

June 2014

**Unaffiliated Lay Vincentians'
Informal Engagement with the
Vincentian Mission**

**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC**

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Executive Summary

In winter 2013, DePaul University's Office of Mission and Values (OMV) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a survey of "unaffiliated lay Vincentians," that is young adults between the ages of 18 to 35 who have had a formative experience in the Vincentian mission either as a student or as a post-graduate volunteer at a Vincentian institution. The central purpose of this research is to help OMV explore these unaffiliated lay Vincentians' understanding of their experiences with the Vincentian mission, their commitment to that mission, and their desire for more formation in the Vincentian charism.

In collaboration with OMV, CARA designed an online survey with 72 closed-ended and four open-ended questions. The survey asked respondents about their past and current engagement with the Vincentian mission, their understanding of the dimensions of the Vincentian mission, the importance they give to Vincentian values, their interest in learning more about the Vincentian charism, their past and current religiosity and spirituality, and their demographic characteristics. Between February 2014 and May 2014, CARA and OMV distributed a link to the survey to a total of 1,737 men and women that OVM identified as unaffiliated lay Vincentians. A total of 351 men and women (or 20 percent of those who had been sent the survey) completed the questionnaire.

Major Findings

Characteristics of Respondents

- Respondents average 28 years of age, with six in ten in their 20s and another one-third in their 30s. More than three-quarters are females. More than a quarter are married, with another two in ten in a committed relationship.

- Just over four in ten report having earned a bachelor’s degree, with another half having earned an advanced degree as well. About two in ten report occupations that fit into these two U.S. Census categories: community and social service *and* education, training and library. Slightly less than two in ten indicate that they are currently students.

Engagement with the Vincentian Mission

- More than half of respondents first encountered the Vincentian mission during their college years. Another four in ten first encountered it after college. Over half have volunteered in a Vincentian program and another one in five has been or is currently a student at a Vincentian university. Just over one-quarter have both attended a Vincentian university and have volunteered for a Vincentian program.
- Slightly more than half say they contribute their time to the Vincentian mission or family. Just under half agree that they contribute financially to the mission or family. Respondents were also asked to indicate their current level of involvement with the Vincentian family in five different categories. Two-thirds report being involved in at least one way, with one-quarter involved in three or more different capacities. More than three in ten indicate being at least “somewhat” involved in the Vincentian family in general; volunteering for a Vincentian group or organization; prayer, faith sharing or formation groups; and financial support of Vincentian ministries. Those of the Post-Vatican II Generation and Catholic respondents are particularly likely to provide financial support.
- More than three-quarters of respondents consider the Lay Vincentian Missionaries at least “somewhat” of a mentor to them in learning about and living out the Vincentian mission. Six in ten consider the Daughters of Charity to be at least “somewhat” of a mentor to them, and just over four in ten consider the members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to be at least “somewhat” of a mentor. Catholics are especially likely to consider the Daughters of Charity “very much” a mentor, with other Christians particularly likely to list the Society of St. Vincent de Paul as “very much” a mentor.

Influence of the Vincentian Mission

- Asked to indicate how well their Vincentian program or university communicated eight distinct dimensions of the Vincentian mission to them, unaffiliated lay Vincentians show strong signs of having understood most dimensions of the Vincentian mission. Two-thirds or more indicate that their program or university communicated seven of the eight “very” well. The dimension of service to and solidarity with people who are poor or marginalized was especially well understood, with almost all respondents saying it had been communicated “very” well.

- When asked to indicate how important those same eight dimensions are in informing their life choices, more than half indicate that five of the eight are “very” important in that way. Respondents say that the dimension of service to and solidarity with people who are poor or marginalized has been especially important in informing their life choices.
- Almost nine in ten agree at least “somewhat” that their relationships with the Vincentian mission has strongly influenced their career life choices. In addition, at least six in ten agree that their Vincentian experiences have influenced the relationship they have with their spouses or partners. Half to three-quarters agree that their spouse or partner shares their values, spiritual beliefs, and religious faith.

