen a personal commitment to ecumenism and to cooperate in works of charity and justice as a contribution towards the achievement of that full and viable unity of the Church for which Christ prayed, “....that they may all be one. As your Father are in me and I am in you, may they be one in us that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21).

6.1.2. The Society is committed to ecumenical and inter-faith cooperation

Following the teachings of the Catholic Church, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul recognizes, accepts and encourages the call to ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue and cooperation which arise from its charitable activity. It is prepared to participate in the Church’s ecumenical and inter-faith initiatives within each country, in harmony within each country, in harmony with the diocesan bishop.

6.1.3. The adoption of practical initiatives

Conferences and Councils should establish dialogue with their counterparts in other Christian churches or ecclesial communities and other faiths, with regard to cooperation in charitable work, wherever this is appropriate.

6.1.4. Ecumenical and interfaith membership

In some countries, circumstances may make it desirable to accept as members, Christians of other denominations or people of other faiths who sincerely respect and accept the Society’s identity and its principles insofar as differences of faith allow. The Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) should be consulted.

6.1.5. Preserving the Catholic credo and ethos

The Catholic beliefs and ethos of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul must be preserved. The President, Vice-President, Secretary, Vice-Secretary, the Treasurer and Spiritual Adviser should, therefore, be Roman Catholic. They may in certain situations depending on national circumstances, and after consultation with the local diocesan bishop, be members of churches and ecclesial communities which share the Catholic belief in, among other issues, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Seven Sacraments and devotion to Mary.

6.1.6 Affiliated groups can work very closely with us

The Society accepts the principle of affiliated groups. These groups consist mainly of members of other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities who are attracted by the work of the Society and / or its spirituality. They are welcome to participate in the charitable work, appropriate Council discussions and the fraternal life of the Society, but are not eligible for office in the Society. Groups from non-Christian religions may also be similarly affiliated.

6.1.7. Relationships with state agencies and other charities

When the problems they encounter are beyond their competence or capacity, Vincentians may contact state agencies and other more specialized charitable organisations, provided that such action helps the Society in its struggle against justice, and respects the spirit of the Society.

6.2 Relationship with civil society – Work for social justice

6.2.1. The Society gives immediate help but also seeks mid-term and long-term solutions.

The Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying the root causes of poverty and contributing to their elimination. In all its charitable actions there should be a search for justice; in its struggle for justice; the Society must keep in mind the demands of charity.

6.2.2. A vision of the civilization of love.

Affirming the dignity of each human being as created in God's image, and Jesus' particular identification with those who are excluded by society, Vincentians envision a more just society in which the rights, responsibilities and development of all people are promoted.

As citizens of one world, Vincentians listen to the voice of the church, which demands their participation in creating a more equitable and compassionate social order, promoting the culture of life and the civilization of love. In this way the Society shares the Church's mission to evangelize the world through visible witness, in both actions and words.

6.2.3. Vision for the future

The Society's vision goes beyond the immediate future, looking towards sustainable development and protection of the environment for the benefit of future generations.

6.2.4. The practical Vincentian approach to Social justice

The distinctive approach of Vincentians to issues of social justice is to see them from the perspective of those we visit who suffer from injustice.

6.2.5. A voice for the voiceless

The Society helps the poor and disadvantaged speak for themselves. When they cannot, the Society must speak on behalf of those who are ignored.

6.2.6. Facing the structures of sin

Where injustice, inequality, poverty or exclusion are due to unjust economic, political or social structures or to inadequate or unjust legislation, the Society should speak out clearly against the situation, always with charity, with the aim of contributing to and demanding improvements.

6.2.7. Striving to change attitudes

Vincentians oppose discrimination of all kinds and work to change the attitudes of those who view the weak or those who are different with prejudice, fear or scorn, attitudes which gravely wound the dignity of others.

The Society strives, with charity, to foster new attitudes of respect and empathy for the weak, so that all are able to understand, recognize and defend the right of each person to be responsible for his or her own life. The Society promotes understanding, cooperation and mutual love among people of different cultures, religion, ethnic origins and social groups, and so contributes to the peace and unity of all peoples.

6.2.8. Political independence of the Society

The Society does not identify with any political party and always adopts a non-violent approach.

Some members may follow and fully participate in their political vocation in such a way that they bring Christian values to political matters.

6.2.9. Working with communities

The Society should not only work with individuals in need but also with families and communities. It can help an excluded or deprived local community to develop a sense of responsibility and solidarity which leads it to improve its economic, social or environmental well-being, always retaining the personal contact of all members with those who suffer.

PART TWO OF THE RULE

STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

1. THE CONFEDERATION, HEAD OFFICE AND MEMBERS

1.1. The Confederation

At International level, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is united in its spirituality and management through an International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (hereinafter referred to as the "Confederation"), which is presided over by the President General.

1.1.1. The Name of the Society

The International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is the sole owner of the Society's name. Only the Council General may, on behalf of the Confederation, authorize or prohibit the use of its name.

1.2. The International Head Office

The Confederation's head office is based in Paris, France, the city where the first Conference was founded.

The head office may be transferred to any other location in the world by resolution of the Council General Assembly; this resolution shall be adopted by a majority of two thirds of the votes of the members present and represented.

In order for this resolution to be validly adopted by the Assembly, the proposal must have been included on the agenda prepared previously and sent to the members of the Council General

1.3. Other International Confederation Centers

Other work centers may be established in different cities around the world.

1.4. Official Language

In recognition of the establishment of the first St. Vincent de Paul Conference in France, the official language of the Conference is French. All the Confederation's official documents shall be drafted in this language.

1.4.1 Other co-official Languages

The co-official languages of the Confederation are English, Spanish, Portuguese and Chinese. The Confederation under-takes to publish most of its documentation in all the co-official languages.

1.5. The Assembly of the Council General

The supreme democratic body of the Confederation is the Council General, which meets in ordinary or extraordinary Assembly and is presided over by the President General.

1.6. Legal Members

Each National or Assimilated Council that joins the Confederation, and is instituted accordingly, shall become a legal member of the Confederation's Council General.

They must be constituted within the scope of their national legislations as non-profit or similar organisations, and duly instituted by the Council General.

Although the tradition of our Society prefers to use the term "Superior Councils", special provisions in legislation or other circumstances may warrant the use of the term "National Council."

1.6.1. Representatives on the Council

The duly elected Presidents of the National or Assimilated Councils, which they represent, and which are instituted in the different countries and clearly defined regions around the world, form the Council General.

1.6.2. Definition of Assimilated Councils

Assimilated Councils are Councils that have been instituted or Conferences that have been aggregated, and which are legally constituted within the scope of their national

legislation as non-profit organizations representing a country or region in which a national council has not yet been instituted.

1.7. Affiliation to the Confederation

Any National, Assimilated or Associated Council (as defined in Article 1.10.1 of Part 2 of the Rule) of the Society around the world that wishes to join the Confederation must request this in writing and submit such request to the President General of the Confederation

1.7.1. Requirements for the affiliation

The above mentioned written request for affiliation to the Confederation must state that such Council complies, pursuant to national legislation, with the provisions established in Article 1.6 of Part 2 of the Rule, and must also indicate the area for which it is responsible.

