

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* —

Being Persistent... in Pursuit of your Passions and Core Beliefs

For many volunteers, full-time service is coming to an end and it's time to reflect on your past year and imagine your future. During these months, we sent you four issues of this *Shared Visions* publication, filled with tools to help you evaluate your experiences living with your fellow volunteers and working at your placement site. We encouraged you to be attentive, be reflective, be decisive, and now, in this final issue, be persistent in living out your values. Our prayer is that you will take these four criteria with you and use them, even if only in a general way, for many years to come. In this fourth issue, we include activities to help you reflect on your past year, nurture your spirituality, evaluate your moral landscape, lower your anxiety level and think about how to transition to your post-volunteer life. Don't miss the resource page which tells you how to tap into the Pallotti Center as a support for your idealism and faith in the years to come. God speed.



The Volunteer Mind Sweep



As you prepare to leave your volunteer program, you undoubtedly have a list of things running through your mind that you'd like to accomplish before you go.

Whether you are trying to make sure that you spend quality time with community members and co-workers, or thinking ahead to what you'll do when you get back home, you can easily become overwhelmed.

One suggestion for alleviating your stress is to do a mind sweep. A mind sweep consists of taking about five minutes to write down ABSOLUTELY everything that is on your mind – every worry, dream, wish, and task that you can think of that's on your "to do" list.

After you write down your thoughts you'll discover three things:

1. You'll feel much better just from having put your stresses down on paper.
2. If you have a large number of "must do" jobs on your list, you may be feeling a bit overwhelmed. Written down, your thoughts are now tangible, and it will be easier for you to prioritize which you want to deal with in the short-term and long-term.
3. Your list will help you to be persistent in following through and translating your thoughts into decisions and actions.

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Transitioning from Volunteer Service: How to Overcome Anxiety About Your Flight Plan

You have been a busy bee during this past year, and now many of you are nearing the end of your volunteer experience. As you mull over the upcoming changes, imagine new futures and make your personal decisions, you are moving closer to making your transition. Each one of you will face the transition in your own specific way. Does this mean that one method of transitioning is any better or worse than the others?

Not really. It just means that each person is different and will handle transition differently. Still, there are many people who want to think that there are better ways of handling life changes – you might even say there is a relative “hierarchy” of approaches to transition. Here is a hierarchical “beehive” representation of how some people might rank these different approaches, using the theme of “Bee”-ing we’ve used this year in *Shared Visions*. Pick which one most closely represents how you see yourself at this point in time.

I already have a job, I know where I'm living, and I have everything planned.

I have actively started an application process for jobs or school.

I'm moving back home, taking some time off to reflect, and planning for the future.

I'm not done here yet - I'm going to do another year of volunteer service.

I have no idea what I'm doing or where I am going when my program is finished.

Leaving? I'm not leaving! They'll have to remove me in my sleep!

Now, let's shift perspective a bit to focus on an alternative to the previous, hierarchical attitude toward transition. Keeping in mind that there are underlying concerns involved in any transition, read the following

statements and circle any that reflect what you may be thinking and feeling right now. If none match you, write a couple that do express your thoughts, feelings, or values regarding your upcoming transition.

I would like to spend some time with my family right now.

I wish I could just stay here another year.

I need structure in my life!

I want to explore all my options.

(Write your own here:)

I haven't seen my friends in ages.

I don't know where or how to start moving on.

I'm burnt out!

I know what I want to do next, but I missed all the deadlines.

(Write your own here:)

I had a plan ready even before I started volunteering.

(Continue reading on Page 3 for some questions for reflection and discussion.)

Group or Individual Reflective Activity:

If you live in a community, or have co-workers you can talk with, share and discuss your feelings and values from the previous activity. If you're by yourself, take half an hour to discover and think about your deeper values.

1. Of all the statements in the honeycomb, or the others you've added, which comes closest to capturing how you are thinking and feeling right now?
2. To what extent do you think these thoughts, feelings or values should be at the center of your decision-making about which steps you need to be taking?
3. Are any one of the above holding you back from making an important decision about your next steps into your future?
4. What do your statements say about where you are spiritually right now? Does this remind you of a parallel

story in scripture or the gospels?

