



March 2024

Vincentian **Wisdom**
Quotes • Charism



Meeting

Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, 3/19, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM
Family Resource Center, Pittsburg

Meeting

District Council Meeting
Tuesday, 3/23, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM
CCC Healthcare for the Homeless
2731 Systron Dr., Concord, CA

Meeting

Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, 4/16, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM
Family Resource Center, Pittsburg

Event

Ozanam Sunday
Sunday, April 28

Meeting

West Region Meeting
Thursday-Saturday, May 16-18
Sacramento, CA

SAVE THE DATE

60th Anniversary Celebration
The Society of St. Vincent de Paul
of Contra Costa County
Friday, 6/28
St. Perpetua Catholic Church
Mass: 5 PM
Celebration Awards/Dinner: 6 PM

Bob Liles Corner

BOOK REVIEW – The Complete “Imitation of Christ” by Thomas Kempis. *Translation by Fr. John-Julian*

I don't understand why it took me so long to finally read this book. After all it has been read more than any book other than the Bible. Of the four books that make it up, I found the first two to be the best.

I could not read more than two pages at one sitting since there was just so much packed into every sentence. In fact I'll have to go back in several months and reread it in the hope that more of it sinks in. It gets into very specific detail on how you should be living your life and sets a high standard.

I got the version in which the translator has a page of comments for every page that Thomas Kempis wrote. In some cases it adds nothing, but many times it makes the original text more clear.

At our Day of Reflection on January 27th, Tim Williams told everyone what a great book it was and how St. Vincent de Paul encouraged everyone to read it.

So don't go by what I say, follow what Tim said ...

...along with St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Thomas More, St. Teresa of Avila and other famous people like Agatha Christie, Vincent Van Gogh, Oscar Wilde and John Newton, the author of “Amazing Grace”.

Bob

**“A word or a smile is often enough to put fresh life in a despondent soul.”
St. Therese of Lisieux**

Follow up on SVdP’s Morning of Reflection with Tim Williams on Jan 27

Many of the attendees indicated that they wanted to get a copy of Tim's prayers that he used on Saturday during the Faces of Christ section, his Extended Sign of the Cross prayer, the Both Sides prayer, and the 500 Little Prayers for Vincentians. They can be found on our website in the conference operation section on Spiritual Advisors: www.svdpc.org/conference-operation/. Also on that webpage is a special Stations of the Cross meditation written specifically for Vincentians.

**Rule 3.14 THE USE OF MONEY
AND PROPERTY FOR THE POOR**

Vincentians should always remember that giving love, talents, and time is more important than giving money. Nevertheless, the Society uses money and property to help relieve the suffering of those in need. The Society’s funds must be handled with the utmost care, prudence, and generosity. Money must not be hoarded. Decisions regarding the use of money and property are to be made after reflection in the light of the Gospel and Vincentian principles.

Accurate records of all money received or spent must be kept. **The Society may not allot funds to other organizations, except occasionally for other branches of the Vincentian Family, save under exceptional circumstances.**



SVdP St Callistus Conference

By Carol Brazil, President

Through rain, fog, wind, sunshine, and COVID, our dedicated Vincentians and volunteers never stopped serving our “Neighbors in Need” with our twice a week food distribution from our pantry.

The food is set up like a farmer's market in St. Callistus’ courtyard; unless it rains, we enter the church’s hall. Our volunteers are diverse and represent our community. They range in age from 12 to 85 years old. We assist our Neighbors in Need with volunteers who speak English, Tagalog, Spanish, French, Dutch, and Vietnamese.

Since the beginning of Covid, the number of families we provide for has gone from 100

per week to over 250 a week. We have regulars who have come for years, but we are getting many more first-timers from other countries.

The Food Bank of C.C. and Solano County is our primary source of food donated either from them directly or their connections with stores.

Someone dropped off a bag of used clothes one day. So, we decided to put a table out with the donations. Months later, we get clothes, household items, and toy donations. We have nicknamed our addition ***SVDP FREE FOR ALL BOUTIQUE***.