Likewise, it shall expressly accept all aspects of the Rule and Statutes of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which consists of three parts: The Rule of the International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (Part 1); the Statutes of the International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (Part 2); the basic requirements for drafting the Internal Statutes for National, Assimilated or Associated Councils (Part 3)

1.7.2. Legal liability

Under no circumstances shall the Confederation or any of its governing members, by virtue of the affiliation described above, be liable for events occurring without their full and proven knowledge. The National, Assimilated and Associated Councils shall, for all purposes, be the highest and ultimate bodies responsible, before any type of national or international jurisdiction, for events occurring within their jurisdictional areas.

1.8. Institution of National Councils.

In order to achieve a better service for members and the poor in the same country, two or more National Councils may be instituted in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 1.9 of Part 2 of the Rule.

1.8.1. The conditions

The following conditions must be met in order to justify need:

- a) Excessive territorial scope
- b) Difficulties in communication
- c) Large number of Conferences and Councils
- d) Large number of members and special works

1.9. Procedures for Instituting a new National Council

The following conditions must be met in order for a new National Council to be instituted in a country where there is already a national council.

1.9.1. Establishment of the request of a National Council

- a) **Existence of more than 3,000 Conferences working in the country of the applicant National / Assimilated council**
- b) **The new council, which is the object of the Institution request, will have more than 1,000 Conferences.**
- c) **The existing National Council, authorizing the institution of the new national council, presents the request.**
- d) **The legislation in the country in question permits the institution of two national councils in that country, with different jurisdictions.**
- e) **Favourable recommendation by the Territorial Vice-President.**
- f) **Express authorization from the Council General through its Permanent Section**

1.9.2. Institution following an official request

The Council General, through its Permanent Section, may officially institute national or assimilated Councils for specific regions around the world, regardless of the frontiers of the countries in question, whenever social –political, geographical reasons for the service make this necessary.

When the institution of these councils affects already instituted national councils duly aggregated to the Confederation in accordance with the provisions established in Article 1.6 of Part 2 of the Rule, the aforementioned Council must be consulted beforehand. This consultation obligation shall be binding on the Permanent Section of the Council General.

1.10. Other members of the Council General

Different circumstances may mean that there are other members of the Council- General, in accordance with the following classification:

1.10.1. Associated Councils

These are Councils that cannot achieve full legal member status due to limitations in their national legislation or to the fact that they have availed themselves of legal instruments governing legal members other than those established in Article 1.6 of Part 2 of the Rule

1.10.2. Temporary Members

These are members appointed by the President General in countries or regions where the Society is not present and until the corresponding National or Assimilated Council can be instituted.

The same shall apply to the provisional Presidents of National Councils instituted by the Council General, in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 6.5 of Part2 of the Rule.

1.10.3. Missionary Members

These shall be members appointed by the President General to perform specific tasks and services. They shall always include members who have served as International Presidents General.

1.11. Right to speak but not to vote

All the other members of Council General that is : Associated, temporary or missionary members shall be entitled to speak but not to vote at the Council General Assemblies.

1.12. Related Special Works

Special works related to the Society that may use the Society's logo in the places and situations that are considered appropriate, shall be deemed to be those special works in which the Society of St. Vincent de Paul participates at any level of the organization; the aforementioned participation shall enable the special work to be controlled by Vincentian members on an effective, majority and real basis.

1.12.1. Use of the Society's Logos

Every National or Assimilated Council shall authorize the use of the Society's logos within its jurisdiction in accordance with the provisions established in the previous paragraph.

1.12.2. Employees

The employees of these special works and in general those employed by the Confederation may not hold offices on the councils of the Society, with the exception of the technical and executive position corresponding to them at the special work or council where they render their services.

2. THE COUNCIL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

2.1. The General Assembly of the Confederation

The senior body of the Confederation is the Council General, which meets in a General Assembly as provided in Article 1.5 of Part 2 of the Rule.

Each National Council and Assimilated Council that is a legal member is represented by one vote. The President General shall likewise have one vote which, if the case maybe, shall be considered the casting vote.

2.1.1. Quorum and Voting

The valid adoption of resolutions by the General Assembly shall require the attendance or representation of at least 30% of its full members. Should a second call be necessary, this shall be considered as validly constituted regardless of the percentage of members present or represented. A simple majority shall validly adopt resolutions.

2.2. Frequency of Assembly Meetings

The Council General Assembly normally meets once every six years.

2.2.1. Extra-ordinary General Assemblies

The President General may convene Extra-ordinary General Assemblies whenever circumstances make this advisable.

An Extra-ordinary General Assembly must be convened when so requested by more than 50% of the legal members of the Council General.

2.3. Participation

The Assemblies may be attended by the representatives of the Councils indicated in Article 1.6 and 1.10.3 of Part 2 of the Rule, each by virtue of the powers granted to them in the afore-mentioned articles.

2.4. Agenda

The agenda of the Assembly meeting and the notice convening the meeting are determined by the Secretary General in agreement with the President and taking into account any suggestions by members of the Council to whom this notice is delivered.

2.5. Prayers and Meditation

According to tradition, the meeting begins and ends with a prayer. Consisting of a spiritual reading or meditation, which may lead to a brief exchange of opinions. The International Spiritual Adviser gives this reading. The corresponding secret collection is always taken among attending members.

3. THE PRESIDENT GENERAL, THE BOARD OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL AND THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE STRUCTURE

3.1 The President General

The President of the Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and its Council General represents the Society before the Holy See and all International religious or civil organizations, and in general, before any public or private organization.

Since the founding of the first Conference, this figure has represented the nexus of union and moral authority of the Society in periods when the Council General Assembly has not met

The President General personifies the unity of the Society worldwide.

3.2. The Functions of the President General

The President General, supported by a team within the International Structure, supervises, fosters and coordinates the Society's activities worldwide and, for this purpose, makes any decisions deemed appropriate, implementing the resolutions of the Council General Assemblies in compliance with the provisions established in the Rule, and pursuant to the Society's tradition.

3.2.1. Report on the progress of the Society

In January every year, and for general information of all the members and councils, the President General drafts a report for all the members of the Council General, reflecting the progress of the Society during the previous year and the prospects for the future.

3.3. Election of the President General

The President General is elected by all the members of the Society, represented by the Presidents of the National, Assimilated and Associated Councils, who exercise this right on their own behalf and on behalf of the members they represent.

3.4. Duration of term of office

The term of office of President General is Six years; this term of office may be renewed once only.

3.5. Age Limit

The President General may not be more than 65 years when elected.

3.6. Election Procedure and deadlines

When a President General must be elected because the term of the existing President has reached its end, the Vice-President General must announce this at least Ten months prior to the time of the election to the members of the Council General, who are then responsible for notifying the members accordingly.

3.6.1. Electoral Board

The Electoral Board is presided over by the Vice-President General and is formed by the latter, the Secretary General and the Treasurer General, provided that none of them is a candidate. If any of the aforementioned three persons is a candidate, a legal member of the Council General shall replace him.

