

# *Serving in Hope*

## MODULE IV



# *Our Vincentian Mission*

## Video/Formation Guide

*Society of St. Vincent de Paul Council of the United States*



## IN LOVING GRATITUDE

**Module IV:** *Our Vincentian Mission*  
**is dedicated to**



**Eugene B. Smith**  
National President 1999-2005  
Council of the United States  
Society of St. Vincent de Paul

**For his vision, leadership and inspiration of**  
*Serving in Hope*



## MODULE IV

### *Our Vincentian Mission*

## SESSION 4.1:

### *Charity and Justice*

#### Learning Objectives

After completing this Session you will have greater insight to:

- ① Identify the Vincentian Mission of Charity and Justice.
- ② Understand how Frederic Ozanam was a precursor of the Social Teachings of the Church.
- ③ Appreciate the process of Apostolic Reflection.





# Preface

**Serving in Hope** is a video-assisted resource for the spiritual formation of the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The goal of the series is to root all members of the Society in the spirituality and heritage of its founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

**Serving in Hope** combines videos with formation guides. The formation guides provide you with materials to enrich your understanding, invite you to discuss insights and to record your responses, and gives you enrichment readings to read between sessions.

**Serving in Hope** consists of a 5-minute Introductory Video for the program, and a 3-minute Video Introduction for each of the six Sessions in the Module together with the Formation Guide Booklet.

**Serving in Hope** is an on-going formation program for all members of the Society. It is also a program that can be used to mentor future new members into the spirituality and heritage of the Society.

**Serving in Hope** can be used a Session at a time during a Conference meeting, or combined together for a Retreat Day.

## IMPORTANT CHANGE

The process of Apostolic Reflection follows each session of **MODULE IV: OUR VINCENTIAN MISSION**, instead of the Enrichment Readings of the previous Modules. This process will help our Catholic Social Teachings to become a deeper part of our lives as Vincentians. Apostolic Reflection is to be integrated into the next Conference meeting after each Session of Module IV.



# *Serving in Hope*

## VIDEO/FORMATION GUIDE SERIES

### MODULE I: *Our Vincentian Vocation*

- Session 1:** What is a Vocation?
- Session 2:** Vocation of the Laity
- Session 3:** The Vocation of Vincent and Frederic
- Session 4:** Essential Elements of the Society
- Session 5:** Core Values
- Session 6:** Mission

### MODULE II: *Our Vincentian Spirituality*

- Session 1:** Vincentian Charism
- Session 2:** Jesus, Evangelizer and Servant of the Poor
- Session 3:** Contemplatives in Action
- Session 4:** Journey together to Holiness
- Session 5:** Sacraments and Vincentian Feasts
- Session 6:** Mary in Vincentian Spirituality

### MODULE III: *Our Vincentian Heritage*

- Session 1:** Blessed Frederic Ozanam
- Session 2:** Society of St. Vincent de Paul
- Session 3:** The Rule
- Session 4:** Blessed Sister Rosalie Rendu, D.C.
- Session 5:** The Vincentian Family
- Session 6:** Vision of Charity

### MODULE IV: *Our Vincentian Mission*

- Session 1:** Justice and Charity
- Session 2:** Catholic Social Teaching
- Session 3:** Life and Dignity
- Session 4:** Family, Community and Rights
- Session 5:** The Poor and Work
- Session 6:** Solidarity and Creation

### MODULE V: *Our Vincentian Conference Life*

- Session 1:** Conference Spirituality
- Session 2:** Conference Fellowship
- Session 3:** Conference Service
- Session 4:** Conference Structure
- Session 5:** Conference Administration
- Session 6:** Partnership with the Parish



# *How to Lead the* **“SERVING IN HOPE” –VIDEO/FORMATION GUIDE SERIES** *in a Conference*

## **INTRODUCTION**

**Leader describes to the group the process which is going to take place:**

- Provide a copy of the Session for each member of your Conference for their personal reflection and notes, together with the Enrichment Reading section.
- Stress that sharing is not compulsory but encouraged, and mention the need for confidentiality.
- Ask, or assign, different members to read the different sections.

## **OPENING PRAYER/QUIETING DOWN PERIOD**

**Leader invites group to:**

- Become relaxed and aware of God’s presence with us.
- Review the Learning Objectives for the session.
- View the video.

## **INTRODUCTION**

- Read the Opening Prayer together.
- Each section is read aloud, slowly and prayerfully, by the different members.
- Hearing different voices will allow different emphasis on words/phrases.

## **QUIET PERIOD**

**Leader invites everyone: (allow 1-2 min. of silence)**

- To quietly reflect on the readings.
- Introduces the suggested Discussion Question.

## **SHARING**

Leader invites members who wish to share on the Discussion Question, or on how one of the readings struck them. Possibly not everyone will share, but time should be allowed for each person who wishes to share his/her thoughts.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

At the end of the session the Leader closes with the Closing Prayer.  
(The process for each Session should take about 15-20 minutes. One Session at a time may be conducted at a Conference Meeting, or combined together for a Retreat Day.)



## MODULE IV

### *Our Vincentian Mission*

#### **SESSION 4.1: CHARITY AND JUSTICE ..... 6**

- The Vincentian Mission of Charity and Justice.
- Frederic Ozanam was a precursor of the Social Teachings of the Church.
- Apostolic Reflection.\*

#### **SESSION 4.2: CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING ..... 12**

- The Foundational Principles of the Catholic Social Teachings.
- Vincentians are called to be “experts” in the Social Teachings of the Church.
- Apostolic Reflection.\*

#### **SESSION 4.3: LIFE AND DIGNITY ..... 18**

- The call of the Church to work for justice and to become the “voice of the voiceless.”
- Life and Dignity of the Human Person.
- The process of Apostolic Reflection.\*

#### **SESSION 4.4: FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND RIGHTS ..... 24**

- The Call to Family, Community and Participation.
- Rights and Responsibilities.
- Apostolic Reflection.\*

#### **SESSION 4.5: THE POOR AND WORK ..... 30**

- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.
- The Dignity of Work and The Rights of Laborers.
- Apostolic Reflection.\*

#### **SESSION 4.6: SOLIDARITY AND CREATION ..... 36**

- Solidarity.
- The Care for God’s Creation.
- Apostolic Reflection.\*

\*To be integrated into the Conference Meeting after each Session.



