



2023 South Central Regional Meeting

Workshop Speaker/Presenter Bios

(in alpha order)

Rafael Bacerra, Seminarian

Rafael Becerra González (1982, Tepatitlán de Morelos, Jalisco). He is a seminarian of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas. He studies Theology III at the Oblate School of Theology. He has a degree in International Business from the University of Guadalajara and a degree in Philosophy and Letters from the Vasco de Quiroga University, a master's degree in politics and public Management from the Jesuit University of Guadalajara, and a Fundraising course with the Leadership Institute. In 2018 he presented his thesis Anacleto González Flores, from the Word to social transformation, to the Major Seminary of the Diocese of San Juan de los Lagos to conclude his studies in Philosophy. His thesis has become a published book for the first time by the Vasco de Quiroga University, the second edition was published by Loscristeros.mx, and the third edition is a collaboration between the Vasco de Quiroga Editorial Foundation and the LosCristeros.mx, now he is working in his theological thesis Human Transubstantiation, a theological theory of Benedict XVI, lived by St. Oscar Romero.

Erica Benavides

Erica M. Benavides is currently the Executive Director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Southwest Texas. Erica has been recognized as an industry leader in enhancing company visibility and developing strategic marketing initiatives.

For nearly 20 years, Erica's passion has been improving the quality of life for the underserved-primarily small businesses/entrepreneurs and those in economically disadvantaged communities. Erica professional experience lies in Economic Development (City), Non-Profit Management, Food Insecurity and Poverty (Local, State, and National level), Healthcare Reform, Education Reform (Local and State level), Creative Economic Development (specifically in the Music Industry) and served as a Registered Lobbyist in Austin, Texas and Washington DC.

Erica is also the co-owner of The Colao Group, LLC and Cuba 1918. Erica's civic engagement includes involvement with the historic Quintana Neighborhood Association, Keep South San Proud, San Antonio Writers Guild, Gemini Ink, the Latino Breakfast Club, the National Hispanic Professional Organization, UTSA's Music Biz Conference (moderator and presenter), the Executive Book Review, the San Antonio Food Bank, Clarity Guidance Center, The MS Society-Lonestar Chapter, Fiesta Youth, Dress for Success, the Urban Future Lab, and San Antonio Sound Garden.

Since 2005, Erica has also been active with the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and is a graduate and former team leader of the Alex E. Briseno Leadership Development Program. She was also a National Association for Latino Community Asset Builder Fellow and is one of the founders and the past President of the Southside ISD Foundation. She is also the proud wife of a disabled American Veteran and has a beautifully blended family that consists of six children.

Rick Bologna

Rick Bologna is a native New Orleanian where he and his wife owned an Art Gallery, Art Publishing and Marketplace Production Companies for over 25 years. The Bologna's moved to Austin in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina destroyed their home and businesses.

Rick worked in the Austin technology sector leading HR & Recruiting teams through 2020. Rick joined the Austin Council as the Stores Director in October of 2020. In 2021, Rick was nominated to serve on the National Stores Committee representing the South-Central Region.

"God's Work On Earth Must Truly Be Our Own." Contact: rick.bologna@ssvdp.org

Brandon Davis

James Davis

James Davis is a registered nurse who held a variety of staff and leadership positions in the Vincentian Health Care ministry at Ascension/Seton Family of Hospitals in Austin, Texas. He is a member of the National Formation Team and has worked with teams to develop Spiritual Advisor Training, Home Visit Training and now Vincentian Discernment and Consensus. James is a member of the St. Austin's Parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society Conference in Austin Texas and serves as the Conference Spiritual Advisor. He also serves as the Spiritual Advisor for the Diocesan Council of Austin Texas as well as the South Central Region. His passion is the integration of Vincentian Spirituality into all aspects of Conference and Council Life. Contact: jamesdavis512@gmail.com.

Ray Dupont

Ray has been a Vincentian for over 39 years holding a variety of positions including Conference President, Conference Treasurer, District Council President, Diocesan Council President, Diocesan Council co-treasurer, Chair of the National Stores Committee, Formator and National Vice President for the South Central Region. Ray currently serves as the Formator and Co-extension for the Diocese of Austin and National Vice President for the South Central Region.

