



Assembly 2024

Vincentians gather for triennial meeting in New Orleans

Every three years, the Western Province holds a week-long assembly to gather in-person, to pray, discern, and discuss and vote on matters pertaining to the province. This year, the assembly was held June 25-28 in New Orleans, home to one of the province's historic parishes, St. Joseph's.

Among the first orders of business was the installation and oath of office of Fr. Joseph Williams, C.M., who was elected Provincial earlier in the spring. A special Mass at St. Joseph's Church was also held to commission the new DePaul Mission Team.

"I will do my best to serve you, my confreres, with fraternal charity and care," Fr. Williams said in his opening address. "I ask for your prayers and rely on the intercession of St. Vincent and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal to help me in this ministry."

Fr. Jim Osendorf, C.M., presided over the business portions of the meeting, covering departmental reports and discussions of matters ranging from the logistical and structural to the philosophical.

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Fr. Joseph Williams, C.M.,
and Fr. Kevin Fausz, C.M. ↑



Dear Friends,

Grace and peace in the Lord Jesus!

I am writing to you for the first time as Provincial of the Congregation of the Mission Western Province. It is a great honor, and also very humbling, to take my place among the distinguished men who have led this province since Fr. John Timon, C.M., first served in the role in 1835.

This issue of *The Vincentian* includes our annual Mission Impact Report, which represents our province's activities in numbers, pictures, and anecdotes. Try as we might, though, numbers and vignettes only scratch the surface of the Vincentians' work in our communities. Fully telling that story would take a much larger publication.

In these pages, you will find a list of our great supporters and an article about two of them, Dr. Bill and Ann von Almen. You can read about our recent Provincial Assembly and a trio of stories from our parish in New Orleans, St. Joseph's, as well as a piece to commemorate the Vincentians' 400th anniversary by Fr. Ray Van Dorpe, C.M., and a listing of this year's jubilarians.

As of this writing, I am still settling into my new office in St. Louis, but I am excited and energized for the work to come on behalf of the mission and for the people we serve. God bless you, and please pray for me as I do for you.

Sincerely in St. Vincent,

Rev. Joseph S. Williams cm

Very Reverend Joseph S. Williams, C.M.
Provincial Superior

(continued from cover)



The gathering closed on Friday in traditional Vincentian fashion with the priests and brothers raising their voices together in singing "Salve Regina" ("Hail Holy Queen") in recognition of their connection to the Blessed Mother.



United in Love and Faith: Vincentian Parish is a Blessing for Widowed Couple

Thanks to their spouses, Ann Wallace and Bill von Almen both found themselves attending St. Joseph Church in New Orleans shortly after its new pastor, Vincentian Fr. Tom Stehlik, C.M., was appointed in 2011. The 132-year-old iconic house of worship is a multi-cultural Vincentian parish with a vibrant congregation and faith-filled parishioners from across the area.

Ann and Bert Wallace were introduced to St. Joseph's years earlier when Bert connected with its philanthropic activities through his work in the nearby university health foundation, and the couple sometimes volunteered to assist with charitable projects. Ann joined the parish after Bert's death in 2014.

Their children grown, Bill and Madeline von Almen began seeking a new parish home in 2012. Madeline attended Mass at St. Joseph and felt an immediate connection. "You need to come check out this church," she told Bill. He did, "and I was hooked."

They assert Fr. Tom was a big reason for the growth of the parish's diverse and active community during his years as pastor (2011-2023). "I can't imagine anyone meeting him and not immediately connecting with him, Ann says. "Listening to his homilies, you'd feel like he'd been sitting on your shoulder the previous week, somehow knowing what you've been going through."

"Fr. Tom always helps solve whatever issue people present to him," Bill added. "It's a very 'Vincentian' thing – especially serving those less fortunate."

Following the deaths of both their spouses, Ann and Bill's paths crossed in a profound new way. The widowed acquaintances became good friends, and in 2022 Fr. Tom united the couple in Holy Matrimony. "He's really part of our family," Ann says. "We are so blessed!"

