



THE VISITOR

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www.svdppitt.org

Dear friends,

Happy new year, dear friends of The Visitor!

The new year inspires “newness” in people. We want to stop what we have been doing that is not pleasing to God or to others or to ourselves, and we want to start doing the opposite. Or we just want to start doing something that we know is pleasing to God, to others, to ourselves, that for some reason or another we weren’t doing. A common example of the latter is exercising. Commercial gyms -and the “Y”- fill up with new members in January, perhaps partially motivated by feelings of guilt after overindulging during the previous two months.

The point is that January gives us that unique door to break with the old and start anew. What is it that you have proposed to part ways with, to start, to change for yourself? If, during Advent, holiday parties took up more of your time than for spiritual reflection, adoration, or meeting with fellow Vincentians, maybe January is the door to change that. Maybe last year your almsgiving was outspent by your donations to the PA lottery. Well, then you (I?) know what to do this month.

No matter what it is, we all have that one, probably two, three, four, or more habits or practices that we should break, that we should pick up, or a combination of the two. If you are like me and have many of those, think of it as being in a restaurant with a menu listing too many choices:

- Spend “y” hours/week with Jesus
- Increase my almsgiving by “x”
- Spend every Sunday afternoon with my wife
- Go to the gym 3 times per week (make it 2)
- Take my time to enjoy reading *The Visitor* every month, etc...

Then, with all those choices written down on your menu in front of you, take a few minutes selecting your appetizer, your entrée, and your dessert. God only knows, maybe in February you are ready to go back to your restaurant to make more healthy choices.

May God bless you this year and give you strength in all of your resolutions.

Ricardo

Ricardo Luckow
Executive Director

GET TO KNOW US: LISA SHERWOOD

Every organization has a variety of people who are important in the various functions that they perform. However, we all know that most operations have one person who is essential because they have their fingers on the pulse (or in the pie) of

just about everything that happens. In the SVdP Council Office, that person is Administrative Executive Assistant, Lisa Sherwood.

Lisa came to us after 32 years working for the Family Court of Allegheny County. It began one day at a Zumba class when the Human Resource Director for SVdP at the time told Lisa about an opening that she thought Lisa would be good for. The HR Director added that SVdP feels like a family more than what Lisa experienced working for the County. Lisa ended up interviewing for the SVdP position and, eight years later, she is still here doing her thing(s) for us.



Lisa grew up in the Pittsburgh area in Wilkinsburg and Penn Hills, so she knows the region and its people well. And people, or actually helping them, is what she likes most about her job. Lisa embraces that and says that she treats those she encounters with the same care and compassion “as if they were family.”

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2024: A YEAR OF SPIRITUAL PURPOSE

As the new year emerges, Catholics around the world find themselves reflecting on the past and contemplating the path ahead. Embracing the opportunity for personal growth and spiritual renewal, many individuals within the Vincentian community embark on a journey of self-improvement through the setting of New Year's resolutions.

Rooted in the rich traditions and teachings of the Catholic faith, these resolutions extend beyond typical aspirations, encompassing a commitment to deepen one's connection with God, foster

virtue, and contribute positively to the community. In this article, we explore some meaningful New Year's resolutions that you may consider as you strive for a more fulfilling and spiritually enriched year ahead:

- **Deepen Daily Prayer** - Commit to a consistent set time each day for more focused daily prayer that is more like personal conversation with God than petitions submitted.
- **Attend Mass Each Week** - But then write down a few notes afterwards about the homily, what part of the liturgy you most liked, what moved you that day.
- **Practice Gratitude** - Cultivate a spirit of being thankful each day and express that to God AND to others in your life.
- **Do Charitable Work** - Volunteer some dedicated time to activities serving others either through the Church or in other ways within your local community. Use your time, your talent, and/or your treasure to help others.
- **Exchange Digital time with Family/Friend time** - Make a point of getting off your cell phone and away from the computer to talk with or visit a family member, friend, neighbor or even a stranger.
- **Begin Better Stewardship** - Sit down and make a pledge to God and yourself to devote more of the resources that you have towards those who are in need, not just within your sphere but wherever the need may be!

The key to successful resolutions is to make them realistic, measurable, and achievable. Tailor these suggestions to your personal circumstances, and approach them with a spirit of commitment and joy in your faith journey.

WE'D LIKE YOUR OPINION!

What content would you find most valuable and engaging in our monthly Society of St. Vincent de Paul newsletter? Please take our one-question survey and select your top four preferences from the options and/or provide additional suggestions.

[CLICK HERE TO FILL OUT THE SURVEY](#)



NEW YEAR, NEW PLANS

January marks the beginning of the new calendar year, a time when individuals often reflect on their personal and financial goals. This period of introspection can prompt you to think about your legacy and the impact you want to leave on the world. Planned giving, which involves making provisions for charitable donations in your estate plan, aligns seamlessly with this contemplative mindset. As you set resolutions for the year ahead, integrating philanthropy into long-term financial planning can be a meaningful way to ensure your values endure beyond your lifetime.