Spirituality and Religiosity

- Compared to other adult Catholics in the United States, unaffiliated lay Vincentian respondents are more likely to attend Mass weekly and to have considered a vocation to religious life and/or ordained ministry.
- Nearly six in ten report that they pray at least once a day. More than half report attending religious services at least once a week and another quarter attend at least monthly. Those who have volunteered for Vincentian programs in the past and Catholic respondents are particularly likely to report attending religious services at least once a week.
- Almost two-thirds of male respondents have ever considered a vocation to Vincentian religious life, other forms of religious life, or ordained ministry in any faith. Four in ten have considered such a vocation at least “somewhat” seriously. Just over four in ten female respondents say that they have ever considered a vocation to Vincentian religious life, other forms of religious life, or ordained ministry in any faith. More than two in ten have considered it at least “somewhat” seriously.
- Three-quarters of respondents were raised in the Catholic faith. More than eight in ten of those who were raised Catholic identify as Catholics currently. One in ten of those raised Catholic now identify as “nothing in particular/atheist/agnostic.”
- Two-thirds of those who say they were raised as Protestant Christians, the second largest group of survey respondents, identify as Protestant Christians today. About one in ten of these respondents currently identifies as a non-denominational Christian and another one in ten identifies as “nothing in particular/atheist/agnostic.”

- When asked to choose which of four categories best describe them, seven in ten respondents report that they are both “religious and spiritual.” Nearly one-quarter identify as “spiritual but not religious,” and one in 20 or fewer identifies as “not religious and not spiritual” or as “religious but not spiritual.”

Interest in Further Engagement with the Vincentian Mission

- Nearly three-quarters agree that they would like their relationship with others who share the Vincentian mission to be more formal and ongoing. That was also a frequent topic among respondents to two open-ended questions concerning how the Vincentian family can better address their needs and what respondents would like to see the Vincentian family organize in their areas.
- More than eight in ten would like to be more involved with the Vincentian mission. While Catholic respondents (more than nine in ten) are especially likely to agree that they would like to be more involved, more than six in ten other Christians and those who identify as “nothing in particular/atheist/agnostic” would like to be more involved as well.
- One-quarter to one-third say they are “very” interested in exploring opportunities in their local areas related to the following: community outreach or volunteer programs; organized social activities; outreach for youth and children; and prayer, faith sharing or formation groups. Non-Catholic Christians are especially interested in more opportunities for outreach for youth and children.
- A St. Vincent de Paul Society, Vincentian priests or brothers, and/or the Daughters of Charity/Sisters of the Vincentian tradition are within a 45-minute drive of more than half of respondents’ homes.
- Respondents were asked to indicate their interest in possible Vincentian resources and opportunities for projects. Nearly half report being “very” interested in resources about social justice and systemic change, resources about effective methods of service, and opportunities for short-term mission projects.

Introduction

In winter 2013, DePaul University's Office of Mission and Values (OMV) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a survey of "unaffiliated lay Vincentians," that is young adults between the ages of 18 to 35 who have had a formative experience in the Vincentian mission either as a student or as a post-graduate volunteer at a Vincentian institution. The central purpose of this research is to help OMV explore these unaffiliated lay Vincentians' understanding of their experiences with the Vincentian mission, their commitment to that mission, and their desire for more formation in the Vincentian charism.

In collaboration with OMV, CARA designed an online survey with 72 closed-ended and four open-ended questions. The survey asked respondents about their past and current engagement with the Vincentian mission, their understanding of the dimensions of the Vincentian mission, the importance they give to Vincentian values, their interest in learning more about the Vincentian charism, their past and current religiosity and spirituality, and their demographic characteristics. Between February 2014 and May 2014, CARA and OMV distributed a link to the survey to a total of 1,737 men and women that OVM identified as unaffiliated lay Vincentians. A total of 351 men and women (or 20 percent of those who had been sent the survey) completed the questionnaire.

This report contains a detailed analysis of survey responses. The report is arranged in four parts. Part I describes characteristics of the respondents. Part II follows with a discussion of respondents' past and present religiosity and spirituality. Part III completes the report with a look at respondents' present engagement with the Vincentian mission and their interest in being engaged further in the future.

