

Creating

A CULTURE OF WELCOME

In Our Conferences and Councils



What Is a Welcoming Conference?

To be a Vincentian is a vocation, a calling. While new members may be directly responding to invitations that we offer, it ultimately was God's call that they have heard, not ours. Keeping this in mind, our first responsibility is not so much to convince people to join, as to not stand in their way; to seek to support and help them; in short, to welcome them.

Beginning with only seven members in 1833, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul rapidly grew in membership and soon grew also in the formation of new Conferences across Paris, then France, and soon around the world. It was only 12 short years after that first Conference was formed in Paris that the first Conference began in the United States. Today, some Conferences struggle to find new members, even as more senior members leave their ranks. This document will offer some ideas on recapturing the spirit of the early Society in attracting new members.

WHO Do We Welcome?

- **Seekers.** Those who drop in out of curiosity, those who ask questions, seeking to learn more. As St. Louise explained, we must *"welcome warmly the ladies and gentlemen who visit... We are indebted to all of them... we must welcome cordially those who come to visit the poor, without seeking our own interests."*
- **Neighbors.** Those who ask for our help. The stranger, the prisoner, and all those who mourn. As Blessed Frédéric said, *"When a poor person wants to shake our hand, do not refuse to respond by extending our own. Approach him so that he will feel welcome."* Our friendship and community of faith includes both members and neighbors!
- **Men and women,** young and old, all races and ethnicities; "all those who seek to live their faith loving and committing themselves to their neighbor in need." (*Rule*, Part I, 3.1)
- **Each other.** Visitors from other Conferences, new members, associate members, volunteers, and supporters. In 1853, Blessed Frédéric described visiting Conferences on his travels, saying, *"Tears of joy well to my eyes when I find our little Society at such far-flung points, our Society, little indeed in the obscurity of its work, but mighty in the blessing of God. The languages may be different, but it is always the same hand-grip, the same fraternal welcome. We can recognize ourselves by the sign of the early Christians, 'See how they love one another.'"*

"Faithful to the maxims of our divine Master and His beloved disciple, let us love one another. We should love one another now and ever, far and near, from one Conference to another, from town to town, from clime to clime... The unity of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul will be cited as a model of Christian friendship, of a friendship stronger than death, for we will often remember in our prayers to God the brothers who have been taken from us.

"This sentiment, which, with us, will make of all our hearts one heart, of all our souls one soul, *Cor unum, et anima una...*"

The Rule (1835)

WHAT Do We Welcome?

- **Divine Providence.** Even when it seems our plans are not working out as we'd hoped, we trust in God's will for us and for our Conferences. God speaks to us through the people and events in our lives, especially the unexpected ones! As St. Vincent explained, *"the Will of God cannot be made known to us more clearly in events than when they happen without our intervention or in a way other than we requested."*
- **Servant Leadership.** Each of us is called to leadership, not in the model of a commander or a boss, but in the humble model of servant leadership given to us by Christ, who washed the feet of His disciples saying, "as I have done for you, you should also do." Whether as an officer, committee chair, chair for a special project, leadership in the Society is service to our fellow Vincentians.
- **New Ideas.** Offered by new or experienced members. When the Spirit inspires members, our first duty is to not get in the way! Vibrant Conferences grow by responding to new ideas not by saying "no" but by asking "how?" In welcoming new ideas, we welcome the members who offer them.

WHEN Do We Offer Welcome?

- The Society must always be a place of welcome! At every meeting, our doors and our hearts must be open.

WHERE Do We Offer Welcome?

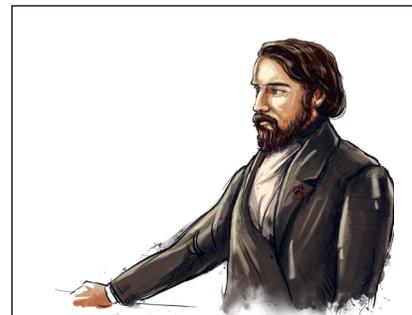
- At our meetings, in our lives, in our conversations with friends, family, and neighbors. Our welcome is part of our vocation, which is *"a vocation for every moment of our lives"*. (*Rule*, Part I, 2.6)

WHY Do We Offer Welcome?

