

INVITATION TO SERVE

For New and Existing Conferences

*Recruiting New Members for
Adult, Young Adult and Youth Conferences*



**National Council of the United States
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
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Invitation to Serve

Introduction

“The Society is open to all those who seek to live their faith, loving and committing themselves to their neighbor in need.” (*Rule*, Part I, 3.1)

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a Catholic lay organization where the members grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those in need. The Society was founded by Frederic Ozanam and six companions and named for St. Vincent de Paul.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul serves in approximately one fourth of the parishes in the United States and continues to grow as more and more people answer the call to serve people who are living in poverty.

This manual will provide the necessary steps to be followed to recruit new members to the Society. The approach to be taken varies slightly between recruiting for existing Conferences and recruiting for new Conferences. The distinction will be pointed out where needed.

The process described in this manual includes everything to be done before the actual weekend event through the formal gathering of those interested to explain what the Society is all about. This is the actual recruitment process. Everything the reader needs to know and do prior to and after the actual recruitment process will be found in the following two documents.

Model Plan for Developing Conferences is a document which identifies all of the steps to be taken to get into a new diocese and /or into a new parish. The recruitment process assumes that all of the necessary preliminary work has been done: the Bishop and the Pastor are well informed and agreeable to the forming of the new Conference. The *Model Plan* also lays out all of the things that need to be done after the recruitment process to start the Conference, form the new members, and monitor and evaluate the growth of the new Conference.

Revitalization Plan for Existing Conferences is a document which outlines all of the various things that may cause an existing Conference to need revitalization. One of the solutions for revitalizing a Conference could be to recruit new members. This is where the recruitment process comes into play. The Conference to be revitalized should have already been identified and prepared for the recruitment. The *Revitalization Plan* lays out everything to be done before the recruitment and after the new people have received their initial indoctrination.

Once again, this manual covers the actual recruitment process – step by step.

Invitation to Serve – The Recruitment Process

Once the parish for the recruitment and the weekend for the recruitment have been identified, it is important to set the stage for the parishioners. The best way to do this is to print a special bulletin announcement in each bulletin on the two weekends prior to the actual recruitment and on the weekend of the recruitment. Three sample bulletin announcements will be found below. It is not absolutely necessary to use this exact wording; however, more than ten years of experience have shown that these notices work very well for preparing parishioners for the upcoming recruitment.

It should also be noted that, if a significant portion of the parish community speaks a language other than English, then the bulletin announcements should be translated into that language as well. The National Council has a Spanish version of this manual available.

Bulletin Announcement Samples – Recruiting for an Existing Conference

Sample 1 – Two Weekends Prior to the Recruitment

Are you looking for ways to experience God? Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul invite you to share in their ministry of experiencing God in serving people living in poverty. We see Christ in our friends in need and, when we see Christ, we experience God.

Please contact the President, Society of St. Vincent de Paul Conference at

_____.

Sample 2 – One Weekend Prior to the Recruitment

Do you consider yourself a naturally caring, compassionate and giving person? If so, come and share your gifts with people in need by joining the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. In the coming weeks more information will be shared about the spirituality and works of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at the Parish Masses.

If you are interested, please contact _____.

Sample 3 – Weekend of the Recruitment

You are invited to serve people in need in our (name) Parish area by joining the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Helping us provide people in our Parish area needing food, clothes, rent assistance, utility assistance and other types of support will be a rewarding experience. Is it time for you to live your religious convictions and give something back for all you have received?

Come join us this next (Wednesday, Thursday, etc.) at (time) in the (location) to find out more about what we do.

Bulletin Announcement Samples – Recruiting for a New Conference

Sample 1 – Two Weekends Prior to the Recruitment

Are you looking for ways to experience God? God is a spiritual being. How do you experience a “spiritual being”? Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul invite you to share in their ministry of experiencing God in those in need. Holy Scripture tells us: “The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we saw His glory, the glory that is His as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) We see Christ in our friends in need and when we see Christ we experience God.

Sample 2 – One Weekend Prior to the Recruitment

Are you a naturally caring, compassionate and giving person? Were you blessed with parents and other role models in life from whom you learned that the joy of living is giving? If you answered “YES” to either of these questions, look for an **Invitation to Serve** from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in our bulletin next week.

Sample 3 – Weekend of the Recruitment

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is inviting caring men and women of all ethnicities and cultural backgrounds to assist God’s people in our community needing food, clothes, rent assistance, utility assistance and other emergency needs. Let us remember from Matthew 25, the Last Judgment: “The king will say, ‘For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked you covered me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.’ And the just will say, ‘Lord, when did we do these things?’ And the King will say to them, ‘Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me.’” **Is it time for you to really live your religious convictions and give something back for all you have received?**

Come join us this next (Wednesday, Thursday, etc.) at (time) in the (location) to find out more about what we do.

Talk from the Pulpit

For an Existing Conference: On the recruitment weekend, with the permission of the Pastor, the president of the Conference and/or designated members who are comfortable with speaking publicly will attend each parish Mass and give a short 2-3 minute talk inviting parishioners to join the existing Conference in the parish.