Interpreting this Report

Many of the questions on the survey used four -point response scales (for example, "not at all," "a little," "some," and "very much"). Two of the responses in these scales may be interpreted as relatively more "negative" ("not at all" and "only a little," for example) and the other two as relatively more "positive" ("somewhat" and "very much," for example). Tables summarizing responses to questions that use these scales will not include percentages for each response category. Instead, they will usually report the percentage of those whose responses fall on the positive side of the scale. In other words, the tables typically report the percentage of respondents saying *either* "somewhat" or "very much," and the percentage for the most positive category only, such as the percentage of respondents saying "very much," since the most positive response sometimes distinguishes important contrasts in level of support. This is especially useful for this survey since many respondents tended to give "positive" responses but not always the *most* positive responses. Readers may also wish to compare the difference between the two extreme low responses. These comparisons and others may be drawn by referring to the

complete percentage responses for each question, listed on the copy of the questionnaire in the Appendix I.

A summary of the findings from the four open-ended questions is presented in the main body of the report. Appendices II and III present transcriptions of all of the responses to the open-ended questions. They are unedited, just as they were typed in for the online survey.

Summary

In summary, respondents are especially likely to give the reasons in the table below for describing themselves as religious, spiritual, not religious, and/or not spiritual.

Summary of Reasons for Identifying as Religious or Spiritual

Religious

- Has a formal relationship with a religious tradition
- Believes in the tenets of faith in a religious tradition
- Participates in religious services, ministries, or congregational life
- Finds rituals and spiritual traditions in a religious tradition meaningful

Not Religious

- Has doubts about God's existence or is an atheist
- Are exploring the truths found in other faith traditions
- Attends religious services irregularly or not at all
- Does not want to conform to the rules of any religious tradition
- Disillusioned with organized religion
- Faith experience has not led to affiliating with an organized religion
- Has not found meaning in God or religion

Spiritual

- Has a personal relationship with and/or experiences of God
- Feels connected to a larger reality or being
- Experiences God through prayer, meditation or reflection
- Finds spiritual connection with God through participation in a religious tradition's rituals and spiritual traditions
- Finds God and religious truths present in other religions
- Believes in God, but not necessarily in the divinity of Jesus Christ
- Satisfied with picking and choosing from many religious traditions instead of just one
- Finds more meaning in participating in service to others than anywhere else

Not Spiritual

- Is an atheist or has doubts about the existence of God
- Does not pray and is not interested in prayer or reflection
- Connects with the Vincentian tradition, but not with God

Engagement with the Vincentian Mission and Family

Nearly all at least “somewhat” agree that they are still in contact with people they met through their experiences of the Vincentian mission. Seven in ten “strongly” agree that they are.

<i>How much do you agree with the following statement?</i>		
<i>Percent responding</i>		
	“Somewhat” or “Strongly” Agree	“Strongly” Agree Only
I am still in contact with people I met through my experiences of the Vincentian mission	96%	70%
My relationship with the Vincentian mission has strongly influenced my career and life choices	88	58
I would like to be more involved with the Vincentian mission	84	34
I would like my relationship with others who share the Vincentian mission to be more formal and ongoing	73	29
I contribute my time to the Vincentian mission or family	53	24
I contribute financially to the Vincentian mission or family	46	10

Nearly nine in ten “somewhat” or “strongly” agree that their relationship with the Vincentian mission has strongly influenced their career and life choices. Just fewer than six in ten “strongly” agree that it has.

- More than eight in ten at least “somewhat” agree that they would like to be more involved with the Vincentian mission. One-third “strongly” agrees that they would.
- Almost three-quarters at least “somewhat” agree that they would like their relationship with others who share the Vincentian mission to be more formal and ongoing. Three in ten “strongly” agree that they would.
- Survey respondents are more likely to agree that they contribute their time than that they contribute financially to the Vincentian mission or family. More than half at least “somewhat” agree that they contribute their time to the Vincentian mission or family,

with one-quarter “strongly” agreeing that they do. In comparison, slightly fewer than half agree at least “somewhat” that they contribute financially to the Vincentian family or mission, with one in ten “strongly” agreeing they do.

