

# For Your Love Alone

SPRING 2008



## *“The heart from which St. Vincent de Paul activity radiates.”*

The conference meeting is the center of the Society, “the heart from which St. Vincent de Paul activity radiates.” According to the Society’s National Manual, unlike other organizations, conference meetings are “less to conduct business than to celebrate and deepen the unity of its members for essentially spiritual reasons.”

People are drawn to the parish Conference with a common goal of serving the poor. This is often in response to one’s desire to serve our Lord as He has preached: “In as much as you do it to the least of my brethren, you do it to me.” (Matt 25:40) For most volunteers or members, there is the implicit desire to grow closer to our Lord through service to the poor. In the course of our work in the Society, it is usually at Conference meetings that members are able to come together with regularity as a group, to share their experiences in service, to pray, and to reflect together. As with the first Conference—The Conference of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, founded by Blessed Frederic Ozanam, Conference meetings are occasions for *spiritual formation* and encounters that *foster the spirit of friendship* that he considered the primary goals of the society.

*“Attending Society meetings—conference, district, diocesan, regional, and national—is a basic Vincentian commitment, ensuring the growth of Vincentian spirituality and molding members into true successors of Frederic Ozanam.”*

Every Conference meeting includes a spiritual component that promotes members’ active participation and discussion. The meeting serves to develop personal attitudes and actions geared toward the love and service of the needy and suffering—as exemplified by our patron St. Vincent de Paul, “The Father of Charity.” The Conference Spiritual Advisor, clergy or designated lay member, facilitates the reflection, discussion, and prayer. Training and resources in this regard are available from the National or Archdiocesan Council Office. Opening and closing prayers, together with spiritual reflections heighten one’s awareness of the Holy Spirit’s presence.

Vincentians use the conference meeting to review their experiences with their contacts with the needy. Through this exchange, members become more skillful in the art of helping people. Support for each other occurs, and enhances the unity of its members, especially when they collectively analyze a problem. The meeting has a welcoming environment, interesting, productive, and convenient for every one who might want to join.



“IT IS FOR YOUR  
LOVE ALONE THAT  
THE POOR WILL  
FORGIVE YOU THE  
BREAD YOU GIVE  
THEM.”



### 175th Anniversary of the International Society of St. Vincent de Paul

*“This will be a special year of grace for us, a time of renewal and refounding,” declares Joe Flannigan, national president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States. “Every member of the Society can rediscover our Vincentian heritage and serve the poor with a deeper spirituality and dedication.”*

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NEWSLETTER IN AN EMAIL,  
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## *Q&A with Father Jack Lombardi, St. Vincent de Paul Spiritual Advisor*

Dear Fr. Jack,

I am with a wonderful new and growing conference at St. Rita's Parish in Dundalk. One of the ways we serve our clients is with our food pantry. We serve about 15-22 clients on our day of operation. The logistics are 1-2 Vincentians in the intake room and 1-2 bagging the food in another room. I would like to take the opportunity to pray with or for them so we can tend to their spiritual needs as well. Please advise us of a good way to implement and achieve this goal. Also, it would be good if all Vincentians serving that day could be involved. I am blessed that I get to learn and grow from such lovely people on a regular basis.

Your Friend in Christ,  
Debbi Bullington, President

*“Give me a man of prayer  
and he will be capable of  
everything.”*

*—St. Vincent de Paul*

Debbi,

This is a wonderful charism—to feed the poor—and also to pray for them, and the volunteers who help. After all, helpers need holy help too lest they become overburdened, burned out, or “de-spirited”.

Every day after Holy Communion, Mother Teresa would pray various prayers of spirit and service—to help them help others and never lose sight that it is really Jesus whom we serve in serving the poor. Her Missionary of Charity Sisters still do this today. The prayers they pray include: Anima Christi, St Francis Peace Prayer and “Radiating Christ” (by Cardinal Newman). Once we get the mind and souls in line, the body and actions may follow more readily. I also suggest praying with the group and continual encouragement.

Also remember, as with St. Teresa of Avila, in a way, Christ has no body but yours. Yours are His hands, heart and feet. When we constantly remind ourselves and fellow helpers with such spiritual thoughts, we are not just social workers, but spiritual adventurers and co-workers with St Vincent de Paul –going from Jesus (in worship and Eucharist) and then going to Jesus in His disguises in the poor. The privilege is ours!

Peace  
Fr. Jack Lombardi

*If you have a question for Fr. Jack Lombardi, Spiritual Advisor with St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore, send your question to [shull@vincentbaltimore.org](mailto:shull@vincentbaltimore.org), or call 410-547-5475.*

## *Parish Conference Member Volunteer Highlight*

### *John Petrik – Volunteer, St. Mary's Govans Parish Conference*

*“We always say ‘don’t make this just checkbook charity.’”*

Five years ago, John Petrik became involved as a Parish Conference volunteer at St. Mary's Church in Govans. He and six other parishioners help members of their community who are struggling with the costs of food, rent, utilities, and medical expenses. Most importantly, they offer care and compassion to those who need hope.

