

# SHARED VISIONS

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Volume 18, Number 1

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

## ***New Beginnings: Explore Your Potential***

*“Congratulations” to those of you who have recently begun your volunteer service and “Thanks” to all continuing volunteers who began earlier or are entering an additional year of service. The purpose of this publication is to give you tips and suggestions for your personal and spiritual development. It is written by former volunteers for current volunteers. We provide activities and readings which raise questions and encourage you to share your values and vision with one another.*

*This year, more than ever before, we provide snippets from various spiritual writers in the hope that when you have time, you can “go to the well” and drink more deeply from those authors. As always, each issue focuses on challenges that volunteers frequently face during the life-cycle of your year of service. Shared Visions comes to you quarterly, and we hope you find its content provocative and nurturing. We provide many activities to be used in your community of volunteers and some for use by individuals. If you have any comments or suggestions about the content, please email us at [SharedVisions@pallotticenter.org](mailto:SharedVisions@pallotticenter.org).*



## ***Has Restlessness Prompted Your Volunteering?***

*To what extent is my volunteer service rooted in restlessness?*

Many writers, from the fourth century's Saint Augustine of Hippo, to the twenty-first century's Rev. Ron Rolheiser, highlight the reality that most persons have a deep-seated, personal “restlessness” which prompts them to action. On the first page of his Confessions, Augustine sums up the story of his life, saying to God: “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” Rolheiser, in The Restless Heart, claims that everyone has a fire burning within them, and that what we do with that fire - how we channel it - is our spirituality.



### **Questions for Reflection:**

*(If you live with other volunteers, share your responses to these questions.)*

1. Have you experienced this type of restlessness in your life? How have you responded to it?
2. Is your choice to serve as a volunteer a response to a restlessness or a fire burning within you? Do you feel that this restlessness comes from God?
3. How do other members of your volunteer community respond to their own spiritual restlessness?
4. Looking down the road, do you feel this fire will diminish in time or grow stronger? How might your response be impacted by your experience as a volunteer?

**In this issue...** Page 1: New Beginnings: Explore Your Potential and Has Restlessness Prompted Your Volunteering? // Page 2: Great Expectations and Present Blessings // Pages 2-3: Awakenings: The Power of Stories // Page 3: Biblical Reflection: Your Beginning Expectations // Page 4: Activity: Create Your Mission Statement and “The Long View” // Page 5: Cup Activity: How do I see my spirituality? // Page 6: Resources for further reading

# Great Expectations and Present Blessings

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end.” – Thomas Merton, from Thoughts in Solitude



Do Merton’s words remind you of how you felt before arriving in your community or at your workplace? Now that you’ve been at your placement and in your community for some time, try to remember how you felt before beginning your program, and reflect on your current feelings and understanding of the following aspects of volunteer life.

**Prior to volunteering...**

**Currently...**

<b>In community</b>	Did you have an image of what your community (both the people and the place) might look like?	How has your community contributed to your current image and understanding of what makes a community?
<b>At your workplace</b>	What did you initially know about the population with whom you are working?	What new insights do you have about the work that you do and the people with whom and for whom you work?
<b>Your spirituality</b>	How, if at all, did you see your spirituality interacting with your work or school life?	Now, what are the connections between your work and faith life?
<b>Your family and friends</b>	What did your family and friends think about your decision to volunteer?	What about volunteering has been easy or difficult to explain to your family and friends?
<b>Yourself</b>	How did you envision your role as a full-time volunteer or missionary?	Has this image changed? If so, how?

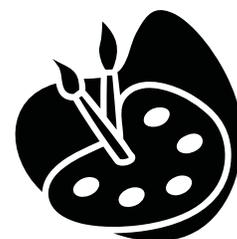
## Awakenings: The Power of

You may be familiar with Dead Man Walking, the story of Sister Helen Prejean’s encounter with the death penalty. In a recently published book called Romero’s Legacy: the Call to Peace and Justice, Sister Helen shares how her story was retold recently as an opera. The use of the arts has played an important role in helping her share this story with the world. “The reason is we haven’t found a way to bring people close to the death penalty, to allow them to somehow identify with what happens in that high-pitched moment of execution. So, we



turn to the arts, to film, and to books. Opera goes further, and by bringing together drama and music, it touches part of our hearts that we don’t even know we have.”

