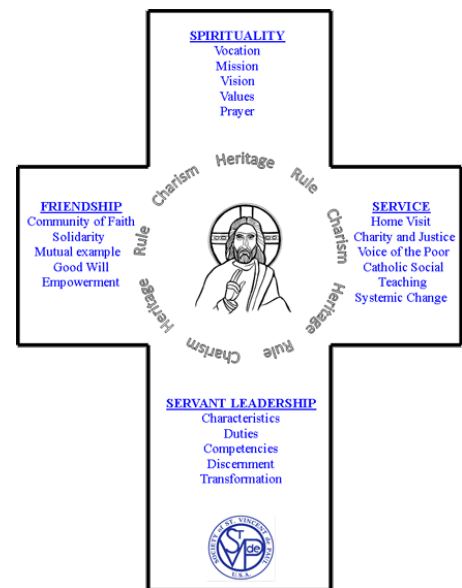




St. Vincent de Paul Society

Walking the Vincentian Pathway

Ongoing Formation Opportunities for Vincentian Spiritual Growth



Volume 1

The Year of the Seven Founders

August 10, 2023
Revision 1a

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I. Schedule

Conference Meeting	Theme/ Content /Topic	Formation Resource for module	Date completed
DISCOVERING VINCENTIAN SPIRITUALITY			
CM #1	Introduction to Pathway	Walking the Vincentian Pathway Pages 1-8	
CM #2	Rule, Manual	RULE part 1, chapter 2: Vincentian Spirituality & Vocation. MANUAL chapter 3.2 Vincentian Spirituality.	
CM #3	Serving in Hope--Module 1: Our Vincentian Vocation	Session 1: What is a Vocation?	
CM #4	Serving in Hope--Module 1: Our Vincentian Vocation	Session 2: Vocation of the Laity	
CM #5	Serving in Hope--Module 1: Our Vincentian Vocation	Session 3: The vocation of Vincent & Frederic	
CM #6	Serving in Hope--Module 1: Our Vincentian Vocation	Session 4: Essential elements of the Society	
CM #7	Serving in Hope--Module 1: Our Vincentian Vocation	Session 5: Core Values	
CM #8	Serving in Hope--Module 1: Our Vincentian Vocation	Session 6: Mission	
CM #9	Cultural Belief: Spiritual Growth		
	Ozanam Orientation	Part III: The Gift of Vincentian Spirituality	
DISCOVERING VINCENTIAN FRIENDSHIP			
CM #10	Rule, Manual	RULE part 1, chapter1 The origin of the society. MANUAL chapter 1.1. the Vincentian Family & chapter 1.2 Society of St. Vincent de Paul	
CM #11	Serving in Hope--Module VI: Our Vincentian Conference	Session 1: Our Spirituality	
CM # 12	Serving in Hope--Module VI: Our Vincentian Conference	Session 2: Our Friendship	
CM #13	Serving in Hope--Module VI: Our Vincentian Conference	Session 3: Our Service	
CM #14	Serving in Hope--Module VI: Our Vincentian Conference	Session 4: Our Home Visits	
CM #15	Serving in Hope--Module VI: Our Vincentian Conference	Session 5: Our Parish	
CM #16	Serving in Hope--Module VI: Our Vincentian Conference	Session 6: Our Church	
CM #17	The Book of the Sick		
CM #18	The Book of the Sick		
CM #19	Vincentian Leadership: Conference & President Handbook	Introduction/ SVDP Organization; Servant Leadership/ Your Goals; Conference Regulations/Council/National Council Office	
CM #20	Cultural Belief: One Society	One Society	
CM #21	Ozanam Orientation	Part I: Introduction. Part II: The Story of the Society	
CM #22	Seasonal morning of prayer: advent/lent/easter		
CM #23	Servant Leadership	Conference selected Topic and Structure	



II. Celebrating Seven Original Conference Members

At the age of twenty, a young man responded to a debate challenge in Paris, France. Young Frédéric Ozanam was asked to demonstrate how he and other Catholic students were helping the poor within their community. This was the trigger that caused Frédéric to join with six others to form the first “Conference of Charity.” Self-funded and providing services within their community, the seven visited the poor in their homes and provided necessary support and services. Shortly thereafter and at the suggestion of Emmanuel Bailly and Sister Rosalie Rendu, Frederic Ozanam identified St. Vincent de Paul as their patron and example by his service.

The seven men of the original conference included Emmanuel Bailly, Frederic Ozanam, Francois Lallier, Jules Devaux, Felix Clave, Auguste Le Taillandier and Paul Lamache. We recognize these men as servant leaders and great examples of living a life rooted in Christ Jesus as they walked with and in support of the poor in their day. Their tenacity, determination and root in their faith provides for us today a foundation and example to pursue in our own spiritual journey. We therefore dedicate this Volume of “Spiritual Reflections while Walking the Vincentian Pathway” to these gentlemen by naming it “The Year of the Seven Founders.”

III. Prepared Reflections

This section contains prepared Pathway samples and references for Conference Meetings defined within this volume, ‘Walking the Vincentian Pathway, Year of the Seven Founders’. Each of these have been prepared for use as desired by other conferences but is not a requirement of the Pathway process (i.e., you may choose to prepare your own using the Session Planner as included in the Introduction Manual). Each document in the next section has been prepared ready for printing and distribution.

Special Note for Presenters, Spiritual Advisors and Presidents:

While the reflections are prepared, ready for printing and can stand alone, it remains the presenter’s responsibility (i.e., President, Spiritual Advisor, or assigned representative) to prepare ahead of time so to maximize the time available during conference meetings. Highly recommended actions include:

- 1. Have at least one copy of the reference materials as show in the Section I, Schedule for the topic to be covered.**
- 2. Read the presented materials/sections ahead of time so to present the topic best possible.**
- 3. Prepare by reading the materials in each reflection prior to the meeting; plan your approach.**
- 4. Pray for insight and hearing God’s wisdom as you are led by the Holy Spirit during conference meetings.**



CM #1. Walking the Vincentian Pathway: Introduction

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Appreciate the scope and purpose of the Vincentian Pathway (2) Introduce and define the structural and spiritual elements of Pathway.

Gospel: (Matthew 25: 34-40)

Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘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, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’

Spiritual Foundation of the Theme:

“St. Vincent teaches us to see Christ in the poor and suffering, so much so that the poor become our Lords and Masters and we their servants. Vincentian spirituality is centered around this concept. Jesus said “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (see Matthew 25: 34-40). So we honor our Lord Jesus Christ by serving Him both materially and spiritually in the person of the poor. Vincentians believe that true religion is found among the poor, and that as we attend to their needs, they inspire us and evangelize us.” (SVDP Rhode Island)

If we are to see the face of Christ in the poor we also must prepare ourselves to be witness to this reality. It is not enough to speak about embracing Vincentian spirituality, we must also be continually formed and invited to greater reflection. The four components of the Vincentian Pathway, Spirituality, Friendship, Service and Servant Leadership come together and challenge us to grow and further develop our Vincentian heart.

Meditation and Reflection:

“We must be full reservoirs in order to let our water spill out without becoming empty, and we must possess the spirit with which we want them to be animated, for no one can give what he does not have.” (St. Vincent de Paul)

The Rule
Formation of members

It is essential that the Society continually promote the formation and training of its members and Officers, in order to deepen their knowledge of the Society and their spirituality, improve the sensitivity, quality and efficiency of their service to the poor and help them be aware of the benefits, resources and opportunities that are available for the poor. The Society also offers members higher training in order to better help to raise the cultural and social level of those who request this support.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM#1 – Introduction to The Vincentian Pathway (*continued*)

Our reflection for the introductory week of the Vincentian Pathway places focus on discerning what it means to prepare ourselves to best serve our neighbors in need. Prayer and reflection centered on the importance of caring for ourselves spiritually is at the core of this first week. Additionally, the purpose and foundation of the Pathway process is defined within this introduction.

As indicated in The Rule, section 3.12, spiritual formation is not only a nice to have but rather an essential element to continue to grow as Vincentians. Doing so however, requires prayer, an openness to greater awareness, study and action based on our call as a Vincentian family. We must continue to link our minds to our hearts in a manner that embraces our love for our neighbor and our ability to see the face of Christ in one another. The combination of these form our Vincentian path and invitation. For over a decade, Walking the Vincentian Pathway, a Process for Ongoing Formation as a Vincentian has helped to form and grow many men and women into these foundational elements of Vincentian Spirituality. This section provides a brief overview and reflection of this opportunity ahead of us.

Perhaps the best place to start with the Vincentian Pathway is to take a description directly from Walking the Vincentian Pathway, Record and Planner:

Indeed, the four components of the Vincentian Pathway are inter-related and as you are challenged to grow through one component, you will be challenged to grow through the others. This process will develop the Vincentian heart and prepare those members who will be called to the different Servant Leadership Roles in the Society.

The four components are:

- **Spirituality:** *will root us in a clear understanding of the Vincentian Spirituality which underlies our Vincentian vocation: mission, vision, values and prayer.*
- **Friendship:** *will provide us with the ways to gather the support, advice and encouragement we need for our Vincentian journey: community of faith, solidarity, mutual example, good will and empowerment.*
- **Service:** *will guide us to see exciting new ways to serve with a Vincentian heart, so that we will be able to strengthen our service: home visits, charity and justice, voice of the poor, catholic social teachings, systemic change.*
- **Servant Leadership:** *will lead all members of the Society to become a true Vincentian servant in the spirit of Jesus and our Founders. Some members will be called to assume a formal leadership role at different times in their journey.*

 *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

What steps do I take to ensure my spiritual reservoir is ready to share in abundance with the poor among us? Do I have any ‘expectations’ of the Vincentian Pathway?

Closing Prayer:

For the grace to pray privately and to pray together. **Lord, hear us!**

For the grace to serve the poor with dedication and faithfulness. **Lord, hear us!**

For the grace to support and care for each other in our Conference. **Lord, hear us!**

For the grace to follow the heart of St. Vincent. **Lord, hear us! Amen**



**CM #2. The Rule, chapter 2; The Manual, chapter 3.2:
Vincentian Spirituality & Vocation**

Developing Discovering Deepening Discerning Spirituality Friendship Service Leadership Servant

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Appreciate our lifelong process to grow in holiness, (2) understand the key aspects of Vincentian Spirituality, (3) Know the essential virtues of Vincentian Spirituality (4) appreciate the gifts shared through Blessed Frederic Ozanam and St. Vincent de Paul.

Gospel: (John 20:26-29)

Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Spiritual Foundation of the Theme:

"Both men and the poor we see with eyes of the flesh; they are there and we can put finger and hand in their wounds, and scars of the crown of thorns are visible on their foreheads; and at this point incredulity no longer has place and we should fall at their feet and say with the Apostle, "Tu est Dominus et Deus meus.' You are our masters, and we will be your servants." (Blessed Frederic Ozanam, Letter #137, November 13, 1836).

The presence of Christ in the poor is something that can both challenge and call us to greater reflection and holiness. So to ensure we remain aware, we must never accept our current state as the end of wisdom but rather a continuation of our Vincentian Spirituality and an openness to future insights.

Meditation and Reflection:

"Vincentian spirituality can be defined as "a conscious effort to become and act more like the Jesus of Vincent and Frederic - Jesus seen by them as the Evangelizer and Servant of the Poor." This entails a constant, daily conversion of our vision and our treatment of others, so that we become more like Jesus every day in everything we think, do, and say." (The Manual, 3.2)

The Rule

***The journey together
towards holiness***

Vincentians are called to journey together towards holiness, because true holiness is perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which is central to their vocation and the source of its fruitfulness.

