

Letter to the Vincentian Family on the Plight of Christians in Iraq

Rome, 15 August 2014

Dear Members of the Vincentian Family,

A Blessed Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady!

Since the last circular letter a few days ago which I addressed to all branches of our Family, there have been other events that require me to write to you again; I do not want to miss the call for deep reflection and prayer that is made to us.

For months now, we have listened to Pope Francis speak of his concern and sadness regarding the reality of the persecuted Christians in Iraq, along with other situations of famine, drought, war, and disease in many parts of the world, where the poorest always suffer. A few days ago, I received a letter from Michael Thio, International President of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. He informed me that among those persecuted Christians in Iraq, there are many who belong to Conferences in that country. This makes us even closer to the situation.

On Sunday, 10 August, at the Angelus, Pope Francis said *"We are stunned and dismayed by the news coming from Iraq: thousands of persons, among them so many Christians, expelled from their homes in a brutal way; children who die of thirst and hunger during the flight; kidnapped women; massacred persons; violence of all kinds; destruction throughout, of houses, religious, historical, and cultural heritages. All that seriously offends both God and humanity. One does not hate in God's name! War is not made in the name of God!"*.

As members of the Vincentian Family, let us not ignore the call that the Church and the poor make to us, specifically in Iraq, to unite for this cause. A recent report of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, noted that they have been providing Iraqi refugees with humanitarian aid since June. Therefore, if we can make a material contribution, let us do so through the national branches of Caritas (Catholic Charities) and the Episcopal Conferences.

But I want to launch a call to all branches, nationally, regionally, or locally to organize a day of Prayer (and fasting) in a creative way, for 22 August, when we celebrate the feast of the Queenship of the Blessed

Virgin Mary. Let us pray, as the Pope has said, “together to the God of peace, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary: Give peace, Lord, to our days, and make us builders of justice and peace. Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us!”.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General