Moreover, January is commonly associated with tax season, as people start preparing for the upcoming filing deadlines. This financial awareness can motivate you to explore tax-efficient strategies for charitable giving, and planned giving offers several options, such as charitable bequests, trusts, and gift annuities, which may provide tax benefits. Taking advantage of these opportunities allows you to optimize your contributions and support charitable causes while also managing your financial responsibilities.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- St. Vincent de Paul has 20 new donation bins? These bins need a home. If you know of a business owner, church, school, or other entity that would be a good fit, please let us know. Last year, St. Vincent de Paul kept over 4.5 million pounds of clothing out of local landfills. These bins are a big reason why.
- We are trying to rebuild and update the SVdP Council of Pittsburgh website. This is an extremely important destination in these changing and challenging times--where Friends-in-Need go for help, where potential donors look to contribute, and where staff, volunteers, and the public seek information. Should you have ideas for what to include in the new website, and/or an interest in helping with this important project, please contact Jennifer Thoma at jthoma@svdpitt.org.

- In November, the Knights of Columbus donated 50 NEW winter coats to the Archangel Gabriel SVdP Conference. They were immediately distributed to children in need, some of whom never had a new coat before in their lives.

READING CORNER

Occasionally, contributors to *The Visitor* will recommend information we believe to be powerful or meaningful to Vincentians in some way. Should you have any suggestions for us or if you would like to introduce information to fellow readers, please contact Jennifer Thoma at 412.321.1071x1204 or jthoma@svdpitt.org.

It is with a commitment to furthering our understanding of the challenges faced by those we serve that we present to you the [Poverty and Income Insecurity in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area](#) report, commissioned by [The Pittsburgh Foundation](#) and meticulously prepared by the [Urban Institute](#) in 2014. Although now ten years old, the local situation has likely worsened.

This comprehensive study delves into the complex dynamics of poverty and income insecurity within our community, providing invaluable insights that can shape our approach to addressing the needs of the vulnerable and underserved. As devoted members of the Society, your unwavering dedication to alleviating poverty and promoting social justice aligns seamlessly with the goals of this report.

By delving into its findings, we can deepen our understanding of the nuanced issues our community faces, enabling us to develop more effective strategies and interventions. Together, let us embark on this enlightening journey, armed with knowledge that empowers us to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the lives of those experiencing poverty in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area.

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS & OPPORTUNITIES



A good part of the blessing for those in need that comes from SVdP begins with a simple request for assistance. And whether it's a need for a bed and some furniture, being behind a few months in back rent, mounting unpaid utility bills, hungry children, or an eviction notice, those friends in need who contact us are, for the most part, initially responded to by our volunteers.

Besides direct contact with churches, or referrals through the Findhelp program, the new SOS Collab network, or the SVdP website itself, most contacts reach us through phone calls to the Council Office. Those calls are often more than just requests, they are pleas for help filled with distress and desperation from persons whose stories can tug at your heartstrings.

These calls are met with empathy, compassion, patience, and understanding from our volunteers who respond to over 1,000 calls we receive monthly.

BECAUSE OF YOU...

In this section, we share some of the profound thanks we receive from those we help through your support. Because of your generous heart, together, we raised an incredible \$690,000 in 2023! Your gifts support our work keeping families in their homes, assisting with rent and utilities, and delivering food and clothing to neighbors in need. Thank you to everyone who contributes to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Council of Pittsburgh!

"I wanted to take a minute to thank your organization for the help my sister received in her time of need.

Sometimes good people make bad decisions, and their situation deteriorates so completely they have nowhere to turn for help. That describes my sister's life a number of years ago. She had struggled with addiction for years and by the time she was seeking a healthier life she was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Luckily the kind and compassionate people at St Vincent de Paul's provided her with temporary housing and were instrumental in finding low-cost housing in a secure building. She even received furniture for her apartment.

Thank you for your hard work and devotion to those in our community in need."

"Just wanted to update you and let you know I picked up the women's clothing last week from Monroeville. I really underestimated how much clothing ten outfits is—lots of nice, warm sweaters and jackets I can barely fit in the car!

A peek into how this has impacted us and our people... For the most part the clothing all stays here and is distributed here, but it has been helpful to have on hand when an immediate need comes up outside of the clinic.

For example, I dropped off a change of clothes for an individual who had been in the hospital and was being transferred to another treatment facility but didn't have any clean clothes. This has been especially beneficial for people that don't have a consistent or stable place to stay.

Today, one of the nurses pulled me aside to tell me a patient was currently wearing all the clothing they own, so we put together some nice, warm outfits. On Friday, I overheard someone who had benefited from the clothing donation asking about how to donate her own and pass it on. Our staff and their family/friends will also donate, too.

It also makes me happy to see people get excited about the clothing, knowing many of our patients are going through stressful and scary things. It is one more way to make our FIN (Friends in Need!) feel more comfortable and supported. The positive impact of feeling comfortable and spiffy in your clothing is understated. I never knew community can come in the form of sweaters hanging on a clothing rack. 😊" -- Sara B.

**YOUR DONATIONS HELP US
SERVE OUR NEIGHBORS**

DONATE TODAY

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR GREAT DEALS IN OUR STORES + STAY UP-TO-DATE
ON WHAT WE'RE DOING TO HELP OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED EVERY DAY!



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