

ANF WORKSHOP 2026

GUARDING THE FLAME

LED BY THE SPIRIT

Speaker Notes

Slide 1: Guarding the Flame Led by the Holy Spirit

Introduce self and Willis.

Welcome and thank you for attending

A candle is more than a decoration. A lit candle symbolizes the presence of the Holy Spirit guiding us to live out our Vincentian vocation with love and compassion. The light represents how our acts of service can guide and inspire positive change.

Slide 2: Opening Prayer...read

Slide 3: Agenda

Our Spiritual DNA ..our Vincentian spirituality established by our founders

Strengthening the Foundation... best practices and Role of the Spiritual Advisor

Discernment in Action...the importance of prayer and discernment

Carrying the Flame Forward...ensuring our spirituality remains at the center of all we do

Guarding the Flame...concrete action(s) to guard our spirituality moving forward

Slide 4: The Spark Our Spiritual DNA

The spark of a candle. Explore what ignites and inspires our work...

Slide 5: Our Vincentian Founders

St. Vincent de Paul

He was known as the “Apostle of Charity” and “Father of the Poor.” He is our inspiration and model as Vincentians. His Rule and spiritual charism with a preference for the poor and vulnerable, in the model of Jesus Christ, is the very foundation of who and what we are as Vincentians.

St. Louise de Marillac

She was a contemporary of St. Vincent and was inspired and directed by Vincent's spiritual leadership. She was Vincent's collaborator in founding the Daughters of Charity, after organizing hospitals, schools, orphanages, and homes for the elderly. Her attitude toward the sick and poor remains the model for all members of the Vincentian Family today.

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

Frédéric was the founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. A college professor, historian, and lawyer, he continued to dedicate himself to personally serving the poor throughout his life, and his vision of a “worldwide network of charity” inspired the formation of many new Conferences. He spoke often and widely on the Society.

Blessed Rosalie Rendu

She was a Daughter of Charity, and is considered a mentor of Frédéric and of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul as she taught the first members the art of helping the poor and the sick. Sr. Rosalie’s example reminds us of the importance of the home visit as the means towards spiritual growth. She is known for her inspirational quote: “Be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you bring them.”

The International Rule of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul officially designates Blessed Rosalie Rendu as the Society's first spiritual advisor. She guided the young Frédéric Ozanam and his co-founders on how to serve the poor and conduct proper home visits.

Slide: We seek spiritual guidance, wisdom and direction from our founders who are models of love and compassion.

Slide 6: 180 Years of Compassion in Action...read

Slide 7: The Vincentian Mission....read

Slide 8: The Why...It’s The Rule

As Vincentians, The Rule serves as both the spiritual compass and the primary governance framework. The Rule reminds us, “we are called to journey together towards holiness.”

Slide 9: The Why-Personal and Communal Holiness

Christ-centered Mission

A spiritually healthy Conference/Council keeps Christ at the heart of all Vincentian service. Every act of charity flows from the Gospel and reflects Christ’s love for the poor.

Member Holiness

The Conference/Council exists not only to serve those in need but to help members grow in holiness. Spiritual growth happens through prayer, reflection and shared formation.

Vincentian Formation

A vibrant Conference/Council deepens its understanding of Vincentian spirituality, values and traditions. This helps members live the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam more fully.

Authentic Charity

A spirituality alive Conference/Council understands that charity is more than material assistance. True Vincentian charity is rooted in compassion, dignity, respect and love.

Faithful Discernment

A strong Conference/Council makes decisions rooted in Catholic teaching and the Rule of the Society. This preserves its mission and spiritual identity.

Prayerful Meetings

Conference/Council meetings are moments of spiritual renewal, not simply business discussions. Prayer, reflection and sharing create space for God to guide the mission.

Member Unity

A healthy Conference/Council is built on friendship and spiritual communion. Members journey as one mind and one heart in service of Christ and the poor.

Encounter Christ

A spiritually formed Conference/Council recognizes Christ in every person served. Each home visit, encounter at our Stores becomes a sacred encounter with Jesus.

Spiritual Guidance

A thriving Conference/Council remains open to wisdom, encouragement and reflection. This sustains members through challenges and deepens their vocation of service.

Rule Compliance

The Rule and Statutes protect the spiritual identity of the Conference/Council. Faithful observance ensures the Society remains rooted in its Vincentian mission and purpose.

Overall

A spiritually alive Conference/Council moves from “Managing Meetings” to living the “Charism”.

The goal is not simply to run efficiently, but to breathe deeply of the Spirit and radiate Christ through Vincentian service.

