

To be an Effective and Responsible Servant Leader:



Effective Conference Meetings and Consensus Building





L: In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

All: Amen.

L: Come, 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: Our Father, etc.

All: Give us this day our daily bread, etc.

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

All: Lord Jesus, deepen our Vincentian spirit of friendship during this meeting and 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. Louise de Marillac, **All:** Pray for us.

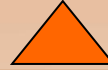
L: Blessed Frederic Ozanam, **All:** Pray for us.

L: Blessed Rosalie Rendu, **All:** Pray for us.

Organization of Our Society



People Living in Poverty



Conferences



District Councils



(Arch)Diocesan Councils



U.S. National Council

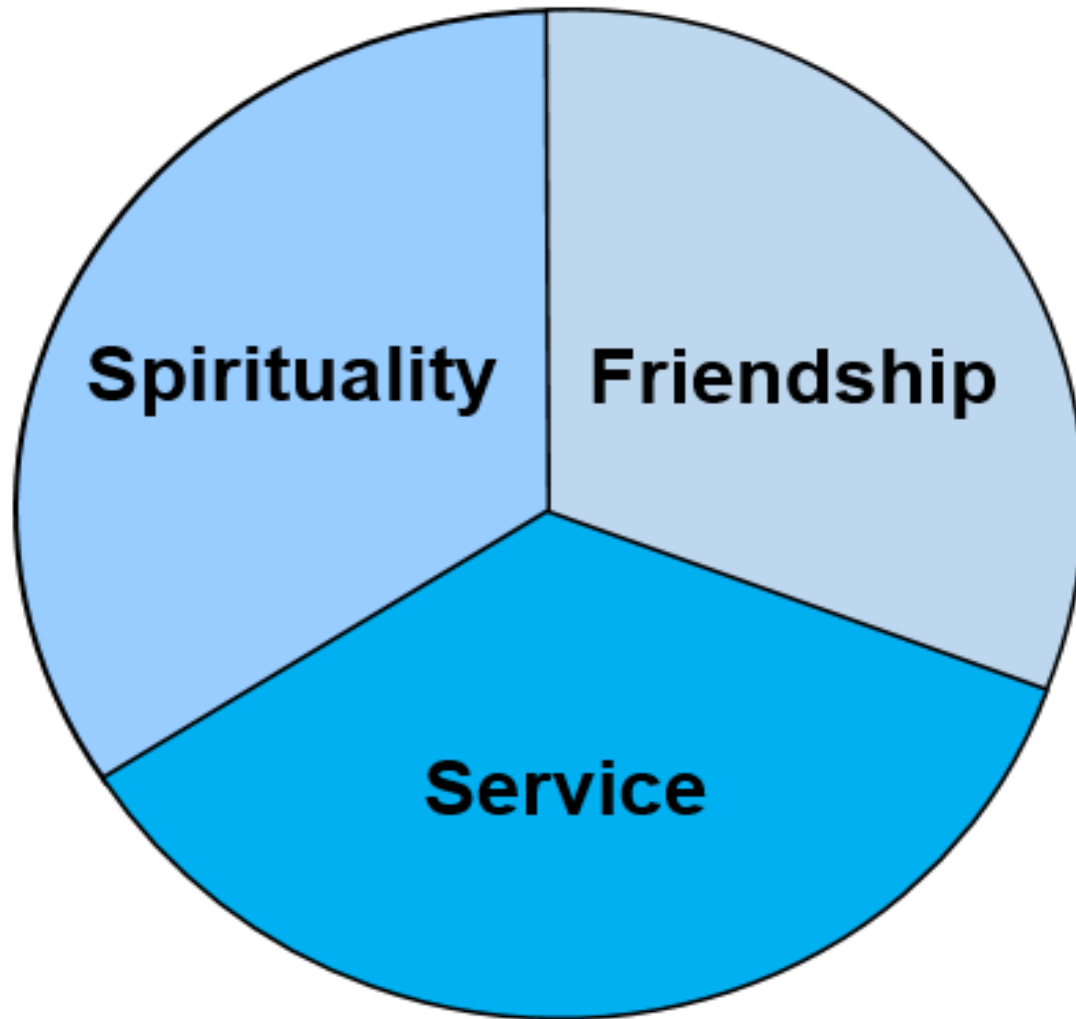


International Confederation
of St. Vincent de Paul

Regions



Essential Elements





What does our Rule say about Conference meetings?