Vincentians are aware of their own brokenness and need for God's grace. They seek His glory, not their own. Their ideal is to help relieve suffering for love alone, without thinking of any reward or advantage for themselves. They draw nearer to Christ, serving Him in the poor and one another. They grow more perfect in love by expressing compassionate and tender love to the poor and one another.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM #2 - Vincentian Spirituality & Vocation (continued)

Manual: Chapter 3.2 Vincentian Spirituality

As baptized people and following our vocation, we are to pursue the support, strength and Vincentian spirituality with veracity, credibility and integrity. We can find these virtues within the incarnation as reminded to us by St. Vincent:

"Honor the Incarnation, a mystery beyond words... Since Christ willed to be born poor ... he made himself the servant of the poor and shared their poverty. He went so far as to say that he would consider every deed which either helps or harms the poor as done for or against himself."

St. Vincent's and Blessed Frederic's view of the Mystery of the Incarnation complement one another as well as our continuing call. While St. Vincent saw the historical Jesus in the poor, Blessed Frederic saw the risen and suffering Jesus in them. Together they form the basis of our witness to the poor and by the poor. THIS is our vocation, that is to see the face of Christ in the poor and pray that they may see Christ's presence in us. We do so by remaining open in prayer and by putting the doctrine of the Incarnation into practice by the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy. We can meet this tall order and live our Vincentian vocation and spirituality by, as The Manual reminds us:

"Vincentian spirituality can be defined as "a conscious effort to become and act more like the Jesus of Vincent and Frederic - Jesus seen by them as the Evangelizer and Servant of the Poor." This entails a constant, daily conversion of our vision and our treatment of others, so that we become more like Jesus every day in everything we think, do, and say."

"Vincentian spirituality is gentle and strong, nurturing and guiding, loving and creative, compassionate and merciful. Vincentian spirituality is indeed rooted in charity and justice."

The St. Vincent De Paul Society is primarily a lay organization. As such, today's Vincentians see much of themselves in Blessed Frederic Ozanam who in his time lived a life as husband and father. He represents for us a great mix of Vincentian spirituality, a vision of a traditional world that invites every Vincentian to a life of discipleship, love of neighbor, prayer and seeing the presence of the Lord in the poor. In him, we see Vincentian spirituality crossing the boundaries of race, gender, language and culture much as so many after him have displayed for so many years.

 *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

Discussion: *(Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)*

As a Vincentian, how is your journey to holiness most profoundly made?

Think of a time when you became most aware of a personal conversion in your vision or treatment of others.

Closing Prayer:

With grateful hearts we pray for the grace of conversion,

- **Grant us the grace to be kind and loving.**

For the poor we serve,

- **Grant us the grace to be non-judgmental.**

For the Society of St. Vincent de Paul,

- **Grant us the grace to live the spirit of Frederic and Vincent.**

- **Amen**



CM #3. Serving in Hope Module I—Session 1 – Our Vincentian Vocation

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) appreciate the meaning of “vocation”, (2) articulate your “call” to be a Vocation, (3) understand your ministry of service as a “call” to put your faith into action.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

“The two disciples heard what John the Baptist said, and followed Jesus. When Jesus turned around and noticed them following Him, he asked them, ‘What are you looking for?’ They said to him ‘Rabbi, where do you stay?’ ‘Come and See,’ he answered them.” (John 1:37-39)

INTRODUCTION

The word “**vocation**” come from the Latin word ‘vocare’; which means “to call”. Vocation is a “call” a personal summons from God to a human being, inviting the person to embark upon a specially chosen work relative to God’s plan of salvation. As a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, we have been ‘called’ by God to a ministry of service to those who are poor, to bear witness to Jesus’ compassionate love..

READING (Taken From: Manual of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul in the United States, P. 4)

It’s not for everyone. It’s not for anyone. But being a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul—being a Vincentian—is for some. It is a special calling by God. Blessed Frederic Ozanam says: “...*what is proposed to us is the sublime vocation God has given us. Would that we were a little bit worthy of it and be bent easily to its burden.*” (Letter #90)

St. Vincent de Paul said over and over again, “*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.*”: The Church says: “*The followers of Christ are called by God, not according to their own purpose and grace.*” (Lumen Gentium, #40)

A member of the Society puts his or her faith into action. The Vincentian vocation is the intimate desire to participate personally and directly in helping the needy by person-to-person contact and by the gift of one’s heart and friendship, doing so within a Conference, a community of faith, of lay persons each inspired by the same vocation.

The Vincentian vocation may be expressed in many ways and with different shares of meaning. Practical translation of faith into action, meditation upon it and adapting it to our changing world is the very life of every Vincentian, the very life of the Society.

2018 Revised
Mission Statement

*A network of friends,
inspired by gospel
values, growing in
holiness and building
a more just world
through personal
relationships with and
service to people in
need.*



CM #3 – Our Vincentian Vocation (continued)

FREDERIC OZANAM’S VOCATION STORY

Frederic Ozanam was born in Milan, Italy on April 23, 1813, and at the age of three, his family moved to Lyon, France. When Frederic was 7 years of age, he nearly died of typhus. His parents had already faced the death of 8 of their children, but with a deeply rooted faith in God they prayed that Frederic would be cured, and by a miracle of grace he lived. Frederic’s father was a doctor, and he often saw his father and mother leave, sometimes in the middle of the night, to take care of the sick and the dying. Their example gave him the wisdom and compassion that only comes from the witness of people’s lives.

At the age of 16, while in college, Frederic suffered a severe crisis of faith. He questioned why he believed, and he faced despair, depression, and scruples. When the temptation became stronger and sharper, Frederic felt surrounded by darkness and he felt utterly alone. He prayed to the Holy Spirit; he asked for the gift of faith, the grace to believe, and when the crisis ended, he promised to consecrate his life to the defense of the faith and the service of the truth.

The Rule of the Society evolved out of the life and faith of Frederic. Authentic Vincentian service assists the impoverished and the troubled, but it is one in love and with love. As Vincent, Frederic knew that this is what our Lord asks of his followers, namely, that they seek and find Jesus in the poor. Vincentianism is Faith in Action; it is a reaching out in friendship and with helping hands to those who are poor or who are suffering. Vincentian helping out in friendship and with helping hands to those who are poor or who are suffering. Vincentian helping is person-to-person, by a personal gift of the heart, in humility, simplicity and charity. Being a Vincentian is a vocation.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

Have you felt that being a Vincentian is a ‘Vocation’---that you have been ‘called” by God to serve the poor?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Let us pray together the word of St. Vincent:

“It is our vocation...to set people’s heart ablaze, to do what the Son of God did, to set it aflame with his love. It is not enough for me to love God if my neighbor does not love him.

I must love my neighbor as the image of God and the object of his love...I must act in such a way that people love their Creator and each other in mutual charity for the love of God who loved so much that he delivered up his own Son to death for them.” Amen.

i *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 9-11 in Serving in Hope Session 1.1.*



**CM #3 (Alternate). Serving in Hope, Module I—Session 1 –
Our Vincentian Vocation**

Developing Discovering Deepening Discerning Spirituality Friendship Service Servant Leadership

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) xxx, (2) xxx, (3) xxx.

Gospel: (John 1: 37-39)

The two disciples heard what John the Baptist said, and followed Jesus. When Jesus turned around and noticed them following him, he asked them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi, where do you stay?” “Come and see,” he answered.

Spiritual Foundation of the Theme:

The word “vocation” comes from the Latin vocare, which means “to call.” Vocation is a “call,” a personal summons from God to a human being inviting the person to embark upon a specially chosen work relative to God’s plan of salvation. As members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, we have been “called” by God to a ministry of service to those who are poor, to bear witness to Jesus’ compassionate love.

Meditation and Reflection:

It’s not for everyone. It’s not for anyone. But being a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul—being a Vincentian—is for some. It is a special calling by God. Blessed Frederic Ozanam says: “...what is proposed to us is the sublime vocation God has given us. Would that we were a little bit worthy of it and bent easily to its burden.” (Letter #90)

St. Vincent de Paul said over and over again, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” “The Church says: “The followers of Christ are called by God, not according to their accomplishments, but according to his own purpose and grace.” (Lumen Gentium #40)

A member of the Society puts his or her faith into action. The Vincentian vocation is the intimate desire to participate personally and directly in helping the needy by person-to-person contact and by the gift of one’s heart and friendship, doing so within a Conference, a community of faith, of lay persons each inspired by the same vocation.

The Vincentian vocation may be expressed in many ways and with different shades of meaning. Practical translation of faith into action, meditating upon it and adapting it to our changing world is the very life of every Vincentian, the very life of the Society.

The Rule

The Vincentian Family

Members throughout the world, together with other communities inspired by the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul and with those whom they help, form a single family. Gratefully remembering the support and encouragement the first Conference received from Blessed Rosalie Rendu, the Society maintains and develops close relationships with other branches of the Vincentian family, while preserving its identity. It cooperates with them in spiritual development and common projects, as well as with the Church’s charitable pastoral initiatives at every level, whenever this may be mutually enriching and useful to those who suffer.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM #3 (Alternate) – Our Vincentian Vocation (*continued*)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

How have you felt that being a Vincentian is a “vocation”—that you have been “called” by God to serve the poor?

Closing Prayer:

Let us pray together the words of Blessed Frederic Ozanam:

“Father, grant us the wisdom and the integrity to persevere in fidelity tot the Rule of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Committed to growing in spirituality, living in a community of faith and serving those who are poor and suffering, may we follow those who have gone before us, becoming a visible sign of Christ and a witness to your boundless love. Amen”

 *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 9-11 in Serving in Hope Session 1.1.*



CM #4. Serving in Hope, Module I—Session 2 – Vocation of the Laity

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Understand the vocation of the laity in the Church, (2) Appreciate the universal call to holiness, (3) Articulate how holiness is found in the midst of the world.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

"My command to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are children of your heavenly father, for his sun rises on the just and the unjust . In a word, you must be made perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5: 44-48)

INTRODUCTION

The lay Faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church's life. Therefore, they in particular, ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church manifested in daily work and activity. The Second Vatican Council emphasized this universal call to holiness to all the baptized to a life of grace and union with Him:

"The laity live in the world. They live in the ordinary conditions of life in the family and in society, from which the web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God so that by exercising their proper role and being led by the spirit of the Gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven. In this way they can make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity." (Lumen Gentium, #31)

But, "Holiness is not limited to the sanctuary or to moments of private prayer; it is a call to direct our whole heart and life toward God and according to God's plan for this world. For the laity holiness is achieved in the midst of the world, in family, in community, in friendships, in work, in leisure, in citizenship. Through their competency and by their activity, lay men and women have the vocation to bring the fight of the Gospel to economic affairs, so that the world may be filled with the Spirit of Christ and may more effectively attain its destiny in justice, in love, and in peace." (Economic Justice for All, #332).

Foundational Formation Documents

Lumen Gentium ('Light of ALL Nations') 1964:

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

Gaudium et Spes ('Joy and Hope') 1965:

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

Apostolicam Actuositatem ('Lay Apostle') 1965:

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity

Christifideles Laici ('Christ's Faithful People') 1988:

The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People (Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II)



Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.



