

Service

Empowerment, social justice, and accompaniment comprise the Service orientation of the Vincentian Leadership Model. The Service orientation identifies leaders who encourage and promote learning, challenge situations of injustice, and inspire others through their example of service.

Empowerment

Vincentian leaders empower people. They help others become better leaders by creating an environment that promotes learning and by delegating appropriately to encourage others to work independently.

An Idea Waiting to Happen

“If we are faithful in small things,
God will entrust us with those that are greater.”
St. Vincent de Paul

I knew there was something wrong when I picked a photo from several spread on the table, showed it to my staff, and asked, “What do you think?” Three pairs of eyes just blinked.

At my first meeting with my staff, as the new director of the Institutional Development & External Affairs Office, IDEA Office — I was introducing the practice of spreading photographs on the table and choosing a cover shot for the upcoming issue of the Adamson News.

In disbelief, I realized that my staff, including the editor-in-chief, a photographer, and a graphics artist, was never encouraged to share their opinion. Add the fact that I was a priest in the Philippines, where the old adage, “The words of a priest are those of a king,” speaks much about attitudes in these Catholic islands, and you get an anachronism reminiscent of feudal Europe, which was more-or-less the Europe of Vincent de Paul's time. Vincent's ability to mingle with nobility as well as the poor is an eloquent picture of his vision of the priesthood. This was the inspiration I had when I made a promise on my ordination day 11 years ago — to make my priesthood more accessible to people. That meant not just opening up my calendar for appointments, but changing the attitudes that people have about priests — attitudes that automatically create walls when a collar is around. I can never totally change the mindset established by three centuries under the Spanish conquistadores when the subjugation of the Islands was committed in the name of God. I can, at least, slowly return to people the voice they lost when they relinquished everything — their culture, their names, their identity, their pride, and even their religious beliefs — to the invading army.

It was uphill at first with my staff. They depended on me to call the shots on just about everything. Not only did they lack initiative, they were frustratingly reticent when I asked for their opinions. That slowly changed. I gave people the authority to call meetings. I refused to let anyone off the hook when he or she needed to stand up publicly for something. I made people say what they honestly felt about the project. Ironically, I used the same strong-arm approach our colonizers used to rob Filipinos of their voices in order to return what was rightfully theirs.

The result? We now have the most creative bureau in Adamson University, where the free-flow of ideas is abundant. People initiate things and just as readily own up to their mistakes. Staff meetings have become more relaxed — even lively. If my job before was to encourage people to speak, now I ask them to wrap up their speeches. It is exciting to see my friends enjoying work and looking forward to new things.

We honored the new wind blowing through the office by putting up a war room with the face of Vincent de Paul gracing one whole wall and the last part of the Adamson Prayer as graffiti on an adjoining one:

“May your love for the poor, the mark of my uniquely Vincentian education, be the work I excel in, the standard I constantly refer to and my courage when I meet you someday.”

Fr. Francisco Cruz, C.M.

Reflection

This story is about achieving greatness through empowering others.

1. Recall a time when you felt empowered by someone else. What did he or she do to encourage you? How did you feel?

2. Do the people who work for you and with you become better individuals through your attention and direction?

Learning to Empower

“Let us accustom ourselves to instruct
more by example than by precept.”
St. Louise de Marillac

As a kid, I had wide and varied interests. I enjoyed singing, drawing, painting, writing, and reading. From an early age, other cultures fascinated me. At six years old, touring Chinatown and eating dim sum with chopsticks in a restaurant occupied primarily by Chinese-speaking families thrilled me. My best friend’s mother, who spoke French fluently, fascinated me and her collection of books, art, and trinkets from far away further fueled my desire to travel the world.

Despite my curiosity, I did not enjoy school. Teachers discouraged me from asking questions and often told to come prepared to discussions with “the right answer.” I remember a very painful experience where my math teacher publicly chided me for not keeping up with my classmates; another time a teacher accused me of being lazy, despite having studied hours upon hours for a test that earned a failing grade. By the time I reached high school, I developed a deep-seated distrust of most of my teachers as well as in my abilities and myself.

After experimenting with social work, psychology, counseling, and teaching, I finally settled on an undergraduate degree in theatre with a French minor. I felt at home immersing myself into two worlds where it seemed acceptable to search for answers. In the world of theatre, uncovering and understanding a character’s history, background, relationships, and motivation guided an actor’s actions. Studying French language provided me with an entrée into a foreign culture, where I learned something new and thrilling about geography, culture, history, politics, and perspectives beyond the American point of view.

After graduation I worked for five years in various day

jobs to pay my rent and at night as a poorly paid actor, director, or stage-manager. I eventually became restless and frustrated and decided to pursue a graduate degree in education at DePaul University.

