

Junior Ladies of Charity AIC-USA YOUTH GROUP

Mission:

“To provide Vincentian Leadership to women acting together against all forms of poverty.”

The Junior Ladies of Charity (AIC-USA Youth Group) is composed of youth and young adults who desire to grow in holiness by reaching out to those who are living on the fringes of society.

The Spirit and Nature of AIC-USA Youth

The youth may form an independent group or be attached to an existing Ladies of Charity AIC-USA association. They strive to provide their service to those who are marginalized and disadvantaged in the spirit of humility, simplicity, and charity.

The members of the AIC-USA Youth/Junior Ladies of Charity are called to be holy, to be on fire with God's love. This holiness is more than being pious, but rather invites members to radiate God's presence, to bring God's joy, strength, peace and daily care to the lives of others.

The AIC-USA Youth Group strives to see Christ in the persons of those less privileged. They are called to combine justice with charity, because God has taken possession of their hearts. These members strive to hear the voice of God calling them in the struggles and frustrations of those who live on the margins of society as Jesus did. Their hearts beat with the heartbeat of the poor. In a word, they meet Christ in the poor.

The AIC-USA /Junior Ladies of Charity desire to listen to God in prayer and in the events of their lives. They allow God to help them make decisions, to possess their hearts as they strive to love and to channel their energies and actions in their service.

They strive to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, who identified Himself with those who are poor. They follow Jesus in a particular Vincentian way. This Vincentian way of life allows them to encounter Jesus in those served. This Vincentian Way challenges them to reflect together at their meetings on their service or actions to discover how God was/is present through their service. They work together against poverty and injustice and to discover the causes of this poverty and injustice so as to be agents of change. This eagerness to serve Christ in the marginalized and disadvantaged will in turn free them to live their own lives more fully.

They strive to live and pray with humility:

They recognize that their gifts and talents are received from God. They are grateful and place these gifts in the service of others.

They acknowledge their limitations and strive to live as best they can.

They provide service in an attitude of service and strive to stay in the background.

They strive to live in simplicity:

They live with their eyes fixed on Christ, as they know that Christ fixes His eye on them.

They live authentically and work at having a consistency in what they say and how they live.

They strive to live in charity:

They first strive to love God knowing that God is always present to them.

They create bonds of friendship among the other members of their organization and work collaboratively with them for the benefit of those they serve.

They reach out to those served with respect, honoring them as persons worthy of respect in a practical, concrete and effective love.

They are not afraid to get their hands dirty as they strive to listen to the words of St. Vincent de Paul who said: "Love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows."

Finally, in all things, they strive to let the gospel rule their hearts. They work to be good listeners, to be taught by the poor, by the wider Church community, and by the words heard again and again at Mass and in their private prayer. They will try to absorb the "good news" in their own lives so that they can, in turn, communicate it to others because they recognize that the poor will find God in them as they strive to discover God in those they choose to serve.

The Importance of Prayer and Reflection

From the early foundations of the Confraternities of Charity or Ladies of Charity as they were called, Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac encouraged the membership to
daily prayer,
participation in the Eucharist when possible,
and to reflect on their experiences of service.

The members strive to follow the example of Mary. Mary shows them the way to be on fire with love for Jesus Christ, to listen to His Word in order to serve others. The sources of Marian Spirituality within the Vincentian charism, which they follow, flow from a reflection on Mary in Scripture.

The Magnificat - the song of the poor:
The poor are the inheritors of the blessings of God, the Messiah;
Mary discovers joy in God, her Savior;
Mary welcomes her role in the plan of God to bring salvation to all
humanity.

The Immaculate Conception -- welcoming God:
Being filled with God, "Putting on Jesus Christ";
Self-emptying so that God can fill us
with God's love for the poor.

The Annunciation:
Realizing one's "smallness" before God;
Gift of oneself in the service of accomplishing God's work;
Awareness of being God's collaborator;
Union with Jesus living in oneself;
Participant in the mystery of God;
Collaborator with God.

The Visitation:
Mary reached out to her cousin, Elizabeth;
Mary goes promptly and cheerfully to serve Elizabeth.

Membership

The Junior Ladies of Charity are composed of young people and young adults. (Ages vary from elementary school through high school. Moderators determine the age group.)

See the application and membership card forms that follow for more details.