CM #4 – Vocation of the Laity (continued)

READING (taken from The Manual of the Society of SVdP in the United states, p 59)

Pope John Paul II taught that spirituality concerns the whole of life, or, as he often put it, “the unity of life.” He said to the laity: “There cannot be two parallel lives in your existence as lay men and women: on the one hand, the so-called ‘spiritual’ life, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called ‘secular’ life, that is, life in a family, at work, social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture. The branch, engrafted to the vine which is Christ, bears its fruit in every sphere of existence and activity. Every activity, every situation, every precise responsibility ... is the occasion ordained by Providence for a ‘continuous exercise of faith, hope, and charity.’” (*Christifidelis Laici*, #59)

By constitution, composition, and administration, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is primarily a lay association. The spirituality proper to it is a lay spirituality, and the Church reminds the laity: “This lay spirituality should take its particular character from the circumstances of one’s state in life (married and family life, celibacy, widowhood), from one’s state of health, and from one’s professional and social activity. All should not cease to develop earnestly the qualities and talents bestowed on them in accord with these conditions of life and should make use of the gifts which they have received from the Holy Spirit.” (*Decree on Apostolate of the Laity*, # 4)

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

How have you found in your lay vocation the road to holiness that is practiced every day in your home, office, and Conference?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Let us close with the words of Blessed Frederic Ozanam:

"Thus, friends, let us work on this earth, docile and submissive to the will of God without knowing what He is accomplishing through us. But He, the divine Artist, sees and knows. When He will show us the finished work of our life, of our toil and of our troubles, we shall then be thrown into ecstasy and we shall bless Him for deigning to accept and place our poor works in His eternal mansion." Amen

i *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 15-17 in Serving in Hope Session 1.2.*



**CM #4 (Alternate). Serving in Hope, Module I—Session 2 –
Vocation of the Laity**

Developing Discovering Deepening Discerning Spirituality Friendship Service Servant Leadership

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Understand the vocation of the laity in the Church, (2) Appreciate the universal call to holiness, (3) Articulate how holiness is found in the midst of the world.

Gospel: (Matthew 5:43-48)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors* do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Spiritual Foundation of the Theme:

As we begin a new millennium, Divine Providence continues to call ordinary men and women to an extraordinary mission as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul continues to bring hope to the poor and suffering in the spirit of Blessed Frederic Ozanam and St. Vincent de Paul. Indeed, our Vincentian Vocation roots us in the Church, as we answer the call of the Second Vatican Council:

"The joys and hopes, griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts." (Gaudium et Spes, #1)

Meditation and Reflection:

The vocation of the Laity in the Church and in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, begins with our Christian ‘vocation’ given to us at Baptism. The common grounding in baptism paves the way for an adequate understanding for all the follower of Jesus: we are called to discipleship and to share in Christ’s ministry.

--prayer composed by Bl. Frederic Ozanam

The Rule

...The Society has been Catholic from its origins. It remains an international Catholic voluntary organization of lay people, men and women.

A Vocation for every moment of life

The Vincentian vocation affects all aspects of members’ daily lives, making them more sensitive and caring in their family, work and leisure activities. Vincentians are available for work in the Conferences only after fulfilling the family and professional duties.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM #4 (Alternate) – Vocation of the Laity (continued)

From Serving in Hope, Volume I, Session 1.2 Introduction:

1. The lay Faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church’s life. Therefore, they, in particular, ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church. God issues a vocation to holiness to each member of the laity, which is manifested in daily work and activity.
2. “The laity live in the world,... They live in the ordinary conditions of life in the family and in society, from which the web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God so that by exercising their proper role and being led by the spirit by the spirit of the Gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven. In this way they can make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.” (Lumen Gentium, #31)
3. The Second Vatican Council emphasized the universal call to holiness, that general call of God to all the baptized to a life of grace and union with Him. This vocation is the call that gives human life its meaning and its destiny beyond this life.
4. But, “Holiness is not limited to the sanctuary or to moments of private prayer; it is a call to direct our whole heart and life toward God and according to God’s plan for this world. For the laity holiness achieved in the midst of the world, in family, in community, in friendships, in work, in leisure, in citizenship. Through their competency and by their activity, lay men and women have the vocation to bring the fight of the Gospel to economic affairs, so that the world may be filled with the Spirit of Christ and may more effectively attain its destiny injustice, in love, and in peace.” (Economic Justice for All., #332)

From the Manual of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States. P. 12:

1. Saint Pope John Paul II says to the laity: There cannot be two parallel lives in your existence as lay men and women: on the one hand, the so-called ‘spiritual life’, that is, life in a family, at work, social responsibilities of public life and in culture.
2. The branch, engrafted to the vine, which is Christ, bears its fruit in every sphere of existence and activity. Every activity, every situation, every precise responsibility... are the occasions ordained by Providence for a “continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity.” (Christifideles Laici, #59)
3. Vocation also refers to the calling from God to follow a specific way of life. In particular, vocation is understood as God’s call to a distinctive state of life such as married, single, religious or priestly. The Sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders are thus designated Sacraments of Vocation.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

Discussion: *(Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)*

How have you found in your lay vocation the road to holiness that is practiced everyday in you home, office and Conference?

Closing Prayer:

“Thus, friends, let us work on this earth, docile and submissive to the will of God without knowing what He is accomplishing through us. But H, the divine Artist, sees and knows. When He will show us the finished work of our life, of our toil and of our troubles, we shall then be thrown into ecstasy and we shall bless Him for designing to accept and place our poor works in His eternal mansion.”

Amen.

i *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 15-17 in Serving in Hope Session 1.2.*



**CM #5. Serving in Hope, Module 1—Session 3 –
The vocation of Vincent & Frederic**

Developing Discovering Deepening Discerning Spirituality Friendship Service Servant Leadership

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Appreciate the vocation of Vincent to the priesthood (2) Understand the call of Vincent to serve the poor (3) Appreciate the vocation of Frederic to marriage (4) Identify the call of Frederic to found the Society of St. Vincent de Paul..

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

As he made his way along the Sea of Galilee, he observed Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said, Come and follow me, I will make you fishers of men.” They immediately abandoned their nets and became his followers. (Mark 1:18)

THE VOCATION OF VINCENT DE PAUL

As a young man, Vincent de Paul began his studies to become a priest. Priesthood in that era was more of a career choice than a vocation, as it offered a chance for advancement and security. He was ordained at the age of 19 and was a very ambitious young priest hoping to inherit a benefice that would give him an early retirement.

He went to Paris and secured a post as a chaplain at the royal court of Queen marguerite. He was moving along quite well in his career, and eventually he became the chaplain to one of the most prestigious families in Europe. He would visit the vast estates of the de Gondi family, and during a visit to Folleville he heard the confession of a dying man. Touched by this event, he conducted a parish mission on the general confession of one’s life and discovered his own mission. He then went to a small town, Chatillon-les-Dombes, where he established the first Confraternity of Charity, serve the poor in their homes.

During this time, Vincent was suffering a dark night of the soul, and he promised God that if he would take away this darkness, he would dedicate his life to the service of the poor. God immediately took away the anguish and it never returned. Vincent was 36 years old, and 17 years a priest before he found his true vocation. He faithfully fulfilled his vow to the poor till the day he died..

Rule 2.5
The Spirituality of St. Vincent

Having been placed under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul by the founding members, members of the Society are inspired by his spirituality, manifest in his attitudes, his thoughts, his example, and his words.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM #5 - The vocation of Vincent & Frederic (continued)

THE VOCATION OF BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM

Frederic Ozanam was from a very devout Catholic Family, and his parents taught him a deep love of God and the poor. As a young man in Lyon, France Frederic suffered a crisis of faith, and Frederic promised God that if his faith was restored, he would give his life to the service of truth. The doubts vanished, and Frederic became strengthened in the faith that he so love, and he remained faithful to his promise for his entire life.

Frederic moved to Paris to study law at the Sorbonne. At that time, there were many attacks of anti-Catholicism and anti-clericalism. He joined the Conference of History, under the mentorship of Emmanuel Bailly. At one of their meetings a challenge was issued to the members to show their faith by alleviating the needs of the suffering poor and to promote social justice in the church and society. This drove Frederic to the poor and in 1833, on his twentieth birthday, six students together with Emmanuel Bailley, formed the Conference of Charity and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was born.

After first considering a vocation to the priesthood, and after many years of discernment he came to understand that it was God’s will that he serve God and the church as layman. When Frederic was 28 years old he met Amelie Soulacroix. They were married on June 23, 1841. After four years, they had a daughter, Marie, their only child. Frederic came to know that he had found his true vocation in the sacrament of marriage.

To Frederic was granted the grace of balancing the commitments to marriage and family, together with the call to serve the poor through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a grace he was faithful to all his life...

Rule 2.4

The Spirituality of Blessed Frederic

- *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 laymen through living the Gospel fully in all aspects of his life.*
- *Had a passion for truth, democracy and education.*

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

Tell your own ‘vocation’ story. Is there any relationship, or similarity, between your life and Vincent/Frederic?

CLOSING PRAYER:

“God has created me to do him some definite service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission—I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next... I have a part in a great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do his work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep his commandments and serve him in my calling.” **Amen.**

--prayer composed by St. Cardinal Newman.

i *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 21-23 in Serving in Hope, Session 1.3.*



**CM #6. Serving in Hope, Module 1—Session 4 –
Essential Elements of the Society**

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) appreciate the role of Emmanuel Bailly as the mentor and guide to the Society; (2) understand the 1st element as the call to grow spiritually; (3) describe the 2nd element as the

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

“I give you a new commandment: Love one another; such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other. This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

INTRODUCTION

In 1835, when the Rule of the Society was first written and approved, Emmanuel Bailly (founding member, first Conference President) wrote the introduction. It should be remembered that Frederic Ozanam and the other founding members of the Society looked to Bailly as their mentor and guide. It was his thinking, advice and influence that formed their first Conference into the working model for the Rule. In the introduction to the first version of the Rule, Bailly pointed out what he referred to as the Objective of a Conference. Over the years, these have been summarized into the Essential Elements of the Conference of Charity.

READING (taken from The Manual of the Society of SVdP in the United States, p. i)

Element I: Spirituality

- *To bear witness to Christ and to His Church by showing that the faith of Christians inspires them to work for the good of humanity;*

We must make an effort to grow spiritually in order to keep the spark of inspiration alive. We must also encourage others to do so. This includes the other members of our Conference as well as those we serve.

Element II: Faith Community

- *To bring together men and women of good will and to assist them by mutual example and true friendship in drawing nearer to the Divine Model by fulfilling His essential precept namely, the love of God in the person of others;*

The Society hopes to develop a community of faith among the members. The objective of the Society is to develop a bond that goes deeper than just teamwork. The friendship that is sought should be developed both among the members as well as with those we serve.

Element III: Service

- *To establish a personal contact between its members and those who suffer and to bring to the latter the most efficacious and charitable aid possible.*

Person-to-person service by our members is what the Society emphasizes. Our members also strive to serve God in others with the best way possible, no matter how long it takes. The focus is on quality of service, not quantity.



CM #6 – Essential Elements of the Society (continued)

The Essential Elements identify who we are and why we exist. They are more than three independent qualities or reasons for existence. Vincentianism calls for an integration of all three.

- Focus on spirituality only is **NOT** Vincentianism. You can join any number of organizations or third orders if spirituality is your only concern.
- Focus on fellowship only is **NOT** Vincentianism. Look within your parish and outside and you will find lots of organizations that are socially focused.
- Focus on service only is **NOT** Vincentianism. Look in the phone book. In most major cities, you will find somewhere in the area of 300 non-profits who are looking for people to provide service.

When we speak of Vincentianism, we speak of a blend of spirituality, fellowship and service. This is who we are. This is why we exist.

 *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

What key word or phrase speaks to your heart? How do you see the three Essential elements integrated in your Conference? Is there an element that needs to be strengthened?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Let us pray:

My brothers, what good is it to profess faith without practicing it? Such faith has no power to save one, has it? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day, and you say to them, “Good-bye and good luck! Keep warm and well fed,” but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless... You must perceive that a person is justified by his works and not by faith alone. Be assured, then, that faith without works is as dead as a body without breath. **Amen.** (James 2:14-17, 24, 26)

 *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 27-29 in Serving in Hope Session 1.4.*



**CM #6 (Alternate). Serving in Hope, Module 1—Session 4 –
Essential Elements of the Society**

Developing Discovering Deepening Discerning Spirituality Friendship Service Servant Leadership

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) xxx, (2) xxx, (3) xxx.

