

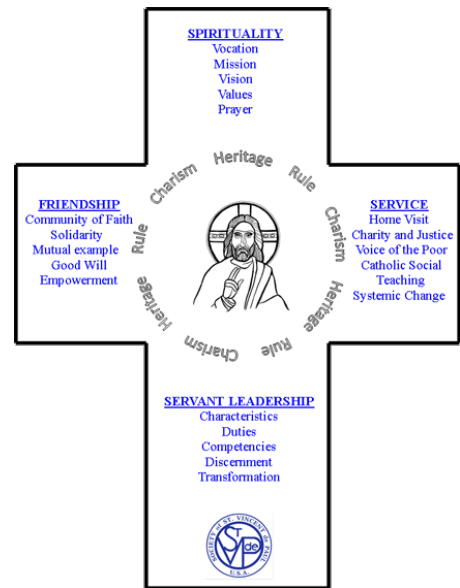




# *St. Vincent de Paul Society*

## *Walking the Vincentian Pathway*

### *Ongoing Formation Opportunities for Vincentian Spiritual Growth*



## *Instructions Manual*

August 9, 2023  
Revision 1

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## **I. Introduction**

Since the establishment of the first St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1833, men and women have come together to help neighbors in need. In order that Vincentians might find the willingness, strength and wisdom to be God's witness in the world, continuous spiritual growth is necessary. Our constant spiritual formation and growth must therefore remain at the forefront of our Vincentian mission.

The Rule says this about Vincentian Spirituality:

*"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, and to improve the sensitivity, quality and efficiency of their service to the poor..."*  
*(The Rule, Section 3.12, Page 12)*

The Vincentian Pathway Program is designed specifically to help all Vincentians in their journey to greater holiness through reflection, prayer and discernment. This is a personal journey as well as a communal one in association with other Vincentians. It is with this in mind that this program is offered. Through a series of sessions, all members of the Society are provided an invitation to walk the Vincentian Pathway within their conference and through personal growth opportunities.

It is this team's hope that this manual will provide a sampling of what is possible of all Vincentians as they journey together within their conferences, their districts, their council.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Your Los Angeles Pathway Coordination Team

## **II. Document Scope and Purpose**

This Pathway manual is developed to assist individual conferences as together they walk the Vincentian Pathway. It is intended to be used as a guide only to lead Spiritual Advisors and Conference Presidents in the preparation, development, and execution of the Pathway program integral within conference meetings and sessions. While it is understood that Vincentian spirituality is both personal and shared, the contents included focus on our relationships as conference members with invitation for personal opportunities outside these meetings.

The Pathway Manual is to be used in conjunction with "Walking the Vincentian Pathway, Conference President and Spiritual Advisor Record and Planner." Each session defined within the manual volumes has a direct reference to the planner. The associated planner is available for purchase at:

<https://ssvpusa.org/product/walking-the-vincentian-pathway-conference-planner-2/>



### **III. The Pathway Manual Structure**

This Pathway Manual is broken into multiple volumes. The Vincentian Pathway process is a lifelong journey to spiritual formation requiring a multiyear rotation of materials and opportunities. Consequently, the Session Planner is broken down into multiple volumes to accommodate the comprehensive approach to the program.

Reflection samples have been prepared and included for each topic segregated by Volume for your use while walking the Vincentian Pathway. The materials developed are labeled by CM#. It is important to note that while samples exist and are free to use at will, they are not fully comprehensive nor required by your conference to follow the process. Much as each person's journey to greater holiness is individual so it is within each conference; consequently, you are invited to consider either prepared materials or generate your own, including preparing your own reflection by using the session planner.

You are also invited to share with this team any materials you develop while walking the Vincentian Pathway. These will be evaluated for inclusion into the next version of the volume planners or appendices accordingly. You may send these to [VincentianServices@svdpla.org](mailto:VincentianServices@svdpla.org).

The breakdown for Pathway Years and Reflections is as follows:

- Volume 1, Year A - "The Year of the Seven Founders"
  - Discovering Vincentian Spirituality
  - Discovering Friendship
- Volume 2, Year B - "The Year of Blessed Frederic Ozanam"
  - Discovering Vincentian Service
  - Developing Vincentian Spirituality
- Volume 3, Year C - "The Year of St. Louise de Marillac"
  - Developing Vincentian Spirituality
  - Developing Vincentian Friendship
  - Developing Vincentian Service
- Volume 4, Year D - "The Year of Blessed Rosalie Rendu"
  - Developing Vincentian Service
  - Developing Vincentian Servant Leadership
  - Deepening Vincentian Spirituality
- Volume 5, Year E - "The Year of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton"
  - Deepening Vincentian Friendship
  - Deepening Vincentian Service
  - Deepening Vincentian Servant Leadership



#### **IV. Conference Meeting Expectations**

To develop conference meeting expectations for the Pathway process, we look no further than The Manual:

*Vincentians are called to holiness by striving to conform ourselves to Jesus, doing God's will, and devoting ourselves to the service of God's suffering and poor. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is composed of women and men who seek personal holiness by works of charity. In this essential way, the Society differs from charitable associations or agencies whose principal objective is not the spiritual advancement of their members but the doing of good for others. (The Manual, Vincentian Ministry, page 52).*

Knowing that our primary Vincentian call is to grow in holiness, any expectation placed on our continuing formation must first and foremost meet this objective. With this in mind and aware that spiritual formation is foundational to our conference meetings' agenda, the following expectations and suggestions are offered for your perusal and implementation. Note that these are not necessarily the only options but rather offer suggestions on approaching Pathway within your conference.

