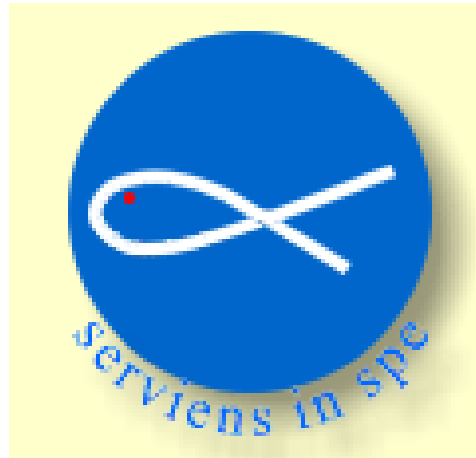


Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Toronto Central Council



Conference Starter/Renewal Kit

February, 2008



MOST REVEREND THOMAS COLLINS ARCHBISHOP OF TORONTO
1155 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario M4T 1W2 Tel: (416) 934-0606 Fax: (416) 934-3452

February 2008

Dear Pastor,

I strongly support the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which since the 19th century, has fruitfully carried out the Gospel mission of caring for those in need.

I encourage you to read the Conference Starter kit which gives information about the Society, and about how to start a conference of the Society in a parish.

In Christ,

Thomas Collins

Thomas C. Collins, Archbishop of Toronto.



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Toronto Central Council
240 Church Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 1Z2

Dear Pastor;

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (Toronto Central Council) currently has conferences in 115 parishes in the GTA portion of the archdiocese, with 1200 volunteer members. In some of the other parishes, a conference once existed but it ceased to exist because as members left (for whatever reason), they were not replaced. In the case of newer parishes, it is likely that no one has yet taken the initiative to start a conference. We are not aware of any parish, however, where there is no conference because there is no need for one.

A conference of members (“Vincentians”) of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul addresses many needs within your parish.

The needs of the poor

Every parish, no matter how affluent, has pockets of poverty. Poverty also takes many forms – lacking material goods, loneliness, depression, addictions, etc. Our members bring assistance, hope, compassion and respect, as well as material assistance, to those of any faith who request our help.

The needs of individual parishioners

People of faith look for opportunities to act on their faith and beliefs. Many parishioners will find one or more ministries that help them to meet this need. The conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul provides interested parishioners with the opportunity to serve those in need in a very personal, meaningful, faith-based way. In most cases this will be through person-to-person contact with the poor in the parish. In some cases it will be through volunteering on one of our committees or in one of our Special Works.

The needs of the parish

Parishioners understand Christ’s call to serve the poor. They know it is a major responsibility of the parish to respond to the needs of the less fortunate. They may not choose to become personally involved in this ministry but they need to know it is being addressed by their church and their parish.

The needs of the pastor

The pastor has both spiritual and practical reasons for helping to maintain a healthy, active, Christ-centred conference within the parish. It is a relief to the pastor to know that the needs of the poor in the parish are being addressed. The conference also helps to address concerns related to people in need frequently requesting assistance at the rectory and to deal with concerns about whether some people may be abusing the system (since Vincentians actually visit people in their homes).

The following Starter/Renewal Kit contains information that can help you to start a conference or to increase the spirituality, vibrancy, effectiveness or size of your existing conference. If you are interested in learning more about the benefits of having a conference in your parish, would like to know how we can help you to start one, or have questions about how to strengthen your existing conference, please call 416-364-5577, and speak to Louise Coutu or Brian Morris. We have also provided each conference president with a copy of this package and so it could form the basis of some productive dialogue between you and the conference president. Additional information about the Society and its works is available on our website:

www.ssvptoronto.ca

In closing, I thank you for any support and assistance you are able to provide to the conference in your parish and wish to express our gratitude to His Grace, Archbishop Collins, for his pledge of support to the Society and its works.