Gospel: (John 13:31-35)

When he had left, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. [If God is glorified in him,] God will also glorify him in himself, and he will glorify him at once.

My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. You will look for me, and as I told the Jews, ‘Where I go you cannot come,’ so now I say it to you. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Spiritual Foundation of the Theme:

Jesus’ word are clear; ‘As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.’ This is our commandment throughout all our lives and in everything we do. As Vincentians, we are afforded an opportunity to place His commandment into practice as we serve the poor and disadvantaged among us. Doing so, however, requires that our faith be nurtured internally, in our community, and in the actions take to serve our friends in need. Together, these components make up the Essential Elements of the Society.

Meditation and Reflection:

Never would a true Vincentian have enough time to praise God during his lifetime and in eternity! He is aware of living a life that is not ordinary and of being asked by someone bigger than him. He knows he is imbued by the spirit of Jesus Himself, “A spirit of perfect charity, filled with a high regard for the Divine and an infinite desire to honor Him worthily....”

(Conference to CMs, Conference 196,p. 627)

The Manual

Fundamental Principles

Spirituality:

To bear witness to Christ and to his Church by showing that the faith of Christians inspires them to work for the good of humanity;

Friendship:

To bring together people of good will and to assist them by mutual example and true friendship in drawing nearer to the Divine Model by fulfilling his essential precept, namely, the love of God in the person of others;

Service:

To establish a personal contact between its members and those who suffer and to bring to the latter the most efficacious and charitable aid possible.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM #6 (Alternate) – Essential Elements of the Society (continued)

(James 2:14-17,24,26)

It was Emmanuel Bailly who in 1835 established the foundational ‘Objects of a Conference’ that later became the essential elements. As a mentor and leader, he had provided the basis for all future conferences within the introduction to what would become The Rule. Each is not only important but crucial to proper formation and service.

Serving in Hope, Module I, Session 1.4 describe these elements as follows:

1. Spirituality - We must make an effort to grow spiritually in order to keep the spark of inspiration alive. We must also encourage others to do so. This includes the other members of our Conference as well as those we serve.
2. Faith Community – The Society hopes to develop a community of faith among the members. The objective of the Society is to develop a bond that goes deeper than just teamwork. The friendship that is sought should be developed both among the members as well as with those we serve.
3. Service – Person-to-person service by our members is what the Society emphasizes. Our members also strive to serve God in others with the best way possible, no matter how long it takes. The focus is on quality of service, not quantity.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

Discussion: *(Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)*

How do you see the three Essential Elements integrated in your Conference?

Is there an element that needs to be strengthened?

Closing Prayer:

My brothers, what good is it to profess faith without practicing it? Such faith has no power to save one, has it? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day, and you say to them, "Good-bye and good luck! Keep warm and well fed," but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless . . . You must perceive that a person is justified by his works and not by faith alone. Be assured, then, that faith without works is as dead as a body without breath. **Amen**

i *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 27-29 in Serving in Hope Session 1.4.*



CM #7. Serving in Hope, Module 1—Session 5 – Our Vincentian’s Core Values

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) appreciate the principles central to the creed and ministry of the Society;
(2) articulate how the Core Values are lived in your conference.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

“Do not lay up for yourselves an earthly treasure. Moths and rust corrode; thieves break in and steal. Make it your practice instead to store up heavenly treasure, which neither moths nor rust corrode, nor thieves break in and steal. Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart is also.” (Matt. 6: 19-22)

INTRODUCTION

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul adheres to a group of Core Values: (taken from Manual of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States, P. 2)

Growth in intimacy with Jesus is a life-long process: Jesus calls each of us to conversion and renewal. Meditation of the Gospel readings lead us to growth in intimacy with Jesus.

Prayer is Essential---personal and communal: Private prayer and prayer in common, e.g. in the Conference, in one’s family and the Eucharist, are essential to the life of a Vincentian.

The dignity of the human person: Vincentians believe that respect and love of each human person is rooted in their dignity as a child of God.

The preferential option for the poor: Whatever choice in life other make, ours is for the poor. We should honestly identify the way in which our life and works will have a real effect on the poor, the most abandoned in society.

The identification of Jesus with the poor: Our Mission Statement calls us to: “...make no distinction in those served because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ.”

The virtue of humility---personal and corporate: Humility is truth in thought, word and deed. Blessed Frederic referred to the Society as the “little Society,” rooting us in humility.

Poverty in spirit is the primary Beatitude: Poverty of spirit leads us to trust in God’s love for us. We are then able to serve the poor with compassion.

The virtue of simplicity: Simplicity gives us the grace of purity of intention, doing everything for the love of God and for no other reason.

Jesus is the Evangelizer and Servant of the Poor: In the mind of St. Vincent, the image of Jesus was ‘Jesus, Evangelizer and Servant of the poor.’

Divine Providence: St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic trusted that God was truly providing for them, always acting in their lives and in the lives of the poor.

Friendship: Frederic told his followers that one of the essential principles of being a member of the Society is friendship.

Community: Conferences are communities of faith from which members go forth as apostles and servants of the poor.



CM #7 – Our Vincentian’s Core Values (continued)

The Society is concerned with charity and justice: We are called to be advocates, to be a voice for the voiceless and to bring hope to the hopeless.

The virtue of charity within and outside the Society: Charity begins at home, which means that members of the Society must be genuinely charitable to reach other in their Conferences and Councils.

Solidarity: One powerful way to effect solidarity is by home visits---entering the homes of the poor and spending time with them.

 *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

How have you seen these Core Values lived in your Conference? Which value(s) pose the greatest challenge for you and your Conference?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Let us pray:

“Help becomes honorable, because it may become mutual, because everyone who gives a kind word, a good advice, a consolation today, may tomorrow stand himself in need of a kind word, an advice, or a consolation; because the hand that you clasp clasps yours in return; because the indigent family you love loves you in in return, and will have largely acquitted themselves toward you when the old man, the mother, the little children shall have prayer for you.” **Amen.** (October 21, 1848)

 *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 33-35 in Serving in Hope Session 1.5.*



**CM #7 (Alternate). Serving in Hope, Module 1—Session 5 –
Our Vincentian’s Core Values**

Developing Discovering Deepening Discerning Spirituality Friendship Service Servant Leadership

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) xxx, (2) xxx, (3) xxx.

Gospel: (Matthew 6:19-23)

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness. And if the light in you is darkness, how great will the darkness be.

Reflection and Vincentian Meditation:

In 1992, the Vincentian Mission Corps was formed. This group’s mission since its inception is “to invite young adults to live in community and to work with those who are living in poverty in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.” Through prayer and deed, their primary objective is to improve the lives of the marginalized and those living in poverty. Members interject themselves into the lives of their friends, with love and humility found in God’s care and loving embrace. They truly understand what it means to participate in the great Mission.

It is interesting, but not surprising, that this community represents what we also witness in our conferences year after year.

The Rule
***Meetings of the
Vincentian members***
The members meet as brothers and sisters with Christ in the midst of them, in Conferences that are genuine communities of faith and love, of prayer and action. Spiritual bonds and friendship between members are essential, as is the common mission to help the poor and marginalized. The entire Society is a true and unique worldwide Community of Vincentian friends.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM #7 (Alternate) – Our Vincentian’s Core Values (*continued*)

Conferences, Councils, The Vincentian Mission Corps, all Vincentians across the world indeed share a common bond found in the Vincentian Core Values. Equipped with these, together we are able to participate fully in the Vincentian Mission. They may be easy to understand but they take a lifetime to master.

The Vincentian core values may be characterized through six primary categories:

Holiness of Life – Our primary objective is indeed greater holiness of life, conversion, and a closer connection found in Him through prayer.

Service of the Poor – We are called to treat the poor among us with dignity and compassion, as well as recognizing Jesus in their faces and hearts.

Humility – We are called to find truth in thought, word and deed within ourselves by seeking an attitude of being poor in spirit through humble surrender to God.

Simplicity – We are called to have a purity of intention by doing everything for the love of God trusting him to lead us to His will.

Community of Faith – We are called to friendship in and out of our conferences and to come together in our meetings to pray, to share, to participate more completely as a community.

Charity – We are called to merge charity and justice with a common bond within and outside the Society. We are to recognize one another as one family of God.

 *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

How have you seen the Vincentian Core Values lived in your Conference?

Which value(s) pose the greatest challenge for you and your Conference?

Closing Prayer:

**"Help becomes honorable, because it may become mutual,
Because everyone who gives a kind word, a good advice, a consolation today, May tomorrow stand himself
in need of a kind word, advice, or a consolation; because the hand that you clasp, clasps yours in return;
Because the indigent family whom you love loves you in return, and will have largely acquitted themselves
toward you when the old man, the mother, the little children shall have prayed for you." Amen**



CM #7 (Alternate) – Our Vincentian’s Core Values (*continued*)

Additional Thoughts

Growth in intimacy with Jesus is a life-long process - Jesus calls each of us to conversion and renewal. Meditation on the Gospel readings lead us to growth in intimacy with Jesus.

Prayer is Essential: personal and communal - Private prayer and prayer in common, e.g., in the Conference, in one's family and the Eucharist, are essential to the life of a Vincentian.

The dignity of the human person - Vincentians believe that respect and love of each human person is rooted in their dignity as a child of God.

The preferential option for the poor - Whatever choice in life others make, ours is for the poor. We should honestly identify the way in which our life and works will have a real effect on the poor, the most abandoned, in society.

The identification of Jesus with the poor - Our Mission Statement calls us to: "... make no distinction in those served because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ."

The virtue of humility: personal and corporate - Humility is truth in thought, word and deed. Blessed Frederic referred to the Society as the "little Society," rooting us in humility.

Poverty in spirit is the primary Beatitude - Poverty of spirit leads us to trust in God's love for us. We are then able to serve the poor with compassion.

The virtue of simplicity - Simplicity gives us the grace of purity of intention: doing everything for the love of God and for no other reason .

Jesus is the Evangelizer and Servant of the Poor - In the mind of St. Vincent, the image of Jesus was Jesus, Evangelizer and Servant of the Poor.

Divine Providence - St. Vincent and Bl. Frederic trusted that God was truly providing for them, always acting in their lives and in the lives of the poor.

Friendship - Frederic told his followers that one of the essential principles of being a member of the Society is friendship.

Community - Conferences are communities of faith from which members go forth as apostles and servants of the poor.

The Society is concerned with charity and justice - We are called to be advocates, to be a voice for the voiceless and to bring hope to the hopeless.

The virtue of charity within and outside of the Society - Charity begins at home, which means that members of the Society must be genuinely charitable to each other in their Conferences and Councils.

Solidarity - One powerful way to effect solidarity is by home visits - entering the homes of the poor and spending time with them.



Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 33-35 in Serving in Hope Session 1.5.



CM #8. Serving in Hope Module I—Session 6: The Mission of the Society

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) appreciate the Mission Statement of the Society, (2) Describe the key words found in the Mission Statement, (3) Understand how the mission inspires the vision of the Society.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

“I call you friends...It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit. Your fruit must endure, so that all you ask the Father in my name he will give you. The command I give you is this, that you love one another.” (John 15:12-17)

INTRODUCTION

- A Mission Statement** describes the unique purpose for the organization. It captures the values and virtues of the members and inspires the vision and all decision making to inherit a benefice that would give him an early retirement.
- A Network of friends.** Frédéric envisioned a “*network of charity and social justice encircling the world*” a network formed by those resolved “*to become better themselves in order to make others happier.*” His vision calls us, each of us and all of us, to give ourselves fully to God and the neighbor.
- Inspired by Gospel Values.** Jesus was the driving force in St. Vincent’s life. He called Jesus the center of his life and activity. Jesus is the source and model for all Vincentians.
- Growing in holiness.** Vincentian are called to journey together in holiness, to be on fire with the love of God. The Second Vatican Council pointed out that God calls us in the church as a people, The People of God, wo we are called as a people in the Vincentian cell of the church. We need to support each other to persevere in our Vincentian Call.
- Personal Relationships.** Vincentians must be involved directly in the works they do. Our service to other often involves many different activities besides providing material support for someone. We are called to be good listeners, always bringing care and compassion.
- People in need.** No form of charity is foreign to the Society. Not only did Frederic and the others take care of the physical and material needs of others (food, shelter, clothing, firewood), the also involved themselves with tutoring, even setting up libraries for members of the military. During the bloody, skirmishes, Vincentian attended to the wounded and dying. In every work, members of the Society were solicitous to the spiritual and moral welfare of others.