*Serving in Hope*

**MODULE IV**

*Our Vincentian Mission*  
**Video/Formation Guide**



*Society of St. Vincent de Paul*  
*Council of the United States*



**OPENING PRAYER: (Together)**

*Thus says the Lord: This is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall be healed; your integrity shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. (Isaiah 58: 6-9)*

**INTRODUCTION:**

*(Each section is read slowly and reflectively, by different members.)*

Our **Mission** Statement of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul states: "Organized locally Vincentians witness God's love by embracing all works of **charity and justice**. The Society collaborates with other people of good will in **relieving need and addressing its causes**, making no distinction in those served because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ."

The mission of Saint Vincent and Blessed Frederic was indeed rooted in the virtues of charity and justice. Vincent said: "There is no **charity** that is not accompanied by **justice**." And Frederic tells us: "The order of society is based on two virtues: **charity and justice**. However, justice presupposes a lot of charity already, for one needs to love a person a great deal in order to respect his rights that infringe on our rights, and his freedom that infringes on our freedom."

At Frederic Ozanam's beatification ceremonies, August 22, 1997, Pope John Paul II told the world that: "Frederic observed the real situation of the poor and sought to be more and more effective in helping them in their human development. He understood that charity must lead to efforts to remedy justice. **Charity and justice go together**. Frederic had the clear-sighted courage to seek a front-line social and political commitment in a troubled time in the life of his country..."

So it is that we can see Frederic Ozanam as a pioneer of the social doctrine of the Church which Pope Leo XIII would develop some years later in the encyclical 'Rerum Novarum.' (On the Condition of the Working Classes). Faced with all the forms of poverty which overwhelm so many men and women, charity is a prophetic sign of the commitment of the Christian in the following of Christ." (Pope John Paul II, 1997)

BUM



# Notes

## Session 4.1

*(Each section is read slowly and reflectively, by different members.)*

By praying and reflecting on the writings of Blessed Frederic Ozanam, we find the truth of the words of Pope John Paul II telling us that our founder, was **a pioneer of the social doctrine of the Church** for in **1836**, fifty-five years before *Rerum Novarum*, Frederic wrote:

“The problem that divides men and women in our day is ...whether society will be only a great exploitation to the profit of the strongest or a consecration of each individual for the good of all and especially for the protection of the weak. There are a great many men and women who have too much and who wish to have more; there are a great many others who do not have enough, who have nothing, and who are willing to take if someone gives to them. Between these two classes of men, a confrontation is coming, and this menacing confrontation will be terrible: on the one side, the power of gold, on the other, the power of despair.

We must cast ourselves between these two enemy armies, if not to prevent, at least to deaden the shock. And our youth and our mediocrity does not make our role of mediators easier than our title of Christian makes us responsible. In this, there is the possible usefulness of our Society of St. Vincent de Paul.” (Frederic Ozanam, November 13, 1836)

Let us pray for guidance on how to more effectively fulfill our identity as Christians and Vincentians through our service and advocacy, **our charity and justice** for and with the poor. Let us ponder the words of Bl. Frederic Ozanam:

“Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveler who has been attacked. It is justice’s role to prevent the attacks.” (Frederic Ozanam:Lecture in Commercial Law)

*(Pause in silence for reflection - underline the words/phrases that touched you - make notes in the space provided.)*

### DISCUSSION:

**In the spirit of Frederic, how are we called to extend our mission of “charity and justice” in order to “prevent the attacks” on the poor today?**



**CLOSING PRAYER: (The words of Pope John Paul II)**

*“And so I appeal to all who love freedom and justice to give the poor and powerless a chance. Break open the hopeless cycles of poverty and ignorance that still trap too many of our brothers and sisters; the hopeless cycles of prejudice that linger; the cycles of despair in which people are imprisoned because they lack decent food, shelter or employment; the cycles of underdevelopment that are the consequence of international mechanisms that subordinate human existence to the domination of partially conceived economic progress; and finally the inhuman cycles of war that spring from the violation of fundamental human rights and that produced still graver violations.” (Pope John Paul II, October 1979)*

**APOSTOLIC REFLECTION****Introduction**

**Apostolic Reflection** is an important part of our Vincentian Heritage. In some ways, it is already part of our Conference meeting especially when we share our stories of how we touch the lives of those who are poor. **Apostolic Reflection** is a process that takes us deeper into the meaning of being Vincentians.

In Module IV: Our Vincentian Mission, we will find that part of the value of praying and reflecting, studying and discussing the Catholic Social Teaching is to give us a lens, a perspective, a filter through which we see and experience the world around us. It is hoped that through our reflection and sharing, we become more conscious of how our words, actions, judgments, attitudes and opinions regarding the situations we encounter in our day to day living reflect the social teaching of the Church. It is not enough to be familiar with the content of that teaching—it must influence how we live our daily lives for it to have true value.

As followers of St. Vincent de Paul, we are rooted in the tradition of **“Apostolic Reflection”**: praying and reflecting together on our experience of serving those who are poor and vulnerable. This is rooted in our belief that “God is here:” in all of the events of our lives, in each other and in our service. At our Conference meetings we are also rooted in the belief that Christ is in the midst of our praying, sharing and reflecting... for Jesus promised that “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

**Apostolic Reflection** is rooted in the method taught by St. Vincent to his followers, when he ask us to:

- 1st**     **Share** our personal experiences of serving those who are poor.
- 2nd**     **Listen** to each other with openness of our eyes, ears, hearts, minds and feelings to what happens inside us when we serve and when we share.
- 3rd**     **Reflect** on the feelings in the lives of those whom we serve.
- 4th**     **Pray** with scripture and the teachings of the Church, and discover the Vincentian values and spirit that were found through the sharing, reflecting and praying.
- 5th**     **Discern** together what actions we are called to do.



The assumptions underlying **Apostolic Reflection** are:

- The mystery of God is larger and more profound than anything any individual can grasp and, therefore, growth in relationships exacts conversations with others.
- God speaks in and through people.
- The individual's experience is significant to a group's self-understanding.
- Experience, however, is always interpreted through personal lenses.
- Individual experience is partial and we need to learn to think communally.
- Communal reflection during our Conference meetings is critical to bring forth individual and group prejudices and biases.
- Wisdom lies within a group and together we can move to understanding our call to "**charity and justice**" as we make decisions to create tangible ways to create change.

### "THE CALL FOR CHARITY AND JUSTICE"

In prayer and reflection, Jesus' message to us seems rather clear and undeniable. The works of **charity and justice** are demanded of all who wish to be called his followers. We are mandated to unite ourselves in defense of those who have been victimized and marginalized in society. We are invited to participate in preparing this world for the new heaven and new earth, which are God's gifts to us in the constantly unfolding coming of the reign of God.

