

Vincentian Awareness Month



**Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Milwaukee
Archdiocesan Council**

OCTOBER 2023



Guide for Conference Presidents

Greetings!

Vincentian Awareness Month has traditionally provided us the opportunity to share our story of service to Neighbors in Need in our communities. We encourage parish members to put their faith into action when we share the story of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Awareness Month begins in celebration of the Feast Day of St. Vincent de Paul, (September 27) and resources are provided for publication in October.

The weekly topics are Spirituality, Friendship, Service, Servant Leadership and Solidarity with the Poor. This guide provides suggestions for publicity, promotion, and conference prayers or activities. Share information with the parish pastor or director, secretary or media and bulletin editor. The images and websites can be used in online platforms for social media, parish websites, as well as bulletins.

Share Your Story of Vincentian Life
with Others!

*Image of Frederic Ozanam on a home visit
in the Mouffetard district of Paris.*



Information compiled by the Milwaukee
District Council Staff and reviewed by the
Archdiocesan Council Voice of the Poor
Committee

Theme: Spirituality

Prayer for a Conference Meeting

A Prayer to Ignite the Fire of Our Vincentian Hearts

O God, you provide us with your Holy Spirit as light to guide us on our life's journey and to guide the Saint Vincent de Paul Society just as you gave your Spirit to the Apostles on Pentecost Sunday. As we recognize that light as an ember in our hearts, help us to fan that flame to be a beacon of hope to the path of our needy brothers and sisters and to revitalize our society.

We ask for your wisdom, strength, and courage to open our mind and heart as you did to the founders of our society. Help us to renew our conferences through the insight and ideas shared during this month of Vincentian Awareness. We also ask you to open the hearts of people to consider this ministry as a way to manifest their faith by service to others.

Help all of us to see where transformation in our own lives can bring us closer to You. Help us to know that growth occurs through transformation and a willingness to accept new challenges, ideas, and opportunities as we thank you for calling us to the gift of this ministry.

We ask this through Christ our Lord, our healer and source of all hope. Amen

Conference Activities

1. **Ask the pastor or parish director** to inform parishioners of Vincentian work. Provide an impact message about the importance of the gift certificates, food baskets, or holiday collections. If possible, tell a short story of a special home, hospital, or nursing home visit. Sharing a personal story (keeping confidentiality in mind) is one of the most effective tools that we have for motivating parishioners to act.
2. **Use Invitation to Serve** as a guide to conduct a membership drive. It is **overwhelmingly successful** throughout the country in drawing new members. The resource is available in English and Spanish:

[Outreach – St. Vincent de Paul USA Member Site \(ssvpusa.org\)](http://ssvpusa.org).

3. **Attend Mass** on the Feast Day of St. Vincent de Paul together as a conference.

Bulletin Article

WEEK 1- SPIRITUALITY

On September 27, we celebrate the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, a priest during the 17th Century recognized for his great compassion, humility, and generosity and known as the "Great Apostle of Charity." His teachings about God's special presence in the poor are revolutionary even in our day. The St. Vincent de Paul Society was established in Paris, in 1833, and has been present in the United States for over 175 years. The Society is represented in the Milwaukee Archdiocese by over 120 conferences throughout our Catholic parishes.

Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are called Vincentians. They journey together in friendship to put their faith into action by offering service to people experiencing poverty, suffering and need.

Today begins our Awareness series to inspire you to learn more about the Society's history and mission. Vincentian members of our parish ask for your prayers to encourage them in their mission of following Christ through compassionate service to those in need.

You can find more information about the National Society of St. Vincent de Paul at www.svdpusa.org. Our local website is www.svdpmilw.org. (Enter your own district or local website address, if applicable.)



Vincentian Commitment Ceremony at Mass

Provide this guide to the presider as a way to profess your Vincentian commitment. Suggestion is to rise from your seat and stand in your pew at the appointed time during Mass. Make copies of the guide for Vincentians in attendance so that they can read aloud their response.

Presider: I invite the members of our parish who represent us as members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society to stand to profess their Vincentian Commitment to serve the poor on behalf of our parish. Spirit of the living God,

Vincentians: Come and breathe your life anew.

Presider: Passionate fire of God's love,

Vincentians: Ignite the talents and gifts of everyone present here and enkindle our hearts with the fire of your love.