2018 Revised
Mission Statement

*A network of friends,
inspired by gospel
values, growing in
holiness and building
a more just world
through personal
relationships with and
service to people in
need.*

Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.



CM #8 – The Mission of the Society (continued)

*“As a reflection of the whole **family of God**, members, who are known as Vincentians, are drawn from every ethnic and cultural background, age group and economic level.*

*Vincentians are united in an **international** society of charity by their spirit of **poverty, humility and sharing**, which is nourished by **prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings**, and adherence to a basic **Rule**.*

*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, **Vincentian see the face of Christ**.” (taken from paragraphs 2-4 of the pre-2018 revised Mission Statement.)*

1. **Family of God.** The Society is rooted in the belief that God is our Father, and we are therefore all brothers and sisters.
2. **Poverty, humility, sharing, prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings...charity and justice.** These are our Core Values.
3. **Rule.** The Rule was written down in 1835, based on the practical experience of the first Vincentians. It gives us regulations that preserve the objectives and spirit of the original foundation.
4. **Vincentians see the face of Christ.** The Vocation of the Vincentian is to follow Christ through serving those in need and so bear witness to his compassionate and tender love. Vincentian Serve in Hope.



Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.

DISCUSSION:

What key word or phrase speaks to your heart?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Let us pray the words of Blessed Frederic Ozanam: “We must do what is agreeable to God. Therefore, we must do what our Lord Jesus Christ did when preaching the Gospel. Let us go to the poor!” Amen.



Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 39-40 in Serving in Hope Session 1.6



CM #9. Cultural Belief — Spiritual Growth

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) I grow in holiness through my prayer, Vincentian service and friendship.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

Jesus said to his disciples: *“Live on in me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him, will produce abundantly, for apart from me you can do nothing....If you live in me, and my works stay part of you, you may ask what you will--it will be done for you. My Father has been glorified in your bearing much fruit and becoming my disciples.” (JOHN 15:4-8)*

VISIONING AND PLANNING

The Society is called to look to the future with ways and means not only to sustain those in poverty but to search and implement plans to eliminate poverty. Many feel it is impossible when they recall Jesus’ words: “The poor will always be with you.” This statement is true because of the human state. However, Jesus strived his entire life to change this vision of life to a new paradigm of faith, hope and love, and anyone who followed this way would have life to the full.

St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam shared these possibilities creating organizations and structures to guide this vision. Thus was born the Vincentian Family and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Today the Society in the United States has created a Mission Statement and Vision to achieve Jesus’ aspiration of humanity. We have placed our plans and actions in the hands of Divine Providence to lead our way.

St. Vincent de Paul understood achieving visions and ideals require that they must be clearly defined, thoroughly planned and clearly achievable for those working in the ‘vineyard.’ Today we call this process strategic vision and plans to achieve the vision..

Rule 2.2

Journey together towards holiness...

“Vincentians are called to journey together towards holiness, because true holiness is perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which is central to their vocation and the source of its fruitfulness.”

Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.



CM #9 – Cultural Belief – Spiritual Growth (continued)

STRATEGIC PLAN (NATIONAL SVDPS)

In 2011, the National Council under National President Sheila Gilbert approved a wide-ranging updating of the Strategic Plan of the Society with the theme to “**End Poverty Through Systemic Change.**” The plan redirects efforts to change the lives of those in poverty not only by sustaining their existing life conditions but also by giving them tools and mentors to move them out of poverty.

1st Goal. Enable spiritual growth and leadership development throughout the Society.

To guide the Society into the future, the National Council decided in January 2015 to simplify the elements embodied in its Strategic Plan and to build a culture of accountability in the Society that would lead the Society forward in achieving its goals. To do so, from 2015 to 2016, it received input from many Vincentians across the country as well as from an outside consultant (Partners in Leadership). From this input the Society learned that what we believe as part of our organization’s culture moves us to actions which in turn lead to final results. Although this may sound simplistic, nevertheless it really works. Acting on this input and information, the Society decided to embrace the seven Cultural Beliefs identified by members as part of our organization’s culture and its hopes to achieve the four Key Results (listed below) by being faithful to and acting on these beliefs:

(NATIONAL KEY RESULTS 2016-2021)

1. Increase Number of Active and Associate Members
2. Increase Number of Councils/Conferences utilizing System Change Strategies
3. Increase Number of People Served
4. Increase Income of all Councils/Conferences

SIGNIFICANCE OF EVENTS

Vincentian spirituality is especially characterized as a spirituality of the event, where we find that God manifests himself each day through our encounters with people and circumstances. To Vincent ‘events’ were the revelation of the Will of God. So, we must also look at what is happening---the people, places, circumstances and situations. Therefore, we must fall all of the circumstances, look at all the factors, and weigh all the evidence. It is important to pay attention to ‘feelings’, and to your ‘intuitions.’

DISCUSSION:

Spirituality is the first purpose of the Society. Our goal is not to bring help to the poor, at least when defined as material or financial assistance, but to bring the love and peace of Christ to those who are suffering. In what ways do our conference bring the love and peace of Christ to the those who are suffering in our community?

How do we incorporate our experience of bringing the love and peace of Christ to the suffering into our personal prayer and in our prayers in our conferences?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, you who willed to become poor, give us eyes and a heart directed toward the poor. Help us to recognize you in them---in their hunger and thirst, their loneliness and suffering. Enkindle within us the fire of love that burned in the hearts of St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic, so that we will live our mission and core values with integrity. Grant us the grace to be faithful to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, so that we will grow in spirituality, friendship and service to our suffering brothers and sisters.

Amen.



**CM #10. The Rule part 1, Chapter 1 - The Origins of the Society –
The Manual, Chapter 1.1, 1.2 – The Vincentian Family & The Society of SVdP**

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Appreciate the origins of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, (2) Appreciate the connection of the society today as continuing service since its inception, (3) Appreciate development and growth of the Vincentian Family in the internationally and in the United States..

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

Jesus and his disciples came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, Jesus began to ask them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” They remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.” Taking a child, he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it, he said to them, “Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me.” (Mark 9:33-37)

REFLECTION

Is it possible that Jesus uses the model of little children not because of their innocence but because of their humility as well as their complete dependence and trust in their parents? As disciples we similarly and in very special way as Vincentians are called to this dependence and respect to God.

The Manual says this about the Vincentian Family:

“Countless persons live and breathe the spirit, tradition, and spirituality of “the Apostle of Charity and Father of the Poor,” Saint Vincent de Paul. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is one branch of a colossal Vincentian Family Tree. The Vincentian Family consists of men and women, young and old, rich and poor, educated and unlettered, Eastern and Western. Family members speak common languages and obscure dialects; they live in large cities and on small islands; they are married and single, priests, deacons, and religious; they are CEOs and manual laborers. Who they are does not matter; what they have in common does: their call to follow in the footsteps of St. Vincent de Paul, their love for him, and their desire to keep his Mission alive.”

And, what is our Vincentian mission?

“A network of friends [we could also say family members], inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.” (svdpusa.org, Our Mission).

 *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM #10 - The Origins of the Society, The Vincentian Family & the Society of SVdP (continued)

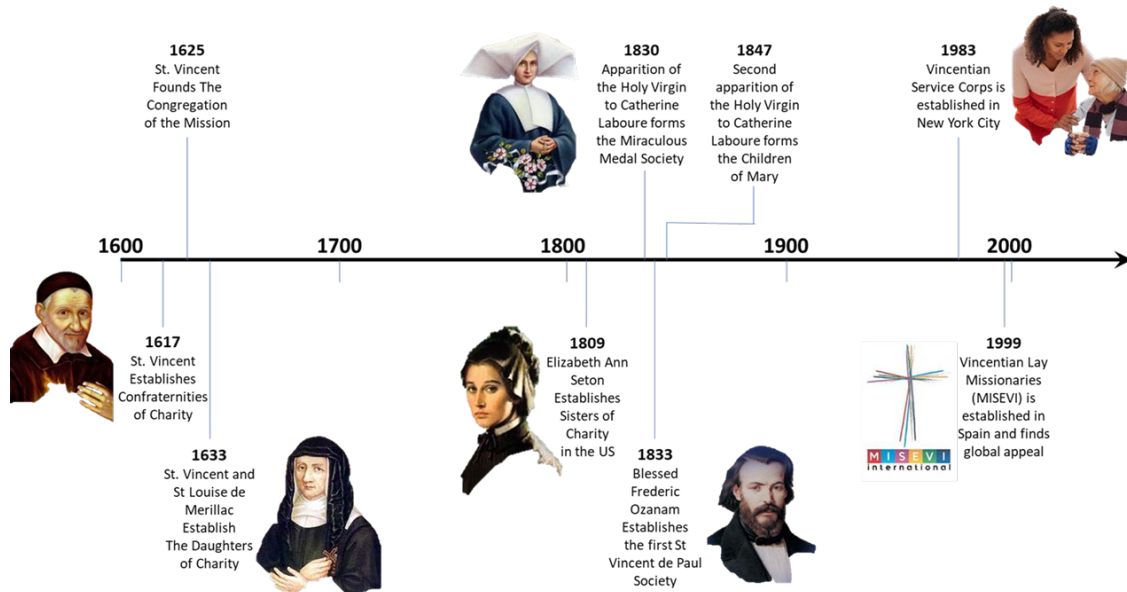
THE RULE (TAKEN FROM ‘ORIGINS’, PART I, SECTION 1.1, PAGE 6)

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a worldwide Christian community; founded in Paris in 1833, by a group of young Catholic lay people and an older person, who joined together to create the first Conference. The Society wishes to remember them all with gratitude, as they set an example of dedication to the poor and to the Church. From Le Taillandier, who received the first inspiration, to Blessed Frederic Ozanam, Paul Lamache, François Lallier, Jules Deveaux, Félix Clavé, all of them knew, in their humility, how to seek the wise advice and support of the one who would become the first President General of the flourishing Society, Emmanuel Bailly.

The Holy Spirit was undoubtedly present in all of them at the founding of the Society, fostering the charism of each one. Among them, Blessed Frederic Ozanam was a radiant source of inspiration.

The Society has been Catholic from its origins. It remains an international Catholic voluntary organization of lay people, men and women.

OUR VINCENTIAN FAMILY (roots, branches and developing opportunities):



i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

How does the history and common bond found in the Vincentian Family over the past 5 centuries affect you today?

The establishment of each element in time needed servant leaders as well as followers to succeed. How do you view your role in the Vincentian family today.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, you who willed to become poor, give us eyes and a heart directed toward the poor; help us to recognize you in them; in their thirst, their hunger, their loneliness, and their misfortune. Enkindle within our Vincentian Family unity, simplicity, humility, and the fire of love that burned in St. Vincent de Paul. Strengthen us, so that, faithful to the practice of these virtues, we may contemplate you and serve you in the person of the poor and may one day be united with you and them in your Kingdom. Amen.



CM #11. Serving in Hope, Module VI —Session 1: Our Spirituality

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) appreciate the Essential Element of Spirituality in the Conference; (2) Comprehend the importance of Prayer and Spiritual Formation; (3) Recognize the role of the Spiritual Advisor; and (4) Understand the Vincentian Discernment process..