Slide 10: The Fuel-Strengthening the Foundation

Motivation, spiritual drive and direction

Slide 11: The Spiritual Advisor

Slide 12: The Spiritual Advisor & the Role of Accompaniment

Spirit over Structure

A Conference/Council can have excellent systems and still lack spiritual vitality. The Spiritual Advisor ensures the Holy Spirit remains the source of all we do, so structure serves mission rather than replacing it.

Christ over Routine

Meetings and ministry can become habitual if Christ is no longer the focus. The Spiritual Advisor gently calls members back to seeing every act of service as an encounter with Jesus.

Prayer over Process

Efficiency matters, but prayer gives purpose to our work. The Spiritual Advisor helps create sacred space where members pause, listen and allow God to guide their service.

Formation over Function

Vincentians are not simply volunteers completing tasks. The Spiritual Advisor helps form hearts and minds, so members grow spiritually through service.

Reflection over Reading

Spiritual reflection is not about reading words quickly and moving on. The Spiritual Advisor invites heart-centered dialogue that helps members hear what God is saying through the reading and their ministry.

Friendship over Formality

Vincentian friendship is a spiritual bond, not just polite association. The Spiritual Advisor nurtures trust, humility and unity so members journey as one heart and one mind.

Mission over Maintenance

Administration supports the mission but should never become the mission. The Spiritual Advisor helps refocus energy on what restores life: serving Christ in the poor.

Encounter over Assistance

We do more than provide help, we meet Christ in those we serve. The Spiritual Advisor reminds members that every visit is sacred and relational not transactional.

Growth over Comfort

Spiritual growth often requires challenge and stretching beyond what feels familiar. The Spiritual Advisor lovingly encounters members toward deeper holiness and courageous charity.

Breath over Busyness

A Conference/Council can be busy but spiritually exhausted. The Spiritual Advisor ensures the "oxygen" of the Holy Spirit continually renews and sustains the life of the Conference/Council.

Slide 13: The Spiritual Advisor's Toolkit & the Role of Accompaniment

Carolyn's Testimony (read)

As a **Spiritual Advisor** in the Vincentian family, I experience my ministry as a true blessing. Every opportunity to serve feels like a moment of grace, drawing me closer to God. I notice God's

presence more deeply in my family, in nature, in the people I encounter, and especially within the Vincentian community.

I am grateful for the privilege of sharing my faith and offering spiritual reflections, knowing that as I guide others in prayer, my own prayer life is strengthened and nurtured. Leading fellow Vincentians in faith brings peace, joy, and fulfillment, and I cherish the chance to encourage and inspire them in their various roles.

This ministry also deepens my personal faith. Through feast days, celebrations, and community events, I witness how others are drawn closer to God. I continue to grow in my understanding of our founders and the rich history and charism of the Society.

Above all, I feel honoured to walk with the Vincentian family as together we strive to grow in holiness.

Slide 14: Spirituality in the Conferences and Councils...read

Slide 15: Spirituality in the Conferences and Councils ~Spiritual Reflections (read)

Slide 16: Spiritual Reflections

How to Lead the Vincentian Reflections

If possible, send the Spiritual Reflection out prior to the meeting to give opportunity for preparation before the meeting.

Provide a copy to each member at the start of the meeting.

It is important to describe the process which is going to take place.

Ask, or assign, different members to read the different sections. Each section is read aloud, slowly and prayerfully. Hearing different voices will allow different emphasis on words/phrases

Spiritual Reflections should relate to the mission of the Society. Typically, they begin with Scripture, followed by a reflection based on the Scripture passage, discussion questions are then presented which invite members to share their thoughts and insights. The Spiritual Reflection ends in a brief concluding prayer.

Slide 17: Spirituality in the Conferences and Councils~Feast Days & Celebrations

Slide 18: Feast Days & Celebrations

Annual Conference Mass

A Conference Mass celebrated at least once a year for all members is encouraged. During this Mass, it is most appropriate to commission new members into the Conference, pray for those we have visited, pray for our benefactors, pray for the poor, pray for the deceased members, and for continued good work. Working with your Parish Priest and choosing a date all members agree to, (Feast of St. Vincent de Paul is ideal). It can also be a time for the Commissioning Ceremony for all members.

Commissioning and Commitment ceremonies should be conducted at least once a year. When new members have fully discerned their Vincentian vocation, we want to honor their commitment and celebrate their welcome into the Conference. Similarly, we want to recognize the beginning of our Officers' terms of office when appropriate.

Slide 19: Spirituality in the Conferences and Councils~ Founders Stories

Slide 20: Founders Stories

Retelling the legacy provides tools to face modern challenges with compassion, humility, and simplicity.