Presider: Do you commit yourself to spiritual growth in your work, so that you may bear witness to the love of God and to see the face of Christ in the faces of those you serve?

Vincentians: We do.

Presider: Do you commit yourself to serve the poor in a spirit of justice and charity?

Vincentians: We do.

Presider: We ask the Lord to bless you: (sign of blessing)
May the flame of God's love light your way and lead you to grow in the path of spirituality and holiness.

Vincentians: Amen

Presider: May the Spirit strengthen you in the ways of justice and charity, and may you bring hope and healing into the hearts of all those who are poor and suffering.

Vincentians: Amen

Presider: May your hands and hearts be nourished for the work that lies ahead, that you may be compassionate to human need, tender and strong in your care and faithful to the commitment of service you renew today.

Vincentians: Amen

Be seated after the commitment ceremony and blessing.

Commitment Ceremony During a Conference Meeting

If you are unable to gather during Mass, use this guide during a conference meeting to celebrate your spirit of friendship and commitment to Vincentian service.

President or:
Spiritual Advisor: I invite you to join me in professing our commitment to serve the poor on behalf of our parish.

In response to the call of Christ who invites you to follow him, do you promise to be a witness to his boundless love for the poor, the lonely, the suffering and deprived, those without faith and those who feel unloved?

Vincentians: I do, and I ask for the grace to grow in holiness of life and to share in a longing for spiritual growth and enrichment.

President or
Spiritual Advisor: Do you firmly resolve to treasure the warm friendship and unity which was, from the beginning, a hallmark of our Society?

Vincentians: I do, and I ask for the grace to grow in humility and simplicity so that true friendship may grow in my heart.

President or
Spiritual Advisor: Do you promise to seek and find the forgotten, the suffering or the deprived so that you can bring them your love?

Vincentians: I do, and I ask for the grace to be sensitive to their vulnerability, to respect and not to judge or blame them.

President or
Spiritual Advisor: Do you promise to be generous with your time, your possessions and yourself in your mission of charity?

Vincentians: I do, and I ask for the grace to always serve in justice and charity so that I can be an advocate and a voice for the poor.

President or
Spiritual Advisor: Do you promise to persevere in regarding your home visits as a sacred trust?

Vincentians: I do, and I ask for the grace to be more aware of the blessings I receive from those I visit.

President or Spiritual Advisor: Let us pray together:

Vincentians: Lord Jesus, you who willed to become poor, give us eyes and hearts 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 de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam, 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 with and to our suffering brothers and sisters. Amen.

Theme: Friendship

A CONFERENCE REFLECTION ON AWARENESS

(Please use as a spiritual reading)

Gospel (Matthew 5:13-16)

“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”



Reflection

You are a bright, beautiful being. Feel that, know that. If you have trouble believing this, ask yourself what blocks you from shining brightly? Is it fear, ego, peer pressure, insecurity? Prepare to let go of those things that keep you hidden under a bushel. Share the brightness and beauty of Who You Are at your work place, with your customers, clients and co-workers. When you live true to who you are, at work and elsewhere, you let your light shine. When you stop short of being your authentic beautiful self, when you bow to pressure from others to be a certain way, that's just not you. You hide your light under a bushel. It helps no one and eventually dims your own life. (Linda Ferguson, *Path for Greatness: Spirituality at Work*)

Vincentian Meditation

In the Society, there is a long tradition that draws our members into a quiet obscurity that often makes our works so confidential that no one knows we exist. While humility is still one of our Vincentian virtues, we must not forget what drew Frederic Ozanam and his college companions out to the ghettos of Paris: their desire to give witness to an unbelieving world that their faith was still relevant. Does our world today not need a similar witness? As Vincentians, we need to balance the admirable quality of humility with the need to become better known - not so much as individuals, but as believing Catholics who are not afraid to light our candles and put aside anything that would stop that light from being visible. We must become shining examples of good so that all may believe.

Discussion

Do our parishioners know what is being done by our conference? Do we ever report how their donations are used? What could we do to make our works be better known?