Sincerely,

Danny Bourne
President, Toronto Central Council

Effective, Smooth Pastor-Conference President Relations

A conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, similar to the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Women's League, is an autonomous organization serving as a ministry within a parish, with the permission and support of the pastor and bishop.

The following points might help to clarify a few things that could be the basis of misunderstanding or disagreement.

Collection of donations: When parishioners put money in the poor box, they assume it is going to the Society to serve those in need. In the interests of good stewardship, it is essential that the conference take full responsibility for these funds. This means that the funds are counted and banked by Vincentians.

New Member Screening: As directed by the archdiocese, the Society has implemented a full screening program for all members. All new members must:

- Complete an application;
- Submit 3 references (which are checked by the president);
- Have a police check;
- Be interviewed;
- Sign a Covenant;
- Attend an Orientation Session

While some applicants will name the pastor as one of their references and the conference president will happily provide you with the name of all members, approval of members is the sole responsibility of the conference executive.

Parish Social Ministry: The archdiocese has been promoting this ministry to help parishes reach out more effectively and to better meet their responsibility to serve those in need. The Society fully supports this initiative – anything that helps the parish to better serve the needy and marginalized can only be good. The pastor, with his parish council, will naturally want to see what needs are not being met by the conference and other parish ministries and then see how Parish Social Ministry can be designed to address these needs.

If you would like to discuss these or other issues related to the effective, appropriate operation of your conference, please call 416-364-5577 and speak to Louise Coutu or Brian Morris

Communication: As in all worthwhile endeavours, success depends greatly on regular, effective communication. The conference, through the president, needs to keep you fully informed of their situation. The parishioners need to know that the conference is using their donations in a compassionate, responsible manner. This can be accomplished through an annual report to parishioners (as a talk from the pulpit by the president and/or a written report in the bulletin). Informed parishioners are more likely to give, to feel good about giving to this worthy cause, and to consider becoming a member.

If you would like to discuss these or other ideas, please call 416-364-5577 and speak to Louise Coutu or Brian Morris

The Christ-Centred, Vibrant, Active, Effective Conference

Spirituality: Parishioners join the Society because they want to put their faith into action. They feel called to serve God through service to the poor. They fully realize that they can only do so effectively with God's guidance and grace. They seek God's help through the opening and closing prayer and the spiritual reading/reflection at every meeting. Before each visit they ask that God guide their words and deeds. They draw guidance and inspiration from the Rule, which contains the words and wisdom of our founder, Frederic Ozanam, as well as explanations of our values, beliefs, and traditions.

Although most pastors are too busy to regularly attend conference meetings, it is important that a conference have the benefit of a spiritual adviser who can help them stay in touch with, and true to, their calling to serve God through those most in need.

Effectiveness: Effectiveness results from a few things

- ❑ Sufficient number of active members to adequately respond to the need;
- ❑ Effective conference leadership (which means, among other things, that there is a change in leadership on a regular basis – the Rule prescribes the term for conference presidents as 3 years, renewable for one additional three-year term);
- ❑ A minimum of 6 active members. This, of course, means that as members leave the conference, new members are recruited. Aside from filling the ranks, new members bring new energy, commitment and perspective;
- ❑ Members committed to growing in their faith and in their effective service to those in need. This includes a willingness to learn, to collaborate with other ministries or individuals, and to participate in available member training sessions;
- ❑ Having adequate funds to respond to the need (see next points)

Adequate Funds: In our experience, parishioners will support the work of the Society if:

- ❑ They know a bit about the Society – where the money goes and how it will be used. (which can be accomplished by an annual talk/report from the pulpit, Bulletin inserts or Bulletin items) ;
- ❑ If the pastor makes a point at the end of each weekend mass to say something to the effect of “Please don't forget the poor as you leave the church today” (since such a statement from someone they respect and like leads to a significant increase in donations to the Poor Box – without adversely affecting the plate collections);
- ❑ Having a Vincentian (or, when necessary, an usher) hold the Poor Box after each weekend mass (since parishioners are far more inclined to contribute when a smiling, friendly face is behind the box);

If you or your conference president would like to discuss these or other ideas for keeping your conference Christ-centred, vibrant, active and effective, please call 416-364-5577 and speak to Louise Coutu or Brian Morris

A Christ-centred, Effective, Active, Vibrant Conference
Excerpts from the Rule of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (2007)

Mission Statement: The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Canada is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, and joy.