The renewed **RULE**, approved in 2004, states in 2.4, "The spirituality of one of its founders inspires Vincentians profoundly. The 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."

Therefore, as Vincentians we are engaged in listening to the cries of the poor, which tragically and frequently rise to the level of a deafening noise in our modern day society. And so, in the spirit of Vincent and Frederic we are called to reflect on the teachings about poverty and injustice that God has offered us through the Scriptures, through the teaching and tradition of our Church, and through our everyday, lived experience of accompanying those who are poor and suffering.

After each Session, as we pray and reflect on the Social Justice teachings of our Church in Module IV: Our Vincentian Mission, we will then use this **Apostolic Reflection process at the next meeting**. This will then give us the grace to go deeper, ask questions and seek solutions together. We will be able to recognize that social justice can be found in small things that can be done locally to create positive change in the lives of those we serve.



## APOSTOLIC REFLECTION PROCESS

*(To be integrated into the next Conference Meeting)*

1. **Share situations you have encountered in your service to those who are poor, especially on your home visits and reflect on how persons were treated.**
  - Are there examples of persons being denied their human rights, stripped of their human dignity, being demeaned, disrespected or ignored?
2. **Listen to each other with an openness of our eyes, ears, hearts, minds and feelings, especially to what happens inside us when we serve and when we share.**
3. **Reflect on the feelings in the lives of those whom we serve:**
  - What are some of the more subtle forms of discrimination that you witness in your Conference, parish or place of work?
4. **Pray and reflect on the readings of Session 4.1. What is most significant for you? Where do you find your Vincentian heart most touched?**
5. **Share any new awareness you have gained and any new action you feel challenged to undertake.**



## MODULE IV

### *Our Vincentian Mission*

## **SESSION 4.2:** *Catholic Social Teachings*

### **Learning Objectives**

After completing this Session you will have greater insight to:

- ① Appreciate the Foundational Principles of the Social Teachings of the Church.
- ② Understand that Vincentians are called to be “experts” in the Social Teachings of the Church.
- ③ Appreciate the use of Apostolic Reflection to understand the Principles of Social Justice.





**OPENING PRAYER:**

*"What good is it if someone says they have faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has not food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (James 2:14-17)*

**INTRODUCTION:**

*(Each section is read slowly and reflectively, by different members.)*

**Ten Foundational Principles in the Social Teaching of the Church**  
**Fr. Robert P. Maloney, C.M.**

The Church has been proclaiming her social doctrine eloquently and repeatedly over the last hundred years. Recently I raised a question: "Are Vincentians 'experts' in the social teaching of the Church?" Not always, and so I encourage you to make the social teaching of the Church an integral part of the formation of all the members of the Vincentian Family. To begin, here are **Ten Foundational Principles** upon which the Church's Social Teaching rests:

**1. The Principle of the Dignity of the Human Person**

Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. This is the bedrock principle of Catholic social teaching.

**2. The Principle of Respect for Human Life**

Every person, from the moment of conception to natural death, has inherent dignity and a right to life consistent with that dignity.

**3. The Principle of Association**

Our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society in economics and politics, in law and policy, directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.

**4. The Principle of Participation**

We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected.



### 5. The Principle of Preferential Protection for the Poor

We believe that we touch Christ when we touch the needy. The Church teaches that we will be judged by what we choose to do or not to do in regard to the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the homeless, the prisoner. Today the Church expresses this teaching in terms of “the preferential option for the poor.”

### 6. The Principle of Solidarity

Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family. The virtue of solidarity means learning that “loving our neighbor” has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

### 7. The Principle of Stewardship

The Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Our tradition is calling us to a sense of moral responsibility for the protection of the environment.

### 8. The Principle of Subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity puts a proper limit on government by insisting that no higher level of organization should perform any function that can be handled efficiently and effectively at a lower level of organization by those who are closer to the problems.

### 9. The Principle of Human Equality

Equality of all persons comes from their essential dignity. And so, social and cultural discrimination in fundamental rights are not compatible with God’s design.

### 10. The Principle of the Common Good

Today, in an age of global interdependence, the principle of the common good points to the need for international structures that can promote the just development of persons and families across regional and national lines.

*(Pause in silence for reflection - underline the words/phrases that touched you - make notes in the space provided.)*

### DISCUSSION:

**What Principle of Social Justice touches you most deeply as a Vincentian?**



**CLOSING PRAYER:**

*"We must be bearers of the peace and justice of God! God's justice and peace cry out to bear fruit in human works of justice and peace, in all spheres of actual life. The works inspired by the Gospel must always be sensitive toward those who are most in distress; those who are poor; those who are suffering from physical, mental, and moral ills that afflict humanity, including hunger, neglect, unemployment, and despair." (Pope John Paul II, 1979)*

## APOSTOLIC REFLECTION

### Background

### Ten Foundational Principles in the Social Teaching of the Church

Fr. Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Let me begin this article with an exam, a very easy one in fact. How many readers can name:

- the ten commandments?
- the eight beatitudes?
- the three theological virtues?
- the seven sacraments?
- the seven corporal works of mercy?

Just about everybody, at least with a little prodding of the memory. How many can name ten social principles that are "an essential part of Catholic faith"? Nobody? Strangely, this question receives the same befuddled response in almost any group of Catholics. As one bishops' conference recently stated, "Far too many Catholics are not familiar with the social teaching of the Church." The bishops added: "Many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social teaching of the Church is an essential part of our Catholic faith."

Why is this essential part of our faith so little known? One reason is that the Catholic social doctrine has not been conveniently condensed for consumption; it has not been "packaged" for catechetical purposes like the ten commandments or the seven sacraments. How can we help the Church proclaim this relatively unknown, yet essential, part of our faith? In some ways the answer is simple, but also very challenging: we must first know the teaching ourselves and then, secondly, communicate it to others. And so now we have the **Ten Foundational Principles** upon which the Church's Social Teaching rests.

These Principles provide the necessary interpretative framework for understanding the significance of the bishop's pastoral letters which reflect on war, peace, nuclear weapons, the economy, abortion, euthanasia, health insurance and a wide range of other topics that have a clear social and moral dimension. Principles, once internalized, lead to something. They prompt activity, impel motion, direct choices. A principled person always has a place to stand, knows where he or she is coming from and likely to end up. Principles always lead the person who possesses them somewhere, for some purpose, to do something, or choose not to.



## FREDERIC OZANAM: PRECURSOR OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE TEACHINGS

The Principles of the Social Teachings need a human face, the lessons have to be conveyed in words and images that move the heart. And so we need to focus on persons who embodied one or more of these principles in a significant way—Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam, Rosalie Rendu, and members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul that you know.

