**Chapter I:**

**AIC’s Identity**

* Our Origins
* **The Motivations for our Action**
* The Profile of our Volunteers
* Working as a Team
* The Organisation of the AIC Network

***Topic n°2***

**The Motivations for our Action**

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| **A Commitment as Citizens:** **A commitment to the poor**Poverty affects the person’s fundamental right to take part in his or her own destiny: “*Insecurity is the lack of one or more of the foundational needs allowing people and families to take on their basic responsibilities and enjoy their fundamental rights.”* Source: UN, Economic and Social Committee, 2006.70% of poor people are women. **A Christian Commitment:** **Like all the baptised, a commitment to following Christ** “Whatever you do to the least among you, you do it to me.” The Church lives by its **preferential love for the poor**. The Church is the place where all who suffer: the poor, the destitute, the unhappy, the sick, prisoners, the hungry, must find rest. Its mission is to tell all those people: “Come to me..." (Mt 11: 28). Poverty is not just material poverty. Benedict XVI speaks of “marginalisation, affective, moral and spiritual poverty”, of those “whose interior lives are disorientated” (Benedict XVI, *World Day of Peace,* 1st January 2009).**A Commitment to Following St Vincent:**1. Serving the Poor as Christ did

Christ is a master, a teaching, he is the example; the Son leads us to the Father. Christ first and foremost bridges relationships, he links us to the Father and invites us to let ourselves be transformed by the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Saint Vincent was marked by the spirituality of Pierre de Bérulle. For him, **Christians are those who experience a relationship with Christ, and so who allow Christ to inhabit them and act upon them.**There are 3 dimensions to this:Faith: Confidence in one person, ChristPrayer: An intimate relationship with Christ which determines actionAction: Active life1. Serving Christ through the Poor

A person living in poverty allows us to discover the first sufferer, Jesus Christ, “The poor are our masters, they are our kings”.The pyramid is reversed, the rich and powerful in this world are those called to serve.**This allows us to:** * **Be ready to listen to others** both when working in a team and in our own actions.
* **Recognise our own vulnerability** and our limits to be able to understand those of others.
* **Live in an austere Vincentian way**, showing that this lifestyle is possible.

**A commitment which gives women a place in society:**The work of AIC members with 20,000 women in positions of responsibility shows that across all cultures women can take on responsibilities in the world. This is a testimony to what John Paul II called “the genius of women”. (Letter to Women, No 10, 1995)It is not a matter of claiming that men and women are independent and self-sufficient. That would risk enclosing them in a utopian or even aggressive self-realisation. Nothing would be further from Christian faith. “An essentially female movement” is a way of explaining the service we give: Given the marginalisation of women through poverty and violence, a first response from women themselves may be easier to accept.**A commitment which gives women a place in the Church:** The Church is faithful to the Gospel, and does not see women as following in the apostolic succession. They have another role, as demonstrated by women such as Mother Theresa, Louise de Marillac, Elisabeth Seton and Hildegard de Bingen, as well as so many other unknown women working in the shadows. St Vincent said to the first Ladies of Charity: *For around 800 years women have had no public role in the Church, and…* | **Poverty: an injustice****Making visible a lack of fraternity****Following Christ: the Church, a place of welcome for the marginalised.****‘The programme of the Christian is “a heart that sees.”’ DCE (No. 31)****St Vincent would say *“What would Christ do if he were in my place?”*****For St Vincent, serving the poor was the fruit of an intensely spiritual life** **Accompany the poorest people spiritually and materially****Be ready to listen****In an essentially female movement****“You are the mothers of the poor”****St Vincent de Paul**…*see how Providence itself is now speaking to some of you*.”  |

**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

1. **How does being aware of the existence of so much social injustice around you motivate you in your work as a volunteer?**
2. **Given the teachings of Christ and Saint Vincent de Paul, how do you try to be consistent in your personal life?**
3. **What practical actions could you carry out, alone or in a group, to fulfil your commitment to accord a place to women in society?**