- It's who we are! We are a welcoming Society, it is part of our culture, and has been from the very beginning.

HOW Do We Become a Welcoming Conference?

- In the pages that follow, we'll try to answer this question!



"When a poor person wants to shake our hand, do not refuse to respond by extending our own. Approach him so that he will feel welcome."

Bl. Frédéric Ozanam

Becoming a Welcoming Conference

Servant Leader (President) ... “is one that knows how to keep the Society in the ways of simplicity and wise freedom for which God has led it to this point; one that does not discourage, nevertheless, well-inspired efforts that may arise. It is necessary, in short, . . . that [the president] attracts trust and respect, [and] at the same time . . . knows how to make friends with the youngest members of this large family . . .”

– Frédéric Ozanam, to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, June 11, 1841

In this 1841 quote, we see that from the origins of the Society the responsibility of inviting and retaining new members was placed on the shoulders of the Conference President, the servant leader. In our day and age, more than ever, that responsibility falls upon *all* Conference Members. At the Conference level especially, all Vincentians are expected to nurture a welcoming environment built on trust and respect with an openness to invite all who are drawn to our mission of charity and justice.

Welcoming Conferences truly live the Essential Elements of Spirituality, Friendship, and Service. As Vincentians this means creating an environment that invites members to deepen their relationship with Christ. Every moment in Vincentian life is an opportunity to encounter Christ—in our daily prayer, in our socials, and in service. We encounter Christ and we seek to imitate Christ, bringing Him in a special way to our neighbors through our kindness and compassion.

You Can't Be a Vincentian Without Other Vincentians

Our primary purpose is growth in holiness, and as our Rule reminds us “Vincentians are called to journey *together* towards holiness.” (*Rule*, Part I, 2.2) The most important people in our Vincentian vocation are the ones who share that vocation with us. Our calling is not just to serve our neighbors in need; it is to serve each other. We do that by being open and honest at meetings, by praying for and with each other, by laughing with and loving one another. Forming community, having socials, praying openly together, and fully sharing our growth in faith helps to strengthen and deepen our commitment to serve the neighbor.

How we approach service defines us and our Conference. Vincentians have a unique vocation to minister to and accompany God's beloved in a very special way. We sometimes meet people in their darkest hour and seek to bring them to the light of hope. We have an opportunity to lovingly share our works with those around us, inspiring them and leading them along a path to God. Our service stems from our relationship with Christ and our prayer. To serve without redirecting all to God, will leave us pursuing the impossible challenge of poverty on our own. If we come with and through the Spirit, no matter what the end results, we will change the world. Practically, this means a balanced approach to service, with focused and

We must also battle the temptation of efficiency, pursuing quality, not quantity, and serving the poor person in front of us, rather than trying to serve the hypothetical hundreds beyond our doorstep.

intentional group opportunities to lift everything experienced and given to God. We must reflect not just on our faith, but also logically on whether our service best addresses the current need. We must be flexible in changing our approach not just because forms of poverty evolve, but also because our membership and their respective skills shift, too. We must also battle the temptation of efficiency, pursuing quality, not quantity, and serving the poor person in front of us, rather than trying to serve the hypothetical hundreds beyond our doorstep. This leads us naturally to think further about ending poverty, to address the deeper causes that keep people in poverty, and so we also must be welcoming of new partnerships and collaborative ventures with others who share the mission of charity and justice.

Inspired by the Gospel and the example of Christ who knelt before His followers and washed their feet, Vincentians desire to truly serve and accept leadership when it calls. With this in mind, we seek to cultivate a commitment to leadership within every member and nurture a



Conference of servant leaders who are all ready to humble themselves with authority. The call to servant leadership then is made to all Conference members. And their first duty is to nurture a relational culture that is about caring for and loving each other, out of which will form a conference of abounding good works and immense spiritual growth. The community we help create of faithful friends, serving Christ and sharing His love will attract others. Others will see our joyful community of loving service and will want to get involved.

Many of us joined the Society as volunteers, but as we grow in faith, friendship, and service, we begin to see ourselves not as volunteers but as Vincentians. This title is steeped in meaning. It indicates a vocation deep within us, a calling to the work of charity and justice.

