



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Conference
The Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Guidelines for Admission to Membership

The St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Conference seeks to be open and welcoming to all new members. Therefore, in order to make it easier for potential members:

- *to learn about the Society,*
- *to participate in our works,*
- *and to follow the pathway to Active or Associate Membership,*

we follow this procedure for admission of new Vincentians.

A. Membership Committee

In order to ensure that these Guidelines are put into practice, the Conference maintains a standing committee for membership with at least three members, including a chairman appointed by the President, with the following responsibilities:

1. Recruiting.
 - a. The Membership Committee actively seeks new opportunities to invite prospective members to consider joining our conference.
 - b. The Membership Committee is responsible for responding to inquiries concerning membership.
 - c. The Membership Committee is responsible for maintaining and distributing informational fliers to prospective members.
2. Welcoming.
 - a. The Membership Committee is primarily responsible for personally greeting guests and prospective members at Conference Meetings.
 - b. The Membership Committee introduces guests and prospective members at the Conference Meeting.
 - c. Membership Committee ensures prospective members have access to a copy of the Rule prior to requesting Membership.
3. Records.
 - a. The Membership Committee is responsible for periodic audits to ensure the accuracy of the Membership Roster in the database.
 - b. The Membership Committee ensures that new members' Safe Environment clearance is recorded in the database.
4. Formation.
 - a. The Membership Committee provides information for attendance at Ozanam Orientation to all new Associate Members.
 - b. The Membership Committee promotes participation by all Members in formation activities such as Spiritual Retreats, Conference and Council Liturgies, and any other activities that may come up from time to time.
5. Ceremonies.
 - a. The Membership Committee is responsible for coordinating with the pastor and appropriate Parish Staff for Commissioning and Commitment Ceremonies.
 - b. The Membership Committee is responsible for maintaining and reporting inventory of SVdP Lapel Pins.

B. Procedure for Admitting New Members

1. Candidate is identified by recommendation of existing Member, by inquiry, or by attending a Conference Meeting.
 - a. Membership Committee contacts prospective member (*If guest attends meeting unannounced, greets member personally on arrival*)
 - i. Gathers basic contact info
 - ii. Answers questions about the Society and Conference
 - iii. Gives Candidate informational flier
 - b. Membership committee invites Candidate to attend a meeting as our guest
 - c. First Conference meeting:
 - i. Greeted on arrival by Membership Committee Member
 - ii. Membership committee member introduces prospective member to the Conference
 - d. After first Conference meeting
 - i. Invites to attend a second Conference Meeting if interested in becoming a Member
 - ii. Before next meeting, follow-up before next meeting to answer questions and gauge interest
 - iii. Ensures that the Candidate has received a copy of the Rule, and understands that to join is to accept the Rule.
2. When a Candidate expresses intent to join:
 - a. Attends second meeting
 - b. Membership Committee moves for “Resolution of Welcome”
 - c. Associate Membership begins
3. 90-day Discernment & Training period

All Associate Members are assigned a Mentor, who can be any Active Member of the Conference, to guide them through their initial 90 days, after which, if they desire, they may request to become Active Members.

 - a. Orientation
 - i. Database access given, and Associate Member record created
 - ii. Associate Member completes Safe Environment training/clearance
 - b. Experience
 - i. Meeting attendance (minimum 7 meetings)
 - ii. Home Visit (minimum one)
 - c. Formation
 - i. Attend Ozanam Orientation
 - ii. Read “The Rule”
 - iii. Prayer, reflection and discernment (Spiritual Adviser may assist)
4. Associate Member asks to be accepted as Active Member
 - a. Mentor Moves for “Resolution of Acceptance”
 - b. Conference Vote
 - c. Commissioning ceremony (to be conducted periodically)

References

1. Excerpt from *The Rule, Part III*

Membership

Statute 3: Membership and Admission

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States has three types of membership: the Active (Full) Member, the Associate Member, and the Contributing Member.

Active (Full) Members are those who participate regularly in the prayer life, meetings, and charitable activities through personal contact with the poor of the Vincentian Conference or Council into which they have been received.

An Active (Full) Member accepts the Rule and Statutes of the Society, belongs to the Catholic Church, and is received as a Vincentian brother or sister into the Society's Conference or Council with which he or she is affiliated. Normally, membership implies Conference affiliation. Less commonly is membership obtained through direct Council affiliation. Only Active (Full) Members hold office in the organization.

Admission Process for Active Members

The names of persons proposed for active membership are to be submitted to the President of the Conference or Council concerned. The President will provide information concerning the recommended person to the Conference or Council. If approved, the candidate will be admitted as a member and given a Vincentian welcome at the next meeting. If a prospective member wishes to test their Vincentian vocation, that person may defer for a time formal admission into the Society. A candidate for active membership is afforded a period of training and discernment which includes formation in the essential elements and core values of the Society as well as its Rule.

Before being commissioned as a member, according to Statute 4, the Conference President or the Spiritual Advisor should consult with the candidate to discern readiness for active (full) membership. The Conference then takes formal action, normally by a resolution, to accept the candidate into active (full) membership.

Associate Members are those affiliated with the Society by formal action of the Conference or Council with which the member will be joined. Associate Members include those who sincerely and publicly accept the Society's Rule but may or may not belong to the Catholic Church and may or may not attend Conference Meetings or engage in the works of the Society on a regular basis. Associate Members are kept informed of the developments and activities of their immediate groupings, as well as the general progress of the Society, particularly in the local area or diocese. They are invited to attend the general meetings and special observances of the Society and to participate in its charitable activities.

Contributing Members are those who regularly or in a substantial way provide in-kind or financial support but who do not engage directly in the Society's work. These members also are invited to the Society's general and festival meetings.

While membership in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States is open to all ages, in honor of the youthfulness of our founder Frederic Ozanam, youth and young adults are encouraged into membership. In the Society, youth (those under 18 years of age) and young adult (those 18 to 30 years of age) membership defines anyone who can make a sustained contribution to Vincentian work. Youth or young adults may be (Active, Associate or Contributing) Members of any Conference or Council or of a Conference designated as a Youth or Young Adult Conference.

Statute 4: Commissioning and Renewal Ceremonies

The commissioning of new members of the Society should take place at an appropriate time and occasion, after they have gained experience in the Society.

All members shall annually renew their promise of service to the members and to the poor, thereby deepening the spiritual dimension of their vocation.

The normal occasion for commissioning and renewal is at a Conference or Council liturgy or at a Festival Meeting.

2. Excerpt from *The Manual, Section 2.1*

Procedures for Admitting Members

The President of the Conference is usually the member initially involved when someone asks to become an Active Member of the Society at the local parish, or when an Active Member proposes a possible candidate. The President contacts potential members and privately discusses their interests, qualifications, and background with them, along with the responsibilities of membership.

These initial meetings and the explanation of membership responsibilities may result in a decision to withdraw or defer the petition for membership. If the decision is to proceed, the President will inform the Conference at a regular meeting about the recommended person. If approved by the Conference, the candidate will be admitted and welcomed, with formal acceptance contingent upon training and discernment.

The **Rule** (Part II, Statute 4) requires that a Commissioning of new members take place at an appropriate time and occasion, after they have gained experience in the Society. Also, it reminds all members to have an Annual Commitment Ceremony, in order to renew their promise of service to the members and to the poor, thereby deepening the spiritual dimension of their vocation. The usual occasions for commissioning and renewal are Conference and Council liturgies, festival day celebrations for St. Vincent and/or Blessed Frederic in September, and Ozanam Sundays in April. The publication ***Vincentian Celebrations***, available from the National Council, is an important resource of prayer services for these occasions.