The primary goal and purpose of the Society, its members, staff, volunteers and benefactors is:

- to serve and to minister to all *the poor*¹, making no distinctions of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions;
- to promote their dignity in accordance with Christian values and the philosophy of the Society.

Vincentians, in serving the poor:

- are living the message of the Gospel;
- are transformed, through Christ, into His disciples.

Vincentians recognize that the service, the activities and the attachment to traditions, as expressed in the stated parameters of the Society, reflect the vision of:

- our main founder, Frédéric Ozanam,
- our patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

Vincentians belong to a worldwide community, and members:

- are drawn from every cultural and ethnic group,
- are united by prayer and reflection,
- take part in gatherings and meetings to organize and administer assistance wherever needed.

Vincentians work as a team within the Society and also in collaboration with other people of good will to:

- serve the poor,
- discover and help redress situations of social injustice that cause poverty, suffering and need.

Vincentians believe that:

- they are serving Christ when they serve the poor;
 - the activities of the Society reflect the spirit of Christ in promoting the reign of God.
-

Vincentians carry out their work keeping in mind that:

- no work of charity is foreign to the Society;
- they are the loving companions to their brothers and sisters;
- the Society's mission goes beyond the immediate future, looking towards sustainable development and the protection of the environment for the benefit of future generations.

Vincentians, through person-to-person contact,

- serve in a spirit of love, humility, respect, and discretion;
- are ready to serve when needed.

The word *poor* designates men, women and children who, either as individuals or as families, are encountering difficulties in their lives. The *poor* may include:

- the homeless,
- immigrants and refugees,
- inmates and their families,
- those with no source of income,
- those searching for employment,
- seniors and those on fixed incomes;
- those living alone with few resources,
- those suffering physically or mentally,
- those who are going through a strike or a lockout,
- those abused physically, sexually or psychologically,
- the working poor who have problems making ends meet,
- those enrolled in governmental financial assistance programs,
- those who have a problem of dependency on drugs, gambling, alcohol, etc.²

The mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a response to the message of Our Lord in the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Members of the Society are called to value the principle of life, which manifests God's love for men, women and children throughout the world. Christ came to give hope to the poor and expects Vincentians to do the same.

By meditation, prayer, reflection on the scriptures, and the teachings of the Church, Vincentians seek to:

- develop their awareness of God,
- develop their relationship with the poor,
- bear witness by acts of kindness in the spirit of Christ.

The Gospels are the prime source of Vincentian spirituality. Meditating on the spirit of the Rule and on the lives of the saints, especially those of St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam is recommended for greater spiritual development.

Role and Responsibilities of a Conference

The main role of a conference is to group together Christians desirous of pursuing the Society's mission. A conference is a gathering of people similarly motivated to serve Christ by serving the poor. Working within the conference, members can nourish and renew their faith, and sustain each other through prayer so that each member will grow closer to God.

Within a conference, an environment should be created that will enable members to develop a sense of Vincentian spirituality, friendship, and solidarity in their charitable activities.

The responsibilities of conference members are varied. The most important one is to bring comfort and aid to the poor. The fundamental activity is the person-to-person encounter with the poor through home visits, carried out by pairs of Vincentians. Home visitation demands the highest respect for the dignity of the poor. Vincentians are the guests of the persons being visited, as those they visit are the hosts.

Within the conference, to carry out its mission, members:

- set objectives,
- plan, develop and carry out activities,
- work as a team,
- make decisions by consensus.