3.7. Presentation of Candidates, forms and Limitations.

During the two months following the notification of the elections, the members of the Council General, either individually or in groups, may present the candidates whom they deem suitable and worthy, chosen from among those members who have belonged to the Society for more than Fifteen years and who do not hold remunerated service posts in the Confederation at any level or in any of the participating or related special works.

3.8. Announcement of Candidates.

At least Three months prior to the Council General Assembly meeting, the Vice- President General shall announce the candidates who fulfil the required conditions and whose proven acceptance has previously been obtained by the Vice-President General.

This announcement shall be accompanied by a short Vincentian "Curriculum Vitae," together with the candidate's action programme if elected. Presented on a maximum two sheets.

3.9. Time and form of Election

The new President General shall be elected at the General, Ordinary or Extra-ordinary Assembly called for this and other purposes.

3.9.1. Quorum to Election

In order for the General Assembly to be validly constituted to elect a new President General, a quorum of 30% of the members with voting rights pursuant to Article 2.1.1 of Part 2 of the Rule shall be required.

3.9.2. Voting Procedure

The voting system used shall consist of two rounds and shall be effected by secret ballot. The first round shall include the postal votes of those electors who are unable to attend in person. In the second round, which shall only be required if no candidate obtains one half plus one of votes presented, the candidates shall be the two members who have obtained most votes in the first round. Due to time restrictions, this second voting round shall be performed directly and by secret ballot; no postal votes shall be accepted.

Voting shall take place on the afternoon of the first day of the Council General Assembly meeting in which the voting is included on the agenda and shall have priority over any other matters.

3.9.2.1. Limitation

If an existing President General is presented for second term of office having passed the first round without any candidate reaching half plus one of the votes, in order for his / her election to be valid, he / she must obtain at least one half plus one of the votes presented in the second round.

PART 3 OF THE RULE

THE INTERNAL STATUTES FOR THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL IN ZAMBIA.

1. MEMBERSHIP.

Members of the Society are part-time, unpaid voluntary workers, who freely undertake to devote some of their time, talents and resources to the service of the less privileged people of our society and their neighbour. The Society as a subsidiary part of their lives, cannot take precedence over their obligations to their livelihoods, their own family or legitimate interests. But subject to these overriding considerations, serving one's neighbours implies a giving of one's best.

1.1 HE WHO SEES CHRIST IN THE FACE OF THE POOR CAN FIND A PLACE IN THE SOCIETY.

1.1.1 Membership is open to all Christians of all ages, men and women, those who seek to live their faith loving and committing themselves to their neighbour. Other people, Christians of other confessions or people from other faiths who sincerely respect and accept the Society's identity and its principles, in so far as differences of faith allow may join. In this respect the Zambia Episcopal Conference shall be consulted.

1.1.2 Membership implies acceptance of the Rule, and Prayer life, commitment, effective participation, in the work of the Conference. People who, though willing to help the Society but are unable to attend meetings can be accepted as benefactors. These are auxiliary members who help the Society through their personal co-operation in any work for the service of those in need.

1.1.3. The names of the persons proposed for full membership are to be submitted to the President of the Conference concerned. The President will provide information concerning the recommended person to the Conference. If approved, the candidate will be admitted. However, the candidate must undergo a period of training, formation in the essential elements and characteristics of the Society, the Rule and the Internal Statutes. The member should attend the meetings continuously for Six months as well as taking part in the work of the Conference, and that of their respective Christian Communities.

Before a candidate is Commissioned as a member according to Statute 1.2, the Conference President or Spiritual Advisor should consult with the candidate to discern readiness for full membership. The Conference then takes formal action, normally by resolution, to accept the candidate into full membership.

1.1.4 As well as taking an active part in the work of the Conference; and that of the Christian communities, in a spirit of fraternity and sharing, members may contribute funds of the Society.

1.1.5 A person will be deemed to be no longer a member of the Society:

- On resignation
- On ceasing to be an effective member, e.g. through non-attendance, without good reason to assignments or missing meetings for four times consecutively without reasonable excuse.
- For grave reasons, the National President or the President of the responsible Council or Conference may ask a member to resign (see Article 6.8.1 of Part 2 of the Rule). Members should take the quality of the Society to their small Christian communities.

1.2 COMMISSIONING AND DEDICATION CEREMONIES

All incoming Presidents shall be commissioned, and members shall annually renew their promise of service to the members and to the poor, thereby deepening the spiritual dimension of their vocation. These ceremonies usually take place during a festival meeting (see Appendix 1, 2 and 3).

2. ORGANISATION

Vincentians gather in groups traditionally called Conferences in Zambia. Conferences in an area are linked together in PARTICULAR COUNCIL; and three or more particular councils may form a Central Council (depending on the size of a diocese, more than one Central Council may be established). Presidents of Central Councils and isolated Particular Councils and isolated Conferences form a National Council.

2.0. CONFERENCES

2.1.1 A Conference may be based at a small Christian Community, parish, school, an institute, a Factory, a village or wherever need for one arises.

2.1.2 Conferences meet weekly. If circumstances prevent this, they should meet at least fortnightly. The purpose of the meeting is to hear reports from members who had visited the needy and to decide where relief and help should be given. As far as possible no case of want should be neglected. Also by means of the prayers of the meetings and fraternal encouragement, the Vincentian vocation may be alive and active in the members

Members will also review assignments of the previous meeting.

2.1.3 The traditional means of contributing to the Society funds is by a secret bag passed around during a Conference meeting. Open monthly or annual subscription system by a Conference is also acceptable. A fixed members' annual contribution may be requested but not imposed, as this must remain voluntary and the secret bag should be used for these contributions. National Council may require Collections to be held for the poor and for the structure both within Zambia and internationally.

2.1.4 A conference has a right to appeal for help outside its locality without prior approval of higher councils. This need not prevent higher conferences with better resources helping poor conferences.

- 2.1.5** A conference on the recommendation of the National Council secures admission to the Society through aggregation pronounced by the Council General.
- 2.1.6** The Society in each of its Conferences makes no distinction regarding Gender, wealth, occupation, and Social status or ethnic origin.
- 2.1.7 **Fraternity and Simplicity:**** meetings are held in a spirit of fraternity and simplicity and Christian joy.
- 2.1.8** Members of all ages strive to preserve the spirit of the youth, which is characterized by the enthusiasm, adaptability and creative imagination. They are willing to make sacrifices and take risks for the benefit of the poor wherever they may be; by sharing their comfort, needs and sorrows and defending their rights.
- 2.1.9** Conferences shall be named only after saints, of Our Blessed Lady, or Almighty God under their various titles. Conferences may not, however be named after St. Vincent de Paul or Blessed Frederic Ozanam. All Conferences and Councils shall include a reference to the area they serve, in their name, in order to differentiate between them.
- 2.1.10** Conferences may establish Youth Conferences, helping them to be fully integrated into the life of the Society.
- 2.2** Visits to the poor are made in Vincentian spirit
- 2.2.1** Visits to those in need should be made in their environment, wherever possible. The contact with friends in need should always be made in a spirit of friendship, respect, cordiality, empathy and affection. It should also promote self-sufficiency whenever possible for those who suffer and show concern for their deepest needs. (See the Rule, 1.2 to 1.12).
- 2.3 **Conference and Council Annual Review****
At least once a year, each conference and council must evaluate their service to the members and to the poor they visit, and find ways to provide better service. They

should also consider the new types of needs they seek to alleviate and how to find those in need.

