

SHARED VISIONS

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— A publication to assist in the spiritual formation of lay volunteers — presented by the people who bring you **Connections** —

A New Year of Volunteering -- A New Time for Intentional Living

Whether you are just beginning your time of volunteer service or midway through your term, the Pallotti Center hopes that this year's four issues of *Shared Visions* provide helpful tools for reflection, community activities, personal development, prayer, and more. *Shared Visions* is written by former volunteers for current volunteers.

Over the next four issues, we will explore what it means to live intentionally. Rather than providing a set definition, we invite you to review your own thoughts and experiences, and to try the activities and reflections we present, to develop what living intentionally means for you. *Living with intention* - making conscious choices about your lifestyle, consumption, time, interactions, and more - is



a common experience for volunteers, whether or not they intentionally choose to do so!

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, intention is "a determination to act in a certain way." You've chosen to live and work in a very specific, determined way; we hope that *Shared Visions* will help you to continue to focus on and explore the unique lifestyle and opportunities of living as a full-time, faith-based volunteer.

If you have any comments or suggestions about the content, we welcome your thoughts at sharedvisions@pallotticenter.org.

Moving From Official to Intentional Community

Those of you living in community this volunteer year have already been together for a few weeks by the time you are reading this. What is your assessment of how well your community life is going? Are you feeling like an intentional community – a group that chooses to affiliate with each other and which might have come together even if outside forces did not put you all under the same roof? Or is yours still more of an official community – a collection of individuals that lives, eats and prays together largely because your program director made it so? Let's address this second group first.



Volunteers should trust that the Holy Spirit is always present and helping you to become more intentional and more of a community, even if you are somewhat accidentally put together. The history of the Church is replete with examples – from the time of the apostles to the time of the Second Vatican Council – of people with widely varying styles and backgrounds coming together to do some dynamic ministry. So if your community life is not yet what you envisioned it to be, perhaps it is time to pray *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* (Come, Holy Spirit!).

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Biblical Reflection: Community

“All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people.” (Acts. 2: 44-46)

The Scripture passage above describes the first intentional community of the Christian Church. The apostles had just witnessed the events which highlight the Christian liturgical year- the Passion and Death of Jesus, His Resurrection, His Ascension- and were now witnessing the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.



One can assume that the apostles entered the Upper Room that day of Pentecost intentionally, each seeking community amongst one another, whether out of belief or fear. At the beginning of this volunteer year, you may find yourselves gathered in

community, with similar sentiments as the apostles. You may be excited about mission, or very afraid about what this year might mean.

The practices described in Acts show how the early community came together in tangible ways, despite their differing backgrounds and ideas. You too will be meeting each other in these ways- at table, in prayer, in your simple lifestyle. These will always be your common grounds, the foundation of your community. You may have different ideas, but the common, tangible practices you will share will always be the meeting place of your intentional community.

As a community, you can ask yourselves:

- How do I/we relate to this image of community described in Acts?
- What aspects of this community do I/we want to apply intentionally to my/our life? (i.e. - sharing belongings, simple living, distribution of money, shared meals)
- As a group, if there are aspects of the Scriptures that we want to apply, how, specifically, do we want to live these practices of intentional community in our own way?
- As an individual, how much am I willing to open up myself to these common practices discussed?

Making Ethical

“Eaters must understand that eating takes place inescapably in the world... and that how we eat determines, to a considerable extent, how the world is used.” - Wendell Berry, American farmer, writer, and academic

Whether you are eating on your own or with a volunteer community, meals offer a variety of opportunities to live with greater intention. Every time we shop for, prepare or consume food, we make a number of choices which affect our health, the Earth, and our local and global communities. The following are three factors to consider when making food choices, as well as a list of resources to help you think further about the ethics of eating.

