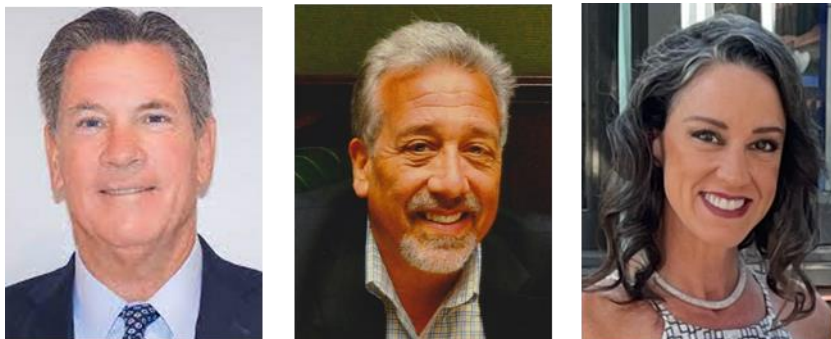




## **What does PEACE mean as a fruit of the Spirit – including in the context of work – and what can be done to make it actionable?**

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the signs and actions that the Holy Spirit is alive within us and helping us live by faith in our daily lives.

“What does PEACE mean as a fruit of the Spirit – including in the context of work – and what can be done to make it actionable?”



Pat McNulty, CEO of St. Vincent de Paul Georgia; Jerry Veltri, former Chief Mission Officer of St. Vincent de Paul Georgia; and Jennifer Maxwell, Senior Director of Vincentian Services at St. Vincent de Paul Georgia; shared thoughts and discussed this with those present during the BELIEVES session held on Tuesday, December 13, 2022.

McNulty, who has a senior executive background with extensive experience leading national organizations and private entrepreneurial companies, and has been active serving in the community, spoke first, sharing a bit about St. Vincent de Paul Georgia.

“St. Vincent de Paul Georgia has three pillars – hunger, housing, and health,” he said. “A program like our Motel-to-Home program addresses housing, our food pantry addresses hunger, and our new pharmacy addresses health.”

Veltri, who has been on the staff of St. Vincent de Paul Georgia since 2020 as the Chief Mission Officer after a 39-year career with IBM in executive client-facing roles, and has also served as a Vincentian for over 12 years – including leading the SVdP Conference out of St. Jude the Apostle Catholic Church in Atlanta, spoke next.

“I have done many assignments,” said Veltri, “but first and foremost I am Vincentian.”

Maxwell then rounded out the introductory remarks sharing that prior to being in her role as Senior Director of Vincentian Services for St. Vincent de Paul Georgia, she had served in number of leadership capacities over her 20+ year career as a non-profit executive, including as Director of Vincentian Services at SVdP Georgia from 2012-2015.

Following the introductory remarks, all the panelists were then asked to share what peace as a fruit of the Spirit meant to them.

“I was reading something last night about the Pope’s comments on the holidays and he spoke about the stillness of the manger,” responded McNulty. “He encouraged people to visit the stillness of the manger. In the last 3-4 days, we’ve had a flurry of situations and stories, especially many involving moms with kids. The moms will share 5-6 paragraph letters asking for help. Typically, we try to go through certain steps to help, but here we may have to throw those out to

do what's needed to help. I think about the chaos people go through every day. In the end, we can help a bit, but what we can also perhaps give is the gift of peace."

Maxwell added further thoughts to what McNulty had spoken.

"I think what Pat shared about the peace of the manger and the rushed life of those we encounter is key," she stated. "For staff like us, our inner peace is really what we can share. Being able to channel the Holy Spirit and share that in communion is key. I'm a new Vincentian. When we have people come in for assistance, I like to start with prayer – to focus on God and what it is to be a Vincentian – and listen. It's kind of a check for us to be focused."

Veltri spoke next, agreeing with what McNulty and Maxwell mentioned.

"There are two aspects of being a Vincentian. One of those is spirituality, the other is being attentive to the needs of those who live in poverty. We're trying to help neighbors in need."