- **3.3** “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 the marginalized. The entire Society is a true and unique worldwide Community of Vincentian friends.”





What does our Rule say about Conference meetings?



3.3.1 “Conferences meet regularly and consistently, usually weekly, but at least every fortnight (twice a month).”



What does our Rule say about Conference meetings?



Statute 5 "...meet weekly, or at least twice a month.

This is to **affirm** the **importance of the spiritual and social dimensions** of our Vincentian community.



....Conference members consistently strive to develop a **three-fold relationship** with God, the poor and one another – mutual support and friendship.”



What does our Rule say about Conference meetings?



3.4 “Meetings are held in a spirit of fraternity, simplicity, and Christian joy.”



The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Conference Meeting

The Rule, Part I, 3.3, 3.3.1

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.

The Conferences meet regularly and consistently, usually weekly, but at least every fortnight (twice a month.)

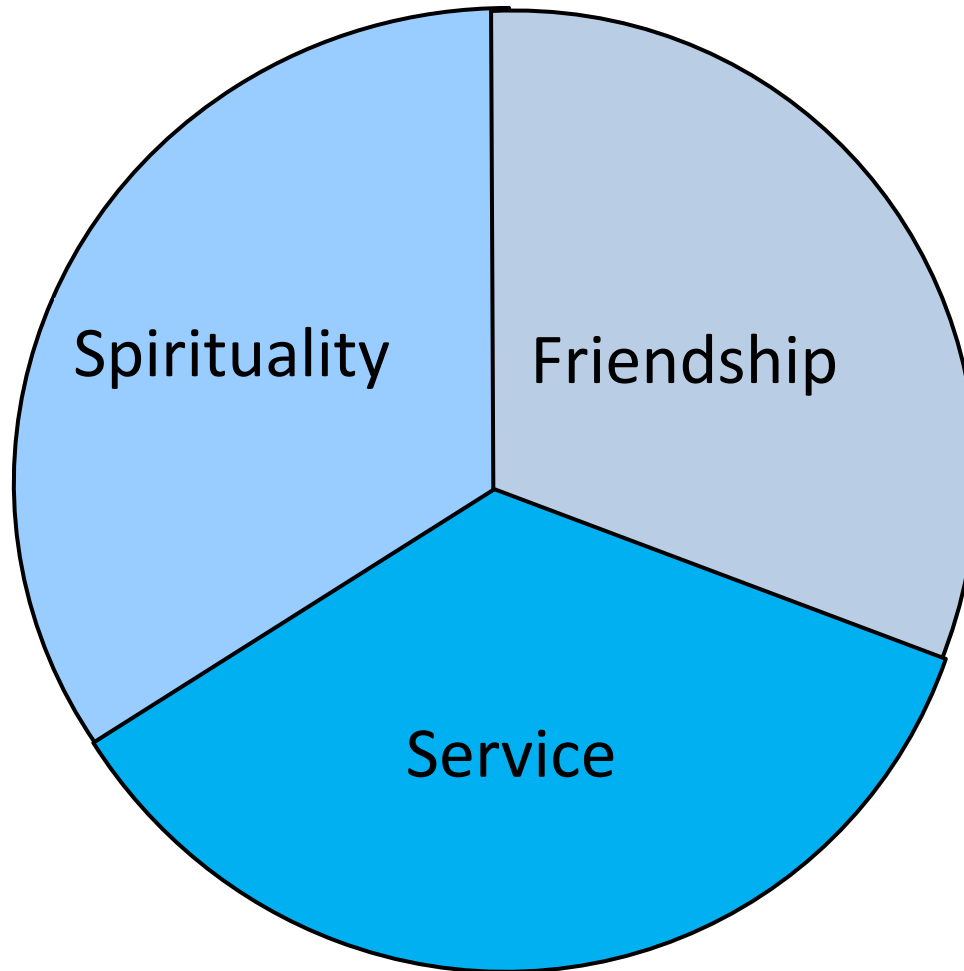
The Rule, Part III, Statute 7

A Conference meeting shall incorporate Spirituality, Friendship, Service, and our Cultural Beliefs, and could include the following components:

