



Welcoming Change

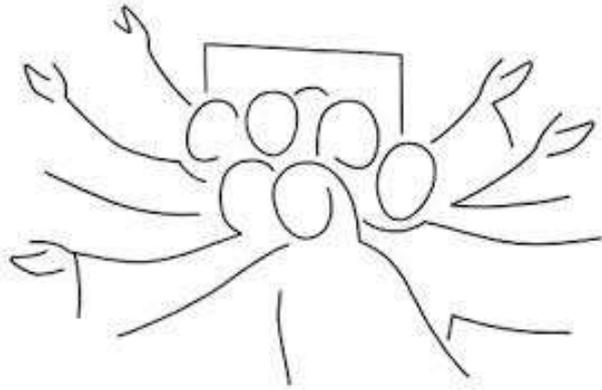
To promote vital rejuvenation in our groups



Content

Two challenges to address:	1
1) Recruiting new volunteers	2
2) Adapting our actions	4
Texts for reflection	5
Prayer	6

*“We have not just been called to serve the poor
but to ensure that others serve them.”
(Saint Vincent)*



*“The harvest is plentiful,
but the workers are few.
Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore,
to send out workers
into his harvest field.”
(Luke 10:1-2)*

Context: Two challenges to address!

Everywhere in the world, our AIC groups are constantly being called to renew themselves. We have to **recruit new volunteers** and **adapt our actions** to the new forms of poverty we detect, to the needs of the disadvantaged people we accompany through our service.

Addressing these two challenges is essential if we want to be able to follow the mission that Saint Vincent has entrusted to us.

*“Each challenge brings me closer to someone, to life, to myself and to God.”
(Carmen Duhne, Aparecida 2012)*

To do this, it is essential to **make room for others**, to **open ourselves up to new things** and to **welcome and facilitate change**.

Attitudes to change: *Rather than opposing it or wanting to impose it on others, let’s choose to welcome it and be open to it. And if people don’t want change, let’s not impose it on them, let’s simply look for the means to make them want to follow us on the same path, at their own pace.*

Jesus didn’t impose change on anyone.



What will happen in 10, 20 or 40 years if our association, our group doesn't change?
For many of you, the answer to this question will reveal the urgency of this challenge.

1. Recruiting new volunteers

The context of life today forces us to think about the question of the recruitment and commitment of AIC volunteers.

Indeed, when we look around us for new potential volunteers, we realise that more and more often:



- An increasing number of women work, out of choice or for financial reasons, often until retirement age
- At any age, people often already have multiple other commitments that make them less available
- New generations think and act differently
- Some people are of another religion or have strayed a little from the church
- Reconstituted families, changes in marital status during a person's lifetime, etc.



- Faced with this reality, how do we react?
- Are we ready to welcome people who don't necessarily resemble us?
- What is our attitude towards them? Are we capable of seeing their strengths?
- Are we able to adapt ourselves to what they can bring us? To certain new constraints (notably with regards to their availability)?

Let's try to find out the motivations of potential new volunteers in order to be able to meet their expectations! In order to do this, it is perhaps interesting to think about what motivates us personally as volunteers and also to ask ourselves about what could motivate other people to join us today.

Examples:

- Supporting the most disadvantaged towards a better life through a concrete action?
- Sharing wonderful spiritual moments as a group?
- Meeting other people and feeling accepted as we are, with our strengths and limitations in an atmosphere of trust and respect?
- Developing new skills and continuing to learn?

Some motivations are universal; others depend on the personality of the individual. **It is useful to identify them**, as well as the possible obstacles to commitment...

Motivations: Desire to serve/be useful; big challenges to address; spiritual dimension of actions (Vincentian charism); testimonies of other volunteers; listening and respect within the group; commitment and appreciative attitude of the head of the group; valuing the strengths of each person; teamwork; etc.



Obstacles: Limited time available; (numerous other commitments); fear of the unknown; fear of not having the necessary skills; fear of the constraints linked to commitment; concern about differences (age, marital status, religious convictions and/or commitments); etc.



- And for you, what are they?
- Remind yourselves: What motivated or blocked the commitment of people who you have invited to join you?
- Ask other people around you who may be interested as well...

Let's reflect on our respective commitments!

In a recruitment context, it is also essential to reflect on what we can offer new volunteers, which practical tasks we can entrust them with and what commitments we expect from them.