My experience at the Open House clinched my decision to attend DePaul. The warmth, hospitality and care exhibited by the staff and faculty impressed me. Unlike my undergraduate experience at a large state university, I had the impression that they were genuinely interested in me and in my academic goals and objectives. At the time, I could not have imagined what a turning point my relationship with the DePaul community would make in my life and in my career.

I recently read an article entitled, “Vincent de Paul as Mentor,” written by Alison Forrestal. Forrestal read and researched many of Vincent de Paul’s letters written to his followers. She writes that Vincent de Paul, “never ordered anyone to do anything, but always asked and suggested...he usually suggested strategies and actions using phrases such as ‘it may be well to,’ ‘perhaps you could’ or ‘do you think.’”

As a student at DePaul, I experienced the same type of gentle encouragement and attention described by Forrestal. My faculty mentors recognized and honored my background and worldview and helped me connect my ideas and values with the subject matter and with my classmates’ perspectives. They used questions to challenge me to think differently, stretched me in my abilities as a student and a teacher, and in addition to academic direction, offered me personal guidance, especially at the moments when I thought I might not make it through the program. When writing my thesis, I often sent e-mails at the “wee hours” of the morning to my advisor, who was patient, kind, and generous in his responses to my questions and concerns.

At DePaul, I experienced education as empowerment. In turn, I aspire, in my current work as a staff member and instructor at DePaul University to emulate the actions of my mentors and the values of Vincent de Paul: To guide and to persuade; To encourage and to question; To love and to respect

others, and; To support others not only in their pursuit of knowledge, but in their self-knowing so that they may remain open and interested in learning and growing every day.

Mary McGuinness

Reflection

1. When have you experienced empowerment?
2. How do you use your experiences to create an empowering environment for others?

Social Justice

Vincentian leaders work for social justice. They seek to transform the causes of poverty and challenge situations of injustice.

Moving Out Vincent Style

“Charity is not charity if not accompanied by justice.”
St. Vincent de Paul

Contrary to popular belief, summer is perhaps the busiest season for DePaul University’s Department of Housing Services. Perhaps people assume that because most students moved out at the academic year’s end, our workload is light in the summertime. However, summer is our time for implementation and execution of extensive facility upgrade projects. During these critical weeks and days, we work to prepare the halls and apartments for the upcoming year’s residents.

One of our major projects is to ensure that all rooms and apartments on campus have quality furniture and amenities. Hence, we replace older furnishings nearing the end of their lifecycle as the budget allows. While upgrading the spaces that students inhabit is gratifying, the most fulfilling aspect of the process is crafting a plan for what to do with the used items.

As our planning process begins, I am reminded of St. Vincent de Paul’s words, “Charity is not charity if not accompanied by justice.” Housing Services student assistants and staff make countless phone calls to area charities and not-for-profit organizations to coordinate various donations including bed frames, student desks, dressers, and other items. Groups of staff and volunteers arrive on-site and assist with the moving the furniture. At scheduled times each group loads up vehicles to transport hundreds of items to service organizations that work with those in need. It is a tremendous feat to see the action, and hear the expressions of kindness, compassion, and responsibility.

During one summer’s project, one group wrote us a letter expressing their gratitude for the items they received from DePaul. After receiving their donation, they set up all the beds

and put linens and pillows on them. Every bed was in use that night at their shelter.

The dedicated leadership and service of everyone involved reflects St. Vincent's values, the same values that are at the foundation of so many facets of DePaul University.

Mary Atkinson

Reflection

Vincent was aware that stewardship of resources is a justice issue. In this story, we see this commitment in action.

1. As you look around your own home or office, are there ways you could cut back or share your resources with others in need?
2. If you made the decision to volunteer a few hours a week for an agency serving the poor, what would that look like for you?

The Ladies of Charity

“You have no right to anything but food and clothing; what is left over belongs to the service of the poor.”

St. Vincent de Paul

Inspired by Vincent, today nearly 260,000 Ladies of Charity across the globe combine compassion, care, and understanding to engage in forceful, vitalizing, and persistent work to serve the material and spiritual needs of the least among us. The Ladies of Charity is the oldest Lay Association of women in the history of volunteerism. The group dates back to 1617 when Vincent de Paul assembled a group of women in Chatillon-les-Dombes, France and gave structure to their first initiative to aid the poor families in the parish — identifying them as one of a network of charities bound together by a common mission and vision.

Today, the organization is 260,000 women members strong. With their motto, “Against all forms of poverty, acting together,” the Ladies of Charity are part of the larger Association Internationale de Charite, an international NGO committed to fighting all forms of poverty and injustice and to giving women an active role in society.