Following their recruitment, new conference members should be instructed about the mission of the Society. This will include its Rule, spirituality, history, structure, objectives, main activities and special works. Within a conference, continuous formation should be provided.

Conference members should be made aware of, and become defenders of, social justice. They must be proactive in their defence of the poor.³

Vincentians should act as catalysts and be part of the conscience of their local community, as they cooperate with parish organizations, neighbouring conferences, other faith communities and social service agencies.

Vincentians must seek to avoid duplication and competition in the provision of services. The Society should play a leading role in cooperating with others because it cannot do alone everything that needs to be done. In all endeavours, assistance should be welcomed from anyone who is sincere and prepared to help, even in a small way.

Starting a New Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

A Checklist

Discuss with the Pastor

- Get the support of the pastor. If he is not familiar with the work of the Society, you will need to **explain how** a conference provides an additional opportunity for parishioners to act on their faith as well as for parishioners and the parish to respond appropriately to Christ's call to serve the poor.

Recruitment Drive

- Plan the Recruitment Drive** with the pastor. Determine the **dates and time** of the masses when the Support Team members can speak to the congregation on behalf of the Society. (The Pastor may prefer to do it himself, if he is familiar with the Society's work.) Central Office of the Society has developed a Recruitment booklet that guides you through the process of recruiting members. We also have some members (Support Team) available to assist with planning and carrying out the recruitment drive.
- Place an announcement in the **Bulletin** (samples available in the Recruitment Booklet) a couple of weeks before the talk from the pulpit. The week prior to the Pulpit Talk, also mention the **date/time of the Information Session** so that individuals can plan to attend.
- Talk from the pulpit & Volunteer Name Gathering.** As described in the Recruitment booklet, it is important to have a few people at the back of the church after the masses when the invitation to join is extended from the pulpit. The Support Team will coordinate this activity. These people will take names and phone numbers of those even mildly curious.
- Distribute Information Package to those interested with attached note confirming the Information Session Date/Time & Location for easy reference.

Information / Training Sessions

- A few days later, a **Support Team** member will telephone (or email) each person and **invite him/her** to the **Information Session** within the week following the pulpit talk. At this meeting, information about the Society and its works will be provided and questions answered. Print information will also be provided.
- Support Team member to arrange for **Particular Council President** to attend to be **introduced** to the new potential members.
- Arrange with the pastor for **2 Training Sessions**, preferably 1 night per week for the next 2 weeks to provide the necessary training for the new potential members. A few days prior to the Training Sessions, the Support Team will call each person to see if they are still interested and invite him/her to the first of two training meetings. At that meeting, New Member Applications will be distributed to those who plan to become members.

Conference Set-up

- Arrange with the Particular Council President to complete the screening process, including arranging for the new members to be accompanied on a few home visits by an experienced member from a neighbouring conference.

Note: A much more detailed and complete check-list is available on our web site: www.ssvptoronto.ca ("Materials Available) or at Central Office-416-364-5577, ext.222

Each home visit is intended to help the client get through a particular difficulty **and** to move forward in some way that's meaningful to them. The first few visits will generally focus almost exclusively on the first objective. After a number of visits, the focus will generally move much more to the second objective.

1) Receiving the call

- Get the client's message from the parish secretary or, hopefully, a conference voice mailbox.
- The information and tone of voice may tell you a good deal about the client's needs.
- Carefully note all the contact info and other details