According to Veltri, St. Vincent de Paul Georgia conducts over 22,000 visits each year – visits being when they encounter and spend time with those whom they serve.

"In each visit, you get emotionally invested almost," said Veltri. "Why do we get emotionally invested? We're bringing our Lord into a situation. We can help so much, but sometimes we need to bring it up to the Lord."

Veltri and the others at St. Vincent de Paul Georgia get very involved in the work they do, but in the end, he reminded everyone they're just lay people who are retired or are volunteers. They are not trained social workers.

"We care as members in the community," Veltri told everyone.

Tim Doyle, who leads the St. Vincent de Paul Georgia conference at the Cathedral of Christ the King, spoke up as an attendee in the session and shared a reflection or two from his involvement with the conference at Christ the King.

"I am thinking back to my first few cases serving with St. Vincent DePaul Georgia at CTK, as well as part of our training," he stated. "When you have an inner peace about what you're doing, you have that to share as a gift. The spiritual part is what people aren't getting elsewhere after."

Hearing Doyle's reflection, Maxwell spoke further.

"For me, I always get more than I give. Like Sandra, who we helped, for example. She was so optimistic and felt so strongly that when she gets through this rough patch, she wants to give back."

With the conversation already going towards the impact of peace in their work, the panelists were asked more explicitly about this to better understand what they believe peace as a fruit of the Spirit means in the context of work.

McNulty answered, "Randy Hain speaks about courage to keep balance in the workplace. Looking back, I don't know if I was always courageous enough in the past to incorporate the Spirit in my prior corporate career. I practiced a lot of soft skills, but perhaps not spirituality."

For McNulty, he indicated he doesn't know if there is any language that would make it easier to incorporate the Spirit in the corporate environment. Rather, what he would probably focus on more is the discernment on where he would work.

Thinking back on his 39-year career at IBM, Veltri then chimed in and remarked about the pressure he recalls feeling during those years.

"It was stressful," he commented. "If anything, it was just like being a case worker. I found prayer was a refuge to turn to amidst the corporate pressures. I needed faith as that refuge. The second part of it was it was my guide in how I conducted business. There was a period of my life when I was full-time at IBM, a St. Vincent DePaul Georgia conference president, and a Vincentian. The centering point in it all was always faith."

Though Maxwell's path to St. Vincent de Paul Georgia differed from the long corporate careers of McNulty and Veltri, she spoke of reflections that were also grounded in discernment and the Spirit.

"I was an educator first, and then my career progressed onwards to where I am now at St. Vincent DePaul Georgia," she said. "Back then, I wish I had the five values of the Vincentian vocation instilled more. The five values are humility, simplicity, gentleness, selflessness, and zeal. I'd go back and tell the young Jennifer about these five values. Now they are integral to me."

Picking up on the common thread of prayer in the responses, Doyle, spoke up again to share a reflection about how praying in the moment is something key in all that McNulty, Veltri, and Maxwell had spoken of.

To illustrate his reflection, Doyle first spoke of how a quarterback in a football game practices and goes through reads over and over until the game slows down and he sees differently.

Similar to how things slow down for the quarterback, Doyle spoke of prayer and said, "It can bring you back to that stillness. It's a skill you can learn to do."

Maxwell added, "We're fortunate at St. Vincent DePaul Georgia that prayer is a part of it. It helps when things get stressful to 'still the game.'"

With all the reflections and thoughts on peace as a fruit of the Spirit, how can it become more actionable?

McNulty told everyone, "When I started my career, humility was much more a factor. Then midway through my career, there was a movement towards self-confidence and how we interact with peers. So, it's kind of a mixed message. We almost need to be vulnerable, or willing to be vulnerable, on that path to peace. It takes some intentionality."

Veltri followed with one last remark to bring the time together to a close.

"Putting peace into action involves three things: respect ("respect for others"), dignity ("giving others dignity"), and love ("live our Lord's teaching and love). It gets down to our interactions."