In a world that favors big agendas and loud appeals, the Ladies of Charity maintain their quiet yet influential manner with which St. Louise de Marillac, under St. Vincent’s tutelage, responded to humanizing the conditions of the less fortunate. Today’s circumstances may seem different with modern efficiency and technology but, as Jesus admonished, “the poor you will have with you always.”

There are hundreds of examples of the successful influence of Vincentian principles in the work that the Ladies of Charity do with drug-exposed babies, pregnant women, abused women, the illiterate, the lonely, aged, and the dying. One Kansas City response to poverty issues demonstrates the

leadership within our organization to affect change, not only in the charitable aspect of helping others but by raising the awareness of the desperate needs as well.

Gayle Johnson, whose commitment to active membership in the Ladies of Charity, stems from seeing the organization as “lay women who see a need and can devise a program to address it,” did just that in January 2007. Under her leadership, the Ladies of Charity held a poverty conference to develop public consciousness of the impact of generational and situational poverty in the Midwestern region of Kansas City. Open to the community and publicized by the media, this conference featured a speaker whose background included personal experience with the welfare system, a panel of Kansas and Missouri legislators, and a panel of directors of agencies who work with children and women. The hope was that those in attendance would leave with a better understanding of the causes of poverty, in particular generational poverty. Attendees from many regions took the ideas back to their organizations for replication. First-of-a-kind for the Ladies of Charity, this concept became a prototype for others, two of which took place in Washington, D.C. and Albany, NY.

“Women have a unique place in the Church,” says Gayle, “the strength of the Ladies of Charity is a certain independence. We see a need and address it.” Much the way St. Vincent de Paul, a Christian pragmatist of the 17th Century resolutely responded to those most in need and created programs to improve their conditions, the Ladies of Charity continue his work by bringing the haves and have-nots together in meaningful and life changing ways.

Albertine McGurk

Reflection

1. What are ways you can become more aware of social justice issues in your community?
2. What is one thing you can do this month to actively engage in working for social justice?

Accompaniment

Vincentian leaders are committed to accompaniment. They inspire others with their example by letting go of their personal agenda and walking with others. They view leadership as service rather than a role or position. They accompany others regardless of race, gender, religion, or position.

More than I in leadership

“We must love our neighbor as being made in the image of God and as an object of His love.”

St. Vincent de Paul

Why does it matter if one cares about the broader world? Why is DePaul University's second goal in its Vision Twenty12 about preparing students to become socially responsible leaders with a commitment to the common good? Attending to the common good is important because we live in a multifaceted world that demands new answers and approaches to relationships and communities. It matters because the problems we face are so complex that we need people of goodwill to look outside their immediate concerns to work together.

We may think of effective leaders as exceptional individuals who outshine everyone else in a room, but in my experience, exemplary leaders make it known that they ask for help as well as provide it. They know others helped them get where they are in life. Mentors challenged, supported, and encouraged them to attend to the broader good. Within DePaul, there are leaders working for more than just him or herself at every level.

As a graduate student in Social Work, Becky Reed was a DePaul University leader focused on the common good. Becky first came to DePaul as an undergraduate. She had no fiery interest in civic engagement or Vincentian values. At an invitation from friends, she began looking into issues of social justice regarding the War in Iraq.

“What was around me sunk in,” Becky says, and there came a discrete moment in time when she had a conscious realization of her responsibility to care for others and engage more students in the work of social justice. She took action for peace. Becky started doing service through University Ministry

where mentors, such as Karl Nass, introduced her to reflection on service using VIA, a Vincentian reflection model that helps guide student discussions by Vincentian principles and ideas. Becky states that, “When you participate in social action and are getting to really know the world — coming to terms with it — you need a mentor. Campus ministers guided and directed me. That is what helped me fill in gaps at the time — I wouldn’t have come to it on my own. And having 15-20 student leaders in VIA, going through similar things made a difference too.” Even two years out of grad school Becky says core ideas from VIA, like the Way of Appreciation and service to the poor, frame how she sees things and inspire her to ask questions outside the interests of her immediate relations. “I am grateful for my life, but not guiltily serving the poor. I appreciate that they can teach me and bring richness to the world that is indescribable.”

Becky relates how DePaul staff and faculty’s encouragement and mentoring led her to a student position with University Ministry to coordinate PAVE, Political Activist VIA Engagement. As part of her work at PAVE, Becky built relationships and trust with DePaul activist groups along the political spectrum — not an easy task, but one she felt was urgent and important in times of divisive partisan politics. Becky rarely failed to bring a thoughtful, globally focused perspective to discussions and planning. She was an example to staff and students alike of what it was to be a socially responsible leader.