1

What can we offer them?

Examples: Opportunity to serve/accompany the most disadvantaged; human, technical and spiritual training; team meetings and moments of conviviality; belonging to a dynamic and committed group, association and international network that it is more than 400 years old; etc.

What practical tasks can we entrust them with?

List the different practical tasks that could be entrusted to them.

Examples: Direct service to the most disadvantaged; administrative support (perhaps from home); fundraising or financial support; different kinds of training; welcoming and supporting new volunteers; technical support (e.g. IT, accounting); etc.

2

3

As a group or association, what commitments do we expect on their part?

Examples: *Certain shared values (Vincentian charism), reflected in words and actions? Minimum and/or ongoing training? Minimum availability (a few hours a week/fortnight/month)?*

*“Saint Vincent brought many people together and told them what it was possible to do and how to do it.”
(Carmen Duhne, p.153)¹*

2. Adapting our actions

As well as looking for new volunteers, within our groups we must also make sure we **continuously adapt our actions to the changing forms of poverty**. We must do all we can to be able to understand today’s reality and discover new faces of poverty.

To do this, while remaining faithful to the sources of our charism, we need to evaluate our actions, our ways of acting and **not be afraid to evolve and accept new ideas**.

*“Sometimes we need to unlearn ways of being and acting so we can learn new ways of accompanying the most disadvantaged. Some traditions are perhaps obsolete and no longer correspond to what the most disadvantaged need...”
(Carmen Duhne, p.155)*

By welcoming new volunteers into our groups, we will benefit from a fresh perspective. We should seize this opportunity to question ourselves and evolve so we can continue providing ever better service to our most disadvantaged brothers and sisters for many years to come.

*Welcoming change **today**,
so that our groups continue to fulfil their mission with the most disadvantaged **tomorrow**.*

¹ Duhne, Carmen, *Con los ojos de Jesus*, Mexico, 2017.

Texts for reflection

“Vincent sought to focus all of his effort on the direct service of poor people. However, he knew that to do so, he would need to gather, motivate, and negotiate with diverse groups of people.

Vincent constantly devised ingenious ways to pool the talents of willing workers.”

(Thomas McKenna, Praying with Vincent de Paul, p.92)²

OSER

Being in AIC groups is about listening to others to get ideas and learning from one another. It's about getting training so as not to be solely reliant our own ways of doing things.

Open your heart to others with confidence, intelligence and imagination: DARE

- *Dare to team up, utilize our differences and cherish each other*
- *Dare to share my faith during moments of spiritual exchange*
- *Dare to abandon my certainties, let myself be shaken up and rejuvenated by others*
- *Dare to face the person who bothers me and trust him/her*
- *Dare to let myself be guided, get off the beaten track, take a path I have not chosen*
- *Dare to make choices, to not want to do everything or be able to do everything, leave room for the unexpected*
- *Dare to take responsibilities and accept risks in an atmosphere of trust*

Extract from the magazine of the Equipés Saint Vincent (AIC-France), 4th trimester 2015



AIC's suggestions for reflection in groups:

- ➔ **What can and must I do personally to encourage rejuvenation within my group? What concrete initiatives can we undertake as a group in this regard?**
- ➔ **What must we do within our AIC group to adapt ourselves to contemporary forms of poverty? (Use the words in the word cloud on the cover page to help you)**

² McKenna, Thomas, CM, *Praying with St Vincent de Paul*, Word Among Us Press, USA, 1994.

Prayer

“You who makes all new things”

*Lord, you who makes all things new
When the wind of the Holy Spirit blows,
Come and perform your wonders again today.
Give us the grace of listening freely,
Without prejudice, hasty interpretations or fear.
Let us discern in the words of others
What could be an invitation to invent,
To dare, to create.*

*Give us the grace of free, open intelligence,
Adventurousness and the ability to put all things
In a broader context; without categorizing,
Without preconceived ideas,
Without a personal desire to assert oneself,
Without a desire for power.*

*Give us, as far as our responsibility is concerned,
The audacity to have ambitious projects,
And the patience to implement them.
Deliver us from the instinct of ownership
That we risk having towards the projects we create.*

*Lord, you who makes all things new
When the wind of the Holy Spirit blows,
Come and perform your wonders again today.*

