

5 Questions for Ron Costanzo



“I am closest to God when I am in community and see a direct connection being in that community when involved with others in our Vincentian work.”

1. Why are you interested in becoming the next DC President?

I am passionate and truly committed to Vincentian work and the folks that SVdP serves. I have spent much of my time in retirement working with SVdP. From being conference president, being on the board of directors, being on the executive board and committees, to being the District Council President for the past 3 years and continuing to study recommended books and materials about Vincent and Frederic and the people we serve, I am very familiar with the concept of servant leadership. And would like to continue doing my best in applying that in every way possible.

2. Describe your overall vision for SVdP.

My overall vision for SVdP has stayed consistent over the years. I see Vincentians living their Gospel calling, meeting folks in need – those with short-term needs and those who really need a chance to move out of their situations. In these interactions, the Vincentians see the face of Christ in those served and likewise those being served see the face of Christ in the ones that serve. There is a diversity of services and approaches that takes into account resources of the Vincentians and conferences. Where there have been human or financial limitations, I see an increase in those resources through council and conference interaction. I see systems and best practices that are shared and continuous striving to grow what we do for both the Vincentians and the people in need. I envision a broad and shared vision for the people in the SVdP society.

3. Identify areas you see SVdP excel and explain why.

The community of Vincentians and Staff are committed. Another strength is that we have people sharing their expertise and their resources from conference to conference. We have a Spirituality Formation Committee working on bringing new resources to conferences and Vincentians. SVdP's financial position and assets are in good standing according to financial statements; we have no debt. There are successful programs SVdP offers: clinic, dining room, workforce, dental, winter nights, etc.

4. Identify areas you see the biggest need for improvement and explain why.

There is a need for more integration of district council and conference work. Reaching every Vincentian and being able to communicate training and other events more efficiently. We must continue to develop fundraising capabilities to sustain and attract funders at the District Council level and Conference level.

Effective use of technology for those who are prepared to use it and recognition of the need to reach those who aren't.

I'd like to see our thrift stores reach a performance level similar to if not exceeding that of our competitors, and they can still be strengthened to where there can be more free or low-cost items available for those in need.

Improve upon a communication strategy that would allow the general public, catholic community, Vincentians, partners in service, people we serve, and funders to know what we do and give them a better idea of how they could appreciate and support us.

I would suggest an effort to increase Vincentian and volunteer recruitment including situations where younger folks and youths are included. I will assure our council and all the conferences have a say in the direction and that we limit requirements placed on conferences to good practices like financial controls, approaching some aspects of the Rule, and safety.

5. What do you think your biggest challenges in this position might be?

Being the people we are, we continue to do what we've done in the past. We need to look for and accept changes that will allow us to sustain and continue to grow.

We need to continue to balance the needs of operations and improvements without overburdening the resources, and supporting the work of the Vincentians.

6. Describe your spirituality and how it might impact SVdP if elected president.

My spirituality is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am a Catholic-Christian. I make prayer and reflection part of my day. I find the Bible and Gospel clearer, and the changing doctrine less compelling. I am refreshed by the writings and actions of Pope Francis. I was raised by a very prayerful mother and quiet father, and they shared only a little of their faith. I was energized by the faith of Protestants who influenced me as a young adult. My wife, Shawna, and I have been very active in the St. Bonaventure ministries. I strive for closeness to our Lord. I have experienced Cursillo and been a part of Cursillo service teams, Kairos prison ministry, co-facilitated a program in Just Faith, participated in Marsh Creek Jail communion service, hosted a small faith sharing group, and am part of a Men's Spiritual Network. My ministry work and spirituality are part of striving to "go forth and make disciple" from Matthew 18.