- **A punctual call to order**
- **Roll call**
- **Opening Prayer** (which should always include a prayer to the Holy Spirit, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and a prayer for those whose suffering they wish to share.)
- **Spiritual reading** (or meditation and address on which members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith.)
- **Approval of Minutes** of previous meeting.
- **Home visitation reports**
- **President's report**
- **Secretary's report** (include correspondence received, information about the Society, or training points.)
- **Treasurer's report**
- **Committee reports** (including Formation Committee report.)
- **Membership reports**
- **Resolutions**
- **Special Works reports**
- **Old Business**
- **New Business**
- **Time and place of next meeting** (the calendar should include Festival meetings and Conference Liturgies.)
- **Secret collection**
- **Closing prayer**
- **Adjournment**



Essential Elements



Why is Spiritual Growth Critical?

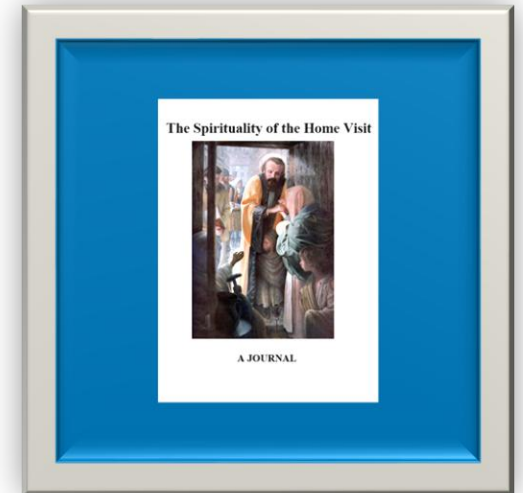
- Keeps us focused on our true mission
- We can't give to others what we don't have ourselves
- Helps in challenging situations
- Invokes the Holy Spirit in all activities



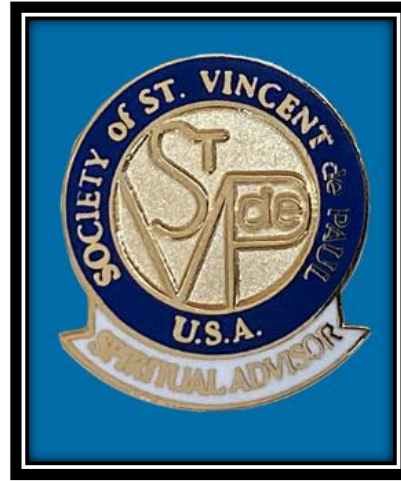
Spirituality is our bedrock



- Importance of Spiritual Advisor
- Assure time for prayer, reflection, discussion
- Provide funds for resources and make time for member formation.

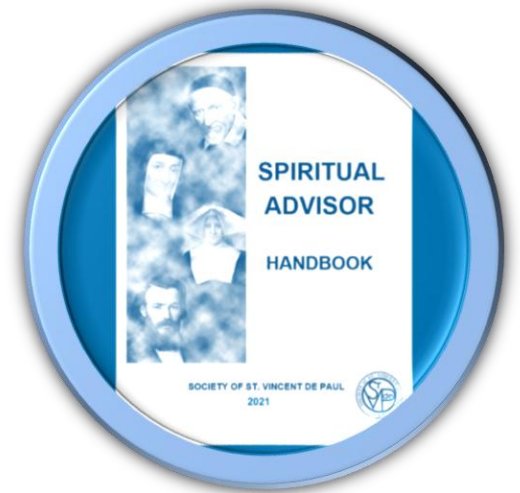


SPIRITUAL ADVISOR



- Share responsibility for leading the opening and closing prayers
- Use the weekly *Vincentian Reflections* and/or the weekly *Contemplations* and participate in the discussion
- Ensure all meetings are conducted in a spirit of Vincentian friendship

(Spiritual Advisor Guidelines, Part III, B)





Spirituality – Rituals and Ceremonies

- Commissioning of new members
- Annual renewal of service
- Attend Eucharist together

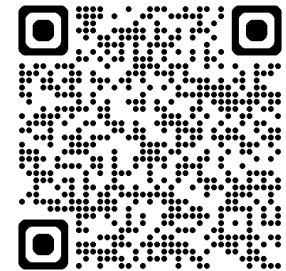


Vincentian liturgies:

