

Closing Mass for Directors of the Daughters of Charity

14 July 2012

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

My brothers In Christ and St. Vincent:

I am grateful to celebrate this final Eucharist with you as our time of prayer, reflection, listening, and learning about your ministry as Directors to the Daughters of Charity. It has been a full two weeks, with a valuable information imparted, and an excellent exchange of ideas. Both have occurred formally and informally. Formally, we have been blessed with well-prepared and insightful presentations by confreres and Daughters of Charity. Informally, we have all gained from the rich experience of sharing experiences and ideas with one another.

As the word Eucharist means “thanksgiving” I offer my thanks to Sister Evelyn Franc, D.C. for her support and assistance, and for the use of the facilities at rue du Bac. Fr. Pat Griffin, Director General, has done outstanding work in planning and organizing this successful meeting. I thank the presenters for their time and effort and for joining us. And I must also thank the many people who made this meeting possible by their work “behind the scenes”, especially the Sisters and staff at rue du Bac for their outstanding service which contributed to this successful meeting.

Today’s readings highlight what it means to embrace our Vincentian charism: a love for God’s poor that is unconditional, and a model of service whose origin and fulfillment is in Jesus Christ. If one read the first reading from Sirach without that frame of reference, one would think these sacred words issued from our Holy Founders: “Do not keep needy eyes waiting... do not aggravate a heart already angry, nor delay in giving to the needy”. The spiritual treasure and common sense wisdom of Vincent and Louise in care for poor are reflected in the Old Testament reading from Sirach: “Give a hearing to the poor, and return their greeting with deference”.

Sirach shows us that from the beginning, God’s lot was with the poor, the “*aniwim*” who were powerless and in need of mercy.

This theme was central to Vincent's vision as he told the first Daughters of Charity "*you have a vocation obliging you to help, without discrimination, all sorts of persons, including women, children, and in general every poor person who needs you*" (St. Vincent, 6 January, 1658, X, Conf. 92). Vincent and Louise knew the secret of sanctity; namely, that God is present in poor and marginalized people. Lack of concern or action on behalf of the poor not only violated their human dignity; it was an offense against God, their creator.

In the Gospel, Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet is the lesson par excellence in what it means to be a his follower and a bearer of the Vincentian charism. It was central to our founders' spirituality, and it must always be our inspiration and standard for ministry. It is interesting how quickly Peter is repelled by the prospect of Jesus washing his feet, as he sees it as humiliating and degrading. Peter's attitude is representative of the disciples' feelings and symbolic of the human condition. That which requires humbling of oneself is discomfoting. But Jesus stands firm: "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me". And then he explains why: "I have given you a model to follow, so as I have done, you also should do".

As directors of the Daughters of Charity, you must strive to model Jesus and Vincent by your words and actions. Your 'job description' comes from the minds of Vincent and Louise, and is concretized in the Daughters' Constitutions. You are to "promote in the province the Vincentian spirit; to be attentive to sisters' formation; to participate in the provincial council and assembly; and to visit local communities and be available to the Sisters" (C. 77b). These take time, energy, and require a willingness to model the servant leadership of Jesus.

In these weeks, you have learned a more about our founders, gained insight into the identity of the Company, explored canonical questions, and participated in open forums on various relevant topics. All this has occurred in the backdrop of our over-arching theme: "Animating, Accompanying, and Forming Daughters of Charity". As you know, that theme comes from what the Constitutions (C. 77a) charge you to do as the director. So the question now remains: what will you take away from this meeting to help you in your ministry as director?

As you recall, in our opening Eucharist, I asked you to engage in the three "R's": reflect, react, and re-integrate, and to make a resolution in each theme of animation, accompaniment, and formation to improve life for the Daughters of Charity you serve. Now, I ask you to focus on the third "R": re-integrate. To guide you, let me offer a saying attributed to Vincent from the play "Vincent in Heaven" written by a confrere in my home province: In the play, Vincent tells his first followers that "When called to serve, always do that which is practical and possible".

So that is my challenge to each of you today: Do something practical and possible in each area to improve the quality of apostolic and communal life for the Daughters entrusted to your care. Be an animator of unity and good humor; be supportive in accompanying the sisters in all phases of their life journey; and help form Daughters in your care – including those in leadership – in the image and likeness of Jesus, Vincent and Louise in the apostolate and in community.