Whether we realize it or not, God has called us to where we are. When we consider inviting others to our work, we recognize that invitation is about helping them find their own distinct calling. *We do not recruit because we badly need people; we recruit because we believe God is calling more people to the gift of our mission.*

Finding New Members: How We Extend God's Call to Serve

The Manual teaches us that “Effective Conferences recruit continuously.” We don’t wait until we are faced with a crisis of low membership — we treasure new members and seek them out at all times. In a welcoming Conference, there are four primary means for doing this.

By Our Example

God speaks to us through the events and people in our lives. Understanding this, we must also understand that God also speaks through us to others. With this in mind, perhaps the most important way that potential members will be drawn to the Society is by simply observing who we are and what we do. **We must always act with humility, but not with secrecy.** By our service to the neighbor and to each other we do not keep God’s light under a bushel! As Pope Saint Paul VI pointed out in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the example of living our faith will stir questions in the hearts of others.

Welcoming Conferences take the time not only to communicate what we do to our parishes and pastors, but also to welcome the participation of parishioners who may wish to volunteer alongside members in special works or other projects. In this way, we begin to share not only in the work, but to share in what it is to be Vincentians. We welcome and accompany them on this journey, not in the hope that they join us for our sake, but in the hope that they might hear God’s call, and receive God’s special blessing, as we have, though this vocation.

Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them?

Evangelii. Nuntiandi, 21

Regular Communication Helps to Share Our Example

- **Regular bulletin notices.** For accountability, we regularly report activities of the Conference, but these are often limited to listing out funds raised and disbursed, and the general purposes for which it was used, such as rent assistance, or food. In addition, consider notices that not only describe your activities, but give the reason why we do these things. For example:

The Conference provides dinner for our homeless neighbors and invites parishioners and others to join, also. In this way, we provide not only food, but something that our homeless neighbors are in even greater need of: Community and friendship.

- **Regular meetings with the pastor.** Either by inviting the pastor to attend occasional Conference meetings, or by the President having lunch with him once a month or so, a regular relationship in which the pastor can become more familiar with our works and our purpose will in turn make him better able — and more likely — to suggest that parishioners join.
- **Membership celebration.** Working with your pastor, consider conducting your annual commitment ceremony, or commissioning of new officers, as part of a regular Mass. This prayerful commitment to service will have greater meaning for Members, and will raise more “irresistible questions” with parishioners!

By Our Personal Invitations

The best, most effective, and original way in which the very first Conference grew from seven members to over 100 in its first year was through personal invitations from each member to his friends. We receive many great blessings in our work as Vincentians. We encounter Christ in the person of the neighbors we visit, and we receive God’s transformative grace, drawing us closer to Him, becoming, as Frédéric put it, “better [our]selves in order to make others happier.” Why would we not want to share this with our friends?

- **Make it personal.** Always, when inviting friends to join, share your own journey: How have you grown in your faith? How have you found fulfillment? Why does the Society mean so much to you?
- **Make it personal (again).** You know your friends. What is it about them that made you think this would be especially of interest to them? Have you seen them serving others selflessly and humbly? Have they expressed to you a desire to find a new ministry or activity?

Through Organized Recruiting Campaigns

From time to time, Conferences should plan an organized membership drive in order to reach those who may not have a friend in the Conference, or who shy away from joining things alone. There are several components to activities like this (some samples are included in an appendix to this document), including:

- **Advertising.** An informational brochure that is left in the lobby of the church (or another gathering place). A brochure should always include information about how to contact you, the first step to join, and most importantly, why we join. Create your own, or [purchase them from the National Council](#).
- **Pulpit talk.** A pulpit talk is a wonderful opportunity to connect with the parish, reporting on the works of the Conference, informing them of the many needs faced by their neighbors, sharing personal stories and experiences of the members, and inviting all those interested in joining – or simply learning more – to attend an information night.
- **Information night.** Before prospective members start attending meetings, it is best to offer a time when interested people can gather together simply to learn about the Society — who are we? What do we do? What will be asked of me if I join? Schedule an hour or 90 minutes for a presentation with plenty of time for questions and discussion, with multiple members in attendance.

Open the Door Wider!