2) Preparing for the visit

- i) Get a partner** – Vincentians **never** visit on their own. A male/female pair is ideal but not always possible. Two males should not visit a lone female client.
- ii) Pre-plan with your partner** – If you've visited with this person before, you probably have a good sense of how they relate to clients. If not, you would do well to chat with them about how they approach a home visit. You want to match your styles and to work to each other's strengths.
- iii) Ask for God's help** – One experienced Vincentian says a short prayer prior to every visit. "God, please don't let me mess up." God will know what you mean.
- iv) Get emotionally ready** – If you are too tired, or angry, or there is something about the client that annoys you, can you be as compassionate, and caring and non-judgmental as you want to be? If you can't get yourself into the proper frame of mind, it may be best for the client and you that you ask another Vincentian to do the call. God will give you all the help you need but you've got to work with Him.
- v) Get materially ready** – You will generally have a couple of food and clothing vouchers with you so that you can respond to the needs as you see them. If the client's call indicates other needs (e.g. information about a gov't service that might be able to help them with a particular problem), you will come prepared with the information or with written material.
- vi) Check file** – If other Vincentian have visited, there should be a file. Knowing a bit about the client let's them know you cared enough to check and also reduces the likelihood of contradictory information.
- vii) Set an appointment** – Set a clear time and date with the client (since it obviously would not be respectful to simply drop in on the client) and get all details re. location. Stress that it's very important that they call and cancel if something comes up.

3) The visit

- **Remember** – if you are there for the right reasons (i.e. you want to act on your faith, to serve others, and to help make a difference), you will say and do the right things. **Be yourself. Trust God and trust yourself.**
- **Ice breaker** – especially if the client seems a little embarrassed, uncomfortable, or even antagonistic (since it's hard to admit you need help), take a few moments to get everyone comfortable. Commenting on an interesting photo, asking the cat's name, or focusing in on something that would seem to be of interest to the client will help
- **Explain who we are** – Don't assume the client knows what the Society is and where the money comes from. Explain that you are a volunteer member of a Catholic organization that works in the local Catholic church to help people of all denominations in the community. Explain that the money comes from the donations of parishioners and it is your responsibility to provide assistance to the most needy.
- **"How can we help you today?"** – A question such as this will start the client talking about their current situation and what they hope you can do for them. Especially on the first few visits, **listen, listen, listen.**

Listen to the words. Listen to the tone. Listen to the unfinished sentences. You want to respond to their request but you also want to find ways that you might be able to help them move forward in some way meaningful to them. This requires that you listen with your mind and heart.

- **Record keeping 1**– You will record some key information on a standard form. In the first couple of visits you really only need:

- i) Client's name, address and contact info
- ii) Number, names and ages of children

If the client continues to call for assistance, you will need more information, likely including:

- i) Total income and expenses.
- ii) Other information that could help you to assess the situation and to offer appropriate assistance.

Note: We don't require clients to give us personal information. However, if we believe we require certain information in order to be able to appropriately serve them and they aren't willing to provide it, it may mean that we can no longer serve them (see the Serving Longer-Term Clients booklet).

- **Record keeping 2** – The client record sheet will have room for comments and observations. However, only factual information (name, address, etc.) should be recorded during the visit. In most cases you and your partner will fill in the information after you leave the client's residence. While you are there you are listening and conversing and listening. Sitting there with a clipboard and pen sets up a very different relationship and dynamic.
- **Promises** – be honest and realistic in what you say you can and will do. Don't make promises you can't or likely won't keep. The client needs to know that you care enough to do what you say you will and have enough respect for them to be honest about what you can't or won't do.

2) Follow-up

- **File** – complete the record sheet and place in conference binder or file (ensuring it's secure)
- **Follow through on promises** – while it's still fresh, do what you said you would do,
- **Discuss at conference** – The conference members do not need to discuss every case at every meeting, but the conference meeting is an excellent opportunity to share experiences and insights and to struggle with challenges. Vincentians in a spiritual, healthy, active conference nourish each other, guide each other, educate each other, and contribute to each other's spiritual and emotional growth. If your conference doesn't do this, work with the president, the other members, and the spiritual adviser (generally the pastor) to bring it about.

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. (from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Rule)

The spiritual aspects of a conference or council meeting are addressed in 2.2.9 of the Rule and p.38 of The Mind & Heart of a Vincentian. The following points refer only to the efficiency and effectiveness aspects of the meetings.