Grateful for Fr. Tom and committed to the larger Vincentian mission, the couple has also begun making charitable gifts to the Congregation of the Mission Western Province.



Ann and Bill von Almen were married by Fr. Tom Stehlik, C.M., at St. Joseph Parish in New Orleans. 📍

"We want to share with those who are in need, and the Vincentian mission is consistent with our beliefs," Ann explains. Combining finances helped the couple extend their generosity beyond parish giving. "We support the Province, too, to help other churches and pastors and ministries with their needs," says Bill.

The couple want to make sure that others can experience the deep relationships they've experienced from the shared faith of the Catholic Church. "Faith brings people together in a unique way," Bill said. "Sharing those bonds beyond our parish community helps us make sure that faith is passed on."

Dr. William von Almen is a Vincentian lay missionary, nearing retirement as a physician specializing in women's health. Ann von Almen is retired and serves as RCIA coordinator and a member of the Marian Sodality of the Miraculous Medal at St. Joseph. The couple has six children and 10 grandchildren.





Fr. Ed Murphy, C.M., with Bernardine Dupre (left) and Gina Fulton. ➔

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH

Ministry on the Mississippi

Fr. Ed Murphy, C.M., embraces move to New Orleans after four decades in St. Louis

St. Louis and New Orleans are connected by the Mississippi River, winding its way from one to the other before emptying into the Gulf of Mexico. The two cities are connected in many other ways, according to Fr. Ed Murphy, C.M.

Before becoming pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in New Orleans a little over a year ago, Fr. Murphy served for four decades in St. Louis, the last 11 years as pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish.

“It was tough, leaving everything I’ve done and the connections I have built up my entire priesthood, but it couldn’t have turned out better,” Fr. Murphy said. “It is a great parish and a great city. From day one, people have been coming up to me and asking, ‘What do you need? How can I help?’”

The parish, established in 1844, has been in the Vincentian family since 1858, and the current church building, one of the largest in the South, was dedicated in December 1892. Fr. Murphy says there is a strong sense of service there.

“I will make an announcement that I need folks to help decorate the church and 50 people will show up,” Fr. Murphy said.

The centerpiece of the parish’s service orientation is the Rebuild Center, located on the church’s property and run cooperatively by three organizations: Lantern Light, which provides breakfast and lunch; the Harry Thompson

Center, which provides showers, clothes, and personal items and starts the process of getting the Center’s guests off the streets; and DePaul USA New Orleans, which works to get them into “permanent supportive housing” and more.

The Center provides a variety of other services, such as health services, psychiatric care, and art and music therapy.

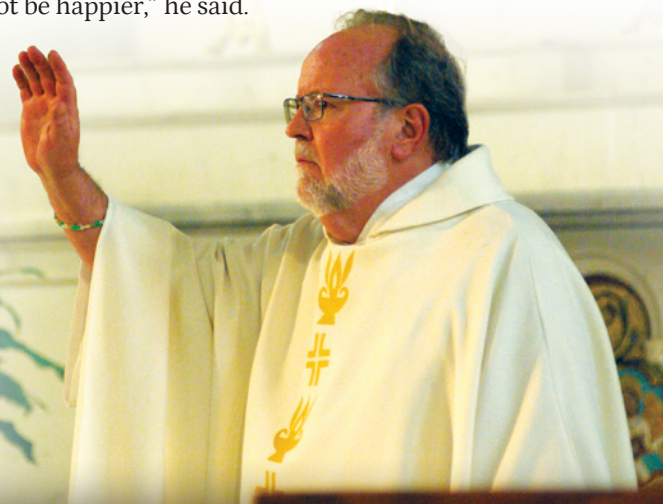
“They provide breakfast and lunch to 150 people a day, and that leads people to the other services,” Fr. Murphy said.

The Center was founded after Hurricane Katrina, a historic 2005 storm that flooded 80 percent of the city. The idea was to provide a place for people to rebuild their lives.