After our Neighbors get their food, we let them look through our Boutique, with the ability to choose an item. The rapport and bond we make with the folks is truly heartwarming. Smiles and hugs are free, as well as all the food and extras. We are blessed.

Carol



RESOURCE FOR
VINCENTIANS
EVERY TUESDAY AT 10:00 AM
WHERE: ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

1ST TUESDAY- FRED TALKS

The first of our Monthly Fred Talks will be “Our Timeless Home Visits”.

So... What are Fred Talks? Fred Talks are short videos that offer information on topics like Vincentian Heritage, Traditions, and Spirituality. Each video is five minutes or less!

What Vincentian can't spare time for that? Fred Talks are also great to share with other members of your Conference or fellow parishioners who may be curious about the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Tim Williams, National Vincentian Formation Director, produces the Fred Talks series. In this newest edition, titled “Our Timeless Home Visit,” Tim reminds us that Home Visits have never been the easiest way to help serve our neighbors in need — even before the pandemic that's gripped us over the past year. But just because it's not always easy doesn't mean it's not important — both for our own spiritual growth AND to bring the face of Christ to those we serve.

This session is part of our ongoing initiative to foster dialogue and connection among Vincentians. Every Tuesday, a moderator from a local SVDP Conference leads a forum where Vincentians from all walks of life can come together, share their experiences, seek answers to questions, and find valuable insights. It is a platform where your questions are welcomed, and we seek answers together.

Who should attend? The answer is simple: everyone. Whether you're an experienced home visitor, a dedicated Board Member, a member of the Hope Conference, or a past or current President of your Conference, you will find tremendous value in these discussions.

We've explored questions at the core of our mission, such as, "Why is home visitation so important?" and "Why must we go to them? Wouldn't asking them to come to us be easier and more efficient?" These discussions have deepened our understanding of our roles and responsibilities as Vincentians.

Join us on this meaningful journey of exploration and sharing. Your presence and voice matter immensely as we continue our mission of service to those in need.

Remember, it's every Tuesday at 10:00 AM. You are welcome whether you come with a burning question or to listen. In this virtual gathering, we may have the answers you seek, or you may discover that you are the answer for someone else.

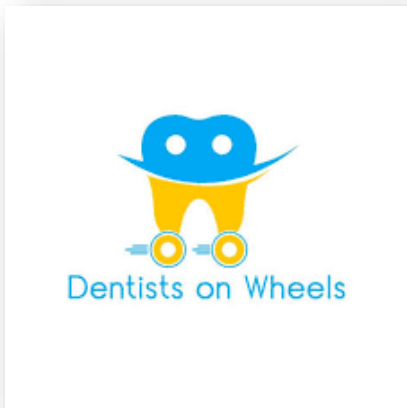
***Every Tuesday at 10:00 AM. Come by with a Question, or just come by –
We may have the Answer, or You May Be the Answer for Someone.***

<https://bit.ly/TuesdayZoomForum>

Meeting ID: 925 439 5060

Passcode: Ozanam





Dear Vincentian Friends of St. Vincent de Paul,

The past three years have been an incredible journey for Dentists on Wheels, serving the less fortunate communities in Contra Costa County.

What began with just two volunteer dentists during our pilot program has blossomed into a team of over 30 dedicated volunteers. It is hard to put a value on their time generously given, but the state of California would estimate it at over \$303,000, all provided at no cost to us.

Since 2021, we've treated over 200 patients, with our dentists traveling from various cities across California, including one from Los Angeles, to lend their expertise.

In 2023 alone, during our 50 days of operation, we provided approximately \$490,000 worth of free dental work to our patients (our Vincentian neighbors), all without receiving any funds from insurance companies. Each patient receives between \$6,000 and \$9,000 of dental treatment at no charge.

All of our volunteers take immense pride in our Free Dental Clinic, offering complimentary dental care to those in need and providing comprehensive treatment. When patients come to us in severe pain, we address their dental needs, restoring their oral health, not just the immediate issue causing discomfort. We approach each patient with compassion, without judgment, and strive to make their experience as comfortable as possible. Their gratitude is evident in the testimonials we receive, with many expressing appreciation for our genuine care and pain-free treatment.