Slide 21: Spirituality in the Conferences and Councils~Retreats/Prayer Services

Slide 22: Retreats/Prayer Services

Slide 23: Retreats/Prayer Services

Conference/Council Retreats

While spiritual reflections are a focal point of every regular Conference Meeting, there is also great value in dedicated retreats.

The feast day of The Immaculate Conception, Patroness of the Society Feast Day December 8 is an excellent opportunity for planning a Retreat.

The Spiritual Advisor can take the lead and invite other members in on the planning.

Benefits to members from participating in a Retreat or Prayer Service include opportunity to work as a team on a spiritual event, deepen prayer life, spiritual growth and renewal, strengthening Vincentian community, building unity and nurtures fellowship.

Talk about our Advent Retreat, Format, fellowship after, connection to SJC history of venues used, blessing jars, decade of the rosary.

Slide 24: Spirituality in the Conferences and Councils~Prayer Tables

Slide 25: Prayer Tables

Slide 26: Prayer Tables

Making prayer visual is at the heart of our Catholic faith. One of the easiest ways to make prayer visible, to make it tangible, is to create a dedicated and permanent Prayer Space. The Prayer Table serves as a sacred area. It should be in a prominent place where it can be easily seen upon entry to a meeting or event. Creating a dedicated space allows for personal reflection, spiritual connection, and the nurturing of one's faith. Beyond its spiritual benefits, a prayer table also serves as a form of expression, allowing individuals to visually reflect on the mission, values, and aspects of their Vincentian journey. Use an appropriately sized table that accommodates your sacred items and fits comfortably within the designated area. Select an appropriate cloth, consider using a colour that reflects the liturgical seasons, standard white or the blue colour of SSVP. The heart of the prayer

table lies in the objects it holds. The following are items to consider. Religious: bible, candle, cross, rosary, and prayers. Vincentian: Rule, statues and pictures of founders, and special cards. Nature: flowers, plants and greenery.

Creating a space that fosters connection to our Vincentian spirituality creates an environment where peace, reflection, and spiritual growth can flourish.

Slide 27: The Oxygen: Discernment in Action

The imagery of oxygen in a candle is the metaphor for faith. Just as oxygen sustains a flame faith and prayer are the breath that keeps the light of hope alive. Oxygen moves the Holy Spirit

Slide 28: Prayer and Discernment (read)

Slide 29: Courageous Leadership & Keeping Christ in our Midst

Challenges

Aging Member

Fewer members joining, difficulty sustaining activities

Leadership gaps

Challenges finding new leaders and succession planning

Maintaining Spirituality

Meetings becoming task-heavy rather than spiritually grounded

Slide 30: The Three Step Discernment Model

Step 1

Silence

Pause intentionally before any questions begin. This moment reminds us that God is already present, guiding our thoughts and intentions. Silence helps set aside personal agenda so we can listen with openness and humility. It creates a sacred space where the Holy Spirit can move within the group.

Step 2

Scripture Reflection

Reflect on Scripture passage that speaks to the values of the heart and decision. This step helps shift from “What do I want?” to “What does the Gospel call us to do?” It roots our conversation in Vincentian virtues: simplicity, gentleness, selflessness and zeal. Scripture becomes the lens through which I view the problem, ensuring Christ remains at the center.

Step 3

Shared Consensus

The goal is not to win an argument but finding the path that brings peace to the group. Listening deeply to others trusting that the Holy Spirit speaks through each person. Consensus reflects our Vincentian commitment to community, charity, and mutual respect. When we reach a shared sense of peace, we are moving in the direction God desires.

Slide 31: The Glow Carrying the Flame Forward

The glow of a candle allows us to see things as they are, so light is a symbolism of truth. The flame is the work we do, our Vincentian vocation to serve others with love, respect, justice and joy is the flame visible to others.

Slide 32: Takeaways & Commitments read and click point by point until

Keep Christ at the centre

Slide 33: The Way: Guarding the Flame Led by the Spirit

Just as the candle's flame gives off heat and light, it reminds us to be a light to those we serve by spreading the gospel of love and compassion through our Vincentian work. The Spirit leads the way for us to guard our spirituality.

Slide 34: Can You?

Now it's time to commit! Ask the audience to note one or more focus areas from the list, that they wish to focus on.... to guard the flame and continue our long standing tradition of serving with "Compassion in action."

Slide 35: I will...

If you promised or thought of a commitment from the previous slide Can You? Then now it's time to commit an action by saying... "I Will" **Exercise:** Link the previous focus area that you selected with one or more related actions with love and passion for what you are called to do.

Slide 36: Closing Prayer

Slide 37: Resources

Slide 38: Resources

Slide 39: Thank you! God bless!