

St. Vincent De Paul Young Adult Center



Retreat to the Street

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Information Guide

PROGRAMING

From a Catholic perspective, the [ST. VINCENT DE PAUL YOUNG ADULT CENTER](#) grounded in Vincentian Spirituality, seeks to help participants recognize their responsibility to the poor and vulnerable in their own community, and communities around the world. The center experience is formed around three key components: service, reflection, education.

SERVICE

Through Service students are given the opportunity to meet and work with people that they would not typically encounter in their day to day lives. We partner with different service sites throughout the Germantown area of Philadelphia that serve various populations including: children, elderly, individuals with disabilities, individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals recovering from addiction, etc. At the center, we view service not as something we do for others, but with others. Service is a two-way evangelization process where we are given the opportunity to spend time with and learn from those living on the margins.

Flexibility is crucial. At a few of the sites we might simply have conversations and listening to people talk about their experiences; while at other sites we will be cleaning, organizing, tutoring, playing, etc. Be open to doing whatever the organization needs of you. We are there for them and their needs.

REFLECTION

Service, without reflection, is just work. Therefore, reflection and prayer are vital parts of the experience here at the center. We desire to give students the chance to reflect inwardly how each person, service site, and educational activity impacts them. We strive to create a space where students can openly and honestly discuss these inward thoughts and feelings with one another, and work toward levels of greater compassion and desire to protect those who are most vulnerable

As St. Vincent said, "Give me persons of prayer and they will be capable of anything." It is only through receiving from God in Prayer, that we have the ability to truly give of ourselves, and to be open to receiving from the poor. Therefore, we start each morning with a prayer. We encourage students to have a spirit of prayerfulness throughout the day, recognizing that being with the poor, amidst their suffering, is a holy place. Our prayer is from the Catholic perspective, but we aim to create prayers and a space that is relatable, inclusive, and comfortable for people of all faiths, religions, and beliefs.

EDUCATION

Education is key in making the experience at the center, transformative. While students are encountering people and situations they may have never encountered first hand, we strive to give them the historical, political and sociological context of these situations. Through educational activities each evening, we aim to deconstruct the false narratives and stereotypes around individuals experiencing poverty, and replace those with a deeper, more accurate look into the societal, social, and individual problems that create the cycle of poverty. Through our educational experiences paired with reflection, the center hopes to live out the following words and intention of St. Vincent de Paul: "Charity, without Justice, is not Charity."

VALUES

Community

Community life is significantly important to the center, as it is strong communities that build a thriving world. We build community by serving, praying, reflecting, working and having fun together. Additionally, community is about recognizing and celebrating one another's strengths, as well as being understanding of one another's weaknesses.

Simplicity/Stewardship

We take Pope Francis' invitation to simplicity and stewardship very seriously. Therefore, the center asks participants to use our resources (water, food, paper products, electricity, etc.) sparingly and thoughtfully. By being mindful of our consumption, we are able to not only live in solidarity with communities we are serving, but also to consume responsibly, in order to protect the natural world.

We live out this Catholic tenant of Stewardship in the following way:

- Being conscious of our consumption – food, water, use of paper products, use of energy etc.
- Reusing and recycling
- Being conscious of the justice issues around water we will not have bottled water (or beverages) of any kind. Please bring your own re-usable bottles. Do not bring cases of bottled water.
- Challenging ourselves to live simply for the time we are here, without cell phones and other electronic devices (cell phones, ipods, computers, tablets, etc.)

Consider your time here at the center, as a detox from a culture of consumption and competition. By decluttering our life we are able to more clearly hear and focus on the inner voice of Love, and our call to be servants to one another.

Humility (Mutuality)

Humility is central to all of our interactions with one another, with our community partners and their clients, and with our neighbors. Doing service is not about "lowering ourselves" but rather, recognizing the truth of who we are – and the equal, inherent value of each and every person. We remind our volunteers that they are above no person, no situation and no job.

Compassion

Compassion is at the heart of our mission here at the center. If we are serving with judgment, and stereotypes rather than compassion, we are doing more harm than good.

ACCOMMODATIONS

HOUSING

The St. Vincent de Paul Centers housing is comfortable and simple. Students will sleep in bedrooms for one, two or three. Genders will be lodged in two separate sections of the house, each equipped with bathrooms and showers. Our center provides participants with bed linens and towels. The center also has a number of common area spaces, including a rec room, a porch, a dining room, back patio, a kitchen and a chapel.

MEALS

Meals will be provided and prepped by the staff at the center. The center strives to live in solidarity with the community that we serve, through the value of simplicity. Participants can expect satisfying meals and made out of simple ingredients. The center is dedicated to fostering awareness of those who live without, by using our own resources (water, food, paper products, electricity, etc.) sparingly and thoughtfully.

SCHEDULE

Each day begins with Morning Prayer or Reflection at 9am. At 9:30 students will depart for their respective service sites. At 2pm students will return to the center to prepare and eat dinner as a community. In the evenings, groups will participate in an educational activity and reflection lead by center staff, which will allow them to think more deeply about their daily experiences, their personal responsibility to those who are marginalized as well as their role in a world that divides between the deserving and the undeserving.

PARTNER MINISTRIES

Our center is dedicated to serving partner ministries in own community of Germantown. Therefore the majority of our service sites are located less than fifteen minutes away from the center. Students will have the opportunity to serve in ministries including but not limited to: schools and after school programs, adult day care centers, rehabilitation centers, food assistance programs, shelters for those experiencing homelessness, as well as public park/green space maintenance. Depending on the work site, service will range from direct (hands on) service, to the service of presence.

REGISTRATION

RESERVATIONS

We require a **non-refundable** deposit of \$200 dollars to be made upon reservation. We will not “hold” dates until the deposit is received. Please take your commitment to the center seriously. As a non-for-profit agency, the fees we charge for the retreat experience do not entirely cover the cost of running the center. Due to the resources and boarding used during a group’s stay, in addition to the planning and leadership that goes into our trips, the **minimum charge to each group we host is \$280.**

PRICING AND FEES

# of Nights	Per Person
1	\$45.00

Day Long Coordination Fee
Per Person: \$10 (\$15 with Meal)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Registration Forms should be received **no later than one month prior to your trip** at the center. The information that you provide to us in the guide is instrumental in building an impactful experience for your students. Additionally, center staff will not be able to schedule service sites if they do not know the size of your group.

The center **requires a 1:6 chaperone to participant ratio**, for all participants under 18. Chaperones should be female or male based on the proportion of males and females in the in the group.

Groups must provide their own transportation. Therefore, chaperones need to have a driver's license and be willing to drive in an urban area.

There is a van available for use at the center.

If your group intends to have a night off to sight see, you must include this information on your registration form. We ask that weekend visitors do not anticipate having a night off, as our time together is limited.

Please plan to arrive 4:00 pm, the day before your first full day of service. On the day of departure we ask you to leave before noon. Additionally, we ask that you do not plan to leave or arrive on Saturday, so that staff members are able to prepare the house for the group on the following week.

***If you are coming from a distance of more than a 6 hour drive please let us know and we can adjust the arrival time.**