For many of our patients referred from the St. Vincent de Paul Conferences, visiting the dentist was a luxury they couldn't afford for years due to financial constraints or lack of insurance. Some have shared stories of how their dental issues impacted their ability to secure employment or affected their daily lives, including difficulties with eating and homelessness. These firsthand accounts underscore our partnership's vital role in providing essential dental care to those who need it the most.

Operating within St. Vincent de Paul, a trusted community hub, ensures our patients feel welcomed and supported. They know we have their best interests at heart when they walk through our doors without ulterior motives.

The need for our services has always been apparent, but until now, it has yet to be addressed. We consider ourselves fortunate to partner with our Vincentians throughout the County and St.



Vincent de Paul in fulfilling our mission of providing free, comprehensive, restorative dental services and oral health education to the underserved and uninsured communities in and around Contra Costa County. *We will have more information on how Conferences can access this terrific resource for the neighbors in need in the April edition of the Vetera Monimenta.*

With heartfelt gratitude,

**Dr. Neda Oromchian,
Dental Director, DOW**



Empowering Our Community: St. Paul Conference's Endeavors

Notes from the St. Paul Conference

At the St. Paul Conference, we are excited to share updates on our recent initiatives to enhance our community's well-being. Recently, we have been fortunate to acquire a valuable asset—a container formerly belonging to St. Vincent de Paul—which has found a new home at Mary's House, situated conveniently at the back of our building.

This acquisition proved timely, especially during our recent engagement with the food bank on February 25th. Thanks to this addition, we now boast 1 1/2 refrigeration units and a small freezer, which have proven invaluable for storing and distributing fresh produce and occasional meat donations from our partner conferences.

In addition to food items, we've also received generous donations, including over 20 cases of diapers and 100 warm pizzas, all of which have been distributed to our neighbors in need. The container has swiftly transitioned into a hub for storage and distribution, efficiently supporting our efforts to serve the community.



We're eagerly awaiting feedback from the Food Bank, with Robert Gama expressing satisfaction with our service delivery during his recent visit. Approval for our application is pending, and we remain optimistic about the outcome.



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have supported us, including your office and fellow conferences, whose contributions have bolstered our mission. Your generosity enables us to continue serving our low-income families here in San Pablo.

As we move forward, we remain committed to the values of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, seeking God's blessings to guide us in our endeavor to serve others with love.

Special Note: The Conference at St. Paul continues to grow to fill the void created by the closing of St. David's Pantry at St. Mark. They need a van with seats that could be removed that will help them facilitate the pick-up of the food from the Food Bank in the future and the growing list of donors they have been able to find to support their Conferences work. If you have any leads or suggestions, or have a van you would be willing to donate don't hesitate to contact Maria Sanchez at svdpsanpablo1845@gmail.com

Vincentians of Contra Costa County Are Not Alone in Our Suffering

By Contra Costa County Vincentian Support Services

Each month, Vincentian staff from all over the country join together on Zoom to talk about best practices, struggles, and challenges in serving the Councils and Conferences, and how to best support our Vincentians and neighbors in need. In the last two or three Vincentian Support/Life Meetings a theme ran through our meetings: An increase in the number of neighbors in need, and a post-pandemic decrease in the number of active Vincentians, and Conferences throughout the country who are able and willing to help. Collectively, we landed on this guidance from an excerpt from Our Serving in Hope Module VII, Page 53: Maintaining a constant prayerful discernment to balance enabling vs empowering charitable love.

From the Vincentian perspective, we always begin by providing prayers, understanding, information, and care. We avoid the reduction of our ministry of "serving" only to giving financial or material assistance. The greatest gift we can offer our neighbors is the gift of our time in an ongoing relationship.