“Fr. Perry Henry (C.M.) was pastor here then and was instrumental in bringing the agencies together to found the Center,” Fr. Murphy said, “and Fr. Tom Stehlik (C.M.) really did a great job of building on that when he was pastor.”

At the end of the day, Fr. Murphy can look upriver and think of a city that is not so different from the one he lives in now. Though one has Blues and the other has Jazz, both have strong Catholic populations, and both share a commitment to serve the poor.

“I could not be happier,” he said.





Bernardine Dupre leads the procession at St. Joseph Church. ⬆



Gina Fulton ⬆

NEW ORLEANS, LA

The Least of my Brothers

Bernardine Dupre finds community and purpose at St. Joseph's

Bernardine Dupre worked for 48 years in job placement and unemployment with the state of Louisiana, and a year before she retired, her husband Emilo became ill and passed away. She approached Fr. Tom Stehlik, C.M., Pastor at St. Joseph's Church at the time, about volunteer work and began working at the Rebuild Center, which serves homeless guests with various services, like meals and hot showers.

“

“They see a future for themselves in religion. It makes me realize there is a future for me, too.”

—Bernardine Dupre

“It's similar to what I was doing before—helping people in a time of need,” she said. “I'm inspired by Matthew 25, ‘What you do to the least of my brothers, you do to me.’ A lot of that comes from working with the Vincentians.”

Bernardine also works with families on the day of a funeral to make sure they have what they need, is a Eucharistic Minister, serves on the Vincentian Social Justice Committee, and cooks occasional meals for Hotel Hope, a shelter for homeless women with children. She admires the spirituality of those that she serves.

“I've learned to respect them by hearing their stories and understanding what happened to them,” she said. “Their spirituality inspires me. They see a future for themselves in religion. It makes me realize there is a future for me, too.”

Window Ministry

Gina Fulton sees missionary role in receptionist work

Gina Fulton is the first person that people see when they enter the vestibule at St. Joseph Church in New Orleans. She greets them from behind a window off to the right, but she doesn't think of herself as a receptionist.



“I call it ‘window ministry,’” she says, grinning. “People need different kinds of help, and I can refer them. Sometimes, just your presence is important, giving a ‘good morning.’ Really, it's about finding Jesus in others.”

Gina came to New Orleans for work with a river transportation company and, after a layoff, eventually found herself at St. Joseph's, where she has worked for 14 years. A member of the Vincentian Lay Missioners, she relishes her interactions with others, which she contrasts with the corporate world.

“Everyone who walks in the door, I think to myself, ‘Jesus is there,’” she said. “I want to be open.”

She tells of a quiet homeless woman six years ago who used to come to the church.

“One day, she asked if she could play the piano, and we let her,” she said. “She played beautifully. At the Rebuild Center, they found a place for her. She is working now and keeps in touch. She remembers my birthday. Those kinds of things keep you going.”



40,000

Families Served
in Parish Missions



37

 Seminarians in
Kenya and the U.S.

FR. CHRIS ROBINSON, C.M., a faculty member at DePaul University, is on the Board of Directors and serves as a sacramental minister at Chicago's DePaul College Prep High School, a sponsored work of the Western Province. He has many opportunities to minister to the students there. "One of my favorites follows a sophomore retreat that typically takes place at St. Vincent de Paul Parish. One of the students was so moved by the stained-glass windows of St. Vincent's that she wrote a school newspaper story interpreting them."



2023-2024

Mission Impact

Fr. Mike Walsh, C.M., discovered a **GUATEMALAN COMMUNITY IN PERRYVILLE** to which he could minister in Spanish after moving there a couple years ago. "The combination of Mass in Spanish and St. Vincent's Anglo parishioners' outreach committee made them feel welcome. We still have a lot to do."