- The Pathway process is complimentary to prayers, reflections, and meditations already in progress within your conference. While the approach can vary from one conference to another, the Pathway process can be incorporated in a multitude of ways including but not limited to:
  - Separate from the opening prayer, reflection, meditation and closing prayers.
  - Separate from the opening prayer but fully integrated within your conference reflections and meditations.
  - Introduced prior to the opening prayer, and fully integrated within the reflection, meditation, and closing prayer.
- The process is to follow the sessions described within “Walking the Vincentian Pathway, Conference President and Spiritual Advisor Record and Planner.” These sessions do not need to be done in any particular order although you may find it easier as one topic often builds on the next.
- It is highly recommended that some time be dedicated at every conference meeting for Pathway. It is suggested that prayer and reflection time including the opening prayer, reflection, meditation, Pathway additional materials and closing prayers be allocated at least 30 minutes at each meeting.
- Materials recommended for use can often be more comprehensive and require more time than is typically available within a conference meeting. This can be addressed in a multitude of ways:
  - Use multiple meetings to cover a single topic or CM#.
  - Provide materials to Vincentians ahead of time for preparation prior to the meeting(s).
  - Invite Vincentians to follow up in personal reflection or reading after the meeting(s).
  - Set up reflection sessions where topics are further explored after they have been introduced at conference meetings.
  - Provide additional questions for prayer and consideration outside conference meetings.
- As a Spiritual Advisor or Conference President, you are best able to determine the needs and approach for your own conference. Do not be afraid to alter or modify your approach to Pathway while considering the following questions:
  - Does your defined approach continue to grow your conference members in holiness?
  - Does your technique meet required elements listed within The Rule, The Manual and Conference By-Laws?
  - Can your approach be aligned to at least one topic listed in the Conference Planner?
  - Does your method invite further discernment, prayer or reflection?



## **V. Preparing and Presenting Pathway Topics**

Prepared reflections that meet the objectives of Pathway are included in each Volume for conference use as desired. There are conferences, however, that may want to prepare their own reflections as associated with Pathway topics. A blank Session Planner as defined and included in Sections VI and VII for Spiritual Advisors and Presidents wishing to develop their own reflection while walking the Vincentian Pathway may be used.





## **VI. Optional Conference Meeting Session Planner Usage**

While applying the Meeting Session Planner is optional (when not using prepared reflections), you are invited to follow a structured approach should you decide to develop your own reflection. The meeting session planner is this team's suggestion for topics necessary while preparing for a spiritual reflection for your own conference.

Developing a meeting session that meets the objectives of the Pathway process and making it work within the allotted time can be a daunting task. Proper planning and organization is key to easing the burden and developing a process that enhances the spiritual and growth objectives. The Conference Meeting Session Planner is intended to help to prepare and coordinate for the best possible outcome.

The session planner is broken down into multiple sections. Whether using the pre-filled forms or preparing your own, the purpose for each section is both important and necessary. Each is defined below.

### **Who is responsible?**

Proper planning mandates that specific responsibilities be declared. Describe here who is doing what including roles and responsibilities. Of prime importance to maximize the time planned, identify the planning activities (e.g., who will read, share, print, etc.).

### **What materials are needed?**

All materials and collateral needed to effectively meet the Pathway objective are key. List in this section all the materials required. This may include a list of books, Module sections, videos, guides or any other material that is planned for use.

### **What are the key points?**

List key session objectives in this section. These may be easily discernable when materials include Serving in Hope Modules (i.e., these can be the objectives listed in the section covered) or quite complex in other cases (e.g., book references or videos). Wherever these originate, make certain that the key points listed are covered during the meeting. This may require reducing these or separating them into multiple sessions. Omitting this step may leave you with little direction or unknown time elements.

### **How will we present these points?**

This answers how the topic(s) will be covered during the conference meeting. Be as detailed as necessary in this section to have a clear path forward when presenting the key objectives. Cover in this section areas such as finding a prayerful space, what to read, when to read it and the logistics for the meeting in order to both present and achieve the goals outlined. When developing this section, always keep in mind that the Pathway process is intended to invite Vincentians into further formation and growth beyond just training or education.

### **What questions will we discuss?**

Develop and list the question(s) that you will be asking during the meeting to lead the conversation associated with the key point identified. These should be written in a manner that invites further discussion or reflection. Avoid questions that mandate only a yes or no answer or any that do not invite further reflection.

### **Additional Enrichment Materials**

As identified in a previous section, our formation and growth into further holiness involves both communal and personal spiritual examination. This means that the topic covered in one evening is not simply a checkmark on a list (although tracking is recommended within the planner). Rather each of us should leave our conference meetings feeling invited and empowered to seek more about the session. Identify in this section any additional materials that may be used individually to enforce the discussion and meditation that occurred during the meeting (i.e., Serving in Hope Modules typically contain easily accessible enrichment reading ~~easily accessible~~).

### **Closing the Session**

Identify in the Closing section how the transition from Pathway formation to other elements of the meeting will occur. Depending on the topic, this may be a closing prayer, an invitation to practice the theme during the meeting or a continuation to be tied together later in the meeting.



## VII. Conference Meeting Session Planner

*This document is intended to be filled out ahead of time as you develop a customized Pathway reflection for your meeting. Use the planner to help focus your approach, intent and development of the topic.*

CM# -

Date:

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

### It's a Journey...Let's get ready!

#### Who is responsible?

Briefly describe who is doing what. Include their roles and responsibilities.

#### What materials are needed?

List the materials required to accomplish the objectives for the current session. Include a list of books, videos, guides, etc. to be used.

### It's a Journey...Let's start walking!

#### What are the key points?

Briefly list primary takeaways you hope to achieve by this session.



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**How will we present these points?**

List methods you will use to share the key takeaways.

**What questions will we discuss?**

Develop one or two questions to lead the conversation associated with the key point(s).

**Additional Enrichment Materials**

**Closing the Session**