Closing Prayer

- God, there are those who do not know your presence,
-**may our lives be a sign of faith for them.**
- God, there are those who live in fear and doubt,
-**may our lives be a sign of hope for them.**
- God, there are those who do not experience your love,
-**may our lives be a sign of love for them.**
- God, there are those who are poor and oppressed by others,
-**may our lives be a sign of justice for them. Amen**

Conference Activities

1. **Each one Reach one:** Each member makes a commitment to invite a friend, relative or parishioner to one of the Society activities - serving at a meal program, helping at the pantry, or attending a conference meeting.
2. **Offer to host** a Hospitality/Donut/Coffee Sunday after Masses. Display information about your conference activities. Distribute prayer cards, bookmarks, flyers to those who stop by.

Bulletin Articles

WEEK 2: FRIENDSHIP

“It is our vocation to set people’s hearts ablaze, to do what the Son of God did, who came to light a fire on earth in order to set it ablaze with His love.” Bl. Frederic Ozanam

Vincentians are guided by three essential elements:

- SPIRITUALITY
- FRIENDSHIP
- SERVICE.

The practice of a faithful life, guided by prayer and devotion to Mass, is the foundation. In the spirit of friendship, Vincentians meet regularly to pray and reflect on the Gospels. Enriched by the Word, they are inspired to encounter Christ in service to the poor, lonely, needy, disheartened, or ill.

The home visit is the basic, most fundamental activity of a Vincentian ministry. Rather than have people come to us, we make friendly visits to them. When we are able, we try to meet the immediate need first and then try to help them develop a longer-term plan. One of our most important gifts to leave behind is a feeling that someone cares and that there is hope. In times of social distancing, Vincentians adapted their means of outreach and were able to provide the compassionate care of Christ in a changing environment. Now, more hands are needed to outreach to those in great need. Would you like to learn more about the St. Vincent de Paul conference of our parish? Contact: (insert local conference contact information).

* * *

[EWTN Global Catholic Network](#) aired a special called “Our Faith in Action: Today’s Society of St. Vincent de Paul”, illustrating how Vincentian volunteers made innovations in how they serve neighbors in need, during the pandemic. These stories represent the adaptations made to support our neighbors in nearly 4,500 communities we serve nationwide. Watch this 30-minute video to see first-hand the ways our Vincentians served in the spirit of friendship:

[Our Faith In Action: Today’s Society of St. Vincent de Paul Pandemic Special](#)

Theme: Service

The feast of Blessed Frederic Ozanam, the founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, is on September 9. As a college student in 1833, Frederic led a small group of his classmates into the poor areas of Paris to do what they could to address the needs for food and fuel. September 27 is the feast day of St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) whom Frederic and friends took as their patron saint. Blessed Sr. Rosalie Rendu (1786-1856) taught them how to minister to God's poor. Working one-to-one with families, they gave witness to non-believers about the vitality of their faith. This model of assistance spread through Europe and arrived in our Milwaukee Archdiocese in 1849.

Stores, Meal Sites, Food Pantries

STORES

Thrift stores are a special ministry of SVDP. There are 17 St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Stores in our Archdiocese. In addition to household necessities to persons served by over 120 SVDP conferences, the stores produce surplus income to support the other activities and programs in their local counties, such as meal programs, food pantries, and other special works to help families and individuals in need.

Conference Activities

1. **Host an 'awareness table'** at your Council thrift store. Have information available about all SVDP does in your local community. Promote with flyers and signage throughout the Store. Have store discount coupons available to encourage new shoppers.
2. **Make copies and display** the SVDP Stores in Southeast Wisconsin flyer (see page 12).



MEAL SITES

SVDP conferences sponsor and support various meal sites throughout the Archdiocese to provide nutritious meals to families and individuals in need. Volunteers are critical to their success.

Conference Activities

1. **Invite others** to volunteer with your conference members at one of the SVDP meal sites. They always appreciate volunteer help and you'll be rewarded by the smiles on the faces of those you serve.
2. **Hold a drive to collect items** needed for the meal sites for seasonal events such as Back to School, Easter baskets, or special occasions. Talk with the meal site coordinators to determine what items are needed.

FOOD PANTRIES

Many SVDP conferences operate food pantries in their parish.

Conference Activities

1. **Hold an Open House** to showcase your food pantry operation. Give tours to show what food is available, what is needed, and how it's organized. Hold a *Spring Cleaning* event, so parishioners can help you clean shelves and reorganize!
2. **Hold a drive** to collect items needed at your Food Pantry. Oftentimes, toiletries, paper products or laundry products are requested by pantry guests.