Differences by Generation

Millennial Generation respondents are more likely than Post-Vatican II respondents to at least “somewhat” agree that they would like to be more involved in the Vincentian mission. Post-Vatican II respondents, on the other hand, are more likely to at least “somewhat” agree that they contribute financially to the Vincentian mission or family.

“Somewhat” or “Very Much” Agreeing with Statements, by Generation		
	Post-Vatican II	Millennial
I would like to be more involved with the Vincentian mission	73%	87%
I contribute financially to the Vincentian mission or family	73	41

Understanding of Dimensions of the Vincentian Mission

At least 85 percent of survey respondents indicate that each of the dimensions of the Vincentian mission listed below has been communicated to them at least “somewhat” by their Vincentian program or university.

<i>How well did your Vincentian program or university communicate these dimensions of the Vincentian mission to you?</i>		
<i>Percent responding</i>		
	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
Service to, and solidarity with, people who are poor and marginalized	99%	96%
Working for social justice and systemic change to reduce poverty	98	82
Serving with a community of others who share the Vincentian mission and values	97	84
Engaging in ongoing reflection and prayer	95	77
Living simply	93	76
Vincentian heritage and history (Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Louise de Marillac and the mission of the Vincentian family in the context of its heritage and tradition that are nearly 400 years old)	93	67
Knowledge of and commitment to the principles of Catholic social teaching (dignity of the human person; call to family, community and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; care of God’s creation)	92	65
Participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church (i.e. celebrating the Eucharist at Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation)	85	58

Almost all respondents report that the Vincentian mission dimension of service to, and solidarity with, people who are poor and marginalized was communicated to them “very” well by their Vincentian program or university.

- More than eight in ten say their Vincentian program or university communicated the dimensions of serving with a community of others who share the Vincentian mission and

its values and of working for social justice and systemic change to reduce poverty “very” well.

- Engaging in ongoing reflection and prayer and living simply were communicated “very” well to about three-quarters of respondents by their Vincentian program or university.
- Two-thirds or fewer indicate that the following dimensions of the Vincentian mission were communicated “very” well to them by their Vincentian program or university:
 - Vincentian heritage and history (67 percent)
 - Knowledge of and commitment to the principles of Catholic social teaching (65 percent)
 - Participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church (58 percent)

Differences by Vincentian Affiliation

Those who have been both students and volunteers are most likely to report that their Vincentian program or university has communicated to them “very well” the Vincentian dimensions of serving with a community of others who share the Vincentian mission and values and of Vincentian heritage and history.

Dimensions of the Vincentian Mission “Very Well” Communicated by Their Vincentian Programs and Universities, by Type of Vincentian Affiliation			
	Student	Volunteer	Student and Volunteer
Serving with a community of others who share the Vincentian mission and values	80%	80%	95%
Living simply	64	83	71
Vincentian heritage and history (Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Louise de Marillac and the mission of the Vincentian family in the context of its heritage and tradition that are nearly 400 years old)	59	63	80
Participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church (i.e. celebrating the Eucharist at Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation)	42	67	54

Volunteers are most likely to say their Vincentian program or university “very much” communicated the Vincentian dimensions of living simply and of participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church to them.

Differences by Generation

Post-Vatican II Generation respondents are more likely than those of the Millennial Generation to say their Vincentian program or university “very much” communicated the Vincentian dimensions of living simply and of participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church to them. Those of the Millennial Generation, on the other hand, are especially likely to say Vincentian heritage and history have been “very well” communicated to them by their Vincentian programs and universities.

	Post- Vatican II	Millennial
Living simply	91%	73%
Participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church (i.e. celebrating the Eucharist at Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation)	71	55
Vincentian heritage and history (Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Louise de Marillac and the mission of the Vincentian family in the context of its heritage and tradition that are nearly 400 years old)	51	70

Importance of Vincentian Formation

More than nine in ten report that service to, and solidarity with, people who are poor and marginalized and that working for social justice and systemic change to reduce poverty are at least “somewhat” important to informing their life choices. More than six in ten say each of these dimensions is “very” important to them.