An Annual Review Meeting is therefore, to become part of a conference life and the same idea is extended to councils.

2.4 CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL MEETING ESSENTIALS ***(FOR AGENDA REFER TO APPENDIX 4)***

2.4.1 Opening and closing prayers, formal and, if needed, spontaneous.
(Refer to Appendix 4)

2.4.2 A spiritual reading and meditation, on which members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith and deepening their mutual understanding.

2.4.3 Reading and approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.

2.4.4 Reading and approval of the financial statements presented by the treasurer.

2.4.5 Reports on the visits made by the members, since the previous meeting, to families and friends in need. Discussion on ways to improve the conference's service.

2.4.6 Allocation of the visits and other tasks entrusted to each member for the following week by the President, after consultation with the conference. Visits must be made in pairs for the following reasons:

2.4.6.1.1 Two members are likely to see different aspects of a problem and other possibilities.

2.4.6.1.2 It helps to foster the friendship between members, which is so important to us.

2.4.6.1.3 Our lord sent out disciples in pairs, for mutual support and inspiration.

2.4.6.1.4 For the sake of the Society's, and visiting members' reputation, it is prudent to visit in pairs, especially when visiting vulnerable people living alone.

2.4.7 Review of any correspondence

2.4.8 A secret collection must be taken, and the amount collected announced by the treasurer.

2.4.9 Whenever possible, the inclusion of training periods for members, and communication of relevant current information about the society.

2.4.10 Council meetings at all levels should follow a similar agenda suitably adapted. No secret collection need be taken.

3. COUNCILS

3.1 PARTICULAR COUNCILS

3.1.1 Where there are FOUR (4) or more conferences, under the supervision of a Central Council, a new Particular Council may be formed, with the usual aims but especially to start new Conferences until there are at least Eight (8) Conferences under its jurisdiction. The Particular Council may then be instituted. A Particular Council will consist of officers of the Conferences composing it. From their own members they will elect a Council President, Vice-President, Secretary, Vice-Secretary, Treasurer and Youth Coordinator.

3.1.2 The purpose of a particular council is to animate and coordinate the work of the conferences so that they are well run, to give advice and help where necessary, to encourage new works and generally to promote the work of the society in the area and to form new conferences.

3.1.3 To this end they should meet as often as required, preferably once in a month. They should supervise, and see that regular reports and information are sent to the Central Council and see that such information is given conference members and are understood by them.

Council names refer to the area they coordinate.

3.1.4 Should ensure that a percentage of Council income is submitted to the Central Council at the required time, being financial support to the Central Council. Each particular council should submit the names and address of their leaders as they change leadership.

3.1.5 Particular Councils must evaluate their service to the members and to the poor. They must adapt themselves to new challenges according to the needs of the changing world. Priority must be given to the poorest of the poor and to those who are most rejected by society.

3.2 PARTICULAR COUNCILS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO SUPPORT THEIR CENTRAL COUNCIL FINANCIALLY.

4. CENTRAL COUNCIL

4.1 Where considered necessary a Central Council may be instituted.

4.1.1 Three or more instituted Particular Councils may under the supervision of the National Council form a Central Council to coordinate the work of the Society in their area.

4.2 A Central Council executive is elected by officers of the Particular Councils, which composes it. The executive shall comprise of: the President, Vice President, Secretary, Vice-Secretary, Treasurer, and a youth coordinator. These elections should be made known to the National Council in writing. Central Councils meet once every month. Geographical and travel needs may make this unattainable, instead they should meet ONCE EVERY TWO MONTHS, but at least every THREE MONTHS.

4.3 The purpose of a Central Council is to animate and coordinate the work of the Particular Councils, to see that they are well run, to give advice and to help where necessary, to encourage new works and generally to promote the Society in the area as well as forming new Particular Councils.

4.4 CENTRAL COUNCILS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO SUPPORT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FINANCIALLY.

4.5 FUNCTIONS OF COUNCILS

4.5.1 Councils are first and foremost at the service of conferences and other councils falling under their jurisdiction, with the view to promoting growth of the Society and its works. They also help conferences to develop their spiritual life.

4.5.2 They stimulate and coordinate the activities of the conferences and councils within their area of jurisdiction.

4.5.3 They examine the financial statements and annual reports, and forward them together with their comments, to the next higher council, without delay.

4.5.4 They cooperate with other charitable organizations, which share the same objectives that the Society has. However, sharing the Society's financial resources must be considered only in exceptional circumstances, with great circumspection, and only after receiving approval by the next higher council. It must be remembered that the Society's benefactors donated specifically to the Society, and accordingly, their intentions must be respected. (Refer to Article 3.14 of Part 1 of the Rule).

4.5.5 They encourage initiative, and strive to establish new councils and conferences and new works of charity.

4.5.6 They submit to the council requests for aggregation of conferences and institution of councils together with their comments thereon.

4.5.7 They arrange, whenever possible, meetings for the training of members and prospective members, in the Vincentian vocation. (*For complete criteria, see Article 3.6 of Part 1 of the Rule*)

4.5.8 Without creating a parallel organization, Councils at appropriate levels should promote Youth Councils, when circumstances permit. Such Councils shall have the

same relationship with the Council under which they operate as the rest of the Committees linked to the same Council.

5. NATIONAL COUNCIL

5.1 It will supervise by visits, reports and correspondence the work of all councils and conferences in the country. It ensures that the basic principles of the society, as expressed in all three (3) parts of the Rule are respected.

5.2 The National Council is the highest body of the Society in the country, and it will be based in Lusaka for easy access to the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) and the National Council for the Laity (NCL). It represents the Society before civil, religious and international authorities. It has the right to draw up and amend the Rule of the Society, providing such RULE or amendments are in accordance with Part 1 of the Rule of the Society.

5.2.1 NATIONAL COUNCIL'S INCOME

5.3 It has the right to receive funds, legacies and donations on behalf of the society. National Council's income is derived from support in the form of levies given by other councils attached to it and from sundry receipts including gifts, legacies and subsidies. The National Council shall determine the levy, which each council shall contribute annually.

5.3.1 Council Presidents Right to Audit and see Correspondence

When deemed appropriate Council Presidents should authorize audits of the conferences, councils and special work under the auspices of their council.

Council Presidents are entitled to have access to all correspondence sent by any of its Conferences on behalf of the Society. This same authorization is applicable to any Council with regard to the other Councils under its jurisdiction.

The President of the council to which any of the Society's special work belongs, shall be entitled, after due consultation with National Council and evaluation of the legal consequences to replace the members of the board of that special work (project) and

any of its employees regardless of their functions. (*For complete criteria, see Article 1.12 of Part 2 of the Rule*)

5.4 The National Council is composed of the following:

- National President
- National Vice-President
- National Secretary
- National Vice-Secretary
- National Treasurer
- National Youth Coordinator
- Aggregation Officer
- Twinning Officer
- National Training Officer
- Persons appointed to the National Council for specific duties
- President (or delegate) of each Central Council
- President (or delegate) of an isolated Particular Council or isolated Conference.

