



Interview with Deacon Mike Gouge, the Spiritual Director
and founder of the SJN Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Mike, what inspired you to start our Conference?

The ministry of deacons is centered on *diakonia*, which means “service” and was created to take care of the Greek widows who were part of the Gentiles. This has since been expanded by the Church to include the whole world. We have a mission as the Catholic Church to care for all those in need – our neighbors.

At Saint John Neumann, we had our first meeting of eleven parish members in December, 2007. We prayed together and it truly seemed as if Our Lady was there blessing and sending us forth to serve those who the Lord would send to us. Monsignor Garrity increased the scope and support of the work of our SVDP Society through the use of the parish charity envelope.

As Spiritual Director, what is your guidance on how others may pray about and respond to this call?

There are many gospel passages where Jesus says, ‘As often as you do this for the poor you do it for me.’ God wants us to live a life of gospel poverty, not focused on possessions, but rather what we can do to alleviate hunger, thirst, and material and spiritual imprisonment of our neighbor. It’s important to remember that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is not simply a welfare agency, but the main emphasis is spirituality based on prayer among the Vincentians for each other and for those we serve in the model of Saint Vincent.