

# Vincetians gather to Celebrate SVdP

## Society holds National Assembly in Denver, Colo.

Each year, around Labor Day, Vincetians from across the U.S. and even other countries come together, this year in Denver, to celebrate the Society and its work and to learn more about how to be the most effective Vincetians they can be.

“There were inspiring homilies, retreats and presentations and plenty of fellowship,” said SVdP Denver Council President, Don Kany. “But two things stand out. The effectiveness of the planning by Chris Strasburger’s team and the sunsets. We take mountain sunsets for granted because we see them often. But, to see Vincetians lined up three-deep on the berm at the Wild West Fest taking photos of Friday’s sunset; it was heartwarming to hear ‘I have never seen anything like that!’”

More than 700 attendees took part in workshops, which all relate to the Society and its work, led by subject matter experts on topics such as fundraising, special works, home visits, spirituality, communications and more.

Three years ago in Columbus, Ohio, the Society began offering programing throughout the meeting that was specifically geared towards youth. This year, nearly 20 young attendees from Rhode Island, Detroit, Madison, Washington, D.C. and Denver had the opportunity explore the Mother Cabrini Shrine in Denver and have a picnic lunch before doing service at St. Michael Parish.

Young adults from Rhode Island, New York, Dayton, Madison also had a special opportunity to perform service in Denver. They visited Casa de Paz, an apartment offering hospitality to families separated by immigrant detention. The organization offers visits, emotional support, shelter, meals, access to phones, WiFi, computers and transportation to families whose loved ones are being detained and individuals who have been recently released.

During the meeting, as in years past, youth and young adult attendees participated in the annual international youth call. Youth members from the U.S. had a video conference with young Vincetians from a dozen countries around the world including India, Brazil and more!

“I’m not a Vincetian, but I think the most incredible thing I have learned here is that I am an associate member! I didn’t realize that I had such a big role in the Society,” said Spencer Sellner, a young adult and first-time attendee from Madison, Wis. “But I think for me, learning a lot about the Society, understanding the charism of the Society, knowing that we’re doing charity work, we’re helping individuals, we’re helping the poor and the needy, but there’s also that reflection of Christ through us to the people that are being assisted. Being able to connect the two has been really beautiful for me.”

Each day, everyone came together to celebrate Mass and take time to thank God for his guidance in their Vincetian work. During one liturgy, Vincetians re-committed themselves to helping those in need in the name of St. Vincent de Paul.

Doing the work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is rarely easy. On Friday evening, Vincetians were treated to some fun with Wild West Fest. Held outside the hotel with the mountains and a

gorgeous sunset as the backdrop, attendees were treated to delicious bar-b-que, history lessons from “Annie Oakley” and “Buffalo Bill,” and traditional line dancing. Inside, there was a special art exhibit featuring local, Denver artists.

Like last year, the Assembly offered simultaneous Spanish translations. These were available for Ralph Middlecamp’s presidential welcome, the keynote address by National Episcopal Advisor, Most Reverend Bishop Donald J. Hying, the Spiritual Retreat hosted by John Angotti, Music Mission and Monsignor Ray East’s keynote address.

The Assembly concluded with the closing Mass celebrated by Most Reverend Samuel Aquila, Archbishop of the Denver Archdiocese.

At the closing banquet, National CEO, Dave Barringer officially kicked-off the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year. The year 2020 marks the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the first SVdP Conference in the U.S. It is fitting that the 2020 National Assembly will be held in St. Louis where, at the Old Cathedral, the first Conference was started.

The next 12 months will be full of celebration. Barringer announced that in January, a mosaic of SVdP founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, will be installed in the Vincentian Chapel at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

This year, in partnership with Hallmark, the Society also has developed a Christmas tree ornament of St. Vincent de Paul. Available for pre-order now through October, these ornaments will be ready for Christmas 2020!

The National Assembly is always a transformational experience for Vincentians. But, for many, attending one can be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

“My favorite part of the meeting was about the homeless and the spirituality,” said Debora Samuels, a member of the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Conference in San Diego, Calif. “The Lord put me here. He sent me here. I’m glad I came.”

Next year, the National Assembly will be in St. Louis at the Hyatt Regency hotel September 2 – 5, 2020.

“We are most looking forward to the camaraderie with Vincentians from around the country,” said Elizabeth Barbieri, president of the St. Louis SVdP Council.

It will be a very special time of celebration where the Society got its start in the U.S. We hope to see you there!

[Click here](#) to see photos from this year’s National Assembly in Denver.