Turn Faith into Formidable Action:
October 10, 2026 Peel North PC Fellowship and Reflection

Close to 80 dedicated Vincentians across its nine conferences, spiritual advisors, community leaders and guests, including potential recruits, gathered at St. Jerome's church in Brampton, ON on Saturday, October 10, 2026 for the Peel North PC Fellowship and Reflection event. The event – second in three years - centered on spiritual renewal, collaborative learning and servant leadership celebration. Against the backdrop of the Thanksgiving weekend, the gathering celebrated the PC's recent milestones, perhaps as a model for rejuvenation, while equipping its volunteer network with tools to address the increasingly complex needs of families and individuals we serve. Through inspiring liturgical celebrations, a profound keynote address by the National President, and a solid emphasis on community resource integration, the event renewed the commitment to systemic change and Christ-like compassion across its conferences.

The strategic planning of the event was built upon four pillars:
• **Spiritual Fortification:** Re-anchoring the Vincentian service network in its historical identity, spiritual virtues and systemic mission.
• **Stewardship and Leadership Recognition:** Honoring the structural legacy of the council by formally recognizing past leaders who have contributed to its current growth.
• **Operational Modernization:** Introducing scalable methodologies, expanding resource networks beyond material aid, and reinforcing Peel North PC's status as an organizational blueprint.
• **Cross-Conference Fellowship:** Creating an open forum for the council's 181-strong volunteer network to exchange best practices, build relationships and strengthen unity.

The event began with Holy Mass celebrated by two parish priests and two deacons. With his homily centred on the Society, Fr. Fraser McLaren, St. Jerome's parish administrator, drew the threads between the daily liturgical life of the parish and SSVP's hands-on systemic mission. A major highlight of the liturgy was the installation for new members, right after the homily. The tone-setting ceremony offered the rest of the congregation a look at the vibrant, growing network of SSVP volunteers, serving as a powerful, organic tool for community recruitment.

A moving segment of the itinerary was dedicated to the commissioning of all members and honouring conference stewardship – past and current. Five past conference presidents and the immediate past PC president were felicitated with certificates and lapel pins to mark leadership tenure. The ceremony concluded with conference group photographs, capturing a visible sense of shared joy, unity and multi-generational dedication across the volunteers.



The particular council welcomed National Council President Linda Dollard for a 30-minute talk on **"Community Life, Vincentian Life and Vincentian Family,"** which ended with Q&A session. Drawing from her 23 years of servant leadership and over 900 face-to-face home visits, she delivered takeaways for the modern Vincentians, as follows:

1. ***Service as a Vocation, Not Just Volunteering:*** True Vincentian work is driven by a deep spiritual passion. Service must be given on the timeline and immediate availability of the person in need, rather than the personal schedule of the helper.

2. ***The Power of the Personal Encounter:*** Face-to-face home visits have remained the bedrock of our work since the Society's founding in 1833. They transform institutional charity from a simple transactional exchange of food cards into a deep, relational experience.
3. ***Living the Five Vincentian Virtues:*** Members are called to actively embody Simplicity (honest communication), Humility (recognizing gifts come from God), Gentleness (patience and kindness), Selflessness (generous sharing of time and talent), and Zeal (passion for others' happiness).
4. ***Intentional Presence During Home Visits:*** To build trust, Vincentians must visit in pairs, pray beforehand to clear personal distractions, ask open-ended questions targeting underlying "needs" rather than superficial "wants", and avoid taking intimidating notes during face-to-face conversation.
5. ***Leading with Christ-Like Compassion:*** When confronting systemic abuse or difficult behavioral situations, members need to pause and ask, *What would Jesus do?* Service must remain rooted in love, mercy, and human dignity rather than suspicion or skepticism.

In a matching address, Peel North PC President Jose I. Torres challenged members to look far beyond traditional models, such as poor boxes, food bins and Bundle Up (gently-used clothes) collections. Drawing a modern parallel to the Gospel parable of the Good Samaritan, the PC president stressed poverty in the region is becoming increasingly complex. *Challenges we face in nearly many situations are mended by our caring for others' dignity and well-being... As we move deeper into serving, today's event reflects the need to tap into others to help those most in need and long-marginalized,* he told.

To provide the 181-strong volunteer PC network with concrete tools to navigate this vision, the PC invited two major regional community resource agencies, namely: the Catholic Crosscultural Services (CCS) - assisting with women, newcomer and diverse cultural demographic integration, and Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin (CFSPD) - providing multi-service counselling and family support through its extensive programs and partnerships. He urged conferences to build active relationships with these, both sharing with us serving people of all faiths and backgrounds, and other agencies; ensuring volunteers can quickly refer our neighbors to professional caseworkers when encountering deep-rooted structural or psychological challenges.

The informal block allowed members to participate in host of free raffle draws, exchange lived experiences from home visits, and establish personal lines of communication across conferences. At least six major religious agencies and two local businesses supported the event with a host of materials and gift prizes given to the attendees.

Three distinct organizational methodologies emerged from the event, perhaps standing out as good practices for possible replication across regional events:
• **Audience-Driven Keynote Co-Creation:** Rather than delivering a rigid presentation, the National President was encouraged to adopt a successful and modern approach of having pre-solicited questions based of broad themes and suggestions from would-be audience. Addressing pre-submitted questions ensured the 30-minute retreat talk was directly aligned with the real-time concerns of people on the ground. This was in addition to Q&A from the floor.
• **Institutional Resource Interactivity:** Moving beyond material handouts, the intentional integration of professional exhibitors (CCS and CFSPD) served as a vital blueprint. Equipping volunteers with direct human contacts at these agencies bridges the gap between basic charity and sustainable, professional care.
• **Formalization of Conference Stewardship:** Formalizing recognition for members for their past stewardship establishes an intentional culture of appreciation. This practice ensures institutional knowledge is preserved, past leaders remain connected to the mission, and incoming leaders feel supported by a visible legacy.

The particular council's focus in the next few months lies on creating conferences in key parishes where our neighbours in need are unserved (this after moving quickly in first two years with two new conferences), drawing more areas of engagement since better-performing conferences are those who

lean on power of well-informed and engaged members, continuing fostering best practices in non-conference president roles through PC-initiated sessions, open sharing and active networking, and increasing profile in the community in-and out-of-the parish by leveraging on opportunities in front, ensuring growth by all other conferences following record-high recruitment by five, giving greater push to social justice and advocacy issues, and formalizing referral pipelines with community resource agencies.

By blending spiritual formation with professional networking, the event provided evidence traditional Vincentian values can seamlessly adapt to modern societal challenges. The energy showcased also confirms the Peel North PC network, squarely driven by clear vision set three years ago, stands on solid ground, confident of meeting challenges and serving our neighbors-in-need with efficiency, empathy and dignity.

Willis Langford, St. Mary's (Brampton) Conference/ Peel North Particular Council, Greater Toronto Central Council

---

About the writer: *Drawing from his extensive corporate management and human resource background, Willis has been an active SSVP member of the newly-renewed St. Mary's since mid-2025 and recently joined the Ontario Regional Council's Rejuvenation committee. As also his conference's spiritual facilitator, he regularly contributes reflections to the National newsletter, and the Greater Toronto Central Council Spirituality committee, the latter for use by some 115 conferences in the Toronto area.*



Co-host St. Jerome's Conference members