As a professor in Sorbonne, Frederic Ozanam was active politically as an academic especially in the brilliant treatises he wrote on the issues of social justice. He challenged his students with his teaching and he touched them most deeply with the compassion in his heart. He showed and taught them that, indeed **“charity and justice go together,”** that the Principles of Social Justice indeed need a human face.

### THE RULE

The renewed RULE of the International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, approved in 2004, captures the spirit of Blessed Frederic Ozanam in his dedication to **“Charity and Justice.”** The Society of St. Vincent de Paul throughout the world is now called to work to serve in charity with new ears to hear the cries of the poor, and to have new eyes to search for justice:

#### 7.1 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 structures that cause it. It is, therefore, committed to identifying the root causes of poverty and to 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.

Indeed, Frederic knew that the “Principles of Social Justice need a human face” and so he told us:

“The knowledge of social well-being and reform is to be learned not only from books nor from the public platform, but in climbing the stairs to the poor man’s garret, sitting by his bedside, feeling the same cold that pierces him. When these conditions have been examined in all different parts of the country it is then and only then that we know the elements of these formidable problems, it is only then that we begin to grasp it and may hope to solve it.” (Blessed Frederic Ozanam)



## APOSTOLIC REFLECTION PROCESS

*(To be integrated into the next Conference Meeting)*

1. **Share situations you have encountered in your service to those who are poor, especially on your home visits and reflect on how persons were treated.**
  - How can we give a “human face” to the Principles of Social Justice?
2. **Listen to each other with an openness of our eyes, ears, hearts, minds and feelings, especially to what happens inside us when we serve and when we share.**
  - Did we affirm the dignity of those we served and stand up for their rights?
3. **Reflect on the feelings in the lives of those whom we serve:**
  - When do you find it most difficult to recognize the human dignity of your neighbor?
4. **Pray and reflect on the readings of Session 4.2. What is most significant for you? Where do you find your Vincentian heart most touched?**
5. **Share any new awareness you have gained and any new action you feel challenged to undertake.**

# Notes



## MODULE IV

### *Our Vincentian Mission*

## SESSION 4.3:

### *Life and Dignity*

#### Learning Objectives

After completing this Session you will have greater insight to:

- ① Understand the call of the Church to work for justice and to become the “voice of the voiceless.”
- ② Recognize the social justice teaching rooted in the “Life and Dignity of the Human Person.”
- ③ Appreciate the use of “Apostolic Reflection” to understand our call to participate in the Voice of the Poor Committee.





**OPENING PRAYER:**

*Jesus said, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them." (Mt. 11:4-5)*

**INTRODUCTION:**

*(Each section is read slowly and reflectively, by different members.)*

In **1847** Frederic Ozaman wrote: "Our Society is Catholic but secular, humble but with countless members, poor but overloaded with poor needing to be relieved." As Vincentians, the Catholic Social Teaching has the capacity to inspire us with principles of justice; to strengthen us in taking prophetic stands in our communities; to help us mobilize ourselves into effective action to bring about positive social change that affirms the sacredness of life and the God-given dignity of all.

In **2000**, Pope John Paul II called all Catholics to know the biblical tradition of setting relationships right in society by following the call to justice. The past century has been a particularly fertile time for the growth of the Church's social justice tradition. The rapid pace of social and technological change called the Church to respond with courage and creativity. "The 'cries of those who are poor' in our society demand new and renewed commitment to systemic social change through organizing, community outreach, legislative networks, racial reconciliation, social policy development, coalition-building, and public and private sector partnerships for economic development." (*In All Things Charity*)

The Catholic Bishops of the United States realizing that the Church's Social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society, provide the following themes as the heart of our Catholic social tradition:

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God's Creation

*(The seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching from the US Bishops are rooted in the Ten Principles of 4.2. These themes will be the focus of Sessions 4.3-4.6.)*



### LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

“Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. Every person is created in the image of God. Every person is precious. All social laws, practices, and institutions must protect, not undermine, human life and human dignity—from conception through natural death.

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion to assisted suicide. The value of human life is being threatened by increasing use of the death penalty. We believe every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.” (U.S. Catholic Bishops, Sharing Catholic Social Teaching, 1998)

“Of all the basic Catholic social teachings, the idea of the life and dignity of the human person seems the most obvious. It is not because deep down we do not know this important truth; rather, like the disciples and others of Jesus’ time, we often forget it. We often build social, political, and economic structures that cause us to lose sight of preserving people’s life and dignity. Those structures can become so much a part of our lives that, like the disciples, we are not even conscious of how they conflict with the heart of Jesus’ message.

Pope John Paul II, calls this phenomenon ‘structures of sin’. This sin happens when the structures and norms of society do not enhance people’s life and dignity, but rather dehumanizes them. The message of Jesus calls us to see how the structures of our society destroy rather than build people’s life and dignity. And then, we are called to empower those who find themselves dehumanized by society, not merely by giving them charity, but by enabling them to participate fully in our society, expressing the life and dignity God has given all of us.” (Sharing the Tradition, 1991)

*(Pause in silence for reflection-underline the words/phrases that touched you-make notes in the space provided.)*

#### DISCUSSION:

**As Vincentians, how have you seen the “life and dignity” of the poor violated?**



**CLOSING PRAYER:**

*“The world designed by God is a world of justice. The relationship between people must be based on justice. This order must be continually implanted in the world, since social systems are constantly changing and new possibilities and necessities of the distribution of goods are developing. The world designed by God cannot be a world in which some hoard immoderate wealth in their hands, while others suffer from destitution and poverty, and die of hunger. Love must inspire justice and the struggle for justice.” (Pope John Paul II, 1980)*

**APOSTOLIC REFLECTION****Introduction**

As Vincentians, we are called to grow in awareness of the social justice tradition of our Catholic Church. Since the beginning of the tradition, God’s call to justice has been clear. For more than one hundred years, the Church has contributed to this tradition in a number of papal encyclicals and bishop’s pastoral letters.

**Rerum Novarum:** On the Condition of Workers, Pope Leo XIII, 1891.

**Pacem In Terris:** Peace on Earth, Pope John XXIII, 1963.

**Gaudium et Spes:** The Church in the Modern World, Vatican II, 1965.

**Laborem Exercens:** On Human Work, Pope John Paul II, 1981.

**Economic Justice for All:** U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986.

**Sollicitudo Rei Socialis:** On Social Concerns, Pope John Paul II, 1987.

**A Century of Catholic Social Teaching:** U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1990.

**Centesimus Annus:** On the Hundredth Anniversary of “Rerum Novarum,”  
Pope John Paul II, 1991.

**Renewing the Earth:** U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1991

**Sharing Catholic Social Teaching:** Challenges and Directions: Reflections of the  
U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1998.