Bulletin Articles

WEEK 3: SERVICE

Members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society visit people in all kinds of distress to offer a helping hand and a listening ear. Aside from helping with basic needs for the homes of individuals and families, Vincentians provide for the unhoused, the homebound, and the imprisoned. Two-person teams conduct needs assessments. Personal visits are the catalyst of our worldwide organization.

Service in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul can be appealing to any age group. "No act of service is foreign to the society." Families can serve together at meal sites or food pantries. 'Mini-Vinnies' are groups of young people that come together for fundraisers or service projects. Working adults assist with data entry, social media posts, and other tasks that fit in busy schedules. Retirees provide services that can fill free time during the day. Do you, a friend, a grandchild, or neighbor have the ability or gift to share? Do you feel a nudge to assist in this long-standing lay ministry? For information on how easy it is to get involved, contact (enter local conference contact information).

* * *

Statistical Data: Share the Good News of your charitable works and gratitude for monetary donations and support by sharing statistical data with your parish members.

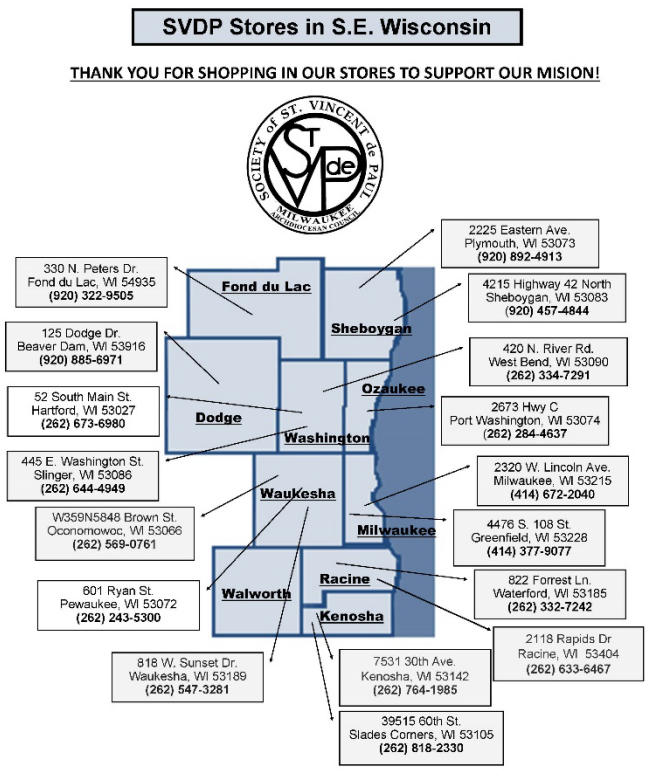
For Example- Conference Level

- # of Visits
- # of children / adults helped
- Type of assistance provided
- Financial details
- # of years your conference has been active in the parish
- # of members and total years of service

For Example- Council Level

- # of conferences in your council
- # of visits overall
- Fiscal year monetary donations or donated goods
- # of Vincentians overall
- # of service hours overall