1) Preparation 1 – agenda

- **Frequency, day & time** – The Rule and National Council recommend that meetings be held every two weeks. For some conferences, this is not practical since a number of members are also working full time. The day and time will, of course, be set to accommodate as many members as possible.
- It is probably best to have a **standard format** for your meetings, so that members are comfortable with it and generally know what to expect. P.20 of the Rule provides a sample agenda.
- Although you will have a standard format, don't get **stuck in a rut**. Be creative; be flexible; be responsive to changing needs and circumstances. For example, sometimes the spiritual reading may be a passage from the bible. At other times it may be a one-line quote from Jean Vanier or St. Vincent de Paul. Sometimes members will report on all visits. At other times they may just discuss particularly challenging situations or ones where they learned something special.
- What **one, specific thing do you want the meeting to accomplish?** E.g. getting all the members to participate more in discussions; working out a better system for allocating calls; deciding how to address particular client needs; educating the members about services available in the community (perhaps with the assistance of a guest speaker); planning an address to parishioners re.the work of the Society and need for donations; planning to recruit more members; discussing ways of making the meetings more productive and enjoyable. **Ideally, every agenda should include some training component, even if it's very brief.**
- Since you generally don't want the formal meeting going longer than **1 hour**, plan your agenda accordingly. Be realistic in terms of how much time you allocate to each section of the agenda. Don't assume five minutes will be long enough to work out a resolution to an ongoing problem
- **How are you going to achieve this objective?** Simply wanting to achieve the objective isn't enough. Don't leave things to chance. Decide how you are going to run the meeting so that the chances of success are greatly increased. (see # 2-4 below)

2) Preparation 2 – room

- How we arrange the seating in a room says a lot about how we see ourselves and the others, and how we want to operate. E.g. If I, as president, sit at a table facing a row or more of members I am saying that I am the boss and little meaningful discussion is expected. Placing the chairs in a circle, where everyone is equal and facing their fellow Vincentians, gives a very different message. Depending on what you want to accomplish, the seating arrangement may vary
- Although a conference generally has few options as far as meeting rooms, try to find a space that is private and comfortable. Help the pastor to understand the importance of doing so.

3) Preparation 3 – materials

- Although members will have volunteered to do the prayer and reflection, ensure that you have a reflection available in case the person is absent. Also, make sure there are sufficient prayer cards.
- Go back through your agenda carefully. Is there any material that might help to accomplish the objective? E.g. a flyer; excerpts from the Rule; a new policy statement or announcement from Toronto Central Council; the phone number for a community service; a TV and VCR to show a video; an article from the Register or newspaper. Having the material ready (and copied, if appropriate) says the matter is important and that you respect their time. Fumbling through papers looking for something you're not sure you have says something very different.

4) Running the meeting

- **If you prepared properly**, the meeting will almost run itself, **except:**

i) Rules of order

- ◆ In small, fairly informal meetings, this is not a big issue. A few points:
 - Any decision that is important (especially in terms of having a written record), should be done with a recorded motion, with the name of the mover and seconder recorded. During the discussion an amendment might be suggested. A discussion and vote is taken on the amendment and then on the amended motion.
 - Try to lead a good, healthy debate of the issue but don't let the discussion become repetitive/circular or wander off the motion.
 - Members should get in the habit of speaking through the chair and not directly debating each other. It may seem a little too formal but when difficult issues arise, you'll be glad you started the practice.

ii) Dealing with storytellers

- ◆ Some people have a great deal of trouble staying focused on a topic or perhaps can't see what the group is trying to accomplish. They regularly slip off into little anecdotes that might be interesting over a cup of coffee but use up valuable meeting time and take the focus off the matter at hand. You need to gently, respectfully get them back on topic or suggest maybe they could tell that story at the end of the meeting or over coffee afterward. The person's pride may be slightly hurt but the other members will be very appreciative of your willingness and ability to keep the meeting on track. Some storytellers even appreciate being brought back in focus.