5.5. All Councils; National, Central or Particular must be instituted and all conferences must be aggregated by the Council General.

6. AUTHORITIES OF THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

6.1 To suspend, members, conferences and councils.

In accordance with Article 6.8 of Part 2 of the Rule, the Presidents of National Councils have the delegated authority to suspend members, conferences or councils of the Society within their area as a precautionary measure.

6.1.1 When the National President has made such a decision, the member, council or conference suspended as a precautionary measure will cease to exercise office and

may not act on behalf of the Society under any circumstances. However, such a member, conference or council is entitled to appeal to the President General. (*For complete criteria, see Article 6.8.1 of Part 2 of the Rule*)

6.1.2 A suspended member may alternatively appeal to the National Council so that the case may be reviewed at a plenary meeting of the latter, which will listen to the member and make its decisions by vote. Should the member choose this process, and should the appeal fail, a further appeal to the President General may be made by the suspended member.

6.2 To annul the election of a President

The National President may, for serious reasons, annul the election of a member as a President of a conference or council. Such a member will immediately cease to exercise the office but may appeal to the National Council.

6.3 May establish a conciliation committee

The National Council may establish a Conciliation Committee, to which councils, conferences and members may appeal.

Councils, conferences and members trust the integrity of the Society and its life of prayer and communion, so that they may not appeal to civil or legal authorities to resolve internal differences, without the express permission of the Council General. Any member, conference or council which uses means other than those provided by the Society to resolve internal disputes renounces Vincentian Communion and leaves the Society. (*For the complete criteria, see Article 6.11.1 of Part 2 of the Rule*)

6.3.1 A Conciliation Committee

It may only have three or four members, of great experience in Vincentian matters with relevant skills and a conciliatory spirit. It should have the capacity to quickly establish the facts, be able calmly to explain the views of the two parties to each other, and to propose solutions, which are consistent with the spirit of the Rule and the Statutes. Sustained prayer, good will and a desire to reconcile, will usually resolve the issue satisfactorily.

7. OFFICERS

- 7.1** A conference, a Particular Council and a Central Council, whichever is the case, is headed and directed by a President, who is elected by a secret ballot from among members of the respective conferences or councils, for a period of three (3) years and may be elected for a similar period of time, but shall not exceed six (6) years of continuous service in the same post/position.
- 7.2** The election of a President of a conference or council must be notified in writing, one month before the date of the election to the delegates and supervising body or person
- 7.3** The President, Vice-President, the Secretary, the Vice-Secretary, the Treasurer will be elected by secret ballot by the full members of the conference or council.
- 7.4** These officers may serve for the second time if elected consecutively. The maximum term of office for the President of Superior Council (National Council) or those of any other level should not exceed six (6) years.(See 19.7.2)
- 7.4.1** Other officers may be appointed by the President to undertake special responsibilities or projects. These serve under the pleasure of the President.
- 7.4.2** To safeguard the reputation of the conference or council, and therefore that of the Society itself, appointees should not be relatives of the person empowered to make the appointments.
- 7.4.3** All Council Presidents and Vice-Presidents must belong to a Conference. Other principal officers should also belong to a Conference but there may be occasional exceptions.
- 7.5** Employees may only hold office in a conference which does not control their work, but they may not hold office in any Council.

7.5.1 The National Council will be headed by a National President. The Presidency should be considered by him/her to be responsibility and not an honour.

8. The President

It is recommended that members should not hold the office of the President after the age of 65 years. The President is at the service of all those aided by the conference or council and all his members. He/she will direct and inspire the conferences or council to ensure that the work is carried out with sympathy and efficiency and to maintain liaison with the council to which the conference or council is attached, and other organizations.

8.1 Presidents as servant leaders

Following Christ's example, the Presidents at all levels of the Society endeavour to be servant leaders. They provide an encouraging atmosphere in which the talents, capacities and spiritual charisms of the members are identified, developed and put to the service of the poor and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The President of the conference or council will have special responsibility for promoting Vincentian Spirituality.

8.2 The Vice-President

The Vice-President Deputizes for the President and cooperates with and assists the President. He also visits members who fail to carryout assignments and do not attend meetings regularly and may be assigned other work by the President.

8.3 The Secretary

The Secretary prepares the minutes of the conferences or council meetings, arranges for call outs and ensures that all records are properly maintained.

8.4 The Vice-Secretary

The Vice-Secretary deputizes when the Secretary is not available, and may be assigned other duties.

8.5 The Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for keeping an accurate and up-to-date record of the funds of the Society. He will prepare audited financial reports every year. He will ensure that account withdraws are made by two officers. He organizes fundraising ventures.

- 8.5.1** The treasurer and the President shall exercise strict control over conference or council funds and shall endeavour to cooperate with banking officials and auditors in safeguarding funds and chequebooks. All cheques paid by the Society must be signed by two duly authorized members.

8.6 The Youth Coordinator

The Youth Coordinator is responsible for all activities in the Youth Committees, promoting interest in sport and works of charity in conferences or councils.

9. The Spiritual Adviser

The Spiritual Adviser has no executive functions in the administration of the conference or council. Vincentians meeting as a spiritual occasion is enhanced by the presence of a spiritual adviser whose role is to help in the development of the spiritual life of the members, to help them understand better the virtue of charity and its practical application to the works in which they are involved. Furthermore, the presence of a spiritual adviser helps to strengthen the bonds between the special activities of the Society and the apostolic activity of the church. As a tradition since the beginning of the Society, a spiritual adviser should be appointed to foster spiritual life with the conferences and councils.

Should a member of the ordained clergy, i.e. a Priest or deacon, or a consecrated member of a religious order not be available to act as the Spiritual Adviser, the President of the Council or Conference, after consultations with the President of the next higher Council, may appoint a layperson who has had suitable training.

9.1 Promoting unity within and between conferences

Festival meetings and conference masses should be maintained.

Conferences and councils celebrate liturgical ceremonies, particularly Vincentian ceremonies, together throughout the year, endeavouring to maintain a profound friendship among the members, to deepen spirituality, to share experiences and to provide information to improve the Society's service to the poor. *(For complete criteria, see Article 2 and 3 of Part 1 of the Rule)*

10. In Zambia, four festival meetings should be convened; one on each of the Sundays nearest four of the following feast day: -

- 9th September – feast of Blessed Frederic Ozanam
- 27th September – feast of St. Vincent de Paul
- 8th December – feast of the Immaculate Conception
- 2nd Sunday of July – remembrance day of the dead Zambian Vincentian
- 1st Sunday of Advent, the beginning of the liturgical year
- 9th November the Liturgical Feast Day of Blessed Rosalie Rendu
- 1st Sunday of Lent (because in Lent the need to undertake more charitable works is emphasized along with the need for more prayer and penance)

At least once a year, members should together attend a mass for the work of the conference, the members themselves and those visited.

