

# Conference Spiritual Advisors Handbook



Society of St. Vincent de Paul  
Archdiocesan Council of St. Louis



## Purpose

### *To Increase the Holiness of Its Members*



- ◆ Remind us to center on Christ
- ◆ Build a faith community
- ◆ Guide us to an inward movement to God FIRST

Our primary purpose as a Society is to grow in holiness. AND THEN to serve those who are poor. This may seem selfish or self-serving, but recall that holiness is why we live and what we strive for. As Vincentians, we do that by caring for the least of our brethren.

-Matt. 25- our final judgment

That is the holiness we are striving to achieve...How can we increase the holiness of our members?

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# Vocation

## Vocation or Volunteer

- ◆ Volunteers are wonderful and very needed.
- ◆ Volunteers are often those who want to help and “do tasks.”
- ◆ Simply stated, “vocation” means a “call.”
- ◆ Your vocation is what God calls you to do with your life.
- ◆ We are all called to know, love and serve God. The difference is how we answer the call.

*What does your vocation mean to you?*

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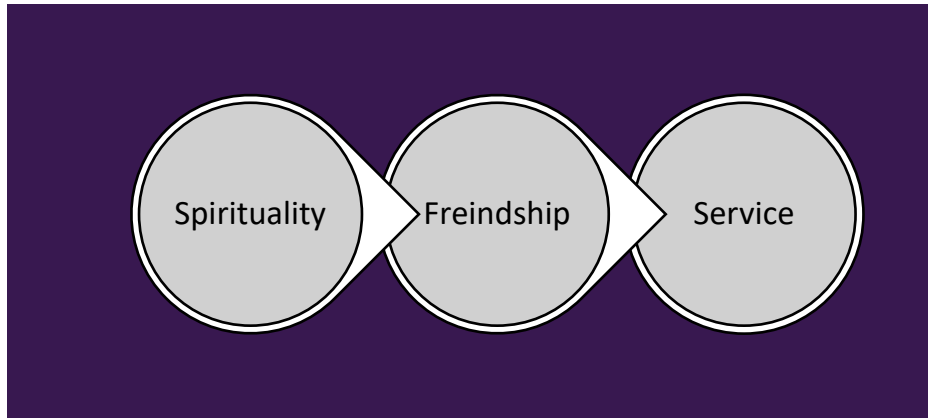
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# Spiritual Advisor's Checklist

- Attend Conference meetings faithfully.
- Participate in Conference activities, including at least some direct service to those in need if circumstances permit.
- Assume responsibility for guiding the spiritual activities and development of the Conference.
- Organize Opening and Closing prayers for each Conference meeting.
- Plan and facilitate readings, reflections, discussions at each Conference meeting using Society resources.  
See Vincentian Reflections from National SVDP:  
<http://www.svdpusa.org/members/Programs-Tools/Tools/Spirituality-Formation/Vincentian-Reflections>
- Assist the President in ensuring meetings are conducted in the Vincentian spirit of friendship and charity toward members and neighbors who request help.
- Maintain on-going communication with the Pastor or Parish Administrator.
- Work with District Spiritual Advisor, St. Louis Council, or National office to plan other spiritual or formation activities for the Conference as appropriate.
- Provide Society resources to guide Vincentians who are looking for materials to deepen their spirituality.
- Model Vincentian Virtues and The Three Pillars of the Society: Spirituality, Friendship and Service.

# Model The Three Pillars



**Vincentian Spirituality:** This call to be holy is the first call of all Vincentians. We cannot be expected to see Jesus Christ in the poor until we can see Jesus Christ in ourselves. And we cannot see Jesus Christ in ourselves until we recognize that everything is in His hands, and we are only His poor instruments. This level of trust in Divine Providence can most easily be summed up in Frederic’s daily prayer: “O God, I will what you will, when you will, in whatever way you will, because you will.”

**Vincentian Friendship:** Being consistently holy in our world is a continual challenge. Each of us knows our own human frailties and the ease with which our virtue can be eroded by our human tendencies. The Society brings together people of good will, intent on imitating Jesus and, by doing so, assisting each other in drawing nearer to the Divine Model. Through the example and continual challenge of our fellow Vincentians, our virtue is strengthened. We learn to see and love God in the person of the other.

**Vincentian Service:** It is God’s unfathomable love for mankind that is central to our understanding of the Mystery of the Incarnation. St. Vincent reminds us that “Since Christ willed to be born poor . . . He made himself the servant of the poor.” If God loved all mankind that much, then the corporal and spiritual works of mercy are necessary expressions of that. We do what we do for the person of Jesus, who is, in truth, the flesh-and-blood neighbor in need standing before us.