**All Things Charity:** A Pastoral Challenge for the New Millennium,  
U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1999.

(Available on many websites i.e.: USCCB site at <http://www.nccbuscc.org/statements.htm>;  
[www.justpeace.org/docu.htm](http://www.justpeace.org/docu.htm); [www.secondexodus.com/html/Vaticandoc/centralvaticandoc.htm](http://www.secondexodus.com/html/Vaticandoc/centralvaticandoc.htm))



## APOSTOLIC REFLECTION PROCESS

*(To be integrated into the next Conference Meeting)*

### “LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON”

#### VOICE OF THE POOR

National Committee of Society of St. Vincent de Paul, USA

[www.voiceofthepoor.org](http://www.voiceofthepoor.org)

The **Mission of the Voice of the Poor Committee** is to uphold Catholic Social teaching by researching, validating, documenting, advocating, and promulgating issues related to the condition of the poor and disenfranchised. This is done in the vision of St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam to help Vincentians live their faith and grow spiritually by acting knowledgeably and credibly as a unified body.

Every Vincentian needs to understand the Society's priorities and motivation in advocating for the poor.

**VOPNet-USA** provides the local link. This grassroots network links Vincentians locally, regionally and nationally. It also provides a means to link Vincentians to their elected officials, such as members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.

**THE RULE** of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, approved in 2004, states:

#### 7.2 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.

#### 7.5 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.

#### 7.6 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.



1. Share situations you have encountered in your service to those who are poor, especially on your home visits and reflect on how persons were treated.
  - How can our Conference work better with the Voice of the Poor, the National Committee of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the USA?
2. Listen to each other with an openness of our eyes, ears, hearts, minds and feelings, especially to what happens inside us when we serve and when we share.
3. Reflect on the feelings in the lives of those whom we serve.
4. Pray and reflect on the readings of Session 4.3. What is most significant for you? Where do you find your Vincentian heart most touched?
5. Share any new awareness you have gained and any new action you feel challenged to undertake.

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## MODULE IV

### *Our Vincentian Mission*

#### **SESSION 4.4:**

### *Family, Community and Rights*

#### **Learning Objectives**

After completing this Session you will have greater insight to:

- ① Understand the social justice teaching on the “The Call to Family, Community and Participation.”
- ② Recognize the social justice teaching on “Rights and Responsibilities.”
- ③ Appreciate the use of “Apostolic Reflection” for “Family, Community and Rights.”





**OPENING PRAYER:**

*"We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on each of us. One's gift may be prophecy; its use should be in proportion to our faith. It may be the gift of ministry; it should be used for service. One who is a teacher should use their gift for teaching...those who give alms should do so generously...those who perform works of mercy should do so cheerfully." (Romans 12: 6-8)*

**INTRODUCTION:**

*(Each section is read slowly and reflectively, by different members)*

**THE CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND PARTICIPATION**

"The human person is not only sacred but also social. We realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others in community. The family has major contributions to make in addressing questions of social justice. It is where we learn and act on our values. The family is the central social institution that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. A central test of political, legal and economic institutions is what they do to people, what they do for people, and how people participate in them." (U.S. Bishops, *In All Things Charity*, 1999.)

Prophetically, Frederic Ozanam wrote on November 5, 1836: "For if the question which disturbs the world around us today is not a political question, but a social question; if it is the struggle between those who have nothing with those who have too much; if it is the violent shock of opulence and of poverty which shakes the earth under it, then our duty as Christians is to throw ourselves between these irreconcilable enemies, and to make the ones divest themselves so that the other may receive as a benefit; so that equality may operate as much as it is possible among men; and to make charity accomplish what justice alone cannot do. It is a good thing, then, to be placed by Providence on neutral ground...in order to act as a mediator."

"America first proclaimed its independence on the basis of self-evident truths. America will remain a beacon of freedom for the world as long as it stands by those moral truths which are the very heart of its historical experience. And so America: If you want peace, work for justice. If you want justice, defend life. If you want life, embrace the truth—the truth revealed by God." (Pope John Paul II, January 1999)



### RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to those rights are duties and responsibilities to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

“In a world where some speak mostly of ‘rights’ and others mostly of ‘responsibilities,’ the Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met.” (U.S.Bishops, In All Things Charity, 1999.)

“Every fundamental human right draws its indestructible moral force from the natural law, which in granting it imposes a corresponding obligation. Those, therefore, who claim their own rights, yet altogether forget or neglect to carry out their respective duties, are people who build with one hand and destroy with the other.” (Pacem in Terris, Pope John XXIII, 1963)

“People have a fundamental right to life and to those things that make life truly human: food, clothing, housing, health care, education, security, social services and employment.” (US Catholic Bishops, 1990)

*(Pause in silence for reflection - underline the words/phrases that touched you - make notes in the space provided.)*

### DISCUSSION:

**In your experience as a Vincentian, why are persons hungry, homeless, poorly educated, underemployed or unemployed?**

### CLOSING PRAYER:

*Blessed are those who know how to detach themselves from their possessions and their power so as to put them at the service of the needy, to commit themselves to the search for a just social order, to promote those changes of attitudes that are necessary for those on society's margins to find a place at the human family's table. Amen (Pope John Paul II, 1980)*



## APOSTOLIC REFLECTION PROCESS

*(To be integrated into the next Conference Meeting)*

### “CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND PARTICIPATION”

“Sadly, we see each day the schism started in society become deeper; ... here the camp of the riches, there the camp of the poor. One only means of salvation remains, that is, that in the name of charity Christians interpose themselves between the two camps, that they fly over them, going from one side to the other doing good, ... getting them used to looking upon one another as brothers and sisters, infusing them with a bit of mutual charity; and this charity paralyzing, stifling the self-interest of both sides, lessening the antipathies day by day, the two camps will rise up and destroy the barriers of their prejudices, throw away their angry weapons, and march to meet each other, not to battle, but to mingle, embrace, and become one sheepfold under one shepherd: ‘One fold, One shepherd.’” (Frederic Ozanam, 1837)

“In the U.S. Bishops’ *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (1997), the bishops acknowledged that poverty encompasses more than a lack of material resources. Poverty denies the full participation in the life of the community and impedes the ability to influence decisions impacting one’s life. Embracing the principle of participation, the U.S. bishops concluded: “the most appropriate and fundamental solutions to poverty will be those that enable people to take control of their own lives.”