<i>How important are each of the following in informing your life choices?</i>		
<i>Percent responding</i>		
	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
Service to, and solidarity with, people who are poor and marginalized	96%	69%
Working for social justice and systemic change to reduce poverty	91	63
Living simply	89	50
Engaging in ongoing reflection and prayer	84	59
Knowledge of and commitment to the principles of Catholic social teaching (dignity of the human person; call to family, community and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; care of God’s creation)	77	55
Participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church (i.e. celebrating the Eucharist at Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation)	64	46
Serving with a community of others who share the Vincentian mission and values	57	26
Vincentian heritage and history (Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Louise de Marillac and the mission of the Vincentian family in the context of its heritage and tradition that are nearly 400 years old)	41	11

- Living simply (89 percent), engaging in ongoing reflection and prayer (84 percent), and knowledge of and commitment to the principles of Catholic social teaching (77 percent) are at least “somewhat” important in informing the life choices of at least three-quarters of respondents. Between half and three-fifths say these are “very” important in informing their life choices.

- Almost two in three indicate that participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church is at least “somewhat” important in informing their life choices. Nearly half says such participation is “very” important to them.
- Serving with a community of others who share the Vincentian mission and values is at least “somewhat” important to almost six in ten respondents when making life choices. One-quarter says it is “very” important to them.
- Four in ten indicate that Vincentian heritage and history is at least “somewhat” important to them in informing their life choices. One in ten says that heritage and history is “very” important to them when making such decisions.

Differences by Types of Vincentian Affiliation

Volunteers are particularly likely to say that living simply is “very” important to them when informing their life choices.

Dimensions of Vincentian Mission “Very” Important in Informing Life Decisions, by Type of Vincentian Affiliation			
	Student	Volunteer	Student and Volunteer
Living simply	39%	59%	40%
Serving with a community of others who share the Vincentian mission and values	29	20	36
Participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church (i.e. celebrating the Eucharist at Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation)	27	51	51
Vincentian heritage and history (Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Louise de Marillac and the mission of the Vincentian family in the context of its heritage and tradition that are nearly 400 years old)	17	6	17

- Those who have been both students and volunteers are most likely to say that serving with a community of others who share the Vincentian mission and values is “very” important to them in informing their life decisions.

- Students are *least* likely to indicate that participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church is “very” important to them in informing their life decisions.
- Volunteers are *least* likely to say Vincentian heritage and history is “very” important to them in informing their life choices.

Differences by Generation

Post-Vatican II Generation respondents are more likely than those of the Millennial Generation to say living simply and participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church are “very” important to them in informing their life choices.

Dimensions of Vincentian Mission “Very” Important in Informing Life Decisions, by Generation		
	Post-Vatican II	Millennial
Living simply	64%	46%
Participating regularly in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church (i.e. celebrating the Eucharist at Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation)	55	44

The Most Important Thing the Vincentian Mission Has Taught

Respondents were invited to write in a response to finish this sentence: “The most important thing the Vincentian mission has taught me is...” Some 288 wrote in a response, 82 percent of all respondents.

While respondents’ answers and descriptions vary widely, these 19 themes appear most often in their responses:

- Show hospitality to all people, especially the poor and marginalized
- Meet people where they are and try to see things from their perspective
- Value all of those you encounter as human beings, as people of dignity and worth
- Serve others humbly, listening more than talking
- Give preference to service to the poor and marginalized
- See God in others, especially the poor and marginalized
- Live your life simply in solidarity with the poor and marginalized
- See the poor and marginalized as your teachers
- Work for systemic change for peace and justice
- Appreciate the riches of the Catholic tradition
- Make God the center of your life
- Serve God and others out of love
- Pray and reflect daily
- Have a passion or zeal in all you do
- Find the right balance between contemplation and action
- Put value on living in community with other believers
- Give back whenever you are able
- Understand yourself and your limitations
- Reflect on how your behavior affects others
- Have an open mind and be open to change

Some sample comments that illustrate these themes appear below.

Acceptance of all people.

To be in service to others and listen to their experience and to understand it as their truth. To be in solidarity with others, especially the poor. Most importantly, the Vincentian mission has pushed me to seek compatibility and to relate with those that are marginalized, and to try to be intentional about that in my life everyday.