Ray worked at IBM in the areas of circuit design, semiconductor design, microprocessor architecture and design. He retired after 34 years with his last project managing the design of a 64-bit PowerPC microprocess with a team of IBM, Motorola and Apple designers. He then worked at ClearCube Technology for 17 years doing circuit design, system architectures, fiber optics and digital design, finally retiring in 2016. Ray holds a diploma in Electronic Technology from Penn Technical Institute, a BS degree in Applied Solid State Physics from Marist College and MSEE degree from the University of Vermont. Contact: rdupont@ieee.org.

Mike Eilers

Mike Eilers is the current president of St Vincent de Paul Conference of St Mary's, Fredericksburg. Mike is retired from the medical software business of 35 years and currently does water system testing part time while volunteering at the SVDP thrift store Fridays and as needed. Mike & his wife, Judy, will be married for 50 years this June 23rd. They have 5 children and 19 grandchildren. The oldest 2 children are twin boys and the oldest of them is a Catholic priest serving at St Josephs in Bryan, TX. Mike's mother was a faithful volunteer at SVDP starting in the 1960s until she died at age 94 in 2009. Mike spent many hours helping his mom at SVDP over the years and still enjoys the labor of love. He considers it a real blessing to be a part of the SVDP society in providing assistance to our neighbors in need.

Cathy Garcia

Cathy has been a member of SVDP St. Robert Bellarmine Conference since 1999. Has humbly served in several Council and Conference positions. Current serves under Ray Dupont National VP for South Central Region as his Vice President for the region and Regional Disaster Chair. Appointed on the National level as the Multi-Cultural Diversity and Initiatives (MCD) chair in the past and participated in the development of the MCD Handbook. Currently appointed to serve on the National Growth and Revitalization (G&R) in serving in this role also is the G&R liaison to the African American Task Force and the Hispanic Latino Task Force. Cathy is married to Felix T Garcia for 31 years, they have six children (his', hers' and ours') and are blessed with 20 grandchildren and one great grandchild on the way. Cathy is employed by DSC SVDP USA on and off since 2010 working many different disasters. Cathy believes that her vocation comes directly from God's calling to serve, be a voice for the voiceless, education and assist Councils and Conferences that are affected by disasters and assist in their response efforts in those disasters. Cathy is devoted to revitalizing the conferences in the Diocese of Brownsville and instrumental in starting a new Spanish speaking conference St Eugene Mazenod in Brownsville, TX. Contact: cgarcia@svdpdisaster.org.

Luis Gonzalez

Luis Gonzalez serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul North Texas, leading the efforts of over 800 Vincentians throughout North Texas.

Prior to joining the Society last year, Luis spent his career in the for-profit IT world and discerned a call to give of himself more completely and align his career to serving others. He previously served as Vice President of Service Delivery at Hudson Advisors LP, Director of Data Center Operations at Horace Mann Insurance and almost 25 years of leadership experience at Allstate Insurance. He earned his MBA from the University of Dallas while at Allstate, after earning his bachelor's degree in Political Science from Southern Methodist University.

Luis and his family of eight children have lived in North Texas for over 30 years and are faithful members of both St. Ann's Catholic Parish in Coppell and St. Phillip's Catholic Parish in Flower Mound.

Michelle Gonzalez

Michelle is the Program Manager for the Archdiocese Galveston-Houston, and is responsible for overseeing Resiliency Initiative programs that promote stability in the lives of our neighbors. She is also a trained facilitator for the Getting Ahead Program.

Carlos Irula

Bishop Gary W. Janak

Father Janak was born March 22, 1962 in El Campo, Texas. He graduated from Palacios High School in 1980 and attended Wharton Junior College and the University of Texas, Austin (1980-1982) and received a Bachelor of Arts in history from The College of Santa Fe in New Mexico (1982-1983). He received a Master of Divinity from Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas (1983-1988) and a Licentiate in Canon Law (JCL) from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. (1993-1995). He received a Master of Education in counseling from University of Houston-Victoria in Victoria, Texas (1995-1997) and is a Licensed Professional Counselor for the State of Texas (2000 to present).