[Vincentian Liturgies – St. Vincent de Paul USA Member Site](#)

Vincentian celebrations:

[Vincentian Prayers and Ceremonies – St. Vincent de Paul USA Member Site](#)



Vincentian



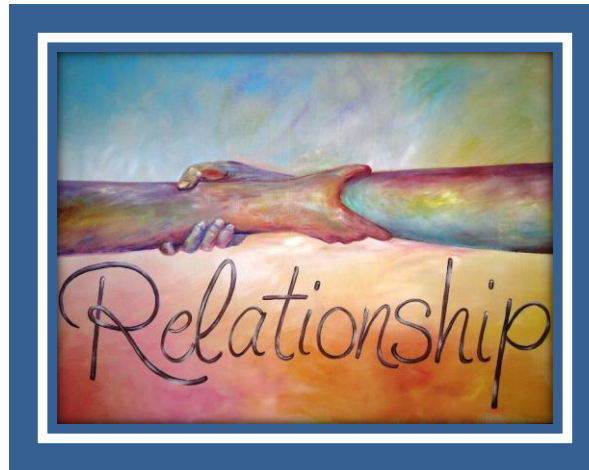
- Mutual example and true friendship draws us nearer to our Divine Model, Christ.
- Vincentian bonds enable us to perform our duties, share our experiences, and grow in our love.
- Friendliness springs from charity in the heart.



Relationships are Central



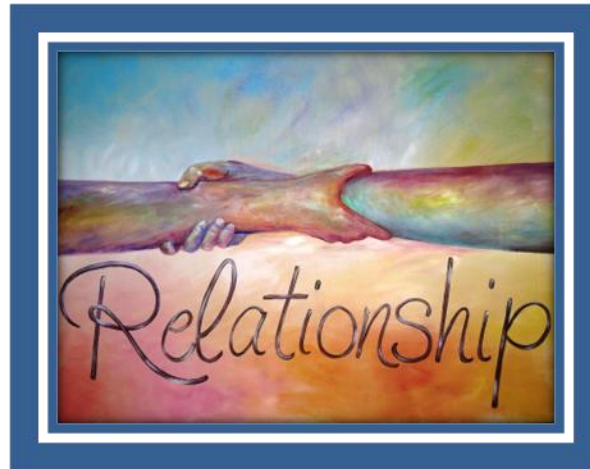
Conference meetings are privileged occasions during which members manifest Christ's love to one another and experience his healing presence.



Conferences meet regularly and frequently, at least twice a month, in celebration of mutual friendship and out of a passion to serve the Lord

Relationships are Central

The Conference meets less to conduct business than to celebrate and deepen its unity for essentially spiritual reasons.



Opening and Closing Prayers, together with the Vincentian spiritual reflections, heighten our awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence.

THINGS TO DO TO FOSTER OUR FRIENDSHIP

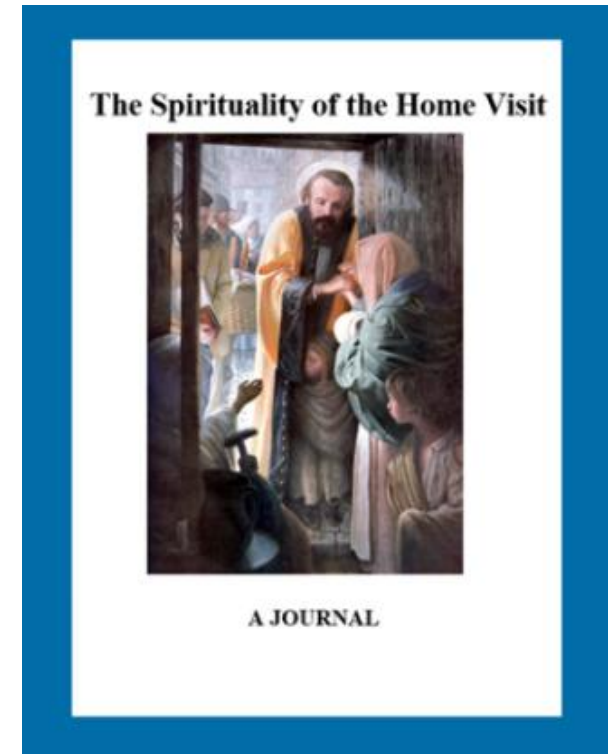


- Ensure meetings are conducted in a spirit of fraternity, simplicity, and Christian joy
- Encourage participation in district, diocese, region, and national meetings
- Fellowship afterwards over light snacks
- Potluck meals with members, families, pastor... summer picnic
- Celebrate members birthdays, anniversaries, get well cards (corresponding secretary)



