



Society of the Divine Savior  
**SALVATORIANS**

Apostles for our times.

## **MODERN DISCERNMENT**

### *Vocation recruitment post pandemic*

Like many, we have learned to be resilient and creative during the pandemic. This resiliency holds true for our vocation recruitment process, led by Bobby Pantuso, SDS, since 2014. We were not utilizing technology in those early days. Now, we have a presence on multiple social media platforms; we stream large Salvatorian events worldwide, and we've made video conferencing a central part of the discernment process. The COVID pandemic pressed us to change our approach.

Initiating vocational discernment sessions via video chat during the pandemic allowed us to continue our vocation recruitment efforts. "In 2021, we needed to cancel two in-person retreats for men interested in exploring a Salvatorian vocation, due to various restrictions and emerging COVID variants," said Bobby. "Based on feedback received from men in discernment, we learned that shorter sessions with specific topics could be an easier way to digest the topics we needed to cover."

One of the men in discernment leads the session with an opening prayer; the group prays together and takes time to reflect and react. Next, a guest speaker joins the zoom call to share specific expert-level subject matter. The guest speaker ends with a question-and-answer dialogue. The concluding conversations turn to possible topics of interest for future meetings. "I'm trying to get them to guide me, as they are the discerners," said Bobby. "The Salvatorian focus of these sessions is to make it about them, the discerner, and where they are in the process. It's my job to walk with them, not tell them what to do."

Typically, at any given time, we are engaging with several men at various stages of discerning what life as a Salvatorian would mean and if it would be a good fit for them. "The decision to join a religious order is huge," said Bobby. "The sessions encourage deeper connections for the men. If they ultimately become members of the Society, they will already have relationships with men who would be on the formation journey at the same time."



*Fr. Paul Portland looks on during a recent discernment Zoom session.*

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