He attended Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in Santa Fe, New Mexico and Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, Texas, and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Victoria on May 14, 1988.

Rev. Gary W. Janak was appointed as auxiliary bishop of San Antonio by Pope Francis on February 15, 2021. He was serving as rector of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory and vicar general and chancellor of the Diocese of Victoria.

Mary Esther Jockers

Mary Esther joined the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in 2000. During those years, she has served as Conference Vice-President, District Council President, Archdiocesan Vice-President, Formator, and Board member. She served on the board for eleven years and has been a Formator for fourteen years. She worked in the live and recorded television business prior to joining the society. Contact: jemmie57@sbcglobal.net.

Ralph Middlecamp

Ralph is currently the National Council President for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, his term ends September 30, 2023. Ralph is a member of the St. Thomas Aquinas Conference in Madison, Wisconsin. He served as the executive director and CEO of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for the District Council of Madison from 1999 until his retirement July 31, 2017. He began his career with the Society in 1987 as a store general manager. During his 30-year tenure, the number of stores increased to seven, and he developed the Center for Vincentian Charity.

He has served on National Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's Store Committee and Communication Committee and is on the presenting team of the Society's national leadership renewal program, Invitation for Renewal. Ralph also is a past member of the International Council General's Commission for the Cause of Canonization of Blessed Frederic Ozanam. In 2017 was elected as National Council President. Ralph is married to Dr. Cathy Hurt Middlecamp, who is on the faculty of the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Contact: rmiddlecamp@gmail.com.

Mike Pazzaglini

Michael Pazzaglini is the executive director for the Diocesan Council of Dallas, Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Michael was a program director with the IBM Corporation in Austin, Texas, and recently retired after a successful career spanning 35 years. He brings with him extensive experiences in hi-tech development, project, process, and people management. Pazzaglini has a master's degree in computer science and has completed the Institute of Managerial Leadership program. As an active member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul since 1997, he has served as president of the Society's Diocesan Council of Austin. He currently serves as the strategic goal leader on communications for the national council, which is focused on marketing, brand recognition and effective communications for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States.

Sr. Norma Pimentel

Sr. Norma Pimentel, Executive Director, Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley. Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley is committed to make the best effort in responding to the needs of people in our community. The social mission of the Church to help those in need is clearly advanced through services carried out by all who participate with Catholic Charities. She received her bachelor's degree in fine arts from Pan American University, a master's degree in theology from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, and a master's degree in pastoral counseling from Loyola University in Chicago.

Sr. Norma has been on the front lines of mercy for three decades, supporting immigrants seeking refuge in the U.S. along the Texas border with Mexico. As Executive Director, she directs efforts to provide shelter, food, sanctuary and comfort to people often treated as less than human. Her organizations has housed and assisted well over 100,000 people at the border. Sister Norma's work is one of immediate response to the emerging needs in the community. Her humanitarian work on the US-Mexico border overseeing the provision of a safe space for migrants to rest and regain strength, has been recognized by many organizations across the country.

B. J. Polk

B.J. Polk has been a Vincentian for 18 years, serving as a Conference President and Vice President for all 18 years. He has also served as a Formator for the Southwest Texas Council since 2012 and been on the SWTX Council Finance committee for 9 years. Prior to joining the Society with his wife, Reda, he spent 30 years with Procter & Gamble in Customer Team Management and retired from the Air Force Reserve as a Lieutenant Colonel. He graduated from Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth and received an undergraduate degree from The University of Texas-Arlington and a MBA from Southern Cal. B.J. and Reda have lived in Boerne Texas for nearly 20 years and are active at St Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in ACTS Missions, Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters and Meals on Wheels.

Pura Santangelo

Pura is Director of Vincentian Services for the Archdiocese Galveston-Houston, and is responsible for overseeing programs that promote greater spiritual growth, encourages greater unity and solidarity, and strengthens relationships within our Parishes, Conferences, and Districts. Pura was born and raised in Falcon, Venezuela. Her Catholic education includes the Salesians Academy for Girls and Catholic College Preparatory.

After graduating from high school, Pura enrolled in the English as a second language program at the University of Houston Central Campus. After completing the program, she pursued a degree in the Hilton School of Hotel and Restaurant Management. Prior to joining the Society, Pura worked in the hospitality industry for 17 years specializing in event planning.