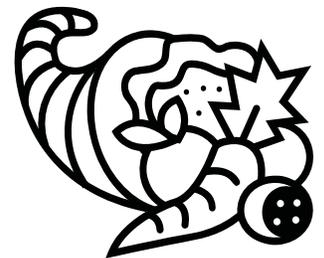
(1) **Reduce Packaging:** Look around your pantry and/or kitchen and think about how your food is packaged. Packaging consumes valuable energy and resources, both in its production and its eventual disposal. How can you reduce the costs of food packaging?

- *Whenever possible, avoid food packaged in individual servings. Instead, buy larger quantities and separate them into smaller re-usable*

containers.

- *When choosing between similar foods, choose those with the least packaging.*
- *Whenever possible, choose foods packaged in reusable or recyclable containers.*
- *When shopping, use plastic bags as little as possible. Most major grocery stores sell inexpensive, reusable grocery bags, and many offer a small rebate (about \$.05) for each reusable bag you use. You can also purchase reusable produce bags at www.reusablebags.com.*

(2) **Go Local:** Whenever possible, choose locally grown and processed foods. Consider planting a garden as a community activity. Purchase fresh produce at local farmer’s markets, or consider joining a community farm share (also known as community supported agriculture, or CSA). When buying items at the grocery store, choose those foods which have traveled



After the Upper Room

There may be dissent as you discuss your application of intentional community. There is dissent in some ways existing in the Church today. Still, there are common practices and beliefs in the Church that have stood the tests and trials of time. The gathering around the altar is a belief and practice that has existed from the early Church and continued through the ages.

What are going to be your common grounds and foundations of community? Tangible practices that you can commit to, that will demonstrate your solidarity with one another?



Perhaps you can make a list of practices you will uphold together as a community: Meeting at table regularly for one meal a day, praying together before or after a meal, giving thanks together as a community weekly or daily. Whatever your practices may be, know

you are in good company with the apostles and many volunteers who have gathered in community as you do today.

The Book of Acts and St. Paul's letters tell of the joys and woes of mission. During this Pauline year, which began on June 29, 2008 with the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, you may want to consider reading from Acts and Paul's letters individually or as a community.

Some passages with which to begin:

The Coming of the Holy Spirit: [Acts 2:1-12](#)

Paul's Conversion: [Acts 9: 3-9](#)

Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love: [Romans 8: 37-39](#)

God is the Same Lord of All: [Romans 10: 11-13](#)

Do Not Conform to the Standards of the World: [Romans 12: 1-2](#)

Be Completely United: [1 Corinthians 1: 10](#)

Different Spiritual Gifts: [1 Corinthians 12:4-11](#)

Many Parts, One Body: [1 Corinthians 12: 12-26](#)

Love is... [1 Corinthians 13](#)

Helping One Another: [Galatians 6: 1-2](#)

Be Conscious of Your Actions: [Ephesians 5: 15-17](#)

Being Humble: [Philippians 2: 2-8](#)

Running Toward the Goal: [Philippians 3: 12-14](#)

Enduring Suffering: [2 Timothy 2:9-13](#)

Food Choices

the shortest distance from the farm or factory to the store. Choosing local foods reduces the environmental costs of transportation, supports local economies, and helps you feel more connected to the sources of your food. Buying produce in season is also cheaper - great for your community budget!

(3) **Choose Healthy Foods:** Eating healthy is good for you, your volunteer community, the people you serve, and the Earth. People who eat healthy diets have greater energy and focus, miss fewer days of work due to illness, and suffer less depression. Healthy, minimally processed foods like fresh produce and whole grains are also Earth-friendly because they require less energy and harmful chemicals to produce. For a quick, interactive introduction to healthier eating, see the USDA's website, [www.mypyramid.gov](#).

Resources:

- [Animal, Vegetable, Miracle](#) by Barbara Kingsolver, follows the author and her family as they commit to a year of eating only local foods. This book is a quick and entertaining introduction to many food issues, and the

companion website, [www.animalvegetablemiracle.com](#), features guides to seasonal eating, recipes, and a great resources section.