of people whose needs were met by council conferences

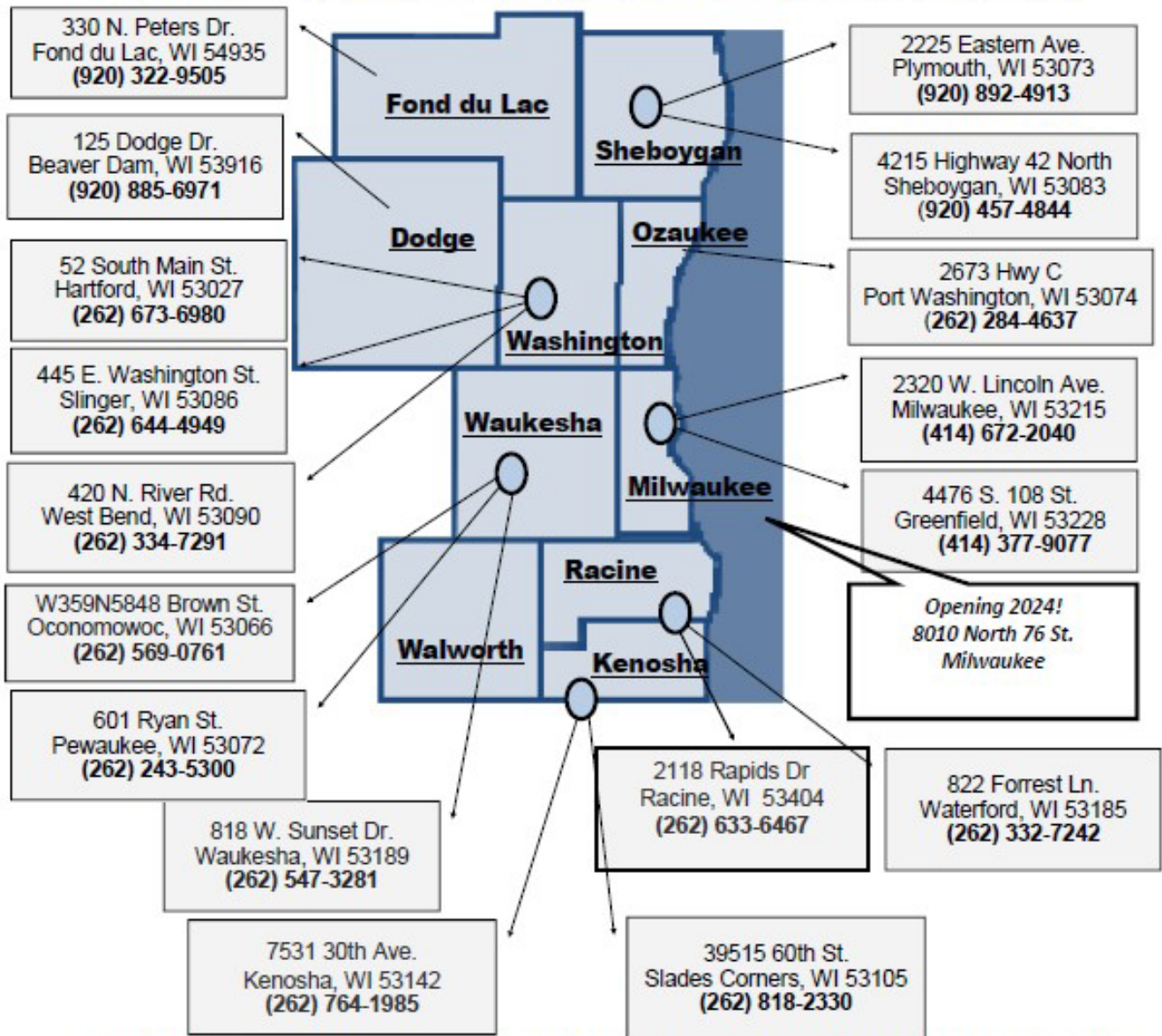


(Image for bulletin insert)

SVDP Stores in S.E. Wisconsin

There are 17 St. Vincent de Paul store locations in the 10 county Milwaukee Archdiocesan area. In addition to providing used clothing and household goods to persons served by over 100 SVDP volunteer groups, the stores produce surplus income to support the other activities and programs in their local counties, such as free meal programs, food pantries, and other special works to help families and individuals in need.

THANK YOU FOR SHOPPING IN OUR STORES TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION!



**To find help for neighbors in need: In Milwaukee County, call 414-462-7837 Ext 110.
For all other counties, call the closest store.**

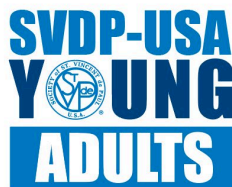
Theme: Servant Leadership

A servant leader's life is based on spirituality, friendship, and service. "St. Vincent de Paul had a profound impact during his lifetime. He transformed the way social service was practiced in Europe...He did this through strategy and action, as leader and manager. His legacy is carried on today in organizations he organized, nurtured, and inspired – the Congregation of the Mission, Daughters of Charity, Ladies of Charity, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and others" (Vincentian Leadership Model, depaul.edu). Following the example of Jesus, Vincent invited ordinary people to join in extraordinary service. He looked for and encouraged the goodness of people's hearts. Thus inspired, Vincentians are rooted in looking for new and better ways to serve those in need.