Sister Helen’s point is that **stories told through the arts can lead to awakenings**; they help us to realize the great injustices that exist in our world. Think back to your first encounter with a book, a film, a person, or a story that led you to want to change the world through volunteering. Why was this experience so powerful for you?



# Biblical Reflection: Your Beginning Expectations

Volunteers and lay missioners often begin their service with considerable enthusiasm - which is as it should be, for their contributions are desperately needed and they have every reason to anticipate wonderful outcomes. However, such initial enthusiasm often has a "twin" which can show up as an excessive Spartan rigidity ("I can give up everything").



It may be helpful for today's volunteers to keep this in mind that Jesus' disciples were not totally immune from such rigidity. When Jesus first called them to follow him, they responded by immediately leaving their nets, boats and family (Matt. 4: 18 ff). Similarly, when they first went out on mission, the disciples took with them neither purse, nor haversack or

sandals (Luke 10:4; Mark 6:8) nor money (Matt.10:9). However, years later (Matt. 14:22) and after Jesus' resurrection, we notice the disciples are still fishing (John 21) with their own boats and nets. Also, they retained their family relationships, as was implied by Jesus' curing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29). Over time and with greater experience, the disciples' understanding developed and they came to believe Jesus wanted them to go into mission and take these supports along with them (Luke 22:35).

The message here is that the early disciples and all of us in the Church, over time and with prayerful reflection on experiences, grow in understanding and develop a balance in our pastoral practices. A good way for today's volunteers to do this is to continue this process by sharing your experiences and reflections with your fellow volunteers. This strengthens your spirituality, as well as that of your community. Together with one another, and with God's grace, you will be better able to avoid extremes and instead, help each other become better instruments of God's love.

## Stories

How did it change you?

Throughout this year, you will collect many stories. These stories will shape your perspective of the world, just as Sr. Prejean's experience shaped her view of the death penalty. How can you begin to share the story of your volunteer experience in a way that might lead others to similar awakenings? Be creative and explore the use of the arts and other media in sharing your story. Sister Helen says that *"to be awake and to be set on fire with passion is the greatest grace that we could ever have."* It is up to you to share this passion with others.

Want more activities or ideas for your community nights?



Visit [www.pallotticenter.org/Current/ActivityOfTheWeek/index.htm](http://www.pallotticenter.org/Current/ActivityOfTheWeek/index.htm) for a current activity, and be sure to click on the archives for over 200 activities designed for volunteers like you!

# Activity: Creating Your Mission Statement

As a full-time volunteer, you are an integral part of a community. Your volunteer program may have a long relationship with a particular religious order, or it may have been recently founded by a group of like-minded people. Either way, you are now part of a network, part of a group with shared history and shared ideals. These ideals are expressed in the mission statement of your volunteer program.

Because you chose to be a part of this volunteer community, you probably agree with many aspects of its mission statement. How do your personal goals and principles coincide with the mission of your organization? How do they differ? *Take some time to reflect on your own 'mission statement' for your volunteer experience.* Limit your statement to no more than five sentences, and write it in the space provided here:

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Once everyone in your volunteer community has written his or her personal mission statement, take some time on your community night to discuss and reflect on each of your statements. Again, how do all of your statements coincide? How do they differ? How do your mission statements reflect Gospel values? *Try to come to a consensus on goals and ideals that are important to all of you, and write a **shared mission statement** for your community.*

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Encourage everyone to post both their personal mission statement and the community mission statement in a place where they will be visible every day—next to one's bed, on a mirror, or in a journal. Clarifying both individual and community goals will help to make your volunteer experience a success!

## The Long View

It helps, now and then, to step back  
and take the long view.  
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of  
the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.  
Nothing we do is complete,  
which is another way of saying  
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about:  
We plant seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future  
promise.

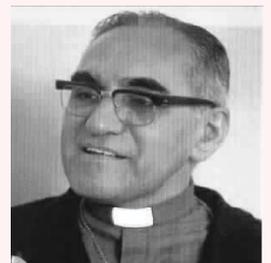
We lay foundations that will need further  
development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects  
beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything  
and there is a sense of liberation in  
realizing that.  
This enables us to do something,  
and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a  
beginning, a step along the way,  
an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,  
but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders,  
ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future not our own.