The most important thing I have learned from the Vincentian mission is the ideas of Catholic Social teaching, particularly the dignity of others. Whenever I am participating in service or reflecting on my experiences dignity is what I contribute my strong

connection to helping others to. I believe that everyone should be treated with equal dignity because we are all created in the likeness and image of God, and that is something I am reminded of every day and hold in the forefront of my own personal mission.

To serve the poor and marginalized in a charitable, humble manner which is effective and long term. To truly see God in the poor and the most little while always having a burning spiritual life in order to serve these people better.

To serve others with the gifts God gave you, have a preference for the poor and marginalized, to turn to God and prayer, share your life in a community, and to live simply.

To see God in the eyes of the poor and suffering.

Solidarity with the marginalized is what erases the difference between "us" and "them". We are together in the struggle.

The poor are our masters because Jesus willed to become poor.

It has taught me about the importance to work with people who have been marginalized and to do this in a dignifying way. It has taught me the importance of empowering people to have agency in improving their situation. I have learned the importance of doing this type of work well and with compassion. I have learned the importance of systemic change. I have learned to look at issue of inequality and working towards a more socially just society.

Truly getting to know people in poverty – as persons and not as "the poor" or "the homeless," and also what this means in terms of living a Catholic faith.

To make God the center of my life because God is love and if I make Him the center, I will be able to love others as God loves us.

St. Vincent de Paul said, "By love alone the poor will forgive you the bread you give them." Love the poor with all your heart, serve them out of love. Give from your need, not your abundance; be like the woman in the temple who gave all the coins she owned and Jesus said, truly this woman has given the most because she gave from her need, not her abundance. You do more service to people if you serve them out of love and treat them with the dignity they deserve and give who you are to them.

To live simply, engage in daily prayer, and to increase my service to others.

Seeing the face of God in the poor and a passion for service

The importance of striking a balance between contemplation and action. We must give God what is due Him and our fellow man what is due him as well.

The values of simple living, community, and social justice. Ability to empathize with those in poverty. Increased self-reflection. Desire to help the world.

Give back whenever you can.

I think it is a tie with the ideas of meeting people where they are at and being gentle with yourself. Also, we are put on this Earth to be of service to others.

Be aware of my impact for justice in the world through my choices and actions. Do not turn a blind eye to those in need.

To serve others with humbleness and an open mind to change my heart and help others.

Local Engagement and Interest

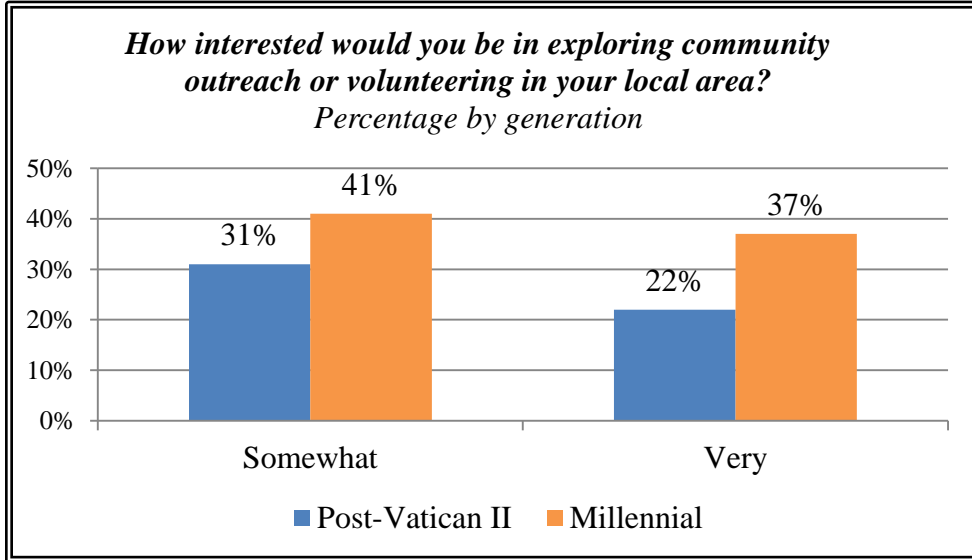
Respondents are especially likely to say they are currently engaged in community outreach or volunteer programs. Three-quarters are at least “somewhat” interested in exploring more community outreach or volunteer programs in their local areas and one-third report being “very” interested in doing so.