Conference Activities

- 1. Update Conference Leader Contact Information:** This is a good time of year to inform your Pastor or Parish Director of any changes in leadership for your conference. Provide a list of the names of your Conference Officers and Spiritual Advisor. Invite your parish leaders to a “meet and greet” conference meeting to pray together, to offer your assistance and answer questions.
- 2. Servant Leadership Prayers:** Pray for Vincentian leaders as a conference by using this booklet: [Vincentian Servant Leader Prayers](#).
- 3. Walking the Vincentian Pathway:** This is a process of ongoing formation for Vincentians as you discover, develop, and deepen your Vincentian heart and discern the many opportunities for Vincentian leadership. More information can be found here: <https://members.ssvpusa.org/formation/vincentian-pathway-toolbox/>
- 4. Invitation For Renewal:** This is a Vincentian Servant Leadership Formation Program for current and emerging Vincentian Leaders. Participants learn to move forward in ways that are true to both our spiritual foundation and the needs of those who are living in poverty today. Contact Sherry Brown for information at sbrown@svdpusa.org or 314-576-3993 ext. 200.
- 5. SVDP-USA Youth:** Post this graphic in your parish social media platforms or bulletin and invite young adults to join you in a service activity or a conference meeting. More information at: <https://www.svdpusa.org/youth>



The Society of St. Vincent de Paul USA

"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."

WHO ARE WE?

We are young adult members in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, changing the world through our faith, service, and friendship through an international network of charity.

"It is our vocation to set people's hearts ablaze, to do what the son of God did, who came to light a fire on earth in order to set it ablaze with his love."
- Blessed Frederic Ozanam

DID YOU KNOW SVDP WAS STARTED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS?

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was started in Paris, France in the year 1833 by a small group of college students. Challenged to show how they live their faith, they began gathering together to pray and serve their community. Nearly 200 years later, you can join in their tradition.

OUR FOCUS



FAITH

Putting our faith into action.
Seeing Christ's face in those we serve.
Sharing, Reflecting, and Praying.



SERVICE

Personal interaction with friends in need.
Empowering the voices of the poor.
Pursuing a charitable and just world.



FRIENDSHIP

Making meaningful, life-long friendships.
Encouraging and supporting one another
on our journeys in faith.

Bulletin Articles

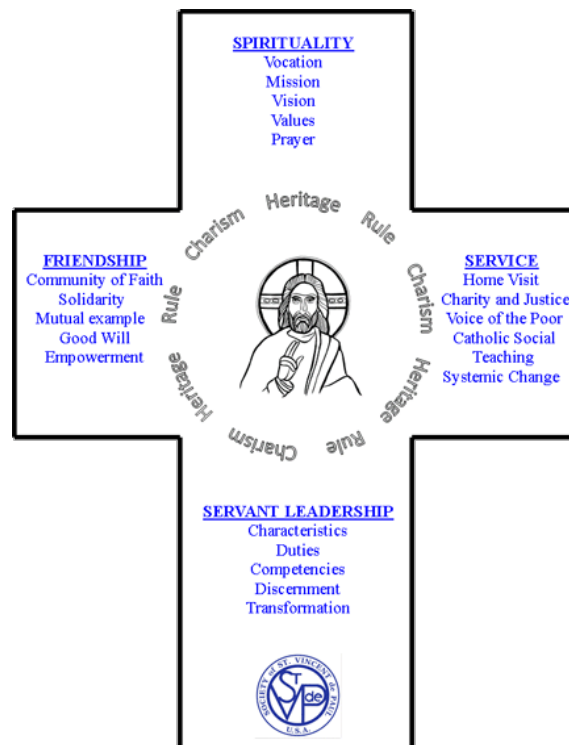
WEEK 4: SERVANT LEADERSHIP

A Vincentian heart is a heart on fire to serve the mission of Christ. A ‘super volunteer’ of his time, Frederic Ozanam’s vision was “to establish a network of charity and social justice to circle the world.” We are deeply grateful for the St. Vincent de Paul conference members at our parish who readily show Christ’s love to people experiencing poverty, suffering and need. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, they reliably move into action to relieve distress in our community. They bring hope to situations that seem impossible, and they remain faithful to their purpose because they see the face of Christ in others. Ask yourself: Do I feel a nudge to assist in this long-standing lay ministry? In this time of great need, has my heart been moved to help relieve distress in my community? We invite you to follow your heart and serve with us.