- [Fast Food Nation](#) by Eric Schlosser is an entertaining and eye-opening look at how the fast food industry affects our health, our economy and the environment. Also, see the film [Supersize Me](#) by Morgan Spurlock.
- [In Defense of Food](#), [The Omnivore's Dilemma](#), and [The Botany of Desire](#), all by Michael Pollan, are somewhat dense, but nonetheless fascinating, books about where our food comes from. You'll never look at a grocery store, farm, or restaurant the same way again!
- [www.epicurious.com](#), [www.realsimple.com](#), and [www.allrecipes.com](#) are three great websites for novice (and experienced!) cooks. Also, check out the World Community Cookbooks, produced by the Mennonite Central Committee, for recipes that are both easy and ethical. Visit their website, [www.worldcommunitycookbook.org](#), for more information.

Intentions for a Year of Living Intentionally

Petitionary prayer has a rich history in the Church. In Scripture, we hear Jesus Christ himself offer up petitions to God the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, asking that his burden be lifted but only if it is in accord with God's will (Mt 26:39). In our Sunday liturgy, we offer prayers of petition for a variety of causes important to the Church, our country and our local community. We would like to offer the following intentions for you and your new volunteer community to consider as you begin your year of service together. We encourage you to pray these petitions together as the year progresses, adding to them and always adapting them to your community's particular needs.

For the dignity and self-respect of every human being. We pray to the Lord.
For the poor and the marginalized, through whom we see Jesus Christ in his distressing disguise. We pray.
For this community of service and prayer, inspired by the presence of the Holy Spirit. We pray.
For missionaries around the world who continue to make Christ known to the ends of the earth. We pray.
For Pope Benedict XVI, for the bishop(s) of our local Church, for all priests and lay men and women who collaborate in the work of leading the Church today. We pray.
For an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, consecrated life and lay ministry. We pray.
For a greater respect for all life. We pray.
For greater understanding and opportunities for dialogue between Catholics and other Christians and those who practice other world religions. We pray.
For our co-workers and the people served by the agencies where we will work over these next several months. We pray.
For the parish that will become our Church family while we are serving together. We pray.
For the sick and the dying, those known to us as well as those who have no one else to pray for them. We pray.
For those who seek the opportunity to lead our country through the next chapter in its history. We pray.
For those who serve in the armed forces and the diplomatic corps, including all military chaplains. We pray.
For the exercise of good stewardship over our shared finances and our environment. We pray.
For a year of living with intention....Lord, hear our prayer.

Are you surprised by any particular intention that either appeared above or was omitted? For what other intentions will your community be praying in the months ahead?

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Dorothy Day reminded us in her autobiography, "We have all known the long loneliness, and we have found that the answer is community." That advice sounds so simple, yet things like work, school, the gym, music, TV, time spent with friends outside the volunteer community – none of them bad priorities in and of themselves – can rob us of the time needed to get to know those with whom we are living. Hopefully, your community has scheduled a regular community night where these distractions are eliminated at least once a week. Maybe there's still time to schedule a retreat weekend before fall slips into winter if one is not already planned.

If your early experience of community living this year has been so positive that it is difficult to relate to the scenario discussed above, congratulations! But remain open to the possibility that

some tensions might also arise in your community relationships as the year goes on, and trust the depths of your knowledge of each other and the intervention of the Spirit to bring you through these times of hardship as well.

Living intentionally implies a willingness to question how things really are and how they can be. Here are some questions to consider with respect to building community.

- How well do I already know the people that I am living with this year?
- What steps can I take to become even more worthy of their trust?
- How open am I about my life experiences with my housemates?
- Is there anything keeping me from sharing more about myself with one or more of them?