50+

Senior Priests
receiving assistance



217

Individuals
Enrolled
in Prayer
Ministry




FR. DAVID NATIONS, C.M., MOVED TO ALASKA THIS YEAR TO TAKE OVER AN INTERNATIONAL MISSION to five rural parishes, joining Archbishop Andrew Bellisario, C.M., and Fr. Henry Grodecki, C.M., at Our Lady of Guadalupe Cathedral in Anchorage. Fr. Nations is working to establish youth ministries and a more robust ministerial presence for the parishes. "This apostolate has brought an active liturgical ministry to the Hispanic and Filipino communities, while also bringing some long-forgotten order/best practices to the parishes."



Expanding our reach to help address a funding shortfall, the **CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION WESTERN PROVINCE MADE A SIGNIFICANT DONATION TO THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL** in St. Louis in June. Executive Director Jonn Foppe said increased demand for the organization's services has strained resources. "The donation from the Congregation of the Mission enables the St. Vincent de Paul Society to respond swiftly and effectively to our various challenges, ultimately sustaining our support for neighbors in need."



12,500
Families Served
in 20 Vincentian
U.S. Parishes



On May 4 in Nairobi, the **VICE-PROVINCE OF KENYA ORDAINED THREE SEMINARIANS AS PRIESTS:** Fr. Allan Kamugisha, C.M., Fr. Alex Odie Otieno, C.M., and Fr. Anthony Kioko Muthoka, C.M. Ordained as deacons were Abba Wakusimba, C.M., Geoffrey Wekesa, C.M., JohnMary Muhumuza, C.M., and Alexander Mumo, C.M. Congratulations to all.





82,577
God Minute
Subscribers

In its **ANNUAL LENTEN APPEAL, SUBSCRIBERS TO THE PRAYER APP THE GOD MINUTE**, directed by Fr. Ron Hoye, C.M., outreached their target to the extent that the scope of projects they funded could expand from a water collection project in the Karuiri region to the construction of a novitiate chapel in Nairobi and the purchase of needed school supplies for elementary school students in St. Ann Parish. The water project and chapel are currently under construction, and the school supplies are already in use.



24
Students Enrolled
in DePaul
Woodworking

The Western Province awarded **\$50,000 IN WALKING WITH THE POOR GRANTS** to St. Vincent de Paul Parish Food Pantry in Chicago, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Perryville, MO, St. Louis Survivors Legal Support in St. Louis, MO, Dallas Area Interfaith at Holy Trinity Parish, and the Community Garden, Claver Kitchen, and St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry (pictured) in San Antonio, TX.




60,000
Individuals served each month
in Kenyan and Ugandan parishes



Thank you! Your generosity has been so important in the lives of those in need, not only in the U.S. but in Kenya. We are ever grateful for your prayers and gifts. Our priests and brothers will remember you in prayer.

Gifts received between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024

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(\$10,000+)

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“

“They care for those who are most neglected and most in need. Contributing keeps us more closely connected to the Province.”

—*Vie Thorgren, Denver, Colorado*



“When you wake up with the disposition of, ‘Lord, let me see your face in others and be your face for others,’ you have more compassion for people. I’m grateful to try to live that out every day, aligning myself with what God wants instead of what I want.”

—David Baranowski,
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“Mark and I are devoted to the Vincentian priests and brothers
and their mission. We have great faith in the Congregation
and know the money is being used for good.”

—Eileen McNabola, Chicago, Illinois

St. Vincent, Seminaries, and Higher Education



Very early in the first years of preaching parish missions in France, Father Vincent de Paul became aware that the clergy of France had insufficient education and spiritual formation for the work which the Church had entrusted to them. Vincent often

found priests who had received little or no instruction on how to celebrate Mass or administer the sacraments. Many were also leading lives hardly in keeping with their vocation. Some bishops had opened seminaries, as mandated by the Council of Trent, but these were few and mostly for the urban dioceses. Rural places, where Vincent and his confreres were preaching missions, had few good priests. Vincent wanted to change that.