In July 2004, she started volunteering at the Society's Central Office answering incoming calls to our helpline. Pura was hired three months later as a Vincentian Services support staff. She worked her way up to Director of Vincentian Services. Pura is responsible for overseeing programs that promote greater spiritual growth, encourages greater unity and solidarity, and strengthens relationships within our Parishes, Conferences, and Districts.

Jane Schafer

Jane Shafer grew up in Oklahoma, graduated from Our lady of the Lake University with a math degree. She later earned a Master's degree in Christian Spirituality from Creighton University. She taught high school in Oklahoma, worked as a parish minister in Louisiana and Texas, served as the Director of the Center for Women in Church and Society at Our Lady of the Lake University, cofounded with Patricia Castillo the P.E.A.C.E. Initiative and Family Assistance Crisis Team (F.A.C.T.).

Jane worked in the domestic violence arena for 25 years for the City of San Antonio before retiring. Twenty-three of those years were at the San Antonio Police Department. She was responsible for the recruiting, training and scheduling of volunteers with the Family Assistance Crisis Team (FACT). She also supervised the case managers and civilian staff within the Special Victims Unit. Working in this field, she provided training on various aspects of domestic violence at the Police Training Academy, to professional groups, civic, church and educational groups as well as organizing trainings and conferences for the public. She currently serves as the Chairperson of the P.E.A.C.E. (Putting an End to Abuse through Community Efforts) Initiative. She also serves as a consultant for Awaaz, a South Asian domestic violence group. She has been a Vincentian for the past 7 years.

Fr. James Schellenberg

Retired Chaplain from the San Antonio Military Medical Center.

Marie Schwartz

Marie has been the Program Director at SVDP for 7.5 years. She has a B.A. in Hospital Administration with a minor in Public Relations from Daemen College in Amherst, NY, and an MBA from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, NM. Her entire career has been spent in non-profit work and is currently serving on the National Thrift Store Committee representing the South Central Region. Prior to her work with the Society, she work with other Non-Profit programs: Domestic Violence Resistant Team (DART), Community Advocate; Resource and Crisis Center, Director of Development; The Gathering Place, Director of Operations; and Mesilla Valley Habitat for Humanity, Executive Director.

Marie's passion is helping others in my work and raising children who would be inclined to do the same. I'm passionate about social justice, equality, and fair treatment. I'm passionate about minimalism; possessions mean nothing when you consider the importance of the true meaning of things; people are important, not possessions. Less is more. I have three beautiful children; 24, 15, and 10. Hobbies: Exercise, Pinterest, and doing crafts. Reside in Pearland, TX.

Tim Williams

Tim is the National Director of Formation for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States. Before joining the national staff, he served as 1st Vice President and Senior Formator for the Diocesan Council of Dallas, chaired the Spiritual Advisor Handbook Task Force, and was a member of the National Formation Committee. He has presented on Vincentian Spirituality and Formation at numerous Diocesan, Regional, and National Assemblies. Most importantly, he and his wife have made hundreds of home visits, serving Christ in the person of the poor. Contact: twilliams@svdpusa.org.

Guest Speakers:

Martin O'Connor

Martin is Chairman of the Board for St. Vinny's Bistro, Martin joined the United States Army and after an honorable discharge he worked for local medical laboratories. In 1990 he started a medical device company which grew to sell products to all 50 states and more than 20 countries. He received the Small Business Leader of the Year from the Northside Chamber of commerce in 2010. Martin has been involved with feeding the homeless at St Vinny's Bistro since 1999. He is blessed with a wonderful wife Pamela, four children and six grandchildren.

Lorris Gibson

Lorris is the Executive Chef for St. Vinny's Bistro, Chef Lorris graduated from Scottsdale Culinary Le Cordon Bleu and has worked as a chef in the restaurant industry for over 15 years. Chef Lorris is a master at preparing hot nutritional meals from scratch and incorporating safe leftovers from local restaurants. Lorris is a calm, pleasant and a hardworking individual who has a passion that is driven by his proficiency in the restaurant industry. A real pleasure is taken by Lorris when the happiness of others is achieved.