

October 2026

Training
Officer Training
Saturday 10/3 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM
St. John Vianney, Walnut Creek

Training
Tuesday Tips & Training - Zoom
Tuesday 10/13, 10–11 AM

Meeting
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday 10/13, 9:30–11:30 AM

Meeting
District Council Meeting
Saturday 10/17, 9:30–11:30 AM

Training
Building A Conference Donor Base
David Lins, SVdP National
Wednesday, 11/4, 5-7:30 PM
Location TBD

Training
Ozanam Orientation
Saturday 11/7, 9 AM – 3:30 PM
St. Jerome, El Cerrito

Training
Home Visit Workshop
Saturday 12/5, 8:30 AM – 12 PM,
St. Jerome, El Cerrito

*For the complete calendar visit the Members section of www.svdp-cc.org

Vincentian **Wisdom**



Pat Walsh's Corner

Servant Leadership

Beginning my term as district council president, I find myself in prayerful contemplation of exactly what it is that I am called to do. There are resource and training materials, books, and manuals related to the topic. There are many people willing to give advice, support, and prayer as I begin my journey. I have a loving wife, who cheers on my successes and tolerates my shortcomings. I have a loving family, and I am blessed with children and grandchildren.

I recall my first "real" job. At 16 years old, a restaurant manager hired me as a dishwasher. As I prepared to ride my bicycle to my first day of work, my dad gave me sage advice. "Just use your common sense," he opined. I pondered his words as I pedaled down the road. And pondered. And pondered some more. By the time I arrived, I wondered, what does *that* mean?

Fortunately, St. Vincent de Paul has a framework to guide our work. In our Society, we are called to servant leadership. St. Vincent modeled leadership as service rather than authority. He emphasized that leadership positions were opportunities to serve Christ, the members of our communities, and the poor, rather than to wield earthly power.

As codified in *The Rule*, "Leadership positions in the Society, at any level, are always to be accepted as service to Christ, the members, and the poor.

(Continued on next page)

Servant leadership is done in imitation of Jesus who said: “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mk 10:45) (Rule Part 3, Statute 11) This is what we are all called to do. The bar may seem impossibly high. Yet together, we can accomplish great things. So, here is how I will approach my work:

Gratitude

- Give thanks to God for allowing me this opportunity to serve.
- Give thanks to all the hardworking Vincentians in Contra Costa County, who exemplify Christ’s love through their actions daily.
- Give thanks to the employees, who work hard every day for the betterment of the Society and the neighbors we serve.
- Give thanks to our parishioners who are generous in their support.
- Give thanks to our donors, who provide funding we use to run our programs.
- Give thanks to those who served before us, for paving the way.
- Give thanks to our neighbors in need, for allowing us to see the face of Christ in our service to them.
- Give thanks to God (the best way to begin and end all things).

Listening

As mentioned in Vincentian Leadership, Council President Guidelines, “The ability to listen to others and to catalyze group decisions are evidence of capable leadership.” In Covey’s The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, we must “seek first to understand, then be understood”. We should use empathetic listening to genuinely understand a person. This creates an atmosphere of caring and positive problem-solving.

Consensus

We should use consensus in our decision-making whenever possible. Consensus is the situation reached when all members of a group:

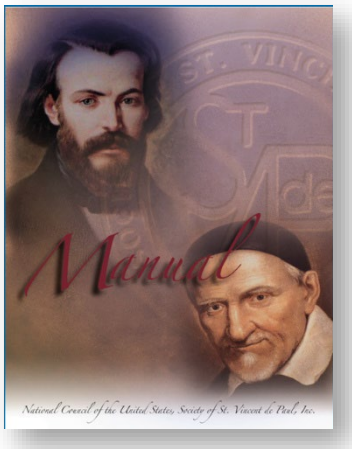
- Understand a decision.
- Understand the conditions and viewpoints which drove the decision.
- Have had an opportunity to air their opinions and viewpoints.
- Accept the decision and support it, even if they do not wholeheartedly agree with it.

Finally, I will follow my dad’s advice and use my common sense.



Thank you for all you do!

