

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

LETTER OF AGGREGATION

Dear Sister,

We are happy to inform you that the Council-General, at its meeting on 10th December 1990, aggregated to the Society the Conference of

St. Patrick - BATON ROUGE - Diocese of BATON ROUGE - State LOUISIANA - United States

This aggregation has the effect of uniting the Conference to which it relates with those of the entire world. It is the link which manifests the fraternal friendship of Vincentians and gathers them into the same spiritual family.

Yours sincerely and devotedly in Our Lord,

One of the
international vice-presidents,

President of the
Superior Council,

President-General,

Henriette Dorain

John J. Coffinger

Anna A. de Tarrazi

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, founded in Paris in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam and his companions, is ever animated by the inspiration that marked its origins.

1. Fundamental principles of the Vincentian apostolate.

Two features sum up this apostolate: living in personal contact with those who suffer and living its spirit in common.

These are translated into practice:

- by person-to-person contact;
- by a personal gift of the heart;
- by participation in a fraternal community of lay people animated by the same vocation.

These essential features should operate in accordance with the needs of the modern world.

We must go very much beyond material aid and seek dialogue with those who suffer, whatever their suffering may be, without any trace of paternalism but rather in an attitude of sincerity, shared friendship and delicacy. Every charitable work animated by such a spirit can be a work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The members of St. Vincent de Paul appreciate that Christ identified Himself with the poor: "Whatever you did to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. 25,40.)

2. Essential characteristics of the Society.

- a) It is a lay Society, composed of men and women, young and old, sick and poor.
- b) It is a Society with a spirit of youth which gives it dynamism, enthusiasm, a generous acceptance of risk, a creative imagination and above all the faculty of adaptation.
- c) It is essentially a universal Society, which is one of the signs of the love of God and of His Grace. This universality should not be confused with uniformity. The Society remains one, even though its activities take many forms, which are not limited to the relief of material poverty.
- d) The Society is Catholic, open to ecumenism in the universal Church. It should bear witness to this in its apostolate of charity.
- e) The Society is traditionally poor. The spirit of poverty is opposed to all hoarding; administrative expenses should be reduced to a minimum. The spirit of poverty is also the spirit of sharing: sharing money, knowledge, available time and the comfort which emanates from personal contact.

3. Modern character of the Society.

- a) The concept of the Vincentian family embraces both those who help and those who are helped, leading to a sharing with the latter of the affection given to our own family.
- b) Fundamental importance is attached to the spiritual life.
- c) Women are present in the Society in either feminine or mixed Conferences.
- d) Presidents are elected at all levels. Each president is at the same time a member of the next higher Council.

Vincentian engagement is fully rooted in the **Gospel message**, permanent reference to which will, in clarifying our action through service, keep it from degenerating into activism or philanthropy.