Service

- Spend time sharing home visit experiences
 - Lessons learned
 - Focus on what you can do better
- Use “*The Spirituality of the Home Visit Journal*”
 - What touched my heart ?
 - Where did I find God’s presence?
 - What did I learn that can make me a better home visitor?



Service



- Periodically bring in outside speakers
- At least annually, devote significant time to discussing how you can improve your service

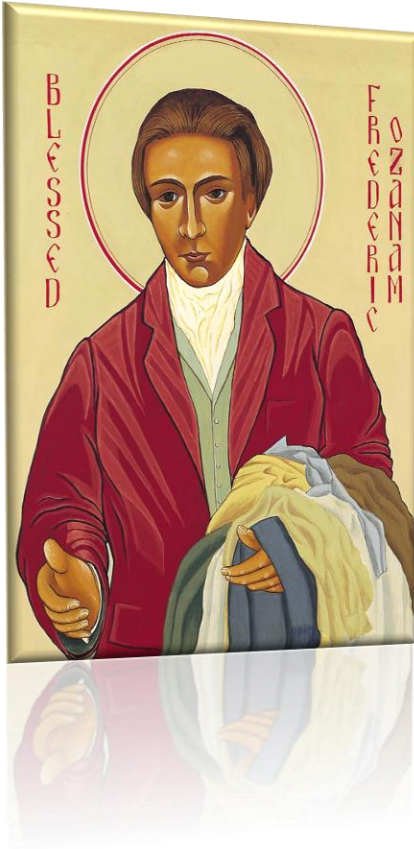


The Secret Collection

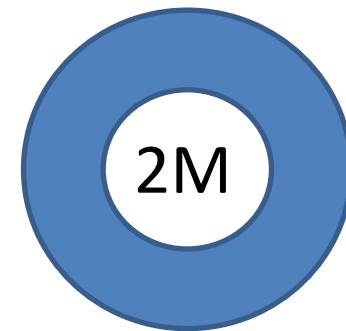
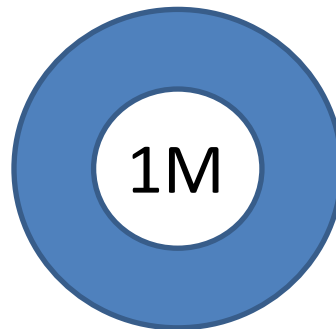
- Based on the tradition of our Founders
- Before the close of the regular meeting
- The hat or bag is passed in secret



Please take the next 2 minutes
to reflect on the following
question:



**What could your conference do to make
its meetings better in growing your
spirituality, friendship, and service?**



Decision-making



3.10 “All decisions are made by **consensus** after the necessary prayer, reflection and consultation. The democratic spirit is fundamental at all levels of the Society, and when appropriate, matters are put to a vote.”



Part III, Statute 16: Subsidiarity and Democracy

The Society accepts the principles of subsidiarity and democratic consensus as the basic rules of its functioning.

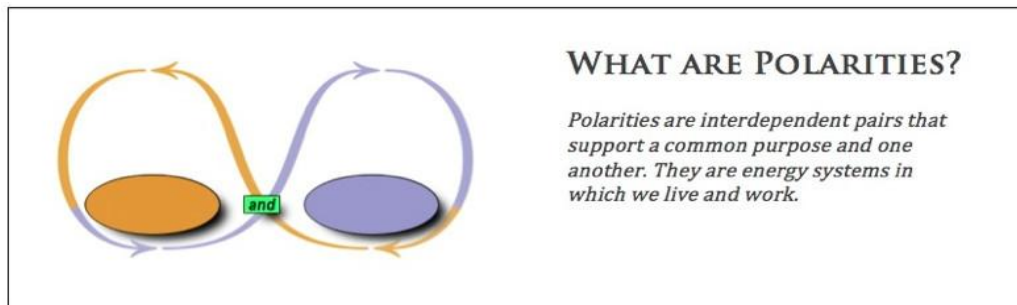
To ensure democracy in the Society decisions are often made by consensus. Consensus decision-making requires that everyone agree with a decision, not just a majority as occurs in majority-rule processes. In consensus-based processes, people must work together to develop an agreement that is good enough, though not necessarily perfect.