In Vincentian Service,
Pat



The Manual 3.2 Vincentian Spirituality

"As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, You shall be holy, for I am holy." (I Peter 1:15-16)

Pope Saint John Paul II told us that "spirituality means a mode or form of life in keeping with Christian demands. Spirituality is 'life in Christ' and 'in the Spirit,' which is accepted in faith, expressed in love, and inspired by hope.... By spirituality... we mean not a part of life, but the whole of life guided by the Holy Spirit." (The Church in America, 29)

The Holy Father also said: "Life according to the Spirit, whose fruit is holiness (cf. Rom 6:22; Gal 5:22), stirs up every baptized person and requires each to follow and imitate Jesus Christ, in embracing the Beatitudes, in listening and meditating on the Word of God, in conscious and active participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church, in personal prayer, in family or in community, in the hunger and thirst for justice, in the practice of the commandment of love in all circumstances of life and service to the brethren, especially the least, the poor, and the suffering." (Christifideles laici, 16)

A specific spirituality underpins our Vincentian vocation: Vincentian spirituality, so named for our patron, St. Vincent de Paul. It is his legacy to the Church and to all who pursue his spirit. This spirituality gives life, color, and meaning to who we are and what we do. Vincentian spirituality is the foundation of our vocation, endowing it with credibility, veracity, and integrity. God's grace strengthens, supports, and energizes the practice of this specific spirituality (Rule: Part I, Article 2.1).

Serving in Hope

Vincentians “Serve in Hope” because they are called to bring the love of God, the compassion of Jesus, to those who are poor and suffering.

St. Vincent said, “God demands first the heart, then the work.” It is only with our heart that we can bring compassion, respect, and devotion to the destitute and marginalized.

It is only with a heart on fire with God’s love that service can become mission. And it is only by “Serving in Hope” that our mission can root us in the faith that in the poor “Vincentians will see the face of Christ.”



Tuesday Tips and Training
October 2026 SESSION
Tuesday, October 13th, 10:00am – 11:00am



Our Monthly meeting, designed to share RESOURCES for our Neighbors.

2ND TUESDAY–HOPE Conference

Join us on Tuesday, Oct 13th, for this month's Tips and Training. For this session we are blessed to be having Mark Schlitt, President of the HOPE Conference, give an overview of the conference and answer any questions you may have. This is a great opportunity to learn more about how this conference assists you all in getting assistance for your neighbors in need.

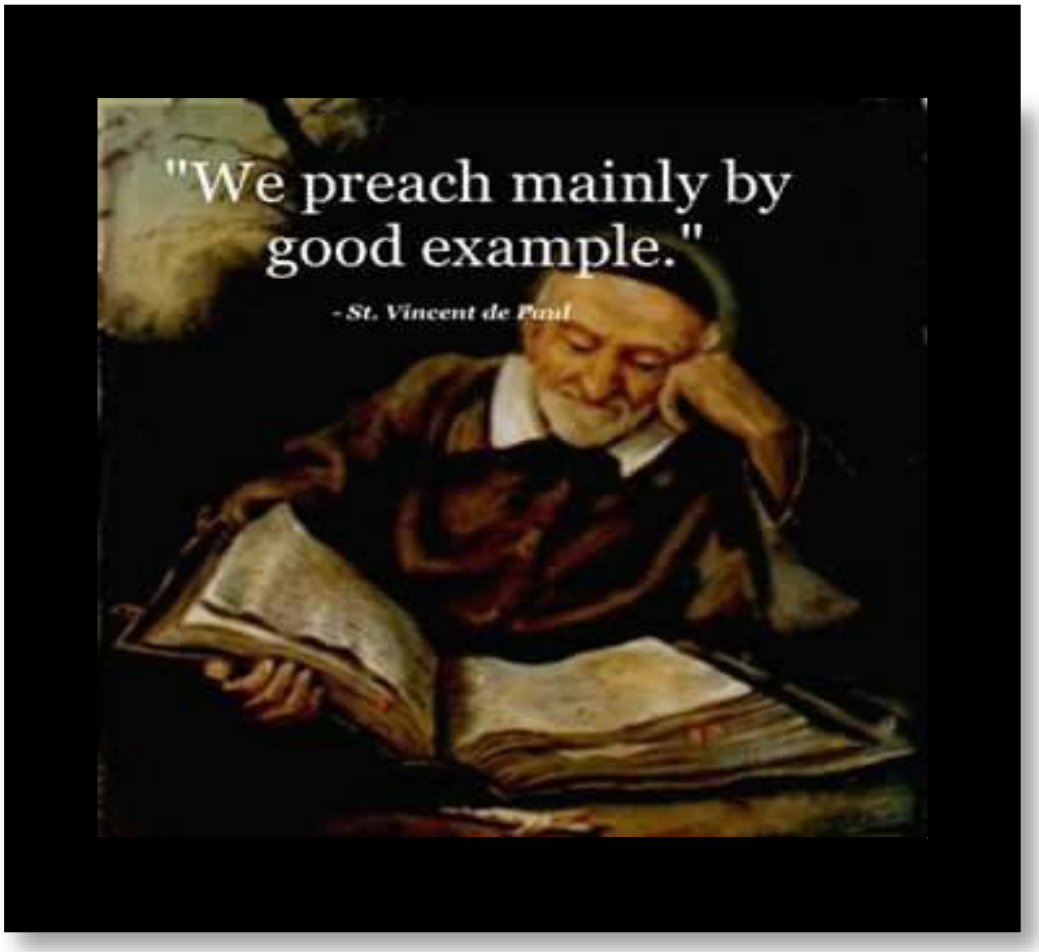
We ask that each conference send at least one Vincentian to represent your conference. These sessions are an important opportunity to stay connected as a Society and to grow together in our mission. Your voice and experience are important. Whether you have something to share, a question to ask, or simply want to listen and learn, we encourage you to join us. Looking forward to seeing you there!

