

ONLINE MEETING ON PASTORAL CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

Vida Ascendente International (VMI) & Vida Ascendente Spain

1. Vida Ascendente

Vida Ascendente is a lay movement that originated in Paris in the 1950s and was established in Spain in 1979. The movement's charism is the spiritual accompaniment of elderly—accompaniment based on the three pillars of **Friendship, Apostolate, and Prayer**.

Vida Ascendente is thus part of the pastoral care ministry for the elderly, specifically addressing the spiritual well-being of the individual, particularly the older person.

Today, Vida Ascendente is established across five continents, coordinated by the organization Vida Ascendente International (VMI). France and Spain are the countries with the longest-standing traditions within the movement.

2. Vida Ascendente Groups

To foster this spiritual care, Vida Ascendente organizes groups of 8 to 12 people in parishes and care homes for scheduled gatherings consisting of four stages:

- **Opening** Vida Ascendente prayer for group meetings
- **Reading** of the Sunday Gospels
- **Sharing** the impact of the readings on our lives
- **Meditation** based on an annual guide published by the movement (optional, time permitting)
- **Closing** Vida Ascendente prayer for group meetings

These meetings may optionally be followed—depending on the group—by the celebration of the Eucharist. Spiritual life is shared in the light of faith with a high degree of confidentiality, fostering strong bonds of friendship. We pray, meditate, share, and celebrate in unity and friendship.

3. Documentation

The charism of spiritual care requires exquisite attention to one's inner life and personal reconciliation, as we are called to share the peace found in our lives. To this end, training sessions and gatherings focused on self-reconciliation are organized.

For this preparation, we rely on two bibliographic references originating from the Jesuit community (CVX):

- **El reloj de la Vida: Taller de Espiritualidad para mayores*** [The Clock of Life: Spirituality Workshop for Seniors] (ISBN: 978-84-288-4194-8). Year: 2024.
- **Conversación en el Espíritu, discernimiento y sinodalidad*** [Conversation in the Spirit, Discernment, and Synodality] (ISBN: 978-84-293-3293-3). Year: 2025.

The first is a guide for reviewing our lives to lead us toward the inner peace of self-reconciliation, while the second prepares us for Spirit-led conversation, guiding us to shed prejudices and open ourselves to active listening; both are preceded by moments of prayer and meditation.

In addition to the magnificent document from the Spanish Episcopal Conference already mentioned by Álvaro—**Old Age: A Wealth of Fruits and Blessings*—Vida Ascendente España (VAE) and the Mouvement chrétien des retraités France (MCR) possess comprehensive documentation regarding the movements' charisms. We would highlight two documents designed for group meetings:

“L’accompagnement de la fin de la Vie” [Accompanying the End of Life] by MCR and **“¿Qué es Vida Ascendente?”** [What is Vida Ascendente?] by VAE.

4. Training and distribution

Vida Ascendente places special emphasis on training volunteers at both the national and diocesan levels to carry out its various missions (group facilitators, "Rut Plan" volunteers, students from Francisco de Vitoria University, etc.).

All documentation can be found under the "**Training**" tab on the Vida Ascendente website: [Vida Ascendente Home Page](#)

5. Presence

The acceptance of this ministry for older adults is reflected in its presence: Vida Ascendente operates across five continents, coordinated through Vida Ascendente International (**VMI**). In Spain, it is present in all 69 dioceses, with approximately 12,000 members spread across 1,250 parishes and care homes. In France, the MCR is present in every diocese nationwide and has 14,333 members.

6. Challenges and strategies

The survival of this apostolate movement faces two fundamental challenges:

- The transfer of responsibilities; a sense of belonging.
- Passing on the faith to new generations; intergenerational connection.

6.1. The transfer of responsibilities

While the apostolate for older adults is widely embraced, it faces the challenge of getting people to take on management responsibilities within local diocesan and parish settings. Generally, the members are older adults who are hesitant to assume such responsibilities.

To overcome this hurdle, the support of bishops—drawing on their spiritual authority—is crucial. As an example, I recall a visit we made to a diocese in Galicia that lacked a diocesan committee because the outgoing president was in poor health.

About 50 coordinators and facilitators attended the meeting; they were highly motivated by the movement, yet no one wanted to take on new responsibilities. The Bishop proposed the following: "Go home, and each of you tell me whom you see as capable of taking on a responsibility." We will meet again in two weeks. Two weeks later, the assembled members elected a new committee that breathed life into the movement within the diocese. The outgoing president sent me a message filled with joy and hope.

It is important to make visible the trust and esteem that other members place in each of us, enabling us to take on new responsibilities. We must motivate one another and work as a group, forming diocesan committees so that the tasks of coordination, planning, and management do not fall on a single person. The diocesan working group is essential for the movement's survival.

6.2. Passing on the faith to new generations

An aging population means a greater number of older adults living in isolation. Unfortunately, the generation aged 50 to 60 comes with a different cultural background—one less steeped in spirituality and affected by the issue of ageism (as no one feels "old").

It is difficult to connect with this age group, as they are deeply immersed in their professional lives; however, we organize intergenerational gatherings in various settings. These events have been very well received and will bear fruit in the future.

- Grandparent-grandchild meetings : Organized by the Education Office of the Diocese of Getafe. More than 400 families signed up this year.

- Meetings between catechism children and care home residents: Monthly visits by a parish's catechism group to residents of a nearby nursing home.
- Academic meetings: Round-table discussions with students from the "Accompanying the Elderly" program at the Francisco de Vitoria University's Faculty of Psychology.

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