11. TWINNING.

Conferences and councils help others in need, both at the National and International level. The Society encourages friendly relations between Conferences and Councils. The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries and Vincentian preferential option for the poor, spurs Conferences and Councils twinned either locally or abroad to assist others with less resources or in particular situations.

The direct link between two Conferences or Councils, consisting of sharing prayer, a profound friendship and material resources, is called Twinning. This activity contributes to world peace, to understanding and cultural exchange among peoples.

11.1 A Conference and a Council not aggregated or instituted may not be twinned. Application for twinning is done through the Twinning Officer of the National Council.

12. TRANSPARENCY IN USING MONEY AND OTHER ASSETS

National Council, other Councils and Conferences publish annual finance and activity reports.

The Society shall preserve its good reputation for honesty and responsible stewardship. It will produce finance and activity reports at least annually as at the 31st March.

A detailed, comprehensive report shall be submitted to the Council General annually on or before 30th September. Such reports will be presented in the format specified by International Council General, and will encompass the year ending the previous 31 March.

Reports should be sent to the diocesan bishops to keep them informed of the Society's work. (for the complete criteria, see Article 3.19.1 of Part 2 of the Rule).

National Council will be, to all legal effects, the sole responsible party before any national or international jurisdiction for the events occurring within the Society in Zambia.

All expenditures should be approved during a full executive meeting and it is recommended that any one holding the position of treasurer should have basic numerical skills.

12.1.1 Vincentians should never forget that giving love, talents and time is more important than giving money. Nevertheless, the Society uses money and property to help relieve the suffering of those in need. The Society's funds must be handled with the utmost care, prudence and generosity. The money must not be hoarded. Decisions regarding the use of money and property are to be made after reflection in light of the Gospel and Vincentian Principles. (see the Rule 4.5.4).

12.1.2. Accurate records must be kept of all money received and spent. The Society may not allocate funds to other organizations, except occasionally to other branches of the Vincentian family, save under exceptional circumstances.

Property and the distribution of unused funds

Conferences and Councils may own property for either accommodating needy people or for fund-raising. All such properties must be reported to and be registered with the National Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Conferences and Councils zealously manage and maintain the Society's assets. The authority to dispose of, purchase, mortgage, lease or rent the Society's real estate assets belongs exclusively to National Council.

National Council may, on behalf of the Society, acquire or dispose of immovable property, and erect thereon any buildings or facilities required by the Society for the furtherance of its objectives, provided that the National Council may delegate its authority or part thereof to a Central Council.

All documents relating to the acquisition or disposal of immovable property shall be signed by the National President, subject to a prior resolution of the National Council authorizing the transaction. Should the National Council President not be available, the National Vice-President shall sign in place of the National President, subject to the adoption of a resolution by the National Council to

authorize the transaction, and to authorize the Vice-President to sign all documents relating to the transaction on behalf of the Society. In the event of both the National President and the National Vice-President not being available, the National Council may by resolution authorize the transaction, and authorize an office bearer to sign the necessary documents on behalf of the Society.

Any document that is to be lodged in a Deeds Office including those relating to the transfer of immovable property shall require two of the following signatures – a National President or a National Vice-President, and a National Treasurer or a National Secretary.

National Council will assess annually the quantum of unused funds held by each of the Councils or Conferences within their areas, and will accordingly determine the allocation of such excess funds, to the service of the poor in their own areas or abroad.(For the complete criteria, see Article 3.14 of Part 1 of the Rule).

13. REFUND OF ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.

Vincentian Officers entrusted to undertake duly authorized tasks for the Society are entitled to the refund of the administrative expenses incurred.

14. ASSISTANCE TO MEMBERS IN NEED

As a general principle, members should not be excluded from receiving assistance just because they are members. All people in need, of whatever status, are eligible for assistance by the Society.

A member should apply to his or her President in the Conference or Council and one other office bearer and the matter will be passed to another Conference to deal with.. Other members of the member's own Conference or Council should not be involved. The members of the Conference which has been asked to help will be informed that a " special case" is being dealt with (without the

name being divulged), but they will be informed of the circumstances so they can consider together the appropriate help to give, which will be duly recorded in the minutes and in the Treasurer's records.

Conferences or Particular Councils should deal with such requests and provide the finance unless the amount required is beyond their means. In such event, Central Councils or National Council are to be asked to assist. The decision to give assistance is to be taken by the Conference or Particular Council, or Central Council or National Council President, and one other office bearer.

Members being assisted may continue to be active members within the Conference.

Members so helped are to be given the option of repaying the amount requested, unlike the circumstances when non-members are assisted.

If the person is an office bearer, then he or she must step down from office.

Any assistance given should, where possible, be paid by the Treasurer direct to the creditor and not to the member.

No case should be taken as a precedent for any other case.

No assistance is to be given to members for educational purposes or any other purposes such as those when an ordinary member of the public would or could approach a bank for a loan.

15. **DECEASED MEMBERS**

It is recommended that, in the 2nd Sunday of July of each year, we remember with gratitude the foundations laid by our deceased brothers and sisters. Accordingly, wherever possible, their names should be mentioned in the De Profundis prayed at the conclusion of each meeting in July.

16. **DISSOLUTION**

Decisions regarding the dissolution of a Central Council shall rest with the National Council.

In the event of the dissolution of a Central Council, its funds and assets shall revert to the National Council to be utilized in such manner as the National Council may decide in the furtherance of the objects as set out in Articles 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3 and 1.2.4. of Part 1 of the Rule. For this purpose the persons authorized to sign documents for the National Council shall be similarly authorized to sign the documents for the Central Council.

The Society may close down if at least two-thirds of the members present and voting at a special meeting convened for the purpose of considering the matter are in favour of dissolving. If the Society should close down it will need to liquidate all its debts. After doing this, any property of money remaining shall not be paid or given to members of the Society. These assets shall be given to another non-profit organization which has objectives as close as possible to those of the Society. Members at the special meeting so convened will decide what organization this should be. If the meeting cannot reach a decision then the National Council for the Laity will be asked to decide.

17. **MEMBERSHIP FEES**

17.1 The preferred level of the voluntary Members' annual contribution will be specified from time to time at the National Council General Meeting.

17.2. Out of the Conference Income, Conferences will remit 15% to the Particular Council, which in turn will remit 10% to the Central Council, which will remit 5% to the National Council by April every year.

17.3 The National Council on receipt of Income from the Central Councils will ensure that some of the money is sent to Council General every year- September.

National Council may require Collections to be held for the poor and for the structure both within Zambia and Internationally.

18, Fund-Raising Projects

All Conferences, Particular Councils, Central Councils and the National Council are under obligation to initiate sustainable fund-raising projects all the time for the purpose of raising money to support the needy people and for their administration requirements.

19

ELECTION REGULATIONS

19.1 The election of the President at the Conference shall be supervised by the Particular Council and at the Particular Council by the Central Council and at the Central Council by the National Council, and at the National Council, by a distinguished Catholic Lay person appointed by Executive Members of the National Council.

19.2 Members of the Society shall not hold more than one Executive post in the Society in order to promote efficiency.

19.3 Executive Members of the Society shall not hold any Executive position in the Church in order to promote efficiency.