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

“A lawyer stood up to pose this problem to Jesus: ‘Teacher, what must I do to inherit everlasting life?’ Jesus replied, ‘What is written in the law?’ He replied: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself’. Jesus said, ‘You have answered correctly, Do this and you shall live.’” (Luke 10: 25-28)

THE JOURNEY TOWARD HOLINESS

- Rule, Part I: 2.2 states: *“Vincentians are called to journey together towards holiness, because true holiness is perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which I central to their vocation and the source of its fruitfulness. The aspire to burn with the love of God as revealed by Christ and to deepen their own faith and fidelity....They draw nearer to Christ, serving Him in the poor and one another. They grow more perfect in love by expressing compassionate and tender love to the poor and one another.”*

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an international organization of lay person, Catholic in character, who seek, in a spirit of justice and charity and by person-to-person involvement, to help those who are suffering.

To provide this personal and neighborly help, Vincentians organize themselves into small working groups, known as ‘Conferences,’ which are the first line of action. Vincentians regard the Conference as the paramount unit of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It is at this grass-root level that the great majority of Vincentians find themselves engaged in the person-to-person service with troubled persons and families in their immediate neighborhood.

From the foundation in 1833, the Essential Elements of the Society have been Spirituality, Friendship and Service. That is why the Rule calls us to make the journey together towards holiness.

Therefore, Spirituality is the first purpose of the Society. Our goal is NOT to bring help to the poor, at least when defined as material ore financial assistance, but **to bring the love and peace of Christ to those who are suffering.** Vincentians enhance their own spirituality by finding their Master, Christ, in the person of those they serve.



Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.



CM #11 – Our Spirituality (continued)

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality serves as the life of a Conference, its vitality. Vincentian spirituality is based on the very real presence of Christ in those whom we serve. God became man through his Son and, in doing so, He brought great dignity to all humankind. He also brought good news to the poor, hungry and oppressed. Vincentians understand and believe this, and also know that when they come to the aid of poor friends or neighbors, they are serving Jesus, their friend and neighbor. This is the core of Vincentian Spirituality

Without Spirituality, our Conference becomes just another welfare organization dispensing food, clothing and money. By brining God into the picture, the dispensing turns into loving help and concern for the individual we are trying to assist.

Vincentian share a marvelous vision of the love of God extended to both rich and poor. Vincentians are thankful for the grace of serving the poor and finding the face of Christ, often disguised in so many ways, in the faces of those they serve.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE CONFERENCE

It is essential that all Conference meeting open with a Prayer, a spiritual reading using the Vincentian Reflections and a discussion with everyone participating. The normal time for this part of a Conference meeting is 10-15 minutes. The Vincentian Reflections are found on www.svdpusa.org (under Spiritual Resources).

After the Conference business meeting is concluded, a closing Prayer is said. This can be from the standard Vincentia prayer card, or the Conference can innovate.

VINCENTIAN CELEBRATIONS: Rituals and Ceremonies is a resource from the National Council which offers prayer services for: Annual Commitment, Commissioning Ceremonies, Funeral/Wake Services, Feast Day Celebrations and Vincentian Meetings.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

How do we live the Essential Element of Spirituality in our Conference?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Let us pray:

Lord, grant us the wisdom and strength to persevere when disappointed or distressed. May we never claim that the fruitfulness of our apostolate springs from ourselves alone. United in prayer and action, may we become a visible sign of Christ, and may we give witness to His boundless love, which reaches out to all and draws them to love one another in Him. Amen

i *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 9-15 in Serving in Hope Session 6.1.*



CM #12. Serving in Hope, Module VI —Session 2: Our Friendship

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) appreciate the Essential Element of Friendship in the Conference; (2) understand how the Conference is a Community of faith and love, of prayer and action; (3) recognize the importance of Servant Leadership; and (4) identify ways to involve Youth and Young Adults.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

“Jesus said to his disciples: ‘As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Live on in my love. You will live in my love if you keep my commandments, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and live in his love. All this I tell you that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I have love you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.’” (John 15:9-17)

FRIENDSHIP

- RULE, PART 1: 3.3 STATES: “The members meet as brothers and sisters with Christ in the midst of them, in Conference that are genuine communities of faith and love, of prayer and action. Spiritual bonds of friendship between members are essential, as is the common mission to help the poor and marginalized. The entire Society is a true and unique worldwide Community of Vincentian friends.”

Therefore, Friendship is our second Essential Element. In our Conferences we are called to create an environment where men and women can work and associate with others who share their Christian ideals and values. Together we grow in spirituality and friendship, and that is why Rule, Part I: 3.3.1 directs that “The Conferences meet regularly and consistently, usually weekly but at least twice a month.”

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Vincent, a servant leader, was always concerned about the growth of those he served. He would strike a fire in their hearts to see Jesus in the face of the poor. Vincent recruited ordinary people and asked of them extraordinary service. He looked for willingness and an open heart, and he always believed in them. Vincent gathered others to help with his projects. He did not look for stars but grew them and encouraged them! Vincent knew the goodness in people’s hearts and called it forth. This is why the followers of Vincent de Paul are rooted in the desire to grow in spirituality, respect, and friendship with others, and in person-to-person service.

St. Vincent came to be a servant leader through prayer and scripture. He was inspired by Jesus who said “Earthly kings lord it over their people. Those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. Yet it cannot be that way with you. Let the greater among you be as the junior, the leader as servant.” (Luke 22: 25-26)

To be a servant leader, following in the steps of Vincent, means to be always searching, listening, expecting that a better solution is possible. Indeed, Vincentians must always be seeking new and better ways to serve the poor which was consistent with our Rule and heritage.



CM #12 – Our Friendship (*continued*)

KNOW THE MISSION AND VISION

The very essence of leadership, going out ahead to show the way, demands an openness to inspiration. But, it is true, that the leader needs more than inspiration. The leader must initiate, provide ideas, and structure, and take the first risk of failure along with the chance of success. Therefore, leaders must know the Mission and the Vision in order to dream the dream and show the way. Vincent and Frederic planted their Mission and Vision firmly in the minds of their followers and never wavered from it. The Mission and Vision now live on in us.

YOUTH

There are many different approaches to getting your people involved but the most important step is to try. Parish Conferences can be connected to youth and young adults in elementary, high schools, colleges, and universities.

The Conference might start to engage the young people by educating them about the mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the works performed by the parish Conference. The members of the Conference may invite the young people to assist in various projects that they sponsor and work alongside active Vincentians. This may provide an opportunity to spark an interest in the Society and an invitation to return. Another way to attract young people is a willingness to try something new or to be flexible on how something is done and when it has to be completed. The youth or young adults are ready to share their talents and take on some responsibility.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

How do we live our Essential Element of Friendship in our Conference? How does our Conference reflect the principles of Servant Leadership? How can we involve Youth and Young Adults?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, deepen our Vincentian spirit of friendship during this meeting, make us responsive to the Christian calling to seek and find the forgotten, the suffering or the deprived so that we may bring them you love. Help us to be generous with our time, our possessions and ourselves in this mission of charity. Perfect in us your love and teach us to share more fully in the Eucharistic Sacrifice offered for All.

i *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 17-25 in Serving in Hope Session 6.2.*



CM #13. Serving in Hope, Module VI —Session 3: Our Service

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) understand the Essential Element of Service in the Conference; (2) appreciate that ‘No work of charity is foreign to the Society’; (3) Identify how to be a ‘Voice of the Poor’; and (4) recognize the need for Systemic Change.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

“I call you friends...It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit. Your fruit must endure, so that all you ask the Father in my name he will give you. The command I give you is this, that you love one another.” (John 15:12-17)

SERVICE TO THE POOR

- Rule, Part I: 1-2 states: “Vocation of the Society’s members, who are called Vincentians, is to follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love. Members show their commitment through person-to-person contact. Vincentians serve in hope.”
- Rule, Part I: 1.3 tells us that: “No work of charity is foreign to the Society. It includes any form of help that alleviates suffering or deprivation and promotes human dignity and personal integrity in all their dimensions.”
- Rule, Part I: 1.8 states: “Vincentians serve the poor cheerfully, listening to them and respecting their wishes, helping them to feel and recover their own dignity, for we are all created in God’s image. In the poor, they see the suffering Christ.”

The Essential Element of Service roots us in our Vincentian Vocation by calling us to person-to-person service, which encompasses every form of aid that alleviates suffering and the dignity and self-respect of our fellow men and women. The Society strives not only to alleviate need but also to discover and redress the situation which cause it.

ACTION ORIENTATION

Vincentians regard the plight of distressed people as a cause for sensitive and informed boldness, rather than timidity. An alert Conference will come to realize they have the right, and sometimes the duty, to provide leadership in attacking the social problems of our society. Perhaps this will mean direct responsibility for coping with unmet needs. If the task is beyond its own capacity, the Conference may serve as a catalyst within the parish or work within their Council to develop needed special works.

TEMPERED WITH REALISM

Conferences must be realistic in what can be accomplished. If they attempt too much, they will exhaust themselves in contacts of a superficial sort and will be able to share little of themselves with those who often desperately need human warmth and caring. If Conferences attempt too little, they will become bored with themselves, and become institutionalized obstacle in the way of what otherwise might become dedicated and generous parish concern for the poor.



CM #13 – Our Service (continued)

PERSON-TO-PERSON

Many possibilities for person-to-person service exist. Whatever program of charitable action is eventually adopted, Vincentian involvement should possess these characteristics:

- A witness of Christ’s love for all men and women;
- A personal sharing of time and interest on the part of the Vincentian with those in material and spiritual need;
- Promoting the dignity of the human person; and
- The furthering of individual self-help.

CHARITY AND JUSTICE

The profound words of Frederic Ozanam speaks to our hearts: “For if the question which disturbs the world around us today is not a political question, but a social questions; it is the struggle between those who have nothing we 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 Christian 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.” (Frederic Ozanam, November 5, 1836)

THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The ‘**Voice of the Poor**’ is a relatively recent yet rapidly growing program of the Society. Its purpose is to increase public awareness of the causes of poverty, obstacles that hamper the poor in their struggle to improve their lot, and injustices which call out for redress. The role of the Conference in this area is to communicate these conditions in such a way as to gain the attention, sympathy and action of legislators and others who have the power to fix these conditions.

SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Our Mission states: “Organized locally, Vincentian 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 to those serve because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ.” ...Therefore, Vincentians make a commitment to walk with the poor not only for the short term but especially for the long haul...to empower them to become self-sufficient.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

How does our Conference live the Essential Element of Service? How does our Conference promote social justice and systemic change?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus deepen our Vincentian spirit of friendship during this meeting, make us responsive to the Christian calling to seek and find the forgotten, the suffering or the deprived so that we may bring them your love. Help us to be generous with our time, our possessions and ourselves in this mission of charity. Perfect in us your love and teach us to share more fully in the Eucharistic Sacrifice offered for all. Amen.

i *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 33-34 in Serving in Hope Session 6.3.*



CM #14. Serving in Hope, Module VI —Session 4: Our Home Visits

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) appreciate how the Home Visit is rooted in our heritage; (2) identify the attitudes of a Vincentian heart; (3) recognize the Rule and Guidelines for Home Visits; (4) understand the importance of Home Visit Teams..

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

“Zacchaeus first ran out in front, and climbed a sycamore tree which was along Jesus’ route, in order to see him. When Jesus came to the spot he looked up and said, ‘Zacchaeus, hurry down. I mean to stay at your house today.’” (Luke 19:2-3)

OUR DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER

- Rule, Part I, 1.9 tells us: “Vincentians endeavor to establish relationships based on trust and friendship. Conscious of their own frailty and weakness, their hearts beat with the heartbeat of the poor. They do not judge those they serve. Rather, they seek to understand them as they would a brother or sister.