An Important note!!! Past links to Tuesday Tips and Training found in previous newsletters up to Aug 2026 will not work. The old link is no longer valid. To gain access to the session, you must follow the new link provided below.

https://bit.ly/TuesTipsTraining

Meeting ID: 822 2861 5994 **Passcode: ozanam**

HOW CAN WE ANSWER THE CALL TO SEE THE FACE OF CHRIST IN ALL PEOPLE?



PLEASE JOIN US FOR AN OZANAM ORIENTATION
NOV 7, 2026, 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM
ST. JEROME, 308 CARMEL AVE., EL CERRITO

PARTICIPANTS *MUST* REGISTER BY OCT. 23, 2026

SIGN-IN BEGINS AT 8:30 AM, TRAINING AT 9:00AM
CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST & LUNCH INCLUDED

REGISTER AT:
HTTPS://BIT.LY/OZANAMNOV7
OR SCAN QR CODE:

QUESTIONS? **TEXT** JOYCE AT 925-475-9566 or EMAIL *joy1936@comcast.net*



The women of Scripture trusted God, embraced His call, and said "YES" to something greater than themselves.

Come pray and reflect with Mary and the women of Scripture as we prepare our hearts to welcome Christ this Advent.

Let their yes, be your own.

Sr. Paule Freeburg, D.C., our West Region Spiritual Advisor, will gently guide us through reflections in preparation for Advent.

Please Join us! Nov 21, 2026
8:30 a.m. (Mass) – 12:30 p.m.
St. Isidore, 440 La Gonda Wy, Danville

https://bit.ly/AdventRetreatNov21

Participants must Register by Nov. 16, 2026

Reflections from National – First Time Attendees By Rosemary Navarro (President, Vincentians of the Arc Youth Conference), Dcn. Fred Seril (Spiritual Advisor, St. Joan of Arc Conference), and Precy Galang (Treasurer, Good Shepherd Conference)



SVdP President General Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez with Vincentians from Contra Costa
Dcn. Fred Seril, Ron Costanzo, Precy Galang, Br. Juan Manuel Buergo Gómez, Shawnna Costanzo, Andre Navarro, Frank Wnuk, Rosemary Navarro, Abby Roden, Marco Ceballos, Claudia Ramirez (from Left to Right)



Abby Roden, Andre Navarro, Rosemary Navarro

My name is Rosemary Navarro and I am the President of the Vincentians of the Arc youth conference at St. Joan of Arc in San Ramon. I truly had an amazing and eye-opening experience at the National Assembly! Listening to great keynote speakers and attending breakout sessions allowed me to reflect upon myself as a Vincentian and my conference.