1. **Share situations you have encountered in your service to those who are poor, especially on your home visits and reflect on how persons were treated.**
  - Have you participated in bringing down a barrier to participation for anyone? Share that experience.
2. **Listen to each other with an openness of our eyes, ears, hearts, minds and feelings, especially to what happens inside us when we serve and when we share.**
  - Think back over your life and see how your family has blessed you with values that have helped you address questions of social justice.
3. **Reflect on the feelings in the lives of those whom we serve.**
  - What are the ways for us to increase participation for those who are poor?
4. **Pray and reflect on the readings of Session 4.4. What is most significant for you? Where do you find your Vincentian heart most touched?**
5. **Share any new awareness you have gained and any new action you feel challenged to undertake.**
  - Who are the people in your ministry who are eliminating obstacles to full participation? Share the story.



## APOSTOLIC REFLECTION PROCESS

*(To be integrated into the next Conference Meeting)*

### “RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES”

“Beginning our discussion on the rights of the human person, we see that everyone has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services. Therefore, a human being also has the right to security in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other cases in which one is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of one’s own.” (Pacem in Terris, Pope John XXIII, #11-1963)

“I am asking that...we look after the people who have too many needs and not enough rights, who demand with reason a fuller share in public affairs, security in work and safeguards against poverty. It is in these people that I can see enough faith and morality left to save a society whose higher classes are lost.” (Frederic Ozanam, February 22, 1842)

“It is a strict duty of justice and truth not to allow fundamental human needs to remain unsatisfied, and not to allow those burdened by such needs to perish. It is also necessary to help these needy people to acquire expertise, to enter the circle of exchange, and to develop their skills in order to make the best use of their capacities and resources.” (Pope John Paul II, On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum-1991, #34)

“The biggest problem is the ‘undeserving poor’ Place a child before us with a hungry face and ragged clothes and we jump at the chance to help. Children, you see, haven’t done anything to make themselves undeserving. They haven’t made the bad choices that landed them in this mess. They can’t be blamed for failing to do what they can to help themselves, because children can’t help themselves anyway. They really can’t help it if they are poor.

Poor children don’t make it hard to help the poor. Poor adults who have had bad luck don’t make it hard to help the poor. The ‘undeserving poor’ are the ones who make it hard to help the poor. They are the ones who have made the bad choices, or failed to make any choice at all. They are the ones who have been helped before—and it didn’t help. They are the ones who seem to expect us to bail them out, and who hardly say ‘thank you’ when we do. They are the ones who seem to take advantage of the system, or other people.

Help them anyway. If you start to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving poor, you are finished—at least as far as the gospel is concerned. Who is really to decide if they are undeserving? I do not mean that we shouldn’t try to help them help themselves. We should always try to help them help themselves. But be careful of metering out your help too carefully. Jesus was never overly careful about metering out his mercy. He was criticized for his largess, his ‘reckless’ mercy toward undeserving sinners. The memory of Jesus helps us deal with the ‘undeserving poor.’ The ‘undeserving poor’ remind us that something deeper needs to change—whatever it is that makes them feel so hopeless and helpless. We need to address that something deeper. In the meantime, help them. Do not be judgmental or overly careful. **If you’re going to err, err on the side of largess.**” (Bishop Kenneth E. Untener)



1. **Share situations you have encountered in your service to those who are poor, especially on your home visits and reflect on how persons were treated.**
  - Share your experience or knowledge of someone or group of persons who have or are experiencing a lack in the basic human rights and are, therefore, poor and marginalized.
2. **Listen to each other with openness of our eyes, ears, hearts, minds and feelings to what happens inside us when we serve and when we share.**
  - What are some of the personal and systemic causes of what you heard described in the stories that violate persons' human rights? Who is responsible?
3. **Reflect on the feelings in the lives of those whom we serve:**
  - Share what has happened with you during this time of telling stories.

The following questions might be helpful.

- How was God present in my listening and reflecting?
  - What has stirred up in me?
  - What resolutions might this call forth from me?
  - What might this sharing call forth from us as a Conference?
4. **Pray and reflect on the readings of Session 4.4. What is most significant for you? Where do you find your Vincentian heart most touched?**
  5. **Share any new awareness you have gained and any new action you feel challenged to undertake.**

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## MODULE IV

### *Our Vincentian Mission*

## SESSION 4.5:

### *The Poor and Work*

#### Learning Objectives

After completing this Session you will have greater insight to:

- ① Recognize the social justice teaching for the “Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.”
- ② Understand the social justice teaching for the “The Dignity of Work and The Rights of Laborers.”
- ③ Appreciate the use of “Apostolic Reflection” to understand the social justice teaching on the Poor and Work.





**OPENING PRAYER:**

*"Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, in prison and you visited me... Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:31-46)*

**INTRODUCTION:**

*(Each section is read slowly and reflectively, by different members.)*

**OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE**

At the very heart of Christianity is a need to love the poor; those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, ill; those who are strangers or in prison. This is the key element in our relationship with God. By loving the poor, we are loving God. It is by this, Jesus tells us, that we will be judged.

As Vincentians, the poor and vulnerable have a special place in our hearts. As Catholics, we are called to respond to the needs of those who find themselves on the margins of society. We are called not to do this in a sentimental or wishful way, but rather to concretely bring about a change in their lives, and consequently in our own lives as well.

In order to fight against injustice and poverty, Sr. Rosalie Rendu, DC awakened the conscience of those in power or those with money, she worked toward the education of the children and the youth of poor families, and to respond to emergencies, she encouraged sharing. She "organized charity" in order to "hunt down poverty in order to give humanity its dignity."

"As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental 'option for the poor'—to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess lifestyles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. (Economic Justice For All, 1986)

In Frederic Ozanam's eyes, faith without charity toward the poor had no meaning. He wrote: "The earth has become a chilly place. It is up to us Catholics to rekindle the flame of human warmth which is going out. Can we remain passive in the world which is suffering and groaning? The poor are precious to the Church because of their number, the infinite number of souls to be won over and saved, and also because they are the poverty that God loves..." (Frederic Ozanam, 1848)



**THE DIGNITY OF WORK AND THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS**

Prophetically, in **1848** Frederic Ozanam was preoccupied with injustice, inequality, the dignity of work, just wages, fair taxes, the right of ownership and the improvement of the suffering of those who were least favored. With a clarity of vision, Frederic wrote: "Behind political revolution there is a social revolution; behind the Republic ...there are issues which concern the people and for which they have battled. These are the issues of work, rest and wages. It must not be imagined that one can avoid these problems. We must investigate doctrine and measures which would aim at guaranteeing for workers a correct proportion between labor and rest...and a pension for their old age."

