

SPIRITUAL ADVISOR FORMATION

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Some of us were asked to be spiritual advisors for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, as our fellow Vincentians note our spirituality and commitment to the work of the Society. Congratulations on the endorsement of your brothers and sisters and thank you for accepting this appointment. More and more, spiritual advisors are regular members of the Society without a history of in-depth study of our faith. I am the Chairperson of the National Spirituality Committee and that is my experience and, yes, it is a bit unnerving. I need formal training and I know it.

The National Council also saw this need and, in conjunction with Newman Theological College in Edmonton, they have developed the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Certificate Program, which is available online. The program takes approximately one academic year to complete (September to June) and, as of September 2020, the total cost of the program (academic fees and books) is approximately \$570 / student. Please note that while there is some funding available, it is anticipated that the local conference or council will arrange for covering these training costs. There has been significant input (time, talent, and treasure) from members of SSVN National Council into the development of this program. It was developed by us for our formation as Vincentian spiritual advisors.

The following description from the Newman College website is a very good overview that I will not attempt to improve on:

Participants in the Study of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Certificate Program will come to appreciate the purpose of doctrine and the process of theology through the study of the Catholic faith; examine, from a variety of theological perspectives, what we know and believe about the central figure of the Christian faith - Jesus; the theology of the sacraments: the public and the liturgical prayer of the Church, as well as the sacraments within the context of their role in the lives of the faithful; to discover the world of the Scriptures and consider the Bible's history, its development, and the cultural factors which influence the events of the writing of the Old and New Testaments; Frédéric Ozanam, the founder of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul; and study and reflection on the history and spirituality of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Participants enrolled in the Saint Vincent de Paul program will be able to appreciate the purpose of the doctrine and the theological process by studying the Catholic faith. The first part of the program focuses on the person of Jesus Christ, the theology of the sacraments, the foundations of Catholicism and biblical writings. The second part deals with the life and spirituality of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, the founder of the SSVN, the history and spirituality of Saint Vincent de Paul, the social teaching of the Church and

the role of the spiritual advisor in part of an SSVP conference. These eight courses are offered in English and French.

A link for more details is: <https://www.newman.edu/ccs/ssvp>

We encourage all our members (especially the spiritual advisors) to take the course as it will make us all more effective in the vital role we fill in the conferences. Completion of the course of study will guide us all in our growth as people, Christians, and as Vincentians in a disciplined, academic, theological manner. As noted above, I need training so I am currently in the process of completing the course and it is a very rewarding experience which has already greatly deepened my understanding and appreciation of Vincentian spirituality. Thank you all for the wonderful work you do in His name. May God bless us all and especially the poor we serve.

Yours in the Service of the Servants of the Poor

*John Carey, Chair
National Spirituality Committee, SSVP Canada*