



Welcome to the Vincentian Family! You are now part of the efforts of over 3000 men and women in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Georgia Council who have committed themselves to helping people in need in our community.

We cannot offer you personal glory or even recognition for the works you do - simply a great deal of spiritual growth and peace - and a commitment to justice that may well last the rest of your life.

I urge you to remain faithful to the meetings of your Conference and to the principles of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. We encourage you to sharpen your skills by reading the Society's publications and attending formation training sessions, annual events and meetings of the Council.

We invite you, at any occasion, to talk with me or any of our staff at the Conference Support Center on problems that arise or for help with situations you encounter during your work as a Vincentian.

Your name will be put on the mailing list for the Society Page, our monthly e-newsletter, which will keep you abreast of local news and happenings within the Society, and for SVdP Frederic's E-Gazette, a national Council weekly publication. Be assured that these lists will be kept confidential; no outside agency can obtain this information from us.

Lastly, I ask you to please review the enclosed documents for information that will help you get better acquainted with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Georgia, what is expected of you as a member, and other resources for you to begin your Vincentian journey. You may also find additional information and resources on the Member Website at [www.svdpgorgia.org/members](http://www.svdpgorgia.org/members). Again, thank you, and welcome to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Georgia!

Your Brother and Sister in Christ and St. Vincent de Paul,

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## Overview of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul exists to provide an environment for the personal spiritual growth and development of its members. This energizing spirituality leads the members to, “seek and find the forgotten, the suffering and the deprived so that we might bring them God's love” just as we pray in the Opening Prayer.

**Vincentians are a relational people who are called to be in community with our brothers and sisters whom we serve, whom we serve with and whom we serve on behalf of. Our works of charity are a means to this end. Active members of the Society strive to:**

1. Take part in spiritual development and formation based upon Scripture, prayer, reflection and discussion, and Sacramental experience;
2. Serve to the best of their ability, the spiritual, social, physical and emotional needs of anyone in trouble regardless of their race, religion or creed;
3. Make special efforts to eliminate the causes of poverty and injustices;
4. Grow as a result and through person-to-person contact with those in need. Members, Conferences and Councils of the Society work cooperatively with others involved in the same types of works as The Society is often a catalyst for the development of additional services within a parish or neighborhood community.

### Organizational Structure

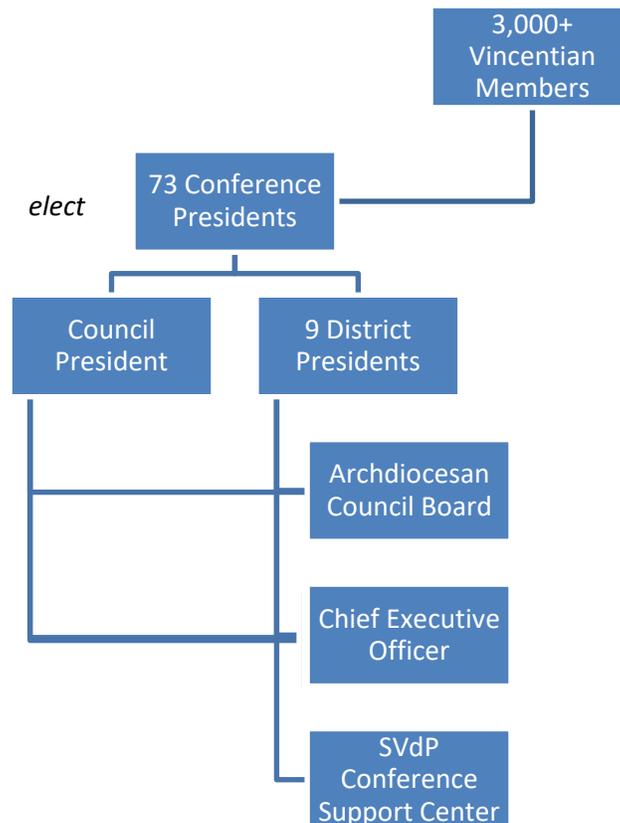
- The basic unit of the Society is the Conference, a group of men and women who wish to live the Vincentian vocation. Conferences are generally affiliated with a parish and are identified by the parish name.
- Local groups of Conferences are formed into Districts.
- The various Districts belong to a Diocesan/Archdiocesan Council.
- All Conferences and Councils are governed by lay men and women elected to serve as Presidents of their respective membership.
- Paid staff serves as a support resource to the members of Conferences through the Council structure. Council is also referred to as the Conference Support Center or CSC and is located in Chamblee, Georgia.
- The Society is Catholic in character. People of other faith traditions are warmly welcomed as associate members.