The Rule defines for us both Active and Associate Membership. A Conference needs both, but remember, these are not ranks! Associate Members may be those whose work obligations would prevent them from attending meetings or going on Encounters/Home Visits often. That should not make them unwelcome! Joining in Conference activities even just a few times a year makes the Conference strong. Non-Catholics may join as Associate Members (although they may not serve as officers). But even beyond these categories of membership, Conferences often have works that need the hands of volunteers. A volunteer might not ever attend a regular meeting, but when you distribute Christmas baskets, open the food pantry, or organize an angel tree, volunteers from the parish make it work.

In our personal invitations and in our organized recruiting campaigns, we should always welcome people in the roles where they feel called. And once we have welcomed each volunteer, Associate, and Active Member, they will be on a pathway that may one day lead them into deeper commitment to this vocation.

Appendix – Sample Resources

These resources are included as examples for your Conference to customize and use.

Pulpit Talk – Example 1

Pulpit Talk – Example 2

New member Admission process

Conference Informational Flyer

Pulpit Talk Example 1

Good morning. I'm _____ with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul here at _____. I'm sure most of you have heard our group's name, or seen the Thrift Stores around town, but you may wonder exactly who we are and what we do. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has over 850,000 members serving the poor in 153 countries worldwide. But almost all of the work of the Society happens in Parish-based chapters, called Conferences, like the one here.

Our mission is to serve those in need; people without jobs, without money; people who are hungry, or homeless, the working poor, who sometimes have just a little more month than money; people who feel forgotten; people who are losing hope. When they call us for help, we don't ask them to come to us, or take a number, or fill out a form. We go to them, we listen to them, we pray with them, and we always try to help them in the best way possible.

Yet while our financial assistance is important, it is even more important that we serve those in need personally; that we show them through our actions that even in their darkest hours, God has not abandoned them; He wants to help; He loves them so much that He sent us to serve them.

Like me, I'm sure you've seen a lot of television appeals over the years for those in need in foreign lands. Their stories are heartbreaking, but it's important to remember that those in need don't live only in distant places. They live right next door. Those in need in our community don't look like the impoverished people of Calcutta, but you see them every day, whether you know it or not; on your street, in the grocery store, maybe sitting next to you today. Neighbors in need look a lot like you and me. A single mom sitting in darkness because the electricity was cut off; a family that suddenly lost their income because their father was injured in an accident; the working poor, who can't afford both a car repair and the rent. Most don't want to ask for help. Many have no idea how it came to this.

It might surprise you to know just how many people are in need right here in our neighborhood. About ____ families call us every week. We help them to avoid eviction; we pay utility bills to restore water or lights that have been cut off, and we bring food to the hungry. Some of our members also dedicate themselves to (examples of special works your Conference may offer – food pantry, homeless outreach etc.).

The time that we give is our gift of love; our only source of funding...is you — is us. That's why I'm here: to ask for your help. I don't want to ask for help. But there are three things I'd like to ask of you. First, and most importantly, I ask that you pray for all those in need and for us, your fellow parishioners in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Second, I am asking for your donations. You've always been so generous in donating money and food, we've never had to turn anybody away for lack of resources, but these are difficult times.

I also hope you can find it in your hearts — and in your budgets — to help us continue to help our neighbors. Your checks should be made out to _____ (Briefly explain ways to donate).

Third, and finally, if you are seeking a way to live your faith through works that directly serve the poor; where you can "love God," as our Patron St. Vincent de Paul said, "with the strength of [your] arms..." please consider joining us. We'll be right outside after Mass to answer your questions, or please just join us at a special information night on _____.

There are other organizations and agencies that serve those in need, and they do good work. But often the assistance they can offer is restricted by narrow definitions, or by the strings attached to grant funding. But we're not an agency, and we're not like other groups. We serve for the love of God alone, and as our Rule says, "No work of charity is foreign to the Society."

Our founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, taught that we should see the Face of Christ in those we serve. When they call, we answer; when they are in need, we help; not because they are "deserving," but because they are suffering; not because they are Catholic, but because *we are Catholic*; because whatever we do for the least of us, we do for Christ himself.

Pulpit Talk Example 2

Good morning, I'm _____ from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul here at _____.

Of all the many good works and ministries of the Catholic Church, around the world, and here at _____ Parish, it sometimes seems that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul may be one of our best-kept secrets.