# What We Do as Spiritual Advisor

The responsibilities of the Spiritual Advisor are very simple, yet so very important the being a Vincentian and being a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

**Meetings**– Prepare materials for reflection (SVDP, Scripture, etc.)

- ◆ Lead/delegate opening and closing prayers
- ◆ Utilize published Society resources or provide appropriate Vincentian or scriptural readings
- ◆ Lead discussion/reflection after each reading
- ◆ Insure all meetings are conducted in a spirit of Vincentian friendship

**Special Prayers and Sessions**- Plan and Execute

- ◆ Collaborate with Council Spiritual Advisor in setting up spiritual development programs
- ◆ Retreats, Formation or Commissioning Services

**Deeper Faith Awareness**- Help Members to Deepen their Faith Awareness

- ◆ We are Catholic first, best drawn into the mystery of the Church through the Eucharist and Scripture. As Spiritual Advisors we arrange, as possible, to attend Eucharist together on Society feasts.
- ◆ Spiritual Advisors call Vincentians together as a **faith community**, loving & accepting one another in Christ.
- ◆ We must continually nurture our belief of Christ's presence in the poor
- ◆ We meet the poor personally and become at home with them.

## Role of the Spiritual Advisor

If your Conference are wanting to increase the spirituality piece of being a Vincentian, here is how you can support them.

- ◆ Spiritual Animator
- ◆ Spiritual Facilitator
- ◆ Development of Vincentian Spiritual Life
- ◆ Inspire & challenge toward new works
- ◆ Provide guidance on spiritual matters
- ◆ Keep Focus on practical love toward the poor

### **Spiritual Animator**

Do you know anyone who has this power to rouse others? Think of Jesus and how people came alive when he spoke or acted. He stirred some longing and truth in them. We pray for his Spirit to “enkindle in us the fire of his love.”

- Bring to life
- Enliven
- Rouse
- Stir
- Stimulate



**Spiritual Facilitator** Establish Ground Rules: they are a foundation for the group’s communication. This helps create a safe environment for the participants to communicate openly without fear of being criticized by others.

Vincentian Ground Rules

- Maintain Confidentiality
- Be honest, Real, Direct and Genuine
- Maintain a Non-judgmental attitude
- Criticize the idea not the person
- Pass if we are not conformable
- Don’t interrupt
- Be Brief
- Agree to Disagree
- Be Empathetic
- Maintain a Sense of Humor

Facilitator Do’s	Facilitator Don’ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use Open-Ended Questions</li> <li>○ Begin the Sharing (when necessary)</li> <li>○ Listen respectfully to each other, even if you disagree</li> <li>○ Ask for Specifics and Examples</li> <li>○ Keep the Group on Task</li> <li>○ Avoid Prejudicial Comments</li> <li>○ Prevent Dominance of Some Participants</li> <li>○ Paraphrase and Summarize</li> <li>○ Acknowledge Contributions</li> <li>○ Use “I” statements: <i>“I feel...” “I think...”</i></li> <li>○ Redirect Questions to the Group</li> <li>○ Be Creative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Refute People’s Ideas</li> <li>○ Put people on the spot</li> <li>○ Downplay thoughts and feelings</li> <li>○ Force People to Speak</li> </ul>

## **Development of Vincentian Spiritual Life**

Think of this role not as a guru, rather like a friend, who listens, reflects on what they heard in light of the gospel, then shares their thoughts. This is spiritual wisdom on an everyday basis.

## **Inspire & challenge toward new works**

When a Spiritual Advisor listens in the group, they become aware of how God is speaking to them in the needs of the poor of today (e.g. hearing the same unmet need repeated in meeting after meeting). That is how Vincent experienced God and Christ in the Poor. He believed God revealed Self in the events and concerns of the poor. Vincent responded to God by organizing actions to meet those needs. (Doesn't have to be a whole new work, maybe just gathering information on resources available or advocating for a service with the government officials).

## **Provide Guidance on Spiritual Matters**

1. Imitate lives of Founders
2. Love God "in the strength of our arms & the sweat of our brow"
3. See Christ in the Poor
4. Be led by the Spirit, then Providence makes works possible
5. Live our Virtues –Simplicity, Humility, Zeal, Gentleness, Selflessness

## **Keep Focus on Practical Love Toward the Poor**

Vincent's spirituality was practical, one of action. He didn't have much use for people who just had pious thoughts of loving God. He wanted **action** on behalf of the poor. Sr. Rosalie did the same in the Moufflard area of Paris, starting every sort of good work, and knowing the poor by name through her visits to them or theirs to her.