“When you are going into the neighborhoods and visiting these people, you really see and understand what they are dealing with and what kind of assistance you can offer,” John says. “At St. Mary's we always say ‘don’t make this just checkbook charity.’ Sit down with them, talk with them about what they are going through, and pray with them.”



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### *Parish Conference Meetings (continued from page 1)*

The regularity of these meetings is the key to developing an effective team effort and achieving the goals of the Society. The Rule stipulates that conferences meet weekly, or at least twice a month. Infrequent meetings can adversely affect the poor and impede the ongoing spiritual growth of the Conference members.

The Conference meeting is the venue for the continuing education and formation of the members spiritually and as helpers. This ongoing formation complements the formation sessions sponsored by the district or archdiocesan Council. Members recognize the importance and value of attending meetings. "The association and the working together of members generate a process of growth, because of which every person, in all aspects, reflects more and more the person of Christ."

### ***2008 Calendar of Events—Save the Date!***

April 20	Ozanam Sunday – 175 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary
June 3	Celebration 2008
July/August	Parish Conference Raffle Ticket Sales Benefit The Caritas Fund
August 1-3	Eastern Regional Meeting, Emmitsburg, MD <i>*see below for more information</i>
September TBD	Leadership Breakfast
September 9	Feast of Blessed Frederic Ozanam
September 24-27	Annual Meeting, Louisville, KY
September 27	Feast of St. Vincent de Paul

***Eastern Regional Meeting, Emmitsburg, MD – "A meeting you won't want to miss. Join parish conference members from MD, PA, WV, NJ and DE for an information packed weekend. Our National President Joe Flannigan, will be with us. Bring back some zeal to your parish conference by joining with fellow Vincentians and hearing their stories of success and failure as they minister to the poor in their diocese. Hosted this year by the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese. For registration information contact avcdepaul12@verizon.net.***

### ***1833-2008: Society of St. Vincent de Paul Celebrates 175th Anniversary!***

As we prepare to celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Paris by a 20-year-old college student named Frederic Ozanam, we are reminded that 2008 will be a special year of grace for us and a time of renewal. Some conferences are gathering to rediscover the Vincentian spirituality and heritage given by Frédéric Ozanam. The six conferences in Anne Arundel County met on Saturday morning, February 16<sup>th</sup> to explore their Vincentian vocation, and the conferences in Howard County met in April. Please contact Sharon Hull at 410-547-5475 to host a gathering in your area. Also, consider attending this year's Eastern Regional Gathering in Emmitsburg. For more information, please see the calendar of events above.

### *St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore*

#### **Our Mission**

To help people who are suffering from the effects of poverty meet their basic human needs and achieve a better future for themselves and their family.

#### **Our Values**

Inspired by Gospel values, we serve all people, as we see God's living presence in every person.

We seek to maximize volunteer involvement, as we believe that caring people can make a difference in the lives of others, and that personal and spiritual growth occurs when people become directly involved in helping others.

We advocate for those we serve, encourage personal responsibility, foster hope, and promote the dignity and self-worth of each individual.

We seek to build a sense of community, and to form community partnerships in support of our work.

We strive to offer the highest possible quality of services in an efficient and effective manner, to strive for overall organization excellence, and to adapt to the changing needs of those we serve.

#### **PROGRAMS**

Adelante Familia  
Beans and Bread  
Camp St. Vincent  
Cottage Avenue Community  
FoodShare  
Frederick Ozanam House  
Head Start  
Home Connections  
Mobile Clothing Bank  
Parish Conferences  
Prison Outreach  
Samaritan Center  
Sarah's Hope  
Learn to Earn at St. Ambrose  
YouthPlace at St. Ambrose



## *Sponsor a Child to Attend Camp St. Vincent*

Camp St. Vincent is the only camp in this region dedicated to serving homeless children. The Camp enables children who have very few resources to experience summer fun and learning in a positive, nurturing environment. As we prepare for the 101<sup>st</sup> camp season, we hope that your Parish Conference will consider sponsoring children to attend Camp St. Vincent 2008.

This year, Camp St. Vincent will be held at Patterson Park in southeast Baltimore from June 23 – August 15, and will include: include instruction in math, language arts, character development, athletics, nature, arts & crafts, and swimming. All camp activities, supplies, daily breakfast and lunch, and t-shirts are free to campers.



Because Camp St. Vincent is free for the children, support from the **Annual Parish Conference Sponsorship Campaign** is absolutely critical to the continuance of this much needed program. If you would like any additional information, please contact Erica DelViscio, Asst. Director of Development, at 410-625-8449 or edelviscio@vincentbaltimore.org. The cost for one child to attend a full, two week session of camp this year is \$330. We hope that you will help us to brighten a child's summer with your support.

## *Clothing Collections Help the Homeless*

Thank you to all Parish Conferences who have led Bundle Sundays at their parishes to benefit the Mobile Clothing Bank! If you want a great activity to do with your youth, consider hosting a Bundle Sunday to collect clothing for the homeless. For information, contact Chris Benzing at 410-368-1545.



Working together, improving lives  
—in your community.

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