Sr. Rosalie Rendu, DC gave the following advice to the founding members of the Society: "There are many ways of providing Charity. The assistance of money or assistance in-kind that we give to the Poor will not last long. We must aspire to a more complete and longer lasting benefit: study their abilities, their level of education and try to get them work to help them out of their difficulties."

In **1891**, Pope Leo XIII issued his Encyclical "Rerum Novarum", On the Condition of Workers, which addressed the plight of workers and affirmed the rights of workers. This is the foundation document which marks the beginning of modern Catholic social teaching.

In **1981**, celebrating the ninetieth anniversary of "Rerum Novarum" Pope John Paul II issued the encyclical "Laborem Exercens" On Human Work, once again defending the dignity of work, the rights of workers and the priority of labor over capital: "Work remains a good thing, not only because it is useful and enjoyable, but also because it expresses and increases the worker's dignity. Through work we not only transform the world, we are transformed ourselves, becoming 'more a human being'." (On Human Work, #9)

**DISCUSSION:**

**What issues have you witnessed that prevent the dignity of work for those you serve?**

**CLOSING PRAYER: (Words of Frederic Ozanam)**

*"The poor we see with our eyes of flesh. They are there before us and we can place our finger and hand in their wounds and the marks of the Crown of Thorns are visible on their foreheads. Thus there is no possible room for unbelief and we should fall at their feet and say to them with the apostle; 'My Lord and my God!' You are the master and we will be your servants." Amen*



## APOSTOLIC REFLECTION PROCESS

*(To be integrated into the next Conference Meeting)*

### “OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE”

Frederic and his companions heard the challenge: “Today Christianity is dead. Indeed, you people who boast about being Catholics, what are you doing? Where are your works which demonstrate your Faith and which can make you respected and accepted?” Frederic answered: “We must do what is most agreeable to God. Therefore, we must do what our Lord Jesus Christ did when preaching the Gospel. **Let us go to the poor.**” (Frederic Ozanam, 1833)

“The joys and the hopes, the grief’s and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief’s and anxieties of the followers of Christ. ...In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception, and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, “As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me.” (Gaudium et Spes, 1965, Preface and # 27)

1. **Share situations you have encountered in your service to those who are poor, especially on your home visits and reflect on how persons were treated.**
2. **Listen to each other with an openness of our eyes, ears, hearts, minds and feelings, especially to what happens inside us when we serve and when we share.**
  - From the local paper or watching the television news, consider what new faces poverty might wear in your local area over the coming year...over the next 5 to 10 years.
  - What consequences will those changes have on your Conference and your service to those who are suffering, marginalized and most vulnerable poor?
3. **Reflect on the feelings in the lives of those whom we serve.**
  - What are some ways you could prepare to be more effective in those ministries so that the new faces of poverty are addressed?
4. **Pray and reflect on the readings of Session 4.5. What is most significant for you? How was your Vincentian heart most touched?**
5. **Share any new awareness you have gained and any new action you feel challenged to undertake.**
  - What resolutions might this call forth from me?
  - What might this sharing call forth from us as a Conference?



## APOSTOLIC REFLECTION PROCESS

*(To be integrated into the next Conference Meeting)*

### “THE DIGNITY OF WORK AND THE RIGHTS OF LABORERS”

In 1848, Frederic denounced exploitation, putting workers in the same category as machines, accumulation of wealth at the expense of men, he wrote:

“Exploitation occurs when the master considers his worker not as a partner nor even as an assistant, but as an instrument out of which he must extract as much service as possible at the smallest possible price. Yet the exploitation of man by another man is slavery. The worker-machine is nothing more than part of the capital, like the slaves of the ancients. Service then becomes servitude.”

“Social thinking and social practice inspired by the Gospel must always be marked by a sensitivity towards those who are most in distress, those who are extremely poor, those suffering from hunger, neglect, unemployment and despair. You will also want to seek out the structural reasons which foster or cause the different forms of poverty in the world and in your own country, so that you can apply the appropriate remedies. (Pope John Paul II, New York 1979)

#### THE RULE (2004):

##### 7.7 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, religions, ethnic origins and social groups, and so contributes to the peace and unity of all peoples.

##### 7.8 Working with communities

The Society should work not only 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 members with those who suffer.



1. **Share situations you have encountered in your service to those who are poor, especially on your home visits and reflect on how persons were treated.**
  - In the spirit of Frederic, how can we help uphold the dignity of the employed, the underemployed, and the unemployed?
2. **Listen to each other with an openness of our eyes, ears, hearts, minds and feelings, especially to what happens inside us when we serve and when we share.**
  - In the spirit of Frederic, how can we challenge those who underpay women, people of color, immigrants, and those who profit because of the inhumane salaries and labor conditions?
3. **Reflect on the feelings in the lives of those whom we serve.**
  - In the spirit of Frederic, how can we challenge those who force workers beyond the eight-hour workday and beyond the 40 hour work week, and those who insist on rotating shifts that exhaust workers and their families?
4. **Pray and reflect on the readings of Session 4.5. What is most significant for you? How was your Vincentian heart most touched?**
5. **Share any new awareness you have gained and any new action you feel challenged to undertake.**
  - In the spirit of Frederic, how can we challenge those who slash or ignore health benefits, purge pensions, and allow unsafe conditions for workers?

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## MODULE IV

### *Our Vincentian Mission*

## SESSION 4.6:

### *Solidarity and Creation*

#### Learning Objectives

After completing this Session you will have greater insight to:

- ① Recognize the social justice call for “Solidarity.”
- ② Understand the social justice issue regarding the “Care for God’s Creation.”
- ③ Appreciate the use of “Apostolic Reflection” to understand the social justice teachings on Solidarity and Creation.





**OPENING PRAYER:**

*"Your love must be sincere. Detest evil and cling to what is good. Love one another with the affection of brothers and sisters. Anticipate each other in showing respect. Do not grow slack but be fervent in spirit; he whom you serve is the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient under trial, persevere in prayer. If possible, live peaceably with everyone. (Roman 13:9-18)*

**INTRODUCTION:**

*(Each section is read slowly and reflectively, by different members.)*

**SOLIDARITY**

"We are our brother and sister's keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world." (U.S. Catholic Bishops, Sharing Catholic Social Teaching, 1998)

For Christians, the definitive answer regarding the responsibility of solidarity was given by Jesus when he said "You must love your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." And, when he answered the question "And who is my neighbor?" by telling the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught that the person who acts in solidarity with another, someone who is not known nor perhaps even liked, is the one who behaves as "neighbor." Jesus instruction to us is "Go and do likewise." This is the call that beats in the heart of every Vincentian.