Current and Future Engagement with the Vincentian Family			
	<i>Are you currently engaged in any of these activities in the Vincentian mission?</i>	<i>[If not currently involved] How interested would you be in exploring these opportunities in your local area?</i>	
	Yes	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
Community outreach or volunteer programs	37%	74%	34%
Organized social activities	29	58	25
Prayer, faith sharing or formation group(s)	25	53	23
Outreach for youth and children	15	56	24
Family retreat programs	3	37	14
An associate program (similar to Ignatian Associates)	2	29	11

- About one-quarter report being currently engaged in organized social activities and prayer, faith sharing or formation group(s), and almost one in six are engaged in outreach for youth and children. Between 53 and 58 percent report being “somewhat” or “very” interested in exploring more opportunities for these activities in their local areas.
- Less than one in 20 indicate that they are currently engaged with family retreat programs or an associate program. Nearly four in ten are at least “somewhat” interested in exploring more opportunities for family retreat programs in their local areas, with three in ten as interested in exploring an associate program in their local areas.

Differences by Generation

Over three-quarters (78 percent) of Millennial respondents are at least “somewhat” interested in exploring new opportunities for community outreach projects or volunteer programs in their local areas, compared to just over one-half (53 percent) of Post-Vatican II respondents.



Interest in Resources and Opportunities

Respondents are particularly likely to express interest in resources about social justice and systemic change, resources about effective methods of service, and opportunities for short-term mission projects. Nearly eight in ten are at least “somewhat” interested in each, with almost half saying they are “very” interested.

<i>How interested would you be in any of the following?</i>		
<i>Percent responding</i>		
	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
Resources about social justice and systemic change	79%	46%
Resources about effective methods of service	79	46
Opportunities for short-term mission projects	78	48
Online resources for ongoing formation and growth in the Catholic tradition	55	32
Educational resources about the Vincentian family, its mission, heritage and spirituality	53	26
Other activities or resources	53	25

Slightly more than half say they are “somewhat” or “very” interested in online resources for ongoing formation and growth in the Catholic tradition; in educational resources about the Vincentian family, its mission, heritage and spirituality; and in other activities or resources. About one-third is “very” interested in the online resources, with one-quarter “very” interested in educational resources or in other activities or resources.

Differences by Type of Vincentian Affiliation

Those who have been both students and volunteers (40 percent) are more than twice as likely to be “very” interested in educational resources about the Vincentian family, its mission, heritage and spirituality as volunteers (19 percent). Among students, 27 percent report being “very” interested.

How the Vincentian Family Can Better Address My Needs

Respondents were invited to write in a response to finish this sentence: “The Vincentian Family can better address my needs by...” Some 205 wrote in a response, or 58 percent of all respondents.

While respondents’ answers and descriptions varied widely, these 17 themes appear most often in their responses:

- Connecting me to service opportunities
- Connecting me to local Vincentians
- Communicating and sharing updates about Vincentian work
- Providing accessible Vincentian material for ongoing faith formation
- Improving post-volunteer year outreach and programs
- Replicating the Vincentian sense of community in my local area
- Enabling young leaders in the Vincentian Family
- Offering more lay leadership careers and opportunities
- Welcoming non-Catholics to contribute service and dialogue
- Focusing more on service than religion
- Creating family programs
- Running retreats
- Instilling more orthodoxy in Vincentian leaders
- Catering to busy people working full-time
- Having more short-term volunteer opportunities
- Praying for me
- Nothing, I am satisfied

Some sample comments that illustrate these themes appear below.

Giving me more opportunities for volunteering

Providing a local event to further knowledge and understanding on systemic change and refresh my knowledge on the heritage and mission of the Vincentian Family. The Family Gatherings are perfect, but they are too far to travel too, so a similar, more localized event would greatly enhance my ability to work with the poor and also 'recharge' my personal batteries.

Having a info letter or update in the bulletin to show how the mission in reaching out.

Providing more accessible resources for formation and learning (I work for the Vin Fam and make very little money doing so, so often I am unable to pay for trips, retreats, classes etc. so I feel a little cut off.)