Learn more about the Vincentian impact by contacting: (enter local conference contact information).

Weekly Bulletin Announcements: SVDP Society provides a quarterly resource of short bulletin reflections on the weekly readings. Access the quarterly announcements at the link below:

[Bulletin Announcements – St. Vincent de Paul USA Member Site \(ssvpusa.org\)](https://ssvpusa.org)



Theme: Solidarity with the Poor

In addition to quietly and discreetly serving families and individuals in need in our Archdiocese, Vincentians also are concerned over the broader issues that affect them. The St. Vincent de Paul Society has a standing committee called the Voice of the Poor with the purpose to educate its members on legislative issues that impact the lives of the poor. Vincentians are urged to identify these negative impacts and share their concerns with those who legislate and administer programs to lessen the suffering of the poor. Some Vincentians also become mentors to people who are having difficulty in managing things in their lives. Waukesha County SVDP, for example, runs a “Coming Together to Get Ahead” program, which helps people change their lives.

VOICE OF THE POOR MINISTRY

At times, the Voice of the Poor Committee may issue **Action Alerts** to make Vincentians aware of issues that affect the poor which are before State or Federal legislative bodies. Make sure your conference discusses these alerts. Members of the Society are urged to contact their respective legislators to support or oppose such legislation which affects the poor.

The primary information sources on most issues are the National SVDP Voice of the Poor Committee, Catholic Charities U.S.A., the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Wisconsin Catholic Conference. Encourage members to sign up for **VOTERVOICE** on the National SVDP Website:

<https://votervoices.net/svdpusa/home>

The Voice of the Poor speaks as a unified voice on behalf of the poor. The Archdiocesan Voice of the Poor committee meets on the second Saturday of each month. Contact Dave Busch, VOP Committee Chairperson, for more information: dabusch99@yahoo.com.



Bulletin Article

WEEK 5: Solidarity with the Poor

Besides offering direct service to individuals and families, the St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVDP) maintains a standing committee—the Voice of the Poor Committee—to inform Catholics on legislative issues affecting the lives of the poor.

From time to time, this committee disseminates **Action Alerts** regarding issues before state or federal legislatures. SVDP members and parishioners are urged to contact their elected representatives to support or oppose legislation affecting the poor.

You can stay informed on these important issues by registering to receive Action Alerts from VoterVoice.

And consider joining the Voice of the Poor Committee in your area. If your SVDP Council does not have a VOP Committee, consider starting one!

The VOP Committee meets monthly to discuss timely issues and topics that impact those in need locally, and welcomes new members.

For more information, you can contact the Voice of the Poor Chairperson in Milwaukee, here: dabus99@yahoo.com



This past year, your donations to St. Vincent de Paul have provided:

- # visits to others in need
- \$ for household necessities
- years of service in our community



SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

HEARTS ON FIRE TO SERVE

IN OUR PARISH AND IN OUR COMMUNITY



**AT THE HEART
OUR HISTORY**

"What is your church doing today?" In 1833, young college student Frédéric Ozanam and five friends responded by creating the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The Society is represented in the Milwaukee Archdiocese in over 100 parishes including our own!

FROM THE HEART

VISITS TO OTHERS IN NEED



What stands out in our outreach is our friendship through person-to-person contact with people in crisis. Representing our parish, Society members help others with emergency assistance such as food, personal or household needs. We meet regularly as a group to pray together and in support of each other for the services we provide.



IN THE HEART

OUR 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." We respect the dignity of each individual created in God's image. Our faith's tradition of compassionate care and love for the most vulnerable is put into action with Vincentian charism.

BE THE HEART

WE NEED YOU! JOIN US!



A Vincentian heart is a heart on fire to serve the mission of Christ! In this time of great need, has your heart been moved to help relieve distress in our community?

We invite you to follow your heart and serve with us.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
APR. 24, 1581 - SEPT. 27, 1660
BL. FREDERIC OZANAM
APR 23, 1813 - SEPT. 8, 1853
SOCIETY FOUNDED
APRIL 23, 1833

Come.
Serve the poor with us.
You are all they need.

OZANAM

servant to the poor

“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.”

(Rule 1.8)