### Conference Works

- A time-honored principle of the Society is that, "No act of charity is foreign to us."
- Essential to the Vincentian mission is visiting the needy in their homes.
- The greatest gift we bring to those in need is the gift of ourselves. Through our home visits, we bring the gift of the Lord's healing love into the brokenness of the lives of others- that is what makes a Vincentian.
- Conferences meet on a regular basis at least twice a month. Each meeting has two segments, spirituality and business - neither can be overlooked.

## Structure of St. Vincent de Paul of Georgia

- The St. Vincent de Paul Georgia Council (Conference Support Center or CSC, in Chamblee) raises millions of dollars to assist those in need. At least 90% of those funds go directly to those in need, which is an outstanding efficiency.
- The Conference Support Center in Chamblee operates a Family Support Center and Client-choice Food Pantry. It also oversees two Thrift Stores (Chamblee and Morrow).
- The Conference Support Center also provides services to members such as publications, training, retreats and other support services.
- Members of the Georgia Conferences should receive the monthly newsletter, the Society Page, which is sent via e-mail. Be sure the Conference Support Center has your current member information, which is also used for other Council publications.
- Conferences contribute 7.5%-10% of their income to the Council. The Council pays both national and regional dues. The U.S. National Office supports the International office of St. Vincent de Paul in Paris, France.
- The Georgia Council operates within the boundaries of the Archdioceses of Atlanta and the Diocese of Savannah, but we are a lay organization. Our funding, governance, activities and non-profit ID are separate.



## **Expectations of Individual Members**

Answering Christ's call, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul fosters hope by providing spiritual, emotional and material assistance on a person-to-person basis to those living in poverty, the lonely and the forgotten in our communities across the United States. The Society and its members adhere to a Rule and to the highest standards of excellence. We believe we see the face of Christ in those we encounter. We believe we are called to a lay vocation to serve those in need and each other as we grow in holiness and friendship with each other and offer ourselves as servant leaders in our mission of charity and justice. Therefore, each member agrees to:

1. Strive to grow in holiness.
2. Value the importance of friendship with fellow Vincentians and those we serve.
3. Regard home visits as the primary method of service to those in need.
4. Attend scheduled meetings and offer insight and wisdom regarding strategic and tactical matters of importance to the Society and those we serve.
5. Support fellow Vincentians in our Vincentian journeys.
6. Act in accordance with our Rule, Bylaws and Policies.
7. Be an advocate and voice for the poor.
8. Be in solidarity with the various levels of the organization.
9. Participate in major events as often as is possible.
10. Encourage twinning both domestically and internationally.
11. Support the Society with personal monetary contributions based on his/her own personal circumstances.
12. Offer self as a servant leader when called upon and to offer the gifts and skills granted to each one for the common good of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.
13. Be goodwill ambassadors for the Society to promote our mission, vision, values, and programs in our communities.

*National Council of the United States,  
Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc.*

## Vincentian Formation

***“It is essential that the Society continually promote the formation and training of its members and Officers, in order to deepen their knowledge of the Society and their spirituality, improve the sensitivity, quality and efficiency of their service to the poor and help them be aware of the benefits, resources and opportunities that are available for the poor.” (Rule: Part 1, 3.12)***

Vincentian Formation is the initial and ongoing process of growing and developing in the tradition, charism and spirituality of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Initial and on-going Formation is designed to touch the head and the heart of the members, in order to assist each one to find meaning and purpose in life, love and a sense of relatedness. Vincentian Formation thus enables the fulfillment of the three essential elements of the Society: personal holiness, service of those in need and friendship.

There are (3) three formation sessions that are required for new members within Six (6) months- One (1) year of joining the Society. These sessions are held at least once per year in each district in the form of an event called Vincentian University. Please check the formation calendar on the Vincentian Member website at [www.svdpgorgia.org/vincentian-calendar](http://www.svdpgorgia.org/vincentian-calendar) or the bi-monthly e-newsletter, The Society Page, for upcoming sessions near you and register to attend.

### **Required Courses:**

Ozanam Orientation

The Home Visit Orientation

Child Abuse Prevention Training

Once you have completed these required courses, you may attend other offered sessions that will help you extend your knowledge of the Society, grow spiritually as a Vincentian, and help you better serve our friends in need.

### **Other Vincentian Formation Events:**

#### **Spring to Life Annual Assembly**

Date: TBD

Each year, SVdP Georgia holds an annual membership meeting for the Georgia Council to come together to celebrate prayer and friendship. All Vincentians are invited and encouraged to attend this inspiring, educational, and enjoyable event.

## Vincentian Spirituality

Vincentian spirituality is not a part of life, but the whole of life guided by the Holy Spirit. It is not just having a spiritual advisor in each conference or district. We live in Christ and the Spirit. It is fidelity to catholic teachings in every aspect of our lives, particularly with family and the conference.