Responsibilities of Members

Strive to acquire the virtues of the Junior Ladies of Charity; deepen their understanding of Vincentian Spirituality.

Seek the good of the mission through prayer, participation in meetings, spiritual activities, projects for the poor and social awareness activities of the organization.

Attend at least _____ meeting per year. (Number determined by moderator)

The Meeting

The meeting of AIC-USA /Junior Ladies of Charity gives "heart" to their service and their relationships with each other. It is during the course of their meetings that they pray and reflect on how God is/has been present to them in their service to the less fortunate. They take time to look at the causes which create the poverty in those they serve and determine if they can be part of the solution to create change. It is in this "holy place" where their work is planned and organized. They strive to seek together ways that they can grow in the virtues of humility, simplicity, and love. They enter their "holy place" of meeting in a spirit of friendship and loyalty. They ask Mary to be their model and intercessor.

**Guidelines for Ladies of Charity Moderator (s)
who accompany
AIC-USA Youth/Junior Ladies of Charity**

- Follow parish, school or diocesan rules for working with youth, such as background checks, fingerprinting.
- Deeply rooted in the person of Christ.
- Understands Gospel values as well Vincentian values.
- Can translate Gospel and Vincentian values into language understood by the young persons they guide as Junior Moderators.
- Has a love of the mission of the Ladies of Charity-AIC.
- Has maturity, the ability to listen to those accompanied, assumes her rightful place among them leading from the side rather than in an authoritarian manner or creating dependency in those accompanied.
- Accompanies the group in a non-directive manner. Her role is to animate the members to growth in holiness through the fulfillment of the mission of service and justice.
- Respects the pace of the group, promotes leadership among the members, and shows impartiality.
- A good listener.
- Knows how to communicate to the young the spirit of the organization of the Ladies of Charity USA (LCUSA) but empowers the young to organize themselves.
- Comfortable with teaching the young how to pray and reflect together on their experiences with the poor.

- Has an appreciation for the social teachings of the Church so that the Junior Ladies of Charity may learn by doing a social analysis of the realities of the poor they serve.
- Promotes an inquiring spirit, responsibility, collaboration with others, a sense of justice and is in solidarity with the sufferings of others.
- Allows the young to make mistakes and learn from them.
- Is willing to dedicate the time required for accompaniment, and encourages creativity in service.

Formation of a Junior Ladies of Charity Association

- 1) **Assess interest among local Ladies of Charity** in initiating a plan to formulate a Junior Ladies of Charity association within your geographic area.
- 2) **Identify specific volunteers from the Ladies** willing to present the actual Junior Ladies of Charity group proposal in different forums and subsequently act as liaison and moderator for the Junior Ladies of Charity group.
- 3) **Identify potential recruitment areas** within your geographic area:
 - Schools;
 - Parishes;
 - Faith Formation Classes;
 - Ladies of Charity association daughters and granddaughters.
- 4) **Formulate a description of the planned Junior Ladies of Charity Group(s)**, specific to your audience.
 - Mission Statement (based on specific mission statement of Ladies of Charity association);
 - Dues not required of Junior Groups;
 - Recruitment (open/closed);
 - Initiation Ceremony (annual /ongoing/in conjunction with Ladies of Charity group)
 - meeting location(s);
 - Meeting schedules and commitments (monthly - bi monthly, etc.);
 - Officers (duties; term of office; election);
 - Identify immediate service opportunities for participation.
- 5) **Obtain approvals from appropriate administrators** to solicit their students as members of the Junior Ladies of Charity.
 - Pastors; Principals; Faith Formation Coordinators etc.
- 6) **Schedule Presentations** (provide handouts for students):
 - Explanation of the Mission Statement;
 - Identify resources available to students;
 - Explain student responsibilities (including participation, representation at Ladies of Charity meetings and in activities of the Ladies as necessary);
 - Benefits to community;
 - Benefits to students (service requirements for Faith Formation Classes;
 - Community Volunteers for College Applications.);
 - Elicit ideas for other activities that girls might participate in as a member of the Junior Ladies group;
 - Assess interest and provide Junior Ladies of Charity application.
- 7) **Contact the National Service Center of Ladies of Charity USA** to register the newly formed Junior Ladies of Charity association: LCUSA National Service Center, 2816 E. 23rd St., Kansas City MO 64127, office@ladiesofcharity.us, 816.260.3853. aic.ladiesofcharity.us