Vincentian Polarities



- Contemplation and Action
- Stewardship and Charity
- Friendship and Boundaries
- Leadership and Followership
- Organized Works and Providence



What is Discernment?



- **An Openness to God's Will**
 - In me, in a unique Conference, Council, the Society
- **To be Led by the Spirit in Freedom**
 - Free to be, act, go in a certain way without resistance
- **A Choice between Two Goods**
 - Where does my body, time, money belong now?





Vincentian Discernment Considerations

- What does our Rule say?
- How does this decision help us to better serve others? Grow in friendship? Grow spiritually?
- What would Jesus do in this situation?
- Am I willing to set aside my preconceived ideas? Willing to give up control?



Voting vs. Consensus



- [illegible]



Role of Spiritual Advisor



- Introduce the spirituality of Vincentian discernment
- Create reflections that encourage respectful sharing around differences
- Encourage the discipline of hearing all the voices.
- Identify win/lose scenarios and encourage both/and solutions
- Invoke silent reflection or conciliatory prayer in moments of conflict



The Decision

- Is the decision reasonably clear?
- Is it rooted in peace?
- Is the decision just?
- Is the decision compassionate?



If these conditions are not met, return to the steps for discernment.

If these decision are met, ACT....and do not look back

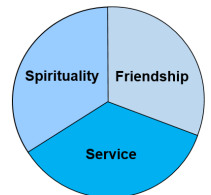


Consensus-based Decisions: Cooperation is the Basis



We all get more of what we want when we cooperate

- We genuinely try to work together, typically based on some shared interest, purpose or calling
- We search together for the best solution for all; it's "us against the problem" not "us against each other."
- We optimize creativity when relationships support an atmosphere of solidarity
- No "winners and losers"



Conference Meetings – Final Thoughts

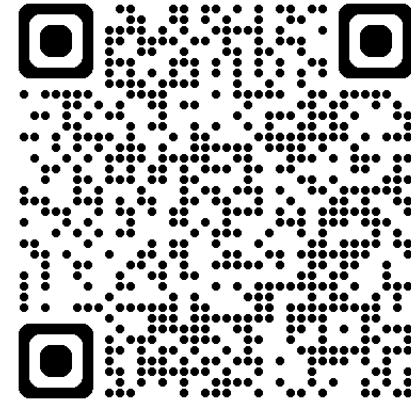
- Balance spirituality, friendship, and service
- Spiritual growth is the foundation
- There's no substitute for friendship



Meetings should be fulfilling—if they're not, then ask why, and change it!



Some Resources



QR code for Digital Pathway

- **Rule, Manual**
- **Serving in Hope series**
- **Member Handbook**
- **The Spirituality of the Home Visit – A Journal**
- **Prayer/Agenda Card**
- **Weekly *Contemplations***
- ***Vincentian Reflections***
- **The Digital Pathway**
(go to the National Website, Click on Members, then click on the digital pathway icon)
- **Walking the Vincentian Pathway**
 - **Personal Guide**
 - **Conference Record & Planner**





L: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

All: Amen.

All: Father, grant that we who are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist may realize the depth 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.

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.

L: That the Cause for the Canonization of Frederic Ozanam, who excelled in the virtue of Christian love, be advanced.

All: Lord, hear us.

L: That our departed friends and relatives, our Vincentian Brothers and Sisters, and those whom we have served, be welcomed into your Kingdom and joined in love.

All: Lord, hear us.

L: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit **All:** Amen.



Questions/Discussion

- If you are viewing this on a live webinar with a facilitator, you will be instructed on how to ask any questions you may have.
- If you are not viewing this as a part of a live webinar, please refer any questions you may have to Tim Williams, National Director of Formation at:

Tim Williams twilliams@svdpusa.org

Thank you and God Bless