

From Your Servant Leader

March 30, 2017

This year's Midyear Meeting, attended by almost 200 Society leaders in St. Louis last week, was as usual for the Society a great blending of business, faith and sharing. At the risk of exclusion, here some of the highlights:

A retreat led by Father Tom McKenna, CM, focused on the Vincentian Charism, how it came to St. Vincent and how it has come over the years to each of us. By reflecting on how we were introduced formally or informally to our charism, we can help it to grow in others!



The National Council passed the resolution to form a new SVdP Foundation at the national level to help the National Council attract and organize a group of fundraising leaders and major gifts to support the Society.

The National Council also approved a budget for the 2017-18 fiscal year that will continue the work included in the current National Strategic Plan, hire a Chief Financial Officer for the organization, and provide regional, Council and Conference support activities under the current solidarity formula.

We heard from National President Sheila Gilbert about the need to continually change and adapt to the times and to grow if we want to remain relevant in today's Catholic faith and society. We were also introduced to president-elect Ralph Middlecamp (who takes office in October) with brief remarks about using his current transition time and first months in office to visit members – especially through regional gatherings – and listen for what members need and what they would like to focus on in the future.

We celebrated the 400th anniversary of the Ladies of Charity (LOC) with a presentation to two visiting LOC leaders. We also recognized Gayle Westfahl with an international Society award for her outstanding leadership and work in supporting and growing youth and young adult members.

John Ashmen, CEO of the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions, shared with us his group's history, perspectives and works on homelessness in America and how nonprofits provide more than 60% of shelters across the country.

We launched the work for the small group representing the National Council at the July USCCB Bishops Convocation, who will organize to use the gathering of thousands of Catholic leaders to attract new Society Conferences and members.

We also launched, as a pre-Conference full-day meeting, a new program called Neighborhoods of Hope. This is the “community lens” of the larger set of systemic change programs for Councils and especially Conferences to use in organizing community resources to help people out of poverty. Also, we learned that a new set of video and workbook materials utilizing the perspectives and resources from Dr. Donna Beegle will be available in the next week or two. Watch the E-Gazette for more information!

We heard from the national board of directors Goal leaders and others about progress on the plan's many objectives and future resources. Members should expect many new resources in coming months!

One of the developments is the airing of "Our Faith in Action" television specials on EWTN! Watch for "special presentation" EWTN program time announcements over the summer, and then for a full series announcement for the fall.

Last but not least, we all attended a Vincentian Mass and Annual Commitment Ceremony at the Basilica of St. Louis, King of France ("the Old Cathedral") in St. Louis where the Society first met in the United States in 1845. It was fitting to gather and remember that amid all of the formal settings and business proceedings at our heart, and in our hearts, we are all friends and Vincentians.

It may appear that we did the above - and a lot more - in a very full week, but actually the Midyear is just two days! While only our leaders get together for Midyear, however, our National Assembly is open to all Vincentians. I hope you can join us in Tampa, Florida on August 30 – September 2 and experience all this for yourself!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave" followed by a stylized flourish.

Dave