19.4 All elections must be by secret vote

19.5 All positions in the executive shall be elective, by a secret vote

19.6.1 In the event of an office falling vacant a person may be appointed by the President to fill the vacancy. Similarly, in the event of the office of President falling vacant, the Vice-President shall take over as president until elections are held.

19.6.2 For disciplinary reasons the national President or President of a Council of Conference may remove from office any officer under his or her control and make a replacement.

19.7 TERM OF OFFICE

The term of office for all Presidents for Conferences, Particular Councils, Central Councils and National Council shall be Three years but can be re-elected for another Three years.

19.7.1 However, the National President shall be eligible for re-election for one additional term not exceeding three years if, under " exceptional" circumstances, the national Council requests the Council General's permission to extend further the term of office of its President.

The Council General, through the Permanent Section, will authorize or refuse such a request and, in case of its authorization, will set the maximum period of time for that extension.

19.7.2. Councils, at any level, have the same power as Council General to authorize another term of office for the Presidents of the Councils and Conferences they co-ordinate, on their written request. If it is authorized, the Council will set the maximum period of time for the extension, which shall be less than three years.

Council and Conference Presidents cannot, therefore, be re-elected for a partial third term without requesting, and obtaining the agreement of the next higher Council.

20 ELECTION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE AND NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETINGS.

20.1 Delegates will elect the National Council Executive from all Councils in Zambia at the Plenary Session, for a period of Three years, except in the case of death or resignation of the President. The National Council Executive may appoint sub-committees for certain work.

20.2 A candidate aspiring for President should be less than 70 years. Only members who have not yet reached the age of 65years are eligible for election as President. It is recommended that members should not hold office of President after the age of 68years. On reaching the age of 68 the President shall complete his or her ordinary term of office but must then retire.

20.3 The National Council Executive will have meetings to attend to the day to day running of the Society within the strategies and policies agreed by the National Council, receiving reports, attending to correspondence, etc. Changes in the Rule and the election of the National Council executive members will take place at the Plenary Session of the National Council.

20.4 There shall be an annual National Council General Meeting. The National Council is the highest decision-making body in the Society in Zambia and has been instituted by Council General.

The Society accepts the principles of subsidiarity and democratic consensus as the basic rule of its functions (see the Rule, 3.9, 3.10). At every Council level, the number of appointed members, who are non-voting, shall not exceed the number of elected Presidents who are members of the Council.

20.5 The Plenary session will take place every Three years to review the operations of the Society.

21. INTERPRETATION OF THE STATUTES

These Internal Statutes of Zambia received the approval of the Permanent Section of the Council General on They are subordinate to and interpreted according to Part 1 of the Rule of the International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and to Part 2, the Statutes of the International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and shall be treated together with them as a single legal document.

APPENDIX 1.

COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

All members shall annually renew their promise of service to the members and to the poor, thereby deepening the spiritual dimension of their Vocation. Annually: Each Conference shall celebrate the renewal of the members' promise of service preferably during a Festival Meeting, 27th September, Feast of St.Vincent de Paul or during a special Conference Mass.

1. Procedure

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Lord Jesus Christ, we the brothers and sisters of the family of St. Vincent de Paul come before you today to dedicate ourselves to the service of the poor. Increase our faith so that we may always see you in those we serve. We increase our hope that we may always undertake our duties with courage and patience, above all increase our love so that we may grow in love for both you and our neighbor, for it was you who said we cannot love you without loving our neighbor. We also ask you to give eternal happiness to our deceased members and hope that at our time of judgment you will say "Come you blessed of my father for I was hungry and you gave me to eat, thirsty and you gave me to drink." We ask this, dear Lord for your great Glory.

AMEN

2. RITE TO COMMISSION CONFERENCE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
(New members might well be formally received at quarterly Festivals)

INTRODUCTION RITE (After a hymn) "Whatsoever you do to....."

PRESIDER: In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

ALL: Amen

PRESIDER: Today (tonight) let us pause and call to mind that together we are in the presence of the Lord as His people, answering His call to serve through membership in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

(Pause for a moment)

Let us pray: Father, we realize your provident care for us, your pardon of our sins, and your protection of our life. Grant that we may serve you that we witness to life among your people. We ask all this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN

FIRST READING: Philipians 2:1-5.

ALL: Hear O God, my voice listen to my prayer

PRESIDER: We are overcome by sins; it is you who pardon them. Happy the one you choose and bring to dwell in your courts. May we be filled with the good things of your house, the Holy things of your temple.

GOSPEL: John 15: 1-7

(Instruction or homily, suggested emphasis on Vatican 2 decree on the Apostle of Lay people, especially chapter on charitable works and social aid)

3. CALLING ALL MEMBERS

PRESIDER: The following Parishioners (students) ofConference (school) are presenting themselves for membership in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

CALL NAMES:

Let us signify our approval by applauding. Commission and sign.

(The celebrant gives the Rule Book to each member).

PRESIDER: Receive the Rule of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, through studying it; meditating on sacred scriptures, and prayer, may you be fortified in your resolve to serve the needy people of God.

NEW MEMBERS: AMEN

4. PETITION

PRESIDER: Let us offer our prayers to the Father of the works of these members:

P: For the leaders of our Church, that they will be supported in the promoting works of justice and charity among God's people. Let us pray to the Lord, Lord hear us.

P: For the sick, the lonely, needy and those suffering pain, that they will experience the healing power of Christ. Let us pray to the Lord, Lord hear us.

P: For the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, that they will continue to grow in the knowledge of Christ's message of justice and charity. Let us pray to the Lord, Lord hear us

P: For ourConference of St. Vincent de Paul, that it will serve our people well, in both giving of themselves and witnessing to the generosity of Christ. Let us pray to the Lord, Lord hear us.

P: For all God's people, that we may come to greater consciousness of God's love and concern for us and our neighbours, Let us pray to the Lord, Lord hear us

P: For all the faithful servants of the Lord who have died in His friendship. Let us pray to the Lord, Lord hear us

P: Father, help us to serve your people in truth, justice and love that they may come to know, love and serve you.

WE ASK ALL THIS IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

AMEN

P: Let us pray as Christ taught us

All: OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN.....

P: May Almighty God bless you, in the name of the Father and the son and the Holy Spirit.

All: AMEN

P: Let us go forth strengthened to do God's work to serve his people.

ALL: THANKS BE TO GOD

APPENDIX 2.

COMMISSIONING CEREMONY FOR A NEW PRESIDENT

PRESIDER: The life and vitality of Parish Societies depends on leaders who are willing to give their time and talent. We pray for the new (Central Council/ National) President who has been elected to lead the Council for the next Three years.

Retiring President: The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an international Christian organization of lay people, Catholic in origin, character and tradition, founded in Paris in 1833 by Blessed Frederic Ozanam and his companions. It is made up of Conferences and Councils. The office of President is a responsibility, not an honour. It is one of service, where the President is first among equals.

Retiring President lights a candle and says:

Brothers and sisters, I present to you the new President (name).....

Who has been elected as the President of(Council). This lighted candle represents the faith and love which, with the help of God, I have tried to encourage and nourish.