After discussing the matter with some bishops, Vincent came up with the idea of organizing retreats of two or three weeks for those about to be ordained. These men were given a crash course in the basics of sacramental ministry, pastoral care, and priestly spirituality. Later, to support priests in their continuing formation and education, Vincent started the "Tuesday Conferences," weekly meetings at which Vincent and other confreres would lead conversations on priestly life and ministry. In 1641 the first seminary staffed by the Congregation of the Mission opened in eastern France. By the end of the 17th century, Vincentians staffed 34 seminaries in France and Poland. In the next century this ministry grew even more.

Part of the growth of these seminaries included secondary schools that recruited younger men and gave them a basic education in preparation for further priestly studies. In some places these secondary schools took in lay students, because education was a way to escape grinding poverty.

In America and a few other countries, major seminaries began taking in lay students for college-level studies to



bring in extra income to the institution and form them into solid Christian laymen. St. Mary's of the Barrens in Perryville, Missouri, is one example. A number of these were started in the United States, three of which remain to this day. The oldest is Niagara University, which opened in 1856 as Our Lady of the Angels Seminary in Niagara Falls, New York. The College of Saint John the Baptist in Brooklyn, New York, opened in 1870 as a lay college only and later moved to Queens, where it is known today as St. John's University. In 1898 St. Vincent's College opened in Chicago and in 1907 was chartered as DePaul University (*pictured top right and bottom right*).

Today, most confreres would agree that making higher education accessible for all, especially the poor, is a worthy goal. Vincentian colleges and universities have formed men and women who graduate with a special concern for the poor. Their influence in business, government, education, and the arts has changed countless lives.



The 1967-68 Novitiate class in Santa Barbara, CA. 



2024 Jubilarians

Congregation of the Mission Western Province



60 YEARS

Fr. William Hartenbach, C.M.

Born in 1937 in St. Louis, MO, Fr. Hartenbach entered the community in 1955, professed vows in 1960, and was ordained in May 1964. He served on the faculty and administration at seminaries in California, Missouri, and Illinois, was Provincial from 1996 to 2002, and was later Director of the Daughters of Charity in Indiana. He is currently a member of the Apostles of Prayer Ministry at St. Mary's of the Barrens in Perryville, MO. "I am grateful for all of the care and support I have received."



50 YEARS

Fr. Robert Brockland, C.M.

Born in St. Louis in 1947, Fr. Robert Brockland, C.M., joined the Vincentians in 1965 and was ordained in June 1974. He has served on the faculty at seminaries and in parochial work and now serves in the Apostles of Prayer Ministry at St. Mary's of the Barrens in Perryville. "I thank God for the awesome Providence that he has worked in my life and in my priesthood. I also thank the Blessed Mother for watching over me and guiding me in all my endeavors, especially in theology."



50 YEARS

Fr. Robert Lucas, C.M.

Born in Palos Park, IL, in 1947, Fr. Robert Lucas, C.M., joined the Vincentians in 1965 and was ordained in June 1974. He served in Japan in 1974-76, followed by parochial ministry in Illinois, Missouri, and Colorado and was a hospital chaplain from 1987 to 2016. He currently serves as chaplain at Franciscan Village in Lemont, IL. "I am amazed at the number of people I have ministered to over the years."



50 YEARS

Fr. David Windsor, C.M.

Fr. David Windsor, C.M., was born in Oak Park, IL, in 1937, joined the Vincentians in 1969 and was ordained in June 1974. He has spent most of his ministry as an academic administrator in California, Belgium, and Washington, DC, and has also worked as a counselor, professor, and formation director. He currently lives and works in Chicago. "I owe so much to the seminarians and priests I have served with over the years, because they have taught me to be a better man."



25 YEARS

Fr. Hoan Ngoc Nguyen, C.M.

Fr. Nguyen, C.M., was born in Ngoc Dong, Vietnam, in 1949, entered the community in August 1993 and was ordained in 1999. He has worked in prison ministry, Vietnamese ministry, as a chaplain, and as an associate pastor. He serves in Los Angeles as chaplain for the Vincentian Association for Vietnam, Hotel Dieu Senior Residence, and Our Lady of Angels Sisters Home. He said Vincentians must be multifaceted. "In order to become an effective Vincentian, you must know everything."



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