In observing both the Rule and the Spirit of the Society, the home visit is the closest thing the Society has to a fundamental activity, practiced universally. “The visiting of the poor in their dismal homes is the distinctive character of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Pal.” (Emmanuel Bailly, 1841)

And so, from the beginning of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the central and most fundamental activity of the Conferences has been the visitation of the needy in their home. This action is the clearest symbol of the Vincentian charism which dictates the highest respect for the dignity of the poor: the visitor becomes the guest and the person being helped is the master. It is in the home environment that needy persons feel most free to entrust their stories of struggle. It is there, in the family setting, that Vincentians are asked to listen, offer humble advice, and render assistance.

HOME VISITS

Frederic Ozanam told us: “The science of charity reform is not transmitted through books and at assemblies’ tribunes as much as by climbing stairs to visit the home of the poor, kneeling at his bed, suffering from the same cold as he does, and discovering the secret of a grief-stricken heart in the course of a friendly conversation.”

The following “Rules for Home Visits” essential deal with attitude. Attitude is what you bring to the visit. It affects the way you think and the way you act. It truly is your contribution to the encounter. It is not so much the materials things that we give that are important as what we bring in our hearts.



CM #14 – Our Home Visits (continued)

FREDERIC’S WORDS

“Help is humiliating when it appeals to men from below, taking heed of their material wants only, paying no attention to those of the flesh, to the cry of hungry and cold, to what excites pity, to what one succors even in the beasts. It humiliates when there is no reciprocity, when you give the poor man nothing but bread, or clothes, or a bundle of straw---when, in fact, there is no likelihood of his ever giving you in return...

But it honors when it appeals to him from above, when it occupies itself with his soul, his religious, moral, and political education, with all that emancipates him from his passions and from a portion of his wants, with those things that make him free, and may make him great. Help honors when to the bread that nourishes it adds the visit that consoles, the advice that enlightens, the friendly shake of the hand that lifts up the sinking courage; when it treats the poor man with respect, not only as an equal but as a superior, since he is suffering what perhaps we are incapable of suffering; since he is the messenger of God to us, sent to prove our justice and our charity, and to save us by our works.

Help then becomes honorable, because it may become mutual, because every man who gives a kind word, a good advice, a consolation today, may tomorrow stand himself in need of a kind word, an advice, or a consolation; because the hand that you clasp clasps yours in return; because the indigent family whom you love loves you in return, and will have largely acquitted themselves towards you when the old man, the mother, the little children shall have prayed for you.” (21 October 1848, Frederic Ozanam)

SPIRITUALITY ON HOME VISITS

Teams should always pray before and after making a home visit. If our primary goal is to bring the love and charity of Christ to those we visit, what better way of doing so than to say a prayer with the people we are visiting. God’s love is meant to be given away along with the food, rent or utility check. This is what makes us different this is what makes us Vincentian. Guidelines for praying with those you visit:

- Be aware of what has been discussed during the interview and pray for that intention (health, employment, strength to overcome an addiction, etc.)
- Ask them: “How about a prayer?” If they agree, ask if they would want to “lead us in prayer”. If they decline to lead and you are not comfortable with a spontaneous prayer, pray the “Our Father” together.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

How does our Conference ensure that the help we give is “Help that becomes honorable”?

CLOSING PRAYER:

We thank You, Lord, for the many blessings which we receive from those whom we visit. Help us to love and respect them, to understand their deeper needs, and to share their burdens and joys as true friends in Christ. Amen.

i *Rules and Guidelines for home visits home visits and additional enrichment material can be found on pages 37- 45 in Serving in Hope Session 6.4.*



CM #15. Serving in Hope, Module VI —Session 5: Our Parish

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Understand the relationship between the Conference and the Parish, (2) Appreciate the importance of the role of the Pastor, (3) Identify ways to develop a beneficial relationship with your Pastor.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

Jesus replied, "I solemnly assure you, the one who has faith in me will do the works I do, and greater far than these. Why? Because I go to the Father and whatever you ask in my name I will do, so as to glorify the Father in the Son. Anything you ask me in my name I will do." (John 14: 12-14)

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH HIERARCHY

The relationship between the Conference and the Pastor requires continuing communication between the two.

- The Pastor needs to know what Conference activities are being planned and what is being accomplished within his parish. Conversely, the Conference needs to know what the parish is planning that might impact its ability to serve those in need.

The best way to nourish a healthy relationship is to have the Pastor or his appointed staff member attend the Conference meetings. If this is not possible, the President should meet regularly with the Pastor, monthly if possible, or at least quarterly, to keep him updated as to Conference activities. It is best to have a regular set date so that the communication will be ongoing.

PERSONALITY CONFLICTS AND AUTHORITY DISAGREEMENTS

We are responsible for working out a personality conflict with our Pastor, not vice versa. Remember that the Society exists and operates in the parish only with the permission of the Pastor. Keep in mind that it is not the Pastor or the SVdP Conference that will be impacted by a failed relationship. It is those in need who will suffer.

There are serious conflicts which could arise over the issue of authority and, if not resolved, could seriously impact the Conference or be a major violation of the Rule of the Society. The Conference leader is expected to give ground when trying to resolve a personality conflict with the Pastor, to honor as best s/he can the Pastor's wishes regarding helping individuals and families, but is expected to hold her/his ground on serious matters involving the Mission, Rule and Bylaws.

The Rule
Part I, Section 5.1

Faithful to the clear intentions of Blessed Frederic Ozanam and his companions, the Society has a close relationship with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Respect of the members for the hierarchy provides the foundation for harmonious reciprocal cooperation.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM #15 – Our Parish (continued)

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

SDVP funds must not be co-mingled with parish funds. However, a collection taken up by the parish for the Conference may be counted by the parish, and the amount issued promptly to the Conference by parish check.

The Conference must have its own bank account, separate from the parish's account(s).

Members of the ordained clergy (priests or deacons) cannot be Officers of a Conference, although they can serve as Spiritual Advisor. Members of the clergy must not be authorized signers on the SVDP checking account.

The Conference does not need the approval of the Pastor, or of the parish staff before helping an individual or family. Parish staff should not verbally or otherwise commit the Conference to assist certain people.

The Conference honors their Pastor by paying bills he has incurred or reimbursing him for expenses taking care of the hungry, homeless or those otherwise in need.

Finally, some Conferences provide parish office staff with food bags, bus tickets, gasoline vouchers and referral forms for the homeless and desperate who walk in off the street when SVDP teams are not available. We work together to serve God's poor.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

How well does our Conference maintain a close relationship with the Pastor?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, deepen our Vincentian spirit of friendship during this meeting, make us responsive to the Christian calling to seek and find the forgotten, the suffering or the deprived so that we may bring them your love. Help us to be generous with our time, our possessions and ourselves in this mission of charity. Perfect in us your love and teach us to share more fully in the Eucharistic Sacrifice offered for all. Amen

i *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 50-55 in Serving in Hope Session 6.5.*



CM #16. Serving in Hope, Module VI —Session 6: Our Church

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) understand our relationship with the Church; (2) appreciate our obligation to the Pastor; (3) Recognize the importance of understanding cultures; and (4) identify the lay character of the Society..

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

Jesus replied, “Blest are you Simon son of John! No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. I for my part declare to you, you are ‘Rock’ and on this rock I will build my church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it. I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 16: 19-20)

OUR DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER

- Rule, Part I, 7.2 tells us: “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.”

The Society is an independent, voluntary association of lay persons, fully approved by a succession of Roman Pontiffs (Popes). Conferences have always been closely identified with their parish communities. Fulfilling those responsibilities requires goodwill, respect and devotion by Conference members and their leaders.

The Conference and its members must enter into the life of the Church fully, generously and enthusiastically! This implies active involvement in parish life beyond the works of the Conference. We are not a ‘stand-alone’ organization within our parish community.

ACCEPTANCE

Vincentian work can be viewed as a celebration of the diversity and solidarity of the human family. God’s love accepts us without reserve. Many people come to us feeling unloved and rejected. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul or special works offer acceptance. What is acceptance? Acceptance means you are valuable just as you are. Acceptance personifies love. The basic charism of the Society means acceptance---respect for the dignity of the human person, meeting their hunger for friendship, and caring enough to provide help with the person needs---all in a person-to-person encounter.

SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE

One of the essentials of any faith-based ministry is making people with faith-based values accessible to others within your Conference, church or community. What greater gift could we bring to those who are suffering than help in recovering their faith.



CM #16 – Our Church (continued)

YOU ARE THE CHURCH

Remember that you will visit hundreds of people who would never call a Catholic priest or even step foot in a Catholic Church. Yet they invite you into their homes. A basic rule of communication is: PERCEPTION IS REALITY. And you are perceived to be the Catholic Church. How you act and talk and pray is how they will believe our Church acts and talks and prays.

UNIVERSAL CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was founded on the concept of helping people in need. Our assistance is given no matter someone’s color, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, race or legal status. We offer assistance to everyone, just as Crist offered love to everyone, Jew and Gentile alike.

PRESERVING THE CATHOLIC CREDO

Frederic Ozanam was rooted in the faith of the Roman Catholic Church. Reassured in faith, after a time of doubt, Frederic promised God that he would devote his life to the service of truth. The Society, therefore, was founded in the faith and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Vincentians uphold the doctrine and social teachings of the Church and maintain the highest level of cooperation with and respect for the Pastor, the parish staff and other ministries. The relationship we have with our Pastor is critical for the success of the Conference and its Mission. The Pastor is not obliged to support the Conference financially. We earn his support as we help him minister to the needs of those within his parish boundaries. An active, positive working relationship is to be sought, one that is mutually beneficial. It is our responsibility to make this work.

(Strategies for creating a positive working relationship with the pastor can be found on pages 61-62 of Serving in Hope—Module VI.)

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

In what ways does our Conference participate in the life of the Church? What strategy is the greatest challenge for our Conference?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, deepen our Vincentian spirit of friendship during this meeting, make us responsive to the Christian calling to seen and find the forgotten, the suffering or the deprived so that we may bring them your love. Help us to be generous with our time, our possessions and ourselves in this mission of charity. Perfect in us your love and teach us to share more fully in the Eucharistic Sacrifice offered for all. Amen.

i *Additional enrichment material can be found on pages 63-64 in Serving in Hope Session 6.6.*



CM #17. The Book of the Sick – Part I

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Recognize Christ presence within our hearts and in others, (2) Appreciate the connection between our faith life and our actions, (3) Appreciate our role sharing, inviting or renewing faith in all our encounters.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was with him for healing. And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set [him] in his presence. But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, “As for you, your sins are forgiven.” Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?” Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, “What are you thinking in your hearts?

Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed, “I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home.” He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they said, “We have seen incredible things today.” (Luke 5:17-26)

REFLECTION AND VINCENTIAN MEDITATION:

“We do not have two lives, one for seeking the truth, the other for practicing it. That is why Christ does not let himself be sought. He shows himself fully alive, in this Christian society which surrounds you, He is in front of you, He is pressing against you.” [Frederic Ozanam letter to Charles Hommais, June 16, 1852]

One year before his death and in the midst of a long illness, Blessed Frederic’s faith was stronger than ever. Much like the friends of the paralytic, he too had recognized well the connection between the internal realities of God’s presence and his outward actions. Living the Vincentian mission asks the same of us as we share in the lives of neighbors in need. By putting our faith in action even when challenges exist, we enable the face of Christ to look deeply into the eyes of Christ.

The Rule

The Spirituality of Blessed Frederic Ozanam

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.*



Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.



CM #17 - The Book of the Sick – Part I (*continued*)

DISCUSSION:

Share a time when you physically felt the presence of Christ pressing against you.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Father, grant that we who are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist may realize the depths of our needs, respond more spontaneously to the suffering of others, and come to love You more deeply by service to our neighbor.