One of the greatest things the National Assembly did for me was deepen my understanding about The Society and what we as Vincentians are called to do. In his President's Address, President John Berry emphasized the importance of action working hand and hand with compassion and the dangers of becoming transactional. Part of what draws me to SVdP is that serving our neighbors is more than a transaction, but an act of love. We as Vincentians are called to advocate for the injustice our neighbors face and to love them as Christ does.

A few things I would like to take back to my conference is an increase in spirituality and a mentorship system to better pass on leadership roles. To quote someone from the assembly, we cannot show our neighbors Christ if we do not know Him ourselves. Understanding the love Christ

has for us along with His sacrifice allows our society to be the love and hope our world needs. With that goal in mind, I have increased our reflections on the Eucharist and implemented different prayers made for Vincentians. When attending a breakout session, I learned about a new training model used to guide future leaders stepping into board positions. Most of the training consisted of mentorship and discussions as key things to help a smooth transition. Using these ideas, I want to create a mentorship system between old and incoming presidents, vice presidents, and other positions to ensure a gradual transition as our conference grows.

I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to attend this year's National Assembly. I will never forget the connections I made, the activities, and the skills I have acquired. I can't wait to bring everything I have learned to my conference!

- Rosemary Navarro



Frank Whuk and Dcn. Fred Seril

Attending the National Assembly has deepened my Vincentian vocation through a renewed connection to the Society and its mission. It felt like a retreat, a return to the basics. Seeing so many committed Vincentians gathered from across the country was both energizing and inspiring. Their stories of God's grace at work in their conferences, and their experiences serving the poor, nurturing their own spirituality, growing their friendship, and practicing servant leadership, reminded me that we belong to something far larger than any single conference: a community within the Catholic Church where the Holy Spirit is on fire, and we are united in our commitment to serving our neighbors.

The assembly's theme, "New Frontiers," challenged me to think beyond my own conference and ask how I can help revitalize the Society in places where conferences have gone silent or never existed. One meeting at the assembly stayed with me: Juan Carlo, MC to the Bishop of the Diocese of Salt Lake City and one of the founders of the Salt Lake City SVdP conference. Though that conference is no longer active, the Vincentian spirit was unmistakably alive in him, in his hope, and his determination to revive and grow it. He reminded me that starting a conference or the restoration of one often begin with the commitment of just a few people.

The National Assembly also gave me space to reflect on my own vocation and return to the Society's spiritual foundation. As St. Vincent de Paul taught, our service must be rooted in love for God. "…let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows…" (St. Vincent de Paul) I came home with a renewed commitment to serve our neighbors and support my conference with compassion, humility, and faith as we move together toward holiness. Above all, I am committed to keeping God at the center of everything we do, always trusting in His guidance and providence.

- Deacon Fred Seril

The 2026 SVdP National Assembly in Salt Lake City, Utah was definitely one to remember. With the variety of workshops covering significant elements and concepts that enhance the Society ranging from spiritual growth to conference governance and all in between, the information overload is underrated. For the love of our neighbors while providing charity and social justice to the most vulnerable populations conjunctively in alignment with the Holy Spirit is what makes us most valuable as Vincentians.



Marco Ceballos, Chris McCarthy "Bl. Rosalie Rendu", Precy Galang

The way John Berry explained how charity and justice work hand in hand could not have been said better, because it certainly does. Advocacy is one thing we do without realizing. It is found in home visits, collecting necessary documents to submit to our partnered organizations, it is staying in compliance with the awareness of potential fraud. We advocate for our neighbors when we assist them with financial shortcomings due to an illness, medical procedure, an unexpected significant decrease in wages, loss of employment, having to relocate, and so on. Moreover, we advocate for those who are facing food insecurity, whether it is to save a few dollars so that funds can be reallocated towards an unpaid bill, or simply to feed the hungry. While focused on the microscopic detail of the work we do, the greater picture from a social perspective reflects justice and charity amidst the ongoing need that is easily overlooked.