## HELPFUL TIPS

### Mindset for Facilitators

- ◆ Be Honest
- ◆ You are not expected to an expert
- ◆ Believe that everyone can learn
- ◆ Promote Active Listening
- ◆ Be observant
- ◆ Encourage Participation by All
- ◆ Be Gentle

### Group Dynamics

- ◆ Create a safe space: To accomplish this, people must feel they can express their thoughts and opinions without fear of being attack or condemned.
- ◆ Manage disagreements: Nip in the bud right away; “whatever resists will persist.” If a disagreement arises give a reminder of the ground rules such as: critique ideas not people, disrespect or insults will not be permitted, we are here to do God’s work and to be the face of Christ.
- ◆ Promote Equality: recognize all members, do not take sides and encourage participation equally.
- ◆ Be mindful of power and who has it: All groups have opinion leaders or people who most others look up to. Often these opinion leaders will set the tone for a discussion and can result limiting the active involvement of more reserved members. If this happens, politely asked them to entertain other opinions.
- ◆ Build in diversity: be open minded and if expression of prejudice arises, respond in a nonjudgmental and non-confrontational manner.
- ◆ Other Tips:
  - Know the group
  - Keep the group on track
  - Reflect responsibility back on the group
- ◆ Focus on the Conference (not the group)

# Desired Outcomes for Members

- ◆ The link between service and holiness
- ◆ Conference members as a faith community
- ◆ Each moment as an opportunity for holiness
- ◆ The face of Christ in everyone served
- ◆ Ministry is impossible without the Eucharist and regular prayer and reflection, personally and with other Vincentians

Your Desired Outcomes for Members.

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# Appendix

**OPENING PRAYER**

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**RESOURCE LIST**

**INSERT: FOURTH QUARTER REFLECTIONS**



## **CONFERENCE OPENING PRAYER**

**L: In the Name of the Father and of the Sone and of the Holy Spirit.**

All: Amen.

**L: Com Holy Spirit, live within our lives.**

All: And strengthen us by Your love.

**L: Send forth Your spirit and new life will be created.**

All: And the whole face of the Earth will be renewed.

**L: Let us reflect on the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, recalling His unity and presence among us: “Where tow or there are gathered together in My Name, there I am in the midst of them. (Short Silence)**

All: 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.

**L: Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,**

All: Have mercy on us.

**L: Immaculate Heart of Mary,**

All: Pray for us.

**L: St. Vincent de Paul,**

All: Pray for us.

**L: St. Louis De Marillac,**

All: Pray for us.

**L: Blessed Frederic Ozanam,**

All: Pray for us.

## **CONFERENCE CLOSING PRAYER**

**L: St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary,**

All: Pray for us.

**L: St. Vincent de Paul,**

All: Pray for us.

**L: St. Louis de Marillace,**

All: Pray for us.

**L: Blessed Frederic Ozanam,**

All: Pray for us.

**L: Blessed Rosalie Rendu,**

All: Pray for us.

**L: For all the benefactors of the poor, that God may reward them with eternal life,**

All: Lord, hear us.

**L: For our Society, and all its members, that God may renew their spirit of service and union,**

All: Lord, hear us.

**L: For all who are sick or suffering, that God may give them courage and consolidation.**

All: Lord hear us.

**L: For the deceased members, the deceased poor, and our deceased benefactors, that God may grant them eternal rest,**

All: Lord, hear us.

**L: That the unity for which Christ prayed-one in truth and charity-may be realized,**

All: Lord, hear us.

**L: For families and those who have no homes that they may quickly find a place which they can live and decent and happy life,**

All: Lord, hear us.

**L: That if it be God's holy will, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, our founder, may be canonized the Church.**

All: Lord, hear us.

**L: That our Holy Father, the Pope may be granted the protection, guidance, strength and consolation that he needs to discharge his duties as Christ's vicar on Earth,**

All: Lord, hear us.

All: Hail Mary...

**L: In the Name of the Father...etc.**

All: Amen



## **RESOURCE LIST**

From the National Website, referenced in the Spiritual Advisors Handbook.

<http://www.svdpusa.org/members/Programs-Tools/Tools/Pathway-Toolbox/F-Spiritual-Advisors>

- ◆ Vincentian Reflections
- ◆ Serving in Hope
- ◆ Rule & Manual
- ◆ Vincentian Celebrations
- ◆ Vincentian Discernment
- ◆ Vincentian Formation
- ◆ Home Visitation
- ◆ Young Vincentian Activities and Resource Guide
- ◆ Voice of the Poor
- ◆ Books, Videos & Music, Vincentian Website