5. Which "future plan" do you identify with most? How has your plan changed throughout the course of the year, and especially now that your program is coming to an end?
6. When you imagine different kinds of futures for yourself, to what extent do you consider how your choice might contribute to the common good?
7. In this issue we're focusing on "being persistent" in your decisions. How are you facing the challenge of being persistent with your next step even though you still have months to go before you leave your volunteer placement?

Anxiety often happens because people fear they will fail. But as long as you're alert, thinking about your experiences, and seeking what's true and what's moral, then you are succeeding. If you later change your flight plan, that's normal and "bee"-utiful.

Biblical Reflection: Getting to the Heart of the Matter . . . Persistently

In the above title, "heart" clearly refers to whatever is the most important element of any given situation. This use contrasts with the sentimental view, which associates "heart" primarily with our feelings and emotions. It's helpful to keep this distinction in mind when reflecting on biblical teachings, which tend to use "heart" to refer to substantive matters of principle rather than to fleeting sentiments.

When religious authorities, for example, criticize Jesus for allowing his disciples to violate the letter of the law by eating corn on the Sabbath (Matt. 12; Luke 6), Jesus says it's not what someone eats or puts into the body that makes the person impure, but rather it is what comes out of the person's interior (see Mark 7:16 and 2:1-12). In other words, the important criteria are the person's beliefs and how these beliefs are lived out in their daily life (Matt. 12:35). Here Jesus continues the earlier prophetic tradition: "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:10). So the heart of the matter, the core of the moral life, is the extent to which a person is

consistent and puts his or her beliefs into action.

This fourth issue of *Shared Visions* focuses on this very point: once you have been decisive in determining what truth is, the challenge then is to follow through and act on it responsibly and persistently. When a person acts with integrity, Jesus calls this having a "pure heart," as in the beatitude, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5: 8). This approach will also give you a clearer vision of what it means to be human as well.

Here are some questions for further reflection:

- What is one personal example where you put your beliefs into action?
- How did that experience make you feel as a follower of Jesus in the modern world?
- How can you more persistently live out your beliefs in your daily life? Think of this question in terms of your life as a volunteer and also your life once you go back home or move onto your next steps. How can you continue to live simply, honestly, lovingly, and justly after you leave your current placement?

Movie Morality: Being Persistent in Making the Right Choice

In the last issue of *Shared Visions*, we noted a number of movies that highlight characters' struggles with the truth, both in the world and within themselves. In this issue, in keeping with its focus on putting your decisions into action and being persistent, we want to offer some ideas for movies that feature characters making hard choices and persisting in their sense of what is morally right – or, in a few cases, realizing later what choices they should have made. So if you have access to a VCR or DVD player, review the following list of movies and, as a community of volunteers and/or friends, choose one whose description inspires you to discussion and sharing.

Casablanca – This well-known classic is the story of a man who must choose whether or not to turn over to the Nazis the freedom-fighting husband of the woman he loves.

Quiz Show – The true story of Mark van Doren, a handsome, likeable, 1950's game show champion, who allowed himself

to be manipulated by the TV network in order to keep ratings up.

Groundhog Day – A comedy with a metaphysical twist, this stars Bill Murray as a man who unwillingly faces the same choices, in the same day, over and over again.

Millions – An entertaining story about a young boy in the U.K. who finds a large amount of money and has to decide whether to keep it, give it to authorities, or give it away.

The End of the Affair – Based on the novel by Graham Greene, this is a story of prayer and sacrifice amid the London Blitz in World War II.

Three Kings – Loosely based on “The Treasure of the Sierra Madre”, this movie follows four American G.I.'s right after the first Persian Gulf War, as they pursue a rumored hoard of treasure in the Iraqi desert.

Make the Most Out of the **Pallotti Center Re-Entry Resources**

Learn more about these free services, available through our website at www.pallotticenter.org/Former, and make the most of the opportunities and resources available to volunteers in re-entry!

Staying Connected is a free newsletter for former volunteers, with each issue focusing on an aspect of volunteering (simple living, social justice, spirituality, relationships, etc.) and how this can apply to life after service.

The **Network of Former Volunteers**: Over 1,300 former volunteers are part of this database of lay volunteer alumni. Once former volunteers have signed on to the Network, they are added to the national listserv. Through this network, “formers” can connect with each other about social gatherings, discussion or prayer groups, couples groups, and for help with employment leads and contacts. The Network database will not be used for fundraising or spam e-mail.