For a New Conference: On the recruitment weekend, with the permission of the Pastor, members of the Extension Team will attend each parish Mass and give a short 2-3 minute talk inviting parishioners to join in forming a Conference in the parish.

These talks typically are done before the end of Mass around the time of the other announcements (or any time the pastor wants you to do it). Provided below is a sample of a pulpit talk that can be used. Feel free to make whatever adjustments are necessary to help the speaker say what needs to be said. Sometimes changing a word or phrase will make it easier for someone to read the talk. Make sure to give the talk to the Pastor to review in advance so he isn't surprised by anything you say.

It should also be noted that, if a significant portion of the parish community speaks a language other than English, then the pulpit announcement should be translated and spoken in that language as well. The National Council has a Spanish version of this manual available.

Sample Talk from the Pulpit - Recruiting for an Existing Conference

Good Morning, My name is _____ and I am the _____ of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Conference here at _____ Church.

I would like to thank _____ (our Pastor) for allowing me to take a few minutes of your time to share with you about the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a Catholic lay organization that helps those in need or those living in poverty. We grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to people in need. Because we see “the face of Christ” in those we serve as Jesus taught us when he said, “Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters you do to me.”

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an international organization founded in 1833 in Paris, France by a young student, Frederic Ozanam, and six companions. The first Conference of the Society in the United States was started in 1845. The Society is currently located in 150 countries.

Today, the need to serve those who are living in need is very great even in our own parish. *(It is important to share some of the local needs that the Conference is*

experiencing and the works that the Conference does: food drive, clothing drive, home visits to assist in utilities or rent, programs to help people move out of poverty, seasonal programs, etc.)

Our Conference is a small group of dedicated women and men of diverse cultures who are inviting you to consider joining us in making a difference. The Society is open to members of all age groups and ethnicities. In order to serve people effectively, it is important to be able to connect with them culturally and in their own language. Not only will you be helping those in need but you will also find yourself growing in God's love and the desire to share that love with others.

After Mass, there will be members of the parish conference in the back of church to provide a sign-up sheet and answer your questions about our organization. May you take some time to reflect in your heart, God's calling to you to serve those in need through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Thank you for your past generosity you have shown to the works of the Society by your financial and material donations to our work.

Come join us this next (Wednesday, Thursday, etc.) at (time) in the (location) to find out more about what we do.

God Bless

Sample Talk from the Pulpit - Recruiting for a New Conference

Good Morning, my name is _____ and I am a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. I am here to tell you about and invite you to consider starting a St. Vincent de Paul Conference here at your parish.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a catholic lay organization that helps those in need who are our friends in Christ. We are not a social service agency ---- we are a person-to-person catholic ministry that sees the face of Christ in the faces of those who are suffering. The Society has Conferences in every state in our nation and within 150 countries throughout the world with approximately 780,000 members. The Society has been in existence for more than 180 years.

Jesus told us, “The poor will be with us always.” And they are found all over our diocese including right here in this area. They are families and individuals on limited income who are having problems paying their rent or utilities and may not even have enough money to buy food or clothes for their children.

Where there are people in need you should find the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Because there are people in or near your parish who are in need and could use a helping hand, I am here today to invite you to serve in a Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul right here at your parish and put into action your Catholic faith to serve those who are in need of your help.

There are many generous people in our Diocese who help by giving donations ---- certainly we need money to respond to the cry of the voices of the *poor---but* what we need most of all is **your help and your time**. And I am saying both men and women in all age groups and cultures. In order to serve people effectively, it is important to be able to connect with them culturally and in their own language. This is NOT a fraternal organization.

We need people, as two person teams, to visit the homes of those in need to bring them food, financial assistance or-----sometimes----simply to listen. There are also other ways to serve such as work in a pantry, volunteer in a thrift store, serve on a committee, and

many other ways. *(It is important to share some of the works that the Conference can do: food drive, clothing drive, home visits to assist in utilities or rent, programs to help people move out of poverty, seasonal programs, etc.)* Everyone has their talents from God and they are all useful in helping our friends in need. The amount of time you wish to give is completely up to you. You tell us how much time you wish to give in return for all of God's blessings in your life.

Come join us this next (Wednesday, Thursday, etc.) at (time) in the (location) to find out more about what we do. We'll give you details about what we do, how we do it and answer any questions you may have.

After mass, I/we will be in the back of the church to answer questions. If you are interested in serving, we would like your name and phone number on our sign-up sheet at the table. If you don't sign the sheet you are still welcome to attend the information meeting. ----- Please think about it. ----- Let your heart respond to Christ's words "whatever you do for the least of mine you do for me". It is not me who needs your help, it is Christ who is asking you to help. It is Christ's children who are in need and it is Christ who is inviting you to serve.

Perhaps this was best captured in the words of St. Teresa of Avila: "Christ has no body now, but yours. No hands, no feet on earth, but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks with compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which Christ blesses the world." And the Society of St. Vincent de Paul adds: "Let us go forth and bring his love to the poor.