BEING MORE INVOLVED WITH MY LIFE AFTER I HAVE COMPLETED MY YEAR OF SERVICE. I GAINED SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE AND PASSION WHILE I WAS SERVING BUT NOW IT HAS JUST DROPPED OFF THE EDGE.

Is there any opportunities available for former volunteers to form community and live together once they leave a Vincentian program? Since leaving it has been difficult to find a housing arrangements and roommates that replicate community life and commitment to service and simple living.

Making me and peers my age feel more included in Vincentian Leadership roles and more support for young adults to take advantage of those leadership roles.

Having more resources and careers for lay young adults that are not considering religious life.

Support those folks who identify with the Vincentian mission but not Catholicism or any formal religion, through inclusive language and ensuring our voice is present in the dialogue about what it means to be a Vincentian.

Focusing more on the service and less on the religious teachings

Service opportunities for families/ family retreats

Offering more resources for retreats and going to mass as a group.

Address the beliefs and action of the Vincentian family and other affiliated religious groups, that don't follow Christ's teaching and to many people are in direct contradiction of their teaching to love all (i.e. the church's stance on same-sex partnerships, women's role in the church, and women's right to choose.)

Have something that is more youth-driven, volunteer work that is adaptable to someone who works a full-time job

Community outreach projects or volunteer programs and opportunities for short-term mission projects - opportunities for my husband and I to engage in direct service in our area as well as weekend "plunge" trips for my age group.

I truly don't have any needs compared to the poor in the world. Maybe by praying for me?

No suggestions. They do a great job of this, I just need to do a better job utilizing resources!

One Thing Would Like to See the Vincentian Family Organize in My Area

Respondents were invited to write in a response to finish this sentence: “The one thing I would like to see the Vincentian family organize in my area is...” Some 201 wrote in a response, or 57 percent of all respondents.

While respondents’ answers and descriptions varied widely, these 16 answers appear most often in their responses:

- Short term volunteer opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities for families
- Service with reflection or education
- Social events
- Networking events
- Young adult groups
- Groups for service and faith sharing
- A program for education and formation in the Vincentian tradition
- Young adult conference
- Reunions for year of service alumni
- Retreats
- An SVDP more proactive in raising the profile of the Vincentian mission
- Outreach around existing Vincentian organizations
- Outreach to at-risk children
- Outreach to college students
- Community services like a soup kitchen, food bank or clothes drive

Some sample comments that illustrate these themes appear below.

Short-term volunteer opportunities

Volunteering that can include my school age children. I would like for them to be able to be involved. If I have this value, I want to share it with them actively.

Service opportunities with reflections to help other process the experience and be sure they are drawing themselves nearer to church and Christ from the experience.

St. Vincent DePaul Church in Chicago/ Father Jeremy Dixon recently started a Vincentian Social gathering one Sunday a month that I am participating in. I hope it continues.

To have a young adult gathering for people to get to know each other, sort of a networking event to get to know other people as well as here of how the Vincentian mission is part of their lives.

Young adult social and faith sharing groups

Small faith sharing and service groups, where I can meet up with others who share the same values and want to serve together.

Education on connecting serving those in poverty with Christianity/Catholicism. Meaning, it was so insightful for me to learn what our faith really teaches & expects from us- recognizing the dignity, needs, & identity of those in poverty is not optional r political, but personal & spiritual.

A Vincentian Young Adult Conference

I said it earlier, but a reunion or networking event specifically for alumni of the Vincentian volunteer programs (GVV, VMC, CVV, etc.) Not as part of a larger Vincentian gathering but specifically for the former volunteers.

Family spiritual retreats

Social get togethers and service projects. I don't feel like at local parish's the Vincentian orders (i.e. St. Vincent de Paul Society) do a whole lot besides raising funds, which is not what Vincentian service is about to me.

Local outreach programs/retreats

Funding for an outreach program for underprivileged children.

Outreach to local colleges and universities telling them about the mission, goal and spirit of the Vincentian Family. Start with the grass roots, by organizing volunteer days, to get students out going practical service learning and Catholic Social Work. Be models of change, allow those to see the good works that we are doing.