Frederic Ozanam told us, "One only means of salvation remains to us, that is for Christians in the name of love, to interpose between the two camps of the rich and the poor...communicating mutual charity to all, until this charity shall bid the two camps arise and breakdown the barriers of prejudice, and cast aside their weapons of anger and march forth to meet each other, not to fight but to mingle together in one embrace.

"Solidarity expresses the Catholic image of the Mystical Body, that we are one human family. It calls us to see others not as "enemy" but as "neighbor," and it requires a just social order where goods are fairly distributed and the dignity of all is respected. As our world grows more and more interdependent, these responsibilities cross national and regional boundaries. Violent conflict, poverty and the denial of dignity and rights to people anywhere on the globe diminish each of us. (Sharing Catholic Social Teaching, 1998)



### CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

"We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored." (U.S. Catholic Bishops, Sharing Catholic Social Teaching, 1998)

"The whole human race suffers as a result of environmental blight, and generations yet unborn will bear the cost for our failure to act today. But...it is the poor and the powerless that most directly bear the burden of current environmental carelessness. Their lands and neighborhoods are more likely to be polluted or to host toxic waste dumps, their water to be undrinkable, their children to be harmed." ( U.S. Catholic Bishops, Renewing the Earth 1992, #2)

The Christian community needs to become aware of the relentless and ever-more powerful attack by humans against the natural world, against the very life-support systems of the planet, the day-by day poisoning of the air, water, and soil, altering the climate, denuding forests, destroying wetlands and wilderness, and driving countless species of plants and animals to extinction. In fact, the ecological crisis becomes the background within which all concerns facing Catholic social teaching are to be measured.

### DISCUSSION:

**As Vincentians what can we do to stand more in solidarity with our brothers and sisters and also, to address the ecological problems we see in our area?**

### CLOSING PRAYER:

*Lord Jesus, give us the grace to know that the choice is ours: to form a global partnership to care for each other and to care for the earth or risk the destruction of ourselves and our earth. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We have the knowledge and technology to provide for all and to reduce our impacts on the environment. Our environmental, economic, political, social and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions and give glory to God. For this we pray in Your name, Amen*



## APOSTOLIC REFLECTION PROCESS

*(To be integrated into the next Conference Meeting)*

### “SOLIDARITY”

“When my eyes look upon society, the incredible variety of events arouse all sorts of feelings within me...and these reflections quicken my soul and fill me with a sort of excitement. I tell myself that the spectacle that we are watching is great, and that it is wonderful to witness such a momentous era. How serious and important is the mission of a young man in society today. I rejoice in the fact that I was born in an epoch in which I will perhaps find many ways to do good, and I feel a new enthusiasm for work. (Frederic Ozanam, 1831)

“One can hardly open the Scriptures without finding reference to God’s command to live our lives in solidarity, especially with those who are poor. There are two primary aspects to the work of solidarity: direct service and social justice. Direct service involves the works of charity. Christian faith in “charitable action” has led to the founding of soup kitchens, shelters, hospitals, counseling agencies, child care programs, and countless other direct services that respond to immediate human needs. The Church teaches, however, that what is done in justice cannot be offered as a gift of charity and so the demands of justice must be met before true charity can be exercised.” (*The Catechism of the Church*, #2446.)

1. **Share situations you have encountered in your service to those who are poor, especially on your home visits and reflect on how persons were treated.**
  - How would you express in your own words the meaning of solidarity?
  - How has your thinking on the two primary aspects of solidarity, direct service and social justice, changed over the years?
2. **Listen to each other with an openness of our eyes, ears, hearts, minds and feelings, especially to what happens inside us when we serve and when we share.**
  - What challenges and calls to solidarity do you experience today in your service, in your local city and state, nationally and worldwide?
  - What means are available for us to promote solidarity?
3. **Reflect on the feelings in the lives of those whom we serve.**
4. **Pray and reflect on the readings of Session 4.6. What is most significant for you? As a Vincentian what touched your heart the most?**
  - What resolutions might this call forth from me?
  - What might this sharing call forth from us as a Conference?
5. **Share any new awareness you have gained and any new action you feel challenged to undertake.**



## APOSTOLIC REFLECTION PROCESS

*(To be integrated into the next Conference Meeting)***“CARE FOR GOD’S CREATION”****The United Nations “WORLD CHARTER FOR NATURE” states:**

**Preamble** - We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and promise. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of the Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

**The Global Situation** - The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species. Communities are being undermined. The benefits of development are not shared equitably and the gap between rich and poor is widening. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, and violent conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. The foundations of global security are threatened.

**The Challenges Ahead** - The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for the Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more not having more. We have the knowledge and technology to provide for all and to reduce our impacts on the environment. The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world. Our environmental, economic, political, social and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions.” (The Earth Charter, 1982)

1. **Share situations you have encountered in your service to those who are poor, especially on your home visits and reflect on how persons were treated.**
2. **Listen to each other an with openness of our eyes, ears, hearts, minds and Feelings, especially to what happens inside us when we serve and when we share.**
  - In your region, what ecological problems exist?
  - How do these problems affect the most vulnerable people?
  - What groups and organizations are addressing these issues? What can we do?
3. **Reflect on the feelings in the lives of those whom we serve.**
4. **Pray and reflect on the readings of Session 4.6. What is most significant for you? As a Vincentian what touched you the most?**
5. **Share any new awareness you have gained and any new action you feel challenged to undertake.**



# References

Ozanam, Italy: Editions du Signe, 1997. An excellent resource available from the Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Maloney, Fr. Robert P. "Ten Foundational Principles in the Social Teaching of the Church": <http://www.cm-ngo.net/TenFoundationalPrinciples.html>.

## **Catholic Campaign for Human Development, United States Catholic Conference**

USCCB Publishing  
Washington, DC  
[www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

### **Faith-Sharing Booklets:**

- Sharing the Tradition, Shaping the Future
- The Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- Dignity of the Human Person
- Preferential Option For and With the Poor
- Solidarity with the Poor

### **Principles, Prophecy, and a Pastoral Response:**

- An Overview of Modern Catholic Social Teaching

### **Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church:**

- A unique, unprecedented document in the history of the Church, serving as a tool to inspire and guide the faithful.

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