Are you freaking out about what to do next? The **“What's Next?” Notebook**, available from your program or on our website, helps guide your transition out of volunteer service. It asks questions to help you reflect on your volunteer experience, as well as on your future hopes, dreams, and goals. It also gives some practical suggestions for next steps to take, e.g., re-entry

self-evaluation, resume and interview tips, reflections and exercises on career direction, and ideas on how to remain active in your faith, social justice, and your community.

Our **Job Bank** aids former volunteers in their search for meaningful and fulfilling work. We offer a weekly e-mail of job announcements which we send to interested former volunteers, as well as articles, resources, and strategies for career discernment and job searching.

One-on-one support. The transition following a term of service can be a trying time. In addition to the various resources and services provided, former volunteers might benefit from talking with someone who understands the challenges involved and can offer some feedback regarding personal career decisions, life path choices, and the like. Call or stop in any of the Pallotti Centers for help today!

WWW.PALLOTTICENTER.ORG Check out the different features on our website, including the: *Resources in Your Area* section with an extensive listing of all kinds of resources in areas across the U.S. Current events are also posted on a separate page.

A Year in Review: Using the Pastoral Circle to Process Your Volunteer Experience

The life of a volunteer, as you know by now, is filled with many highs and lows, ups and downs. The journey is an eventful one, complete with new challenges, learning, and growth. In light of your experience, the staff of the Pallotti Center has tried to give you tools to help you process your experience. This is the goal of *Shared Visions* each year. This past year in particular, we adapted the Pastoral Circle, or “the four bees” as we referred to them, to help you journey through your volunteer experience.

As you may recall, the four stages of the pastoral circle are: be attentive, be reflective, be decisive, and be persistent. In many ways these phases mirror the volunteer experience. For example, when you first started to work at your placement site, you may have noticed your need to be attentive to your new environment and to “process” your experiences. After a few months when you settled into your responsibilities and perhaps ran into problems, you began to evaluate and reflect on your role as a volunteer. Along with your fellow volunteers, whether in community or not, you may have wanted to think and decide about your relationships, friendships, challenges, and hopes for the future.

Here is an exercise to help you pull together and apply the four “bees” to some of your experiences as a volunteer. When answering the following questions, try to respond with what you did throughout the year as well as what you are doing now. Use the spaces below to write down your initial thoughts and reflections.

...at my work or
placement site?

...regarding community
living with my fellow
volunteers?

What did I
pay the most
attention to...

What situation did I
spend time trying
to figure out...

What encounter
challenged my beliefs
the most...

How did I put my
understanding of my
faith into action...

It’s important to remember that the pastoral circle is, in fact, a cycle. You will continue and are continuing to work through the cycle even now as you begin to think ahead. Please see *Shared Visions* Vol. 13 No. 3 (on the web at <http://www.pallotticenter.org/SharedVisions/Vol%2013/Vol13No3.pdf>) for a comprehensive look at the Pastoral Circle and how you can continue to use this method in your post-volunteer life.

SURVEYING YOUR OWN MORAL LANDSCAPE

Volunteers often find themselves in cross-cultural experiences, thus encountering people with different perspectives on morality. These experiences may reinforce your own moral standards, or they may challenge you to become more knowledgeable, reflective, decisive, and committed. Below are several questions for your individual reflection. If your fellow volunteers are willing, perhaps you could gather for discussion on your next community night to share your thoughts with one another.

1) Since becoming a volunteer and working with your clients (students, parishioners, the homeless, etc.) what new moral perspectives have you encountered that have

surprised you? How have these new perspectives influenced your own moral judgment?

- 2) What is one issue pertaining to social justice that you have become more interested in during this past year? What is the main significance of this issue for you?
- 3) For what moral issue or question, if any, have you been re-evaluating your own moral standards?
- 4) During the course of this past year of doing volunteer service, what is one way, morally speaking, that you have been challenged to change for the better?

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The mission of the St. Vincent Pallotti Center

To promote lay volunteer service that challenges laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church. Our goal is to support lay volunteers before, during and after their term of service. Regional Pallotti Centers are located in Boston; St. Louis; and Oakland, CA. The National Office is in Washington, DC.

The Centers take their 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 be missionary.

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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