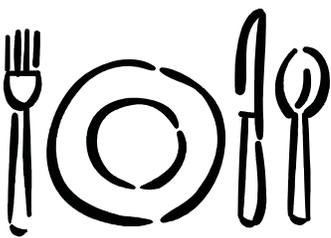
Activity: How Did We Get Here? Influences on Our Worldview

Making a decision to live intentionally doesn't happen purely in the realm of community life and interpersonal relationships. As social creatures, we do not derive our worldview solely from the recesses of the mind; we are influenced constantly by people, words, activities, and more. These interactions help shape our notions of self, spirituality, political affiliations, and more. The following chart is designed to help you sort out your influences and why they are meaningful to you. Feel free to list as many influences from each category on the left as you'd like. Sharing your answers as a community may help you to discover deep insights about each other, and will likely foster great discussions.

	When this person or thing became important to you	The most important thing, to you, about this person or thing	Ways this person or thing has impacted you
Person (relative)			
Person (non-relative)			
Book or other writing			
Other media (movie, song, etc.)			
Experience or activity			
Other			

Activity: Ritualizing Your Community Meal

The sharing of food is a simple but vital aspect of community life. Judging by the abundance of stories in the New Testament involving food and eating, Jesus and the early Christians placed great emphasis on community meals. All four Gospels feature stories of Jesus sharing meals with Jews and non-Jews alike. At the Last Supper, Jesus teaches the disciples to connect with him through the bread and wine of the Eucharist. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus meets two believers who do not recognize him until he sits down and breaks bread with them.



Activity: In your volunteer community, take turns talking about mealtime rituals in your family of origin or another community to which you belonged. Who was there? Who prepared the food? What did you talk about around the table? Did you say grace before the meal? Any favorite foods? Use this time of sharing as a chance to get to know one another better and to reflect on the ways in which sharing a meal builds community.

Now, discuss your hopes and ideas for mealtimes in your new community. How often do you want to eat together? Who will buy and prepare the food? Who will set the table and clean up afterward? Take a few minutes to write down the results of your discussion. You can use this "community meal contract" to guide your first meals together, and re-visit it later to make changes if necessary.

For Personal Reflection: The Examen Prayer

The Jesuits and others who follow Ignatian spirituality use this form of an examination of conscience daily to help them reflect on their day and make resolutions for the next. An examination of conscience is a good practice for those living in community. It helps us to live with intention by evaluating our personal motivations and actions.



This prayer can be done throughout the day, but is usually done at the end of the day. Find a quiet place where you can become aware of God's presence. Give yourself enough time to allow for deep prayer.

1. Recognition

Become aware of God's presence with you at this very moment. Ask God to help you become aware of your true motives and intentions from this day.

2. Gratitude

Recall the moments of the day that were gifts. Give thanks to God for those people and those events.

3. Intention and Examination

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you increased patience and honesty to evaluate your day. Review your day. In what moments did you receive God's love? In what moments did you reject it?

4. Contrition and Evaluation

Allow God to show you the motivations for your actions this day. Allow God to speak to you and challenge you. Seek forgiveness for any actions that may have caused harm and let go of any negative thoughts that you may be holding on to.

5. Resolution

Ask God to give you wisdom from this day to apply towards a new start tomorrow. Spend some time just telling God about your hopes and fears.

Adapted from the New Orleans Province Jesuits' website: www.norprov.org/spirituality/ignatianprayer.htm

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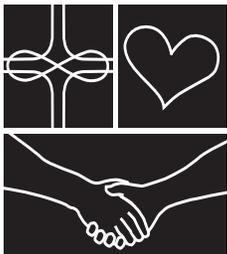
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The Mission of the St. Vincent Pallotti Center

The mission of the St. Vincent Pallotti Center is to inspire volunteer service through Catholic-based organizations. We support prospective volunteers during their exploration of service opportunities, strengthen the personal and spiritual development of volunteers while they serve, and assist former volunteers to stay connected to their ideals and their communities. The Center takes its inspiration from Saint Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850) who believed passionately in the laity, in each person as being an image of God and as called to have a missionary heart.

The Pallotti Center is located in Washington, DC.

Shared Visions' goal is to explore five building blocks of spiritual development: intellectual growth, emotional and physical health, leadership and prayer.



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