Suggestions:

- We pray to receive God's wisdom and Christ's love in performing our Vincentian work. Mass, the Sacraments, and reading the Scriptures are essential. We gather together in our Conference meetings in thoughtful discernment and prayer regularly. Vincentians must be contemplatives in action.
- We commit to spending more time, over time, with our neighbors, making follow-up visits, and learning how to mentor.
- We endeavor to listen deeply and sensitively to underlying problems and root causes.
- We keep abreast of the many services and resource-building programs available in our community for persons in need. This was the hallmark of the Society in Frédéric Ozanam's time and is still true today in the 21st" Century.

Vincentians are aware of different types of poverty and tailor their sharing of resources and services available in the community to their individual neighbors.

Service provided for recurrent or problem cases can sometimes be used as an incentive to move some individuals, who are ambivalent about seeking outside help, to address and take action to solve their problems. Help in such situations would be given contingent upon following through on sincere, well-thought-out plans created by the neighbor and home visit teams or their mentor with consultation and coaching by other Vincentians and community partners.

We strive to create a loving and compassionate impression with a family and leave them with the feeling that we care for them, even though we may not give them all the material or financial help they requested. Follow-up visits reinforce our commitment. Your presence in a home can give hope and help heal wounds we don't even know about. **It is just something to think about.**

Youth in our County Unite to Form a Conference

We were privileged to have a dedicated group of teens from St. Joan of Arc Parish visit the Family Resource Center on a recent rainy Saturday morning. They are part of a group of enthusiastic teens who are forming a Youth Conference of SVdP at St. Joan of Arc. These young people, guided by some wonderful adult leaders and supported by Conference president Frank Wnuk and other Vincentians, came to learn more about Vincentian Life and how we serve our neighbors in need.

They participated in our Shower program, a joint effort of The Bay Church, New Destiny Church, the City of Pittsburg, Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa, and SVdP, as well as at the Saturday food distribution held by the SVdP Conference at the Church of the Good Shepherd.

It was truly heartwarming to see these young people really engage in the work they were doing and, especially, interact with our neighbors in need.

They are recruiting new members and will be commissioned as new Youth Vincentians on Ozanam Sunday. Please keep them in your prayers for a successful launch of this new program!



Spirituality. Friendship. Service.
We are the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

**The First
St. Vincent de Paul
Youth Conference
In Contra Costa County!**



*"I want all young people with
both head and heart
to assemble
for some charitable work."*

– Frédéric Ozanam



SCAN CODE TO SIGNUP

JOIN THE ST. JOAN

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL YOUTH CONFERENCE



Build Friendships With Others In Our Community ✓

Grow Spiritually With Fellow Vincentians ✓

Serve Our Neighbors In Need ✓

Follow The Vincentian Values Throughout Our Lives ✓

**Monday, March 25th; 5:00 PM
@St. Joan Of Arc Lower Conference Room**

For More Info:


Frank Wnuk svdpstjoan@gmail.com
Beverly Fung Bfung@sjasr.org

June 29, 2024 is SVdP of Contra Costa County's 60th Anniversary!

We will be celebrating in style on June 28 and are looking for Vincentians to join the 60th Anniversary Planning Committee!


- Use Your Special Skills and Talents
- Network with Other Vincentians
- Be Part of Making this Celebration Special

To volunteer, contact Barb Hunt, b.hunt@svdp-cc.org or 925-330-6732



The Society of St. Vincent de Paul
of Contra Costa County

60th Anniversary Celebration



**Come Help Us Celebrate 60 Years
of Helping People in Need!**

Join us on June 28, 2024 to celebrate St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County's
Diamond Anniversary of serving our neighbors in need for over six decades

Come Enjoy a Celebration of Volunteer Service, Friendship - and a Delicious Dinner!
For Sponsorship or Event Information, contact Barb Hunt, b.hunt@svdp-cc.org

Event Information:

St. Perpetua Catholic Church
3454 Hamlin Rd. Lafayette, CA 94549

Friday, June 28, 2024
Mass: 5 p.m.
Celebration Awards/Dinner: 6 p.m.

Special Guest:

The Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, SJ
Bishop of Oakland