Keynote speaker Brian Goldstone, author of There is no Place for Us, later mentions how the government at a time announced that there is "x amount of billions of dollars" to spend, yet nowhere to spend it. Meanwhile, here we are serving our neighbors who are in dire need of those dollars just to make ends meet. Depending on perspective, we can say, 'well, gee how insignificant it is to overlook a certain population' – or- we can definitely say, 'there is opportunity for us to step up and claim that money for the people we serve'. The problem is not merely one thing over the other. The problem is that there is a huge gap between what is available and where it needs to go. The solution, well it can potentially be us Vincentians. I see it as a call to step up and step out. To have the courage to build relationships with those who want to assist the populations we serve, attend uncomfortable city council meetings, become a player unmingled with politics and take the seat where 'we don't belong' – players unmingled with politics. Then gradually, with the thing we call magic, we will begin to close that gap.

- Precy Galang

Thank you all for sharing your first-time experience going to a National Assembly. These events are truly something special and we encourage each of our over 900 Vincentians within the District Council of Conta Costa County to attend at least once!

Next year's Assembly will be in Washington D.C. at the Marriot Marquis from Aug 25-28, 2027. Enjoy more photos from the event on the next page.









Thought of the Month by Marco Ceballos

Last month's 'Thought of the Month' involved giving out your personal number to those we serve. We had two Vincentians submit their experience and thoughts on the matter. One Vincentian expressed that in the past they had a stressful experience with a neighbor that he had given his personal number to. The neighbor called excessively day after day, which I think we can all understand. Many neighbors have expressed that out of all the places that they have called, St. Vincent de Paul was the only one that called back. This ministry gives hope and for those we serve, it may be all that they feel they have and so stepping into the shoes of someone who is desperately holding onto that hope, it's understandable that one may be a little too excessive in checking in on that assistance.

Another Vincentian had this to share, "I have shared my phone number with our Neighbors in need for over 15 years. To date, I have not had anyone abuse it. No matter what the request from our Neighbor may be, we visit them as neighbors/equals. Suggesting that they call another number than mine or my partners, puts an obvious barrier in place for communication. I can't imagine telling a neighbor that I don't want them to know my number. From experience with Neighbors who share a phone, have service only when connected to Wi-Fi, or have interrupted service, it is difficult enough to connect. Establishing trust is critical to having a relationship. What message do we want to send?

Conference calls, texting and Facetime calls do require revealing your number. Personal in-home visits are the primary contact. Use of communication can be very helpful for follow-ups or even scheduling future visits or calls. The National response suggests that Vincentians will receive calls for assistance and keep them a secret from their Conferences. Why would we do that? We represent the Conference; we are not the Conference. If a Neighbor gave my number to another Neighbor in need, I simply tell them they need to contact the Conference help line to be assigned someone to help them. My phone allows me to block an individual number or anyone not in my directory. So far, I have never had a need to do that."

They go on further to provide a possible solution with an application called "Burner" that allows you to have a second number that could be used if there was a concern with releasing your primary number. He states that there is a $4.99 monthly fee to use it. You can make and receive calls and text from that "Burner" number, thus protecting your primary number. They are testing it out and state that his experience has been good to date.

Ultimately, there may not be a one-size-fits-all answer when it comes to sharing our personal phone numbers with those we serve. Each Vincentian has different circumstances, boundaries, and comfort levels. What is important is that we remain mindful of the message we send to our Neighbors. We want them to know that we are there to walk alongside them, while also making sure that we maintain healthy boundaries that allow us to continue serving them well.
Whether you choose to share your personal number, use a second number, or rely on your Conference's phone line, the goal remains the same: to make sure our Neighbors know they are not alone. As Vincentians, we are called to meet people where they are, listen to their needs, and build relationships rooted in trust, dignity, and compassion. So perhaps the question is not simply, "Should I give my number to a Neighbor?" but rather, "What can I do to make sure my Neighbor knows I am here for them, while still maintaining the boundaries that allow me to serve them well?"

I want to thank all those that have submitted their responses to these Thoughts of the Month. It is a pleasure to get to know you all more through having these conversations and I look forward to continuing our journey together in Holiness by sharing our experiences, wisdom, and prayers in this way.

And the more the merrier! There are over 900 of you here within this District Council of Contra Costa County, that is so amazing. It's a blessing and so please don't be shy and share your questions, your thoughts, your ideas. It is all welcome. As always, peace and blessings.

"Those whom you serve should feel the efforts of your kindheartedness."

– St. Vincent de Paul