For those who may not know, the volunteer members of the Society provide assistance to those in need in our parish and in our neighborhood. We personally visit them, we pray with them, we listen to them, and we provide whatever assistance we can: for food, for shelter, for medicine, and even to help find other organizations better equipped than we are to meet their needs. As our founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, said, "No work of charity is foreign to the Society."

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul may be a secret to some, but through our collaboration with other community organizations, many individuals and families in need have come to know about us.

It might surprise you to learn that right here in our neighborhood about _____ a week call us for assistance. Some have no food. Some have no home. Some sit in darkness and discomfort because the electricity or gas is turned off.

Through your generosity, we've been able to assist our neighbors financially more than ____ times in the past year, in small ways and in large ways. In fact, in the past year alone, our assistance helped people to avoid eviction ____ times. That's ____ families a week facing eviction right here in our neighborhood — because of a job loss; because of illness or injury; because they've been abandoned.

Most people don't want to ask for help, but poverty and hardship can arrive suddenly, and with no warning. Feelings of helplessness and desperation soon follow. And while our financial assistance is important, it is even more important that we serve those in need **personally**; that we show them that even in their darkest hours, God has not abandoned them; He wants to help; He loves them so much that he sent us to serve them, to comfort them, and to pray with them.

Today, I'm asking for your help.

I'm asking most importantly that you pray for those in need: our neighbors, and for the volunteers of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. We're your neighbors, too.

I am also asking for your financial support. (Briefly explain ways to donate.) All of that money — all of it — goes to assist people in need.

Finally, I want to ask you to prayerfully consider joining us.

This is a ministry where you can not only worship and grow in spirit; not only build new friendships; but also live your faith through works that directly serve the poor; where you can "love God," as our Patron St. Vincent de Paul said, "with the strength of [your] arms..."

Read our insert in today's bulletin. Come to our special Information Night on _____ Meet us. Ask questions. Learn more.

Mother Teresa once asked a visiting bishop, "Would you like to meet Jesus?"

Naturally the bishop said yes, so she led him into another room, where a poor man lay on a mat on the floor. She cradled the man in her arms and said, "Here He is."

Jesus himself chose to come to us in the form of those in need. When we serve them, we serve Him.

Would you like to meet Jesus?

New Member Admission Process

In order to determine if God is calling them to become a Vincentian, a prospective new member (with Conference approval), will be welcomed as a guest at a Conference meeting and receive a copy of the *Rule* and the *Member Handbook*. They will also be invited to attend Ozanam Orientation.

Due to their involvement in the Society's work, a prospective new Member may become an Active Member:

“Associate Members are those affiliated with the Society by formal action of the Conference or Council with which the member will be joined. Associate Members include those who sincerely and publicly accept the Society's Rule but may or may not belong to the Catholic Church and may or may not attend Conference meetings or engage in the works of the Society on a regular basis. Associate Members are kept informed of the developments and activities of their immediate groupings, as well as the general progress of the Society, particularly in the local area or diocese. They are invited to attend the general meetings and special observances of the Society and to participate in its charitable activities.”

(Rule: Part III-Statute 3)

A prospective new member interested in becoming an Active Member will go through a period of candidacy and discernment, during which they will observe the Conference and participate in its activities:

“Active Members are those who participate regularly in the prayer life, meetings and charitable activities through personal contact with the poor of the Vincentian Conference. An Active Member accepts the Rule and Statutes of the Society, belongs to the Catholic Church and is received as a Vincentian brother or sister...Only Active Members hold office in the organization.” **(Rule: Part III-Statute 3)**