May this Eucharist unite us with Jesus and with our confreres and Daughters – both living and deceased – who have animated us by their example; accompanied us by their presence; and who by their exemplary lives have formed us to live out the charism Vincent and Louise have bequeathed to us. “I have given you a model to follow, so as I have done, you also should do”.

List of Participants

NAME	DC PROVINCE
1. ADO TELLECHEA, Gregorio	Canarias + Pamplona
2. AMINE, Weldeghebriel Andu	Mozambique
3. ASFAW, Feleke	Ethiopie
4. BELITA, Jimmy Aguilar	Philippines
5. BELLISARIO, Andrew	Los Altos Hills - U.S.A.
6. BONFIM, Manoel Soares da Silva	Fortaleza
7. BOUCHET, Yves	France Nord + Suisse Turquie
8. CAAMAÑO DOMÍNGUEZ, José Ignacio	Barcelona
9. CABALLERO, Amado	Japon
10. CASADO, Fernando	Madrid San Vicente
11. D'AMICO, Roberto	Naples
12. DUARTE ALONSO, Pedro Juan	Argentine + Paraguay
13. EDEM, Michael Imediedu	Nigéria
14. FERREIRA, Luciano da Costa	Portugal
15. GAJŠEK, Rok	Slovènie
16. GAMERO TORRES, Javier Walter	Pérou
17. GARAJ, Jozef	Slovaquie
18. GARCIA ORTIZ, Francisco Javier	Mexique
19. GOMES, Francisco Ermelindo	Belo Horizonte
20. GOMEZ, Néstor	Afrique Centrale
21. GONÇALVES, Carlos César	Recife
22. GONZALEZ LOPEZ, Antonio	Venezuela
23. GUTIERREZ AMARO, Miguel-Jesús	Madagascar
24. GUTIERREZ NAVA, Aarón	Amérique Centrale

NAME	DC PROVINCE
25. HARDJODIRONO, Franciscus	Indonésie
26. JAMIL, Semaan	Proche-Orient + Suisse Turquie
27. JERNEJ, Alexander	Graz-Europe Centrale
28. KELLY, Fergus	Grande Bretagne
29. KOTTIRY, Thomas	Inde du Nord
30. LOPEZ LOPEZ, Francisco Javier	San Sebastián
31. LÓPEZ MASIDE, José María	Sevilla
32. ŁUCYSZYN, Józef	Cracovie
33. MACIAS, L. Fernando	Chili
34. MAŁŻEŃSKI, Kazimierz Grzegorz	Varsovie
35. MANGULU MOBONDA, Jean-Pierre	Haïti
36. MARTÍN ESTEBAN, Teodoro	Granada
37. MAUVAIS, Christian	Afrique du Nord
38. McKENNA, Tom	Sainte Louise - U.S.A.
39. MOKOLO, Désiré	Congo
40. MOLINA SALMERON, Antonio	Madrid Sta. Luisa
41. NOONAN, Mark John	Irlande
42. PACHECO, Victor	Thaïlande
43. PACITTI, Vittorio	Région d'Albanie
44. PASSERINI, Giancarlo	Rome + Sienne
45. PAULINO, Alejandro	Santo Domingo
46. PHAN THAI, Joseph Hoa	Viet Nam
47. PRADO, Manuel	Porto Rico
48. PRAGER, John	Équateur
49. PUDUSSERY, Devasia	Inde du Sud
50. QUERUBÍN MARÍN, Ricardo Antonio	Cali
51. SANTIA, Michelangelo	Turin

NAME	DC PROVINCE
52. SILVA, Raimundo Nonato Cândido	Amazonie
53. ŚLIWIŃSKI, Paweł	Chelmno
54. SPISLA, Euzébio	Curitiba
55. STASIOWSKI, Marcin Marek	Cracovie
56. STERLING, Luis Alfonso	Bogota
57. TYPAMM, Emmanuel	Cameroun
58. VAN AERT, Jan	Province Chinoise
59. VASQUEZ DUQUE, Joel	Bolivie
60. VELASCO, Juan	Gijón
61. VENUTO, Paulo Eustáquio	Rio de Janeiro
62. WALKER, Gilberto	Cuba
63. WILLIAMS, Tim	Australie
64. WITZEL, Georg	Cologne - Pays Bas
65. ZEDDE, Italo	Sardaigne
66. GAY, G. Gregory	Superior General, Rome
67. GRIFFIN, Patrick J.	Director General, Paris