When asked about how she related to the notion of being a model “socially responsible leader” as a DePaul student Becky said, “I wouldn’t have called myself that then! I just do the best that I can with the knowledge of poverty and suffering that’s out there. I’m not sure if I am a ‘leader,’ but maybe I can be that one person who notices what’s going on, who tries to separate people from apathy.”

Things Becky learned as a student — building relationships, tolerance of others’ ideas, being open to tough conversations to forward social justice — are skills and attitudes she continues to leverage as a graduate, whether

working as a case manager or in non-profit environments. “With PAVE, it was less talking and more listening. There are threads that still come through. That makes me who I am.”

Becky recounts that the first year after school was a never-ending adjustment and pretty uncomfortable. She says a question around Vincentian socially responsible leadership is, “How are you really going to do it when you graduate? You have no idea what you’ll do when you’ll leave until you do things — move, get a job.” Her current job is in advancement for a post-grad volunteer program. “Right now I’m not just a grant writer or mail sorter, I do everything with a sense of personalism. I know every volunteer. I know where they work. I try to go to prayer and dinners with them.” She enjoys writing thank you notes to the donors that enable program participants to serve the poor. Such attention is part of living out her values on a daily basis in the real world, something she can’t do on her own.

Becky related how her first year out of a Vincentian environment was an adjustment relationally. She experienced a sense of loss of community and belonging and often felt alone. So she worked to create a community in Milwaukee she trusts and relies on, with whom she can discuss faith and work. Anticipating another move soon, Becky says she’ll do so again in a new location. “God doesn’t intend us to be alone,” she believes. And God doesn’t intend us just to act for ourselves. So while Becky’s activism looks different now than it did as a student, her work for social justice on behalf of others continues. There are countless other examples of Vincentians who demonstrate a life-altering commitment of working and leading for the common good.

None of these people sprang from the womb with a global perspective. They developed such a perspective within communities. Hearing stories about people who commit to going beyond self-interest, who wrestle with difficult questions springing from their deepest values, is instrumental in giving others hope and practical guidelines for how to live and lead in the world.

Katie Brick

Reflection

Vincent de Paul had an extraordinary ability to walk through life in the company of people of all kinds: rich and poor, men and women, peasants and slaves.

1. What have you done recently to expand your own awareness of another person's culture or place in life?
2. When was the last time you shared something important and meaningful to you with someone who might initially think differently about it than you do?

Tough as Nails

“Say little; do much”
St. Vincent de Paul

Let’s see...it is 4:00pm on Sunday, any Sunday, so that means only 12 more hours before I get up and go to work again! This is not some dire sentiment. It is a sentiment of excitement and anticipation of a new workweek about to begin. It is a fresh chance to spend more time doing what I love to do — serve the DePaul community. Since the day I started, nearly 36 years ago, I experience this Sunday rush of anticipation and excitement of the week to come every Sunday.

I have the best job on earth! Each day I get to do something different, however minor it may be, that will eventually help to make a positive difference for DePaul and its students. It is a privilege to provide leadership to individuals who live the life and spirit of St. Vincent in the jobs they do each day. Facility Operations and those working within the organization believe not only in service and production, but also in providing exceptional levels of service and production. We, as a unit, truly feel that, “It is not enough to do good, it must be done well.” This is one of St. Vincent’s quotes that inspires us each day, along with, “Say little; do much.” We act in the belief that it is best to spend our valuable time doing things that will make a difference — versus spending too much time talking about them.

Whether we are designing and building new buildings, mopping floors in old ones, checking 2,900 students into housing, or setting new program opportunities in campus recreation, it is all a labor of love. We pay attention to the most remote details in each activity with an eye toward improvement the next time. One of the best ways to continue effectively to help others is to get better at what you do.

I grew up with the Vincentian priests. Many have left this world, many are now “elder statesmen,” and many serve DePaul. I learned from them over the years what it means to “live” St. Vincent, realizing it is easy for me to incorporate

into my thinking and actions each day. I share what I learned with my staff each chance I get, and think it is important for them to tune into the same kind of things that took me a short lifetime to learn, understand, and feel so good about.

I do not let the public in on a lot of this though, as it would ruin my tough as nails, “nasty guy” reputation, which I call upon when needed to get things done, all in the name of our good St. Vincent de Paul, of course!

Bob Janis

Reflection

Each day as he prepares for work at DePaul, this author is aware of all the people affected by his work.

1. How often do you stop to consider all those who rely on what you do?
2. What one thing, as the author suggests, would help you “get better at what you do?”