Process

1. Candidacy and Discernment Period lasting approximately 6 – 8 weeks, will consist of the following:
 - Conference members will read, reflect, and share their lived experiences on each section of the SVdP *Member Handbook* with the candidate.
 - A Conference member will sponsor the candidate, responding to questions and describing Conference activities.
 - The candidate will have the opportunity to go on at least two Encounters/Home Visits with Conference members. In a Conference with Special Works, the candidate may have opportunities for person-to-person service with neighbors in need.
 - The Spiritual Advisor will lead the candidate in prayerful discernment, emphasizing the Society's primary purpose of growth in Holiness and guiding them in Vincentian Spirituality.
 - At the conclusion of the candidacy period, the candidate will meet with the President to discuss the activities and services that the candidate feels called to do as part of their ministry.
 - At this point, if the candidate has discerned that they have a Vincentian Vocation, they may request to become an Active Member.
2. After the President, Spiritual Advisor, and candidate discern readiness, the Conference takes formal action, normally by a resolution, to accept the candidate as an Active Member. **(Rule: Part III-Statute 3)**
3. The candidate is then commissioned as a new member of the Society and given the SVdP pin at an appropriate time and occasion, normally at a Conference or Council liturgy or at a Festival Meeting. **(Rule: Part III-Statute 4)** The Commissioning Ceremony for a New Member is found in the Vincentian Celebrations book, or online.
4. New Members will continue walking the Vincentian Pathway through the Serving in Hope Modules and other resources offered by the National Office.
 - The Council will offer opportunities for Vincentian Formation by sponsoring the Ozanam Orientation, retreats, and various activities.
 - New Members should attend the Ozanam Orientation Program within a year, as required by the Society.
 - The Conference assures compliance with local requirements and the National Safeguarding Policy.

So, How Do I Join?

Attend an Informational Meeting

Please join us at a special informational meeting, where we answer your questions and tell you more about the Society. You'll get a sense of what we do, and have a chance to meet some of our members.

Informational Meeting

<<DATE>>

<<TIME>>

Please RSVP if you plan to attend!

<<Contact Email>>

<<Contact Phone>>

Discern Your Vocation

As with any vocation, your desire to be part of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is the first step. If the virtues, identity, and works outlined in this brochure speak to your heart, we will welcome you as a member.

As a member, there will be continuing opportunities to become as involved as you wish.

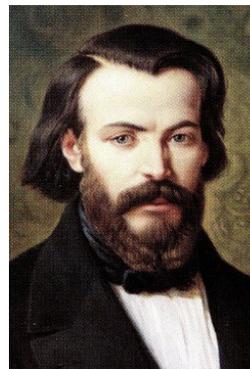


_____ Conference The Society of St. Vincent de Paul

The _____ Conference, formed in _____, is an organization dedicated to the friendship and spiritual formation of our members, and works of charity through personal contact with those in need in our community.

Founded in 1833, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul today is organized in more than 150 countries, with over 850,000 members, known as Vincentians, worldwide.

Our Founder



Bl. Frédéric Ozanam

Our Patron



St. Vincent de Paul

Identity Statement of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to the needy and suffering in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

As a reflection of the whole family of God, our members, 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 Vincentians see the face of Christ.

Our Essential Virtues

- **Simplicity**
We speak with frankness, integrity, and genuineness, seeking to form relationships based on trust and friendship with the neighbor.
- **Humility**
We accept the truth about our frailties, gifts, talents, and charism, knowing that all that God gives us is for others and that we can achieve nothing of eternal value without His grace.
- **Gentleness**
We seek to offer friendly assurance and invincible goodwill, which mean kindness, sweetness, and patience in relation with others.
- **Selflessness**
We seek to share our time, our possessions, our talents, and ourselves in a spirit of generosity.
- **Zeal**
We are motivated by a passion for the full flourishing and eternal happiness of every person.

Our Conference

Our Parish Conference, made up of lay Catholics, serves fellow parishioners, as well as anybody in need who lives within our Parish boundaries.

We assist those who have difficulty meeting basic needs, such as food, utilities and sometimes rent. We provide financial or in-kind assistance, referrals to other resources, and our supportive attention and prayer.

Person-to-Person Service

Our founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, was challenged by anti-Catholics to prove his Church's relevance in the modern world. His response became the foundation of the Society, and remains the heart of our ministry:

“Let us go to the poor!”

We do not ask those in need to come to us, or to fill out a form, or to “qualify” for assistance. We go to them, in pairs, to present ourselves as the face of Christ, and to listen and pray with them as friends.

How Great Is the Need?

It is easy, in our own comfortable lives, to assume that poverty is “somewhere else,” but in fact, our Conference receives about ____ calls every week from those in need right here in our neighborhood. Our members visit and assist a new family almost every single day.

www.svdpusa.org