Thank you, Father, for your support and your compassion for the poor. (to parishioners) -
--thank you for your time and may God bless you all and all those in your care.

After Mass

After Mass, there should be an information table set up outside of the main sanctuary of the church where interested parishioners may be greeted and receive information about the Society. Members of the Society should man the table after each Mass answering questions and inviting parishioners to a gathering later that weekend or in a couple of days to explain in more detail what is involved in joining the Society. If recruiting is being done for an existing Conference, members of that Conference should be manning the table. If recruiting for a new Conference to be formed, then members of the Extension Team should be manning the table.

The Information Meeting

The information meeting should be held on the afternoon of the recruitment or as soon as possible during the week following the recruitment weekend.

Information Meeting after Recruitment for an Existing Conference

(The Conference Spiritual Advisor is to do the Opening and Closing prayers)

- Invite the Pastor to attend and participate, if he has time.
- Begin with Vincentian Prayer.
- Spiritual Reflection based on Mathew 25
- Introduction- first introduce the members of the Conference who are present; then have each potential member introduce themselves, tell if they have a family, and indicate how long they have been a member of the parish.
- Presentation of the “[Introduction to SVdP](#)” by the Conference President which includes:
 - DVD -“The Society” (9 minutes).
 - The Essential Elements of the Society.
 - **Spirituality** – grow in holiness through prayer, service and the opportunities of Vincentian formation.
 - **Fellowship** – support for each other and those we serve.
 - **Service** – person-to-person service to those living in poverty especially through the home visit.
 - How the Society is organized.
 - How a Conference operates.
- Discuss briefly the types of work that the Conference can do: home visits, provide food, pay bills, provide furniture and clothing, advocate on behalf of those living in poverty, help those we serve move out of poverty through Systemic Change programs, and operate seasonal programs around back-to-school, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.
- Get a commitment of attendees to join the Conference (record in minutes).
- Discuss Conference meeting schedule.
- Announce the date, time and place for the next meeting.
- Close with Vincentian prayer.
- Conclude with a social.

Information Meeting after Recruitment for a New Conference

(Ask the Coordinator to do the Opening and Closing prayers until Spiritual Advisor is commissioned)

- Invite the Pastor to attend and participate, if he has time.
- Begin with Vincentian Prayer: All meetings begin and end with prayer (see prayer card in Start-Up Kit).
- Special Conference Start-Up Reflection based on Mathew 25
- Introduction- have each person introduce themselves, tell if they have a family, and indicate how long they have been a member of the parish.
- Presentation of the “[Introduction to SVdP](#)” by Council Rep which includes:
 - DVD -“The Society” (9 minutes).
 - The Essential Elements of the Society.
 - **Spirituality** – grow in holiness through prayer, service and the opportunities of Vincentian formation.
 - **Fellowship** – support for each other and those we serve.
 - **Service** – person-to-person service to those living in poverty especially through the home visit.
 - How the Society is organized.
 - How a Conference operates.
- Discuss briefly the types of work that the Conference can do: home visits, provide food, pay bills, provide furniture and clothing, advocate on behalf of those living in poverty, help those we serve mover out of poverty through Systemic Change programs, and do seasonal programs around back-to-school, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.
- Get a commitment of attendees to start a Conference (record in minutes).
- Describe the steps in starting a new Conference (application, Officers, EIN, Bank, etc.) See Appendix 7 for items to be accomplished to get the Conference operational.
- Decide on Conference name.
- Discuss the requirement for and prepare to elect a President at the next meeting.
- Discuss and decide on Conference meeting schedule.
- Announce the date, time and place for the next meeting (arranged beforehand).
- Close with Vincentian prayer.
- Conclude with a social for the first meeting

NOTE. If there are people who speak only English or Spanish, it is very important to do a Bilingual meeting, we may need the assistance of interpreters for any information or questions they might ask. Another option is to present two Informative Meetings, English and Spanish, at the same time in different rooms.

Worksheets

Included on the next couple of pages are sample worksheets that can be used for the recruitment process. The first one is a sign in sheet to be used both at the information table after Mass and at the gathering to provide more details about the Society. This first worksheet should be used by the Coordinator/members of the Society to call interested parishioners with a reminder about the gathering coming up.

The second worksheet is a summary sheet of multiple recruitments if the recruitment process is being done diocese-wide. The summary should be sent to the Council and/or the Regional Vice President organizing the recruitment effort.

Other Recruitment

The above information mainly focused on parishes but there are other groups and/or Catholic organizations to reach out to. Be sure to tailor your talks to your specific audience. The following is a list of suggestions for other recruitment targets.

- Ministries within your Parish
- Knights of Columbus
- St. Peter Claver
- Seminaries
- Elementary and High Schools
- Colleges and Universities
- Hospitals/Nursing Homes
- Hispanic/Latino Organizations
- Former friends in need

Invitation to Serve

Initial Response Report

District	Conference	Contact	Date of Invitation	Number of Masses	Number of Signups	Number at Orientation Meeting
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_____	_____	_____	____/____	_____	_____	_____
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By _____