We are to emulate St. Vincent, our patron, and Blessed Frederic, our founder in simplicity and humility, our Vincentian focus, gentleness, selflessness, and zeal.

Central to understanding Vincentian spirituality is understanding the mystery and grace that God became human. The mystery of the Incarnation: Jesus was born poor to be the servant of the poor. Our patroness is the "Immaculate Conception." Our society has a devotion to the Blessed Mother. Our spirituality must be nourished from a personal and genuine encounter with Mary in the Gospel, in the spirit of St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic.

Three mysteries in Mary's life reinforce the reason for being Vincentian:

1. The Annunciation  
Humility prepared and sustained Mary's offering to God. She recognized God as the only Lord and she knew her smallness before God. Like Mary we must give ourselves to God to serve our neighbor, in order to accomplish God's work.
2. The Immaculate Conception  
Mary welcomed God, was filled with God, clothed herself with Christ, and was self-emptying.
3. The Visitation  
Mary showed generosity and compassion in her visit to her cousin Elizabeth and is our model of service to the poor.

To this day Vincentians implore Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. This is why the Vincentian prayer includes the "Hail Mary."

To be a servant of the poor we must put into practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. We must see Jesus in others and try to be Jesus for others. We grow spiritually through person-to-person contact.

**We must respond to the gospel challenge to feed, clothe, shelter, welcome, and love those in need.**

- The poor have a RIGHT to daily bread: food distribution;
- The poor have a RIGHT to health: pharmacies, medical and dental;
- The poor have a RIGHT to dignity and hope: domestic and international Twinning. Vincentians help the victims of disasters and provide reverential burial when needed.
- The poor in prison have a RIGHT to respect: Bring hope, solace, and support; help the families of inmates as well.
- The poor have a RIGHT to shelter: Provide temporary shelter; administer housing; provide furnishings and household items.
- The poor have the RIGHT to care in their old age: pay special attention to the elderly, lonely, and shut-ins; visit nursing homes.
- The poor have the RIGHT to work: help the unemployed find jobs and offer job training; tutor in how to interview and apply for positions, and provide appropriate clothing.
- The poor have the RIGHT to education: provide tuition and supplemental funding, textbooks, school materials, and uniforms.

Dignity demands that we never judge another person to be useless, unnecessary, or totally bad. To judge and act that way is unjust. The order of the society is based on two virtues: justice and charity. Justice has its limits, whereas charity knows none. Our spirituality is gentle and strong, nurturing and guiding, loving and creative, compassionate and merciful.

Spirituality is the prime focus at our society meetings. We start with prayer. Then Spiritual Reflection is first on the agenda. It should not be rushed. It should be pondered, discussed, and absorbed. Prayer should be a basic part of our home visits. Insert some stories about praying with people.

Like the "Good Samaritan" help those in need and share their suffering. Like Blessed Frederic, we should think of ourselves as the weak Samaritan. If we have an active contemplative spirituality we will trust in Divine Providence. God KNOWS what He is doing.

*Taken from the Phoenix Council Ozanam Formation Experience curriculum*

## Am I a Vincentian or a Volunteer?

<u>VOLUNTEER</u>	<u>VINCENTIAN</u>
A volunteer focuses on personal fulfillment "I want to give because it makes me feel <i>good</i> ."	A Vincentian focuses on <i>God's</i> will: "Yes, Lord, I will give even when it is uncomfortable.
A volunteer has a limited scope: "I want to do this for my family, my parish, my community."	A Vincentian has an infinite scope: "I want to build up the kingdom of <i>God</i> ."
A volunteer creates different compartments within life: "I distribute food on Tuesdays."	A Vincentian has a seamless garment: "All my life is an apostolate: that is why my life is balanced, I am a responsible employee, a faith filled parishioner, my prayer life is tended to and my family is not ignored."
With volunteerism, few do while many receive: "The same people do everything in the parish."	With Vincentian, we do and others do: "We begin the work, train others, and then let them do the work."
Volunteers focus on quantity: They do many things: "I say yes to anything that sounds like a good thing. I work hard to improve efficiency and to do more things faster."	Vincentians focus on quality: they concentrate on one thing and do it well: "Adhering to the charism that I have been led to follow, I say yes to anything that is efficacious in building up the kingdom of Christ."
<p>While it is true that all Vincentians are on some level volunteers, not all volunteers are called to be Vincentians. Being a Vincentian transcends volunteerism and is a true vocational calling. For most Vincentians, this calling is a lifelong calling. Being a Vincentian is about a way of life, a way of being, a way of living out our Baptismal call and the Gospel values given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.</p> <p><i>Adopted by the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Council of Los Angeles from Leilani Goeckner.</i></p>	