Grant us also the wisdom and strength to persevere when disappointed or distressed.

May we never claim that the fruitfulness of our apostolate springs from ourselves alone.

United in prayer and action, may we become a visible sign of Christ and may we give witness to His boundless love which reaches out to all and draws them to love one another in Him.

Amen



Additional enrichment material can be found In the Book of the Sick Part I.



CM #18. The Book of the Sick – Part II

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Recognize the suffering Christ in the friends we visit, (2) We can find strength in God when helping our friends in need, (3) Through God in our lives, we can still be a light to the world in the midst of our own suffering.

FIRST READING (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

I went to doctors for a cure, but the more they applied ointments, the more my vision was obscured by the white scales, until I was totally blind. For four years I was unable to see, and all my kindred were distressed at my condition. (Tobit 2:10)

REFLECTION:

Prior to his blindness, it is written that Tobit made good choices throughout his life. He had behaved wisely and compassionately, nonetheless, he suffered. You might say that the book of Tobit delivers a good reflection on the question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” We witness this often in the neighbors we serve. Perhaps, the question asked should be rephrased to, “Do I recognize the suffering Christ in the friends we visit?” ...Or maybe... “How do I continue to trust in the Lord in the midst of trouble?”

Tobit’s continuing trust in God and desire to help others, despite his brokenness and suffering, opened the door to so much wisdom and opportunities impacting all involved. Eventually, his unwavering faith in God triggered a series of events that brought about greater comfort, wisdom and peace for many including Tobit himself. The story is retold often.

The Rule

Vincentians are called to journey together towards holiness, because true holiness is perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which is central to their vocation and the source of its fruitfulness. They aspire to burn with the love of God as revealed by Christ and to deepen their own faith and fidelity. Vincentians are aware of their own brokenness and need for God's grace. They seek His glory, not their own. Their ideal is to help relieve suffering for love alone, without thinking of any reward or advantage for themselves.

GOSPEL

They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.” And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, “Son of David, have pity on me.” Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take courage; get up, he is calling you.” He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man replied to him, “Master, I want to see.” Jesus told him, “Go your way; your faith has saved you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way. (Mark 10:46:52)



CM #18 - The Book of the Sick – Part II (continued)

VINCENTIAN MEDITATION:

As Vincentians, we encounter suffering both within as well as in our brothers and sisters we serve. The attitudes, and reactions we carry with us can have a direct impact on the actions taken or the results witnessed. By placing God at the forefront of our lives, we can grow and become a brighter light to our friends. We need look no further than Blessed Frederic to get a clear example of this growth in today’s world. Four months before his death, he wrote:

“God’s hand has touched me. It has touched me, I believe, like Job, like Hezechiah, like Tobit, not unto death but until I have been tested for a long time. Unfortunately, I do not have the patience of those just men, letting myself be depressed by suffering, and I would not be comforted in my weakness if I did not find in the Psalms cries of pain which David shouts out to God and to which God finally replies by granting him forgiveness and peace.”

(To Alexandre Ferriny-Jérusalem, San Jacopo, 6 May 1853)

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

How has God’s hand touched me, allowing me to see like Bartimaeus, like Tobit or like Frederic?

Do I recognize the suffering Christ in the poor? How so?

CLOSING PRAYER (Psalm 91:1-4,9-16) – On Hope and Trust):

Left Side:

**You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shade of the Almighty,
Say to the LORD, “My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust.”
He will rescue you from the fowler’s snare, from the destroying plague,
He will shelter you with his pinions, and under his wings you may take refuge;
his faithfulness is a protecting shield.**

Right Side:

**Because you have the LORD for your refuge and have made the Most High your stronghold,
No evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent.
For he commands his angels with regard to you, to guard you wherever you go.
With their hands they shall support you, lest you strike your foot against a stone.
You can tread upon the asp and the viper, trample the lion and the dragon.**

Left and Right Side:

**Because he clings to me I will deliver him; because he knows my name I will set him on high.
He will call upon me and I will answer; I will be with him in distress;
I will deliver him and give him honor.
With length of days I will satisfy him, and fill him with my saving power.**

i *Additional enrichment material can be found In the Book of the Sick Part II.*



**CM #19. Conference President Handbook - Introduction/ Organization;
Servant Leadership; Conference Regulations/Council/National Council Office**

Developing Discovering Deepening Discerning Spirituality Friendship Service Servant Leadership

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Appreciate as Vincentian servant leaders regardless of our role in the conference, (2) Identify the attitudes and effective servant leader, (3) Recognize the charisms we can share in our role as a servant leader.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

Then an argument broke out among them about which of them should be regarded as the greatest. He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and those in authority over them are addressed as 'Benefactors'; but among you it shall not be so. Rather, let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. For who is greater: the one seated at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one seated at table? I am among you as the one who serves. It is you who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father has conferred one on me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matthew 6:19-23)

READING (taken from Vincentian Leadership - Conference President, IV, Servant Leadership)

The Conference President Handbook, provides insight and a roadmap as we continue to define our roles as district leaders. Considering our call to greater holiness and the Rule, consider the following from the handbook:

"Vincent recruited ordinary people and asked of them extraordinary service. He looked for willingness and open hearts, and he always believed in them... He did not look for stars, but grew them and encouraged them!"

"To be a servant leader, following in the steps of Vincent, means to be always searching, listening, expecting that a better solution is possible."

"The very essence of leadership, going out ahead to show the way, demands an openness to inspiration... The leader initiates, provides the ideas and structure, and takes the risk of failure along with the chance of success."

"Frederic, a servant leader, honed his listening skills and became a listener-leader. Listening in respect and compassion gives the servant leader empathy and humility."

"As a Vincentian servant leader, you will also learn that you are not expected to do all of the work, but that you are called to delegate, encourage, and inspire the members to work together to accomplish the mission. Leadership in the Society differs greatly from commerce and industry because of its voluntary nature. Accordingly, members need to be led rather than pushed, and persuaded rather than told."

The Rule

Following Christ's example, the Presidents at all levels of the Society endeavor to be servant leaders. They provide an encouraging atmosphere in which the talents, capacities and spiritual charism of the members are identified, developed and put to the service of the poor and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The President of the Conference or Council will have special responsibility for promoting Vincentian spirituality.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM #19 – Servant Leadership (continued)

REFLECTION

We live in a world where business leaders are often invited to take charge first, then serve as time allows. It is even written that “success begins with good leadership.” Jesus saw similar traits in his day and used it a way to call us to a greater opportunity, namely servant leadership. Contrary to leadership first, servant leadership begins with those who first yearn to serve and act accordingly. In the words of Jesus, “let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant.” St. Vincent’s and subsequently blessed Frederic’s mission was indeed one based on love of God, love of neighbor and, leaders grown from those who serve.

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*

DISCUSSION:

What challenges you most in your participation as a servant leader of the St. Vincent de Paul Society?
What charisms do you bring with you that can benefit all Vincentians?

CLOSING PRAYER (Beatitudes of a Vincentian Servant Leader:

O God, give us the blessing and grace to be a Vincentian Servant Leader:

Left Side:

Blessed are the leaders who have not sought the high places, but who have been drafted into service because of their ability and willingness to serve.

Blessed are the leaders who know where they are going, why they are going, and how to get there.

Blessed are the leaders who know no discouragement, who present no alibi.

Right Side:

Blessed are the leaders who know how to lead without being dictatorial, because true leaders are humble.

Blessed are the leaders who seek the best for those they serve.

Blessed are the leaders who develop new leaders.

Both Left and Right Sides:

Blessed are the leaders who march with the group, interpreting correctly the signs on the pathway that leads to success.

Blessed are the leaders who have their head in the clouds but their feet on the ground.

Blessed are the leaders who consider leadership an opportunity for service.

For this we pray.

Amen

(SVDP Milwaukee, Adapted from the Leadership Prayers by Richard Kriegbaum)

i *Additional enrichment material can be found in The Conference President Handbook, Section IV, Pages 23-27.*



CM #20. Cultural Belief — One Society

Developing	Discovering	Deepening	Discerning	Spirituality	Friendship	Service	Servant Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: (1) Recognize that the entire Society (locally and globally) is a true and unique worldwide community of Vincentian friends, (2) Appreciate that each member’s personal participation in the mission of the Society is essential to the fulfillment of its mission.

PRAYER (recommend traditional opening prayer followed by scripture passage below)

Jesus said to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Men do not light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket. They set it on a stand where it give light to all in the house. In the same way, your light must shine before men so that they may see the goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father.” (MATTHEW 5: 13-16)

VISIONING AND PLANNING

The Society is called to look to the future with ways and means not only to sustain those in poverty but to search and implement plans to eliminate poverty. Many feel it is impossible when they recall Jesus’ words: “The poor will always be with you.” This statement is true because of the human state. However, Jesus strived his entire life to change this vision of life to a new paradigm of faith, hope and love, and anyone who followed this way would have life to the full.

St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam shared these possibilities creating organizations and structures to guide this vision. Thus was born the Vincentian Family and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Today the Society in the United States has created a Mission Statement and Vision to achieve Jesus’ aspiration of humanity. We have placed our plans and actions in the hands of Divine Providence to lead our way.

St. Vincent de Paul understood achieving visions and ideals require that they must be clearly defined, thoroughly planned and clearly achievable for those working in the ‘vineyard.’ Today we call this process strategic vision and plans to achieve the vision.

The Rule 1.6

Journey together towards holiness...

“Faithful to the spirit of its founders, the Society constantly strives for renewal, adapting to changing world conditions. It seeks to be ever aware of the changes that occur in human society and the new types of poverty that may be identified or anticipated. It gives priority to the poorest of the poor and to those who are most rejected by society.”

i *Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.*



CM #20 – Cultural Belief – One Society (continued)

STRATEGIC PLAN (NATIONAL SVDPS)

In 2011, the National Council under National President Sheila Gilbert approved a wide-ranging updating of the Strategic Plan of the Society with the theme to “**End Poverty Through Systemic Change.**” The plan redirects efforts to change the lives of those in poverty not only by sustaining their existing life conditions but also by giving them tools and mentors to move them out of poverty.

3rd Goal. Achieve unity at every level of the Society.

4th Goal. Embrace systemic change to deepen solidarity for and with those living in poverty.

To guide the Society into the future, the National Council decided in January 2015 to simplify the elements embodied in its Strategic Plan and to build a culture of accountability in the Society that would lead the Society forward in achieving its goals. To do so, from 2015 to 2016, it received input from many Vincentians across the country as well as from an outside consultant (**Partners in Leadership**). From this input the Society learned that what we believe as part of our organization’s culture moves us to actions which in turn lead to final results. Although this may sound simplistic, nevertheless it really works. Acting on this input and information, the Society decided to embrace the seven Cultural Beliefs identified by members as part of our organization’s culture and its hopes to achieve the four Key Results (listed below) by being faithful to and acting on these beliefs:

(NATIONAL KEY RESULTS 2016-2021)

1. Increase Number of Active and Associate Members
2. Increase Number of Councils/Conferences utilizing System Change Strategies
3. Increase Number of People Served
4. Increase Income of all Councils/Conferences



Pause in silence for reflection—underline the words/phrases that touched you.

DISCUSSION:

“Spiritual bonds and friendship between members are essential, as is the common mission to help the poor and marginalized. The entire society is a true and unique worldwide community of Vincentian friends.” (Rule 1:3.3)

In way ways does the Rule challenge me personally to grow in fraternal unity in our local conference? In what ways can we work in solidarity with other conferences in our common mission to help the poor and marginalized?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Almighty Creator, help us see that you plan is not established until all are allowed to contribute their unique talents.

Help us to realize that none of us can move forward as long as one of us is left behind.

Help us work not in competition for our own gain or purpose, but rather in cooperation towards fulfillment of your plan for all of us.

We pray “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.”

Amen.