- Archbishop Oscar Romero



# Cup Activity: How do I see my spirituality?

Which of these images works best for you?

**Imagine yourself as an empty cup wanting to be filled with God's presence.**

OR

**Imagine yourself as an overflowing cup, eager to share your gifts with others.**

Directions and materials needed: This activity will take about 20 minutes. Begin with the community members seated comfortably in a circle. Each person should bring with them a cup or mug of their choice. One person serves as the "guide" and presents two images of an empty cup and a full cup.

Guide asks the community: Which image more closely describes how you feel as you have begun your time of volunteer service? Is your preferred image to see yourself as "empty" so that God can fill you, or, do you prefer to think of yourself as being full of talents, love or knowledge so that you can give abundantly to others? In this particular moment, please choose which image you feel more comfortable working with as a match for how you see yourself.

## **Suggestions for those who choose the empty-cup imagery:**

While holding your cup, look inside and see the emptiness. Now imagine what parts of yourself (mind, heart, will) you want to be empty so that God can begin to be more fully present in you.

## **Suggestions for those who choose the full-cup imagery:**

While holding your cup, look inside and imagine that it is full. Now imagine what parts of yourself (mind, heart, will) you want to be full, so that God can work through you as an instrument of God's work here on earth.

Guide says: The **"empty cup"** approach is encouraged in St. Paul's epistle to the Philippeans (2: 7), which describes Jesus as having emptied himself of his equality with God in order to be fully human. This "emptying oneself" approach seems consistent with the Buddhist tradition in which a person empties the self of expectations (see Joyce Rupp, [The Cup of our Life: A Guide for Spiritual Growth](#)). Simple living and being environmentally sensitive are also consistent with this theme. The **"full cup"** approach is encouraged by St. Paul's second epistle to Timothy (3:14), which describes knowledge and competencies required for ministers (see Paul and Barbara Tieger, [Do What You Are](#)). Some volunteers may prefer to combine the two approaches.

In this section, the guide will ask the group the following questions and encourage the community to share their responses:

1. **When you thought about the cup as a metaphor for yourself, which image, empty or full, best expressed how you see yourself?**
2. **The emptying of yourself is an ongoing process of removing prejudices, opinions, assumptions, fears, etc. Are just starting this process, or are you further along? What do you want to remove? Share an example or two of how you experience this.**
3. **The filling of yourself also is an ongoing process of developing skills, knowledge and competencies. Are you just starting this process, or are you further along? What do you need to develop? Share an example or two of how you experience this.**
4. **Can you share anything you're read or talk about a person who might have inspired you to choose the metaphor that attracted you?**

## Resources for further reading. . .



Throughout this issue of *Shared Visions* you'll find references to the works of many spiritual authors.

Here is a list of those works, as well as further resources that may be of interest.

Augustine of Hippo. Confessions. 398.

Himes, Michael J. Doing the Truth in Love: Conversations

about God, Relationships, and Service. 1995.

Merton, Thomas. Thoughts in Solitude. 1958.

The Mission. (film.) 1986.

Nouwen, Henri. Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life. 1986.

Peck, M. Scott. The Road Less Traveled. 1978.

Rolheiser, Ronald. The Restless Heart: Finding Our Spiritual

Home in Times of Loneliness. 2004.

Romero's Legacy: The Call to Peace and Justice. Edited by Pilar Hogan Closkey and John P. Hogan. 2007.

Rupp, Joyce. The Cup of Our Life: A Guide for Spiritual Growth. 1997.

Tieger, Paul and Barbara Barron-Tieger. Do What You Are. 1992.

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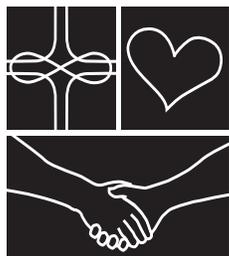
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## The Mission of the St. Vincent Pallotti Center

Our goal is to promote lay volunteer service that challenges laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church, and to support lay volunteers before, during and after their term of service. 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.

Regional Pallotti Centers are located in Boston and St. Louis. The National Office is 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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