ii) Dealing with antagonism

- ◆ One or more members may be antagonistic toward you, as president, toward another member, or the world in general. If it is affecting the meeting or the other members, it needs to be dealt with. In almost all cases this should be addressed **one-on-one** outside of the meeting. If the situation becomes unmanageable, consult with your Particular Council president. In some cases the member may be asked to resign from the conference. **We can not allow a member to bring harm to clients, the conference, or the Society.**

iii) Through discussion, develop some standards and expectations related to meeting behaviour and then ensure they're followed. For example, it's **not appropriate** for the president or any member to:

- ◆ use body language, tone, or words to belittle, diminish or dismiss another participant;
 - ◆ interrupt another speaker;
 - ◆ disregard other members' feelings or interests;
 - ◆ waste people's time with self-indulgent storytelling or sermonizing;
 - ◆ dominate the discussion;
 - ◆ consistently wander into meetings late.
- **Ensure that proper minutes are maintained.** A lot of detail is not required. It is generally easiest to make points under each part of the agenda. For motions or other decisions, the decision should be clearly recorded, with movers and seconders for formal motions (although these aren't often required). For discussions, simply capture the main points (not who said them) and the consensus, if one was reached. Reports on visits don't need to be detailed in the minutes since they exist in the client files.
 - **Ensure appropriate handling of finances and records.** All members should be informed at each meeting re. income and expenses for the month and current balance. There will generally be a decision also as to how much money to send up to the Particular Council. This information and decision will be carefully recorded in the minutes.

5) Follow-up

- Do any follow up while it's still fresh in your mind.

6) General

- **All members**, and not just the president, are **responsible** for ensuring appropriate, effective meetings. Discuss this with the members and have them indicate how they can help.
- **Designate** – This spreads the work and accomplishments around and also helps to develop leaders who are willing and able to take over when your term is through.

A Vincentian Prayer

Lord help me grow.

Help me to be a better Vincentian today than I was yesterday.

Help me to be a better Vincentian tomorrow than I am today.

Lord help me grow.

Help me to be more compassionate today than yesterday.

Help me to be more respectful of our neighbours in need today than I was yesterday.

Help me to be less judgmental today than I was yesterday.

Lord help me grow

Help me to be more humble today than yesterday.

Help me to listen more fully today than yesterday.

Help me to be more patient today than yesterday.

Lord help me grow

Help me grow in faith so that I can see you in all of those I serve.

Help me to be generous with my time and my gifts in my service to those in need.

Help me to serve you better today than yesterday.

Lord help me grow

Help me to be a better Vincentian today than I was yesterday.

Help me to be a better Vincentian tomorrow than I am today.

A Leader's Prayer

I have been called to serve our neighbours in need and the Society in a leadership position.

Help me never to think of my office in the Society as a position of honour or as a burden, but rather as a privilege and a special opportunity to serve.

Help me never to think of it as an opportunity to rule others but rather as an obligation to serve others.

Please grant that my position may never make me proud but that it may always make me humble.

Help me never to make trouble, but always make peace.

Help me always to speak the truth but always to speak it in love and with respect.

Help me never to stand on the letter of the law (the Rule), instead, leading within its spirit.

Help me not to be concerned with my own rights, my own place, my own importance.

Remember that, to lead in Christ's name, one must be the servant of all (as exemplified by our founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam and St. Vincent de Paul).

Help me to be faithful in my duties to our neighbours in need, to my fellow Vincentians, and to the Society.

As I carry out my duties within the Society and as I go about my daily life, help me to model the values and virtues that my faith and my vocation as a Vincentian call me to.

For this I pray.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Toronto Central Council

LOGO

The Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (the International Council General) has adopted a logo and recommended it to the Society in every country. However it is up to each National (Superior) Council to authorize the use of the Society's logo within its jurisdiction.¹ The National Council of Canada has adopted this logo.

The logo has the following meaning:



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

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