PRESIDER:

New President (name).....receive the light of Christ. May you be filled with the warmth of his love, so that the light of His presence may burn evermore brightly in this Council and throughout the Society.

Do you promise to carry out your duties with diligence and imagination, serving the Council and its members, the structures of the Society and those in need for the greater glory of God, and to seek consensus and not to insist on your own opinion. To see every member as a friend, to recognize their talents, to encourage the reticent, to develop harmony and respect between members ?

PRESIDENT: I DO

PRESIDER:

New President.....(name) you have accepted a serious responsibility and I ask all those present to share in that responsibility and to pray for the Grace to carry it.

(The candle is extinguished)

The Rule is held by the Retiring President as it is blessed.

PRESIDER: O God, by whose word all things are made holy, bless this Rule of the Society, and grant that whoever reads it with a receptive mind, may with the help of the Holy Spirit, come to know Jesus better, to see with His eyes and love with His heart. May their souls be protected and their hearts filled with joy, through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

The Rule is handed to the Presider, who hands it to the President and says:

Receive the Rule of the Society as a sign of your leadership and responsibility. With the help of God, may you hand this Rule on to your successor after a fruitful and successful Presidency.

PRESIDER with hands outstretched over the President says:

Almighty God, we give thanks for the many and varied ways you build up your Church. Bless the new President of this Council. Grant that with vision and leadership, he/she and all the officers, may serve the Council and the Society with humility, and bring honour and glory to your name. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Retiring President:

In the spirit of Jesus and in the name of our Patron, St. Vincent de Paul, and our principal founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, we commission you,(name) as President of.....(name of Council) to lead not as one who dominates, but as one who serves, and to encourage your brothers and sisters in the Society "to go to the poor with love," and to share their burdens and joys as true friends.

APPENDIX 3.

DEDICATION

Lord Jesus Christ, we the brothers and sisters of the family of St. Vincent de Paul, come before you today to re-dedicate ourselves to the service of the poor.

Increase our faith so that we may always see you in those we serve. Increase our hope that we may undertake our duties with courage and patience.

Above all, increase our love so that we may grow in love both for you and our neighbor, for it was you who said we cannot love you without loving our neighbour. We ask you to show approval of our Society through the canonization of our blessed Frederic Ozanam.

We also ask you to give eternal happiness to our deceased members, and hope that at our time of judgment you will say "come you blessed of my Father for I was hungry and gave me to eat, thirsty and you gave me to drink, naked and you clothed me." AMEN.

Our Lady Queen of the poor, pray for us.

Note: **It is requested that this prayer be recited at festival meetings.**

APPENDIX 4.

20. MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE

Meetings are held in a spirit of fraternity, simplicity and Christian joy. Decisions are taken by consensus after prayer, reflections and consultations. The democratic spirit is fundamental within the Society and when necessary a vote may be taken.

OPENING PRAYERS

ALL: In the name the Father.....

PR: COME HOLY SPIRIT, penetrate our hearts

ALL: and kindle within us the fire of your love

PR: Send forth your spirit and new life be created

ALL: and the whole new face of the earth will be renewed.

OUR FATHER.....

HAIL MARY.....

PRAYER FOR A FRUITFUL MEETING

PR: Let us remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "when two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

(Short silence)

ALL: Lord Jesus Christ help us through meeting together to deepen our Vincentian friendship and answer the call every Christian receive to seek and find those who are forgotten, to bring love to the suffering or deprived. Help us to be generous with our time, our possessions and ourselves so that we may grow perfect in your love and to share your sacrifice for others in the Holy Eucharist.

PR. St. Joseph, Patron of families

ALL: Pray for us

PR: St. Vincent de Paul

ALL: Pray for us

PR: Blessed Frederic Ozanam

ALL: Pray for us

ALL: In the name of the Father.....

21. AGENDA FOR MEETINGS

- 1. Opening Prayer**
- 2. Spiritual reading and sharing**
- 3. Roll call / Apologies**
- 4. Minutes of the previous meeting**
- 5. Matters arising**
- 6. Correspondence**
- 7. Treasurer's report**
- 8. Member's report of visits:**

i). – in the homes

ii) – Hospitals

iii) – Jails etc.

iv) – Other

- 9. Assignment of work**
- 10. Secret collection**

11. Any other Business

12. Projects (if any)

13. Closing Prayers

22. CLOSING PRAYERS

PR: In the name of the Father.....

ALL: Amen.

Prayer to see the Eucharist as the source of our Apostolate

ALL: Father grant that communion with Christ present in the Holy Eucharist may impel us to love you by serving him in our neighbour and help us to respond with open hearts to the sufferings of others, aware of the depths of our own needs.

Prayer that we may bear witness to Christ's love

ALL: Grant us the grace to persevere when disappointed or distressed and never to claim that our work springs from ourselves alone, so that united in prayer and action, we may be a visible sign of Christ and bear witness to boundless love that reaches out to all peoples and draws them to love one another in him.

Prayer for fruitful visit

ALL: We thank you for the many blessings we receive from those we visit. Help us to love and respect them, to understand their needs and to share their burden and joys as true friends.

BIDDING PRAYERS

(Each member could say one or more Round the table")

For the Pope and all members of the Vincentian Family

Grant the courage, peace and confidence you alone can give to our Holy Father the Pope, to those we visit, to all who help in our work, to our overseas Brothers and Sisters and to all members of this Society and their families who may now be troubled or in need.

.....Lord, hear us.

ALL: Lord graciously hear us

For the Society

We thank you, Lord because you inspired the foundation of our Society to help overcome suffering. Grant the Society and this Conference the grace of continual growth and renewal

.....Lord, Lord hears us.

ALL: Lord graciously hears us.

For the deceased members of the Vincentian Family

Welcome into the light of our presence those who have died, and grant that one day our friends and relatives, those we visit and our Vincentian brothers and sisters may all come together before you in the perfection of love.

.....Lord, hear us.

ALL: Lord graciously hear us.

For unborn life

O God of life and love,

You have given us the power

To bring new life into the world,

But all too often a mother's womb'

That should be a nursery of life,

Becomes instead a place of destruction.

Help us to remove this evil

And ensure respect of all life

Made in your image and likeness, called to fulfil its promise on earth

And destined to find a home with you for all eternity.

We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son Our Lord.

AMEN

ALL: In the name of the Father.....

SPECIAL DAYS

17th February 1951. – First Zambian Conference formed. St. Francis, Mansa

2nd Sunday of July – Remembrance of the dead Zambian Vincentians.

9th September – Feast of Blessed Frederic Ozanam

27th September – Feast of St. Vincent de Paul

8th December – Feast of the Immaculate Conception

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ZAMBIA

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

P.O.BOX 31319.

Lusaka

ZAMBIA.

SPIRITUAL READINGS

Malachi 3:5

4:1-3

Luke 3:11; 6:31; 16:19-31

Acts 6; 1-6

1 John 3:18

James 1:27; 2:1-9; 2: 14:22

Hebrews 13: 1-3

Acts 20: 35

Romans 15:1-3

Philippians 2:4

1Peter 4:7-11

Galatians 5:13-15

1Timothy 3: 1-7

HBM.

