

**Greeting of Welcome
from the Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity**

My very dear Fathers, Sisters and Advisors of lay branches of the Vincentian Family,

First of all, welcome to the Mother House of the Daughters of Charity, the place that you have chosen to have your meeting. The General Council and all the sisters of the house welcome you with joy and will do their best to foster this atmosphere of joy for this very important and significant meeting for the Vincentian laity and the Vincentian Family in general. I believe that it is the first meeting of this kind, or at least of this magnitude, in our history.

The house is at your disposal, given what we have and what we do not have! We are here to help create, as far as we can, a pleasant atmosphere for your meeting.

We would not be content to just offer you the physical and material set-up of this house. This house is also a house of prayer in which you will participate in a special way throughout these days. I am speaking not only of the Chapel, which is a privileged place of prayer, but of our elder sisters who have promised to keep you in their prayers. As for me, I also promise to pray the Our Father in a special way, asking the Lord to fulfill all my hopes for you as Advisors, and in general, for the branches of the Family that have been confided to you.

May this be a family-centered meeting, for we are all brothers and sisters, and in this case, we have special bonds that unite us as children of the one “**Father**” whom we call “**Our**.” May you experience in this atmosphere, the joy of belonging to the same Christian and Vincentian family, sharing the same spirit and charism.

May “**hallowed be thy name**” permeate all that we do. The best way to do this is to be saints. I believe that what John Paul II says to missionaries in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, is also applicable to Advisors: “The true missionary is a saint, a man or woman of the Beatitudes” (cf. *RM*, 90-91). In the same way, the true Advisor will be a saint, the man or woman of the Beatitudes. This will be the best way, or rather, the only way to be “witnesses” of the gospel and “prophets” who announce God’s love and tenderness to the poor.

May your principal goal be spreading the **Kingdom of God**. You have been privileged; you have been personally called by name to contribute to the *New Evangelization* through the group that you animate. This is also the best way to accomplish the **Will of God** because, in the end, that is the only thing to

which we aspire. This was also the force behind all great works accomplished in the Church of God, as well as the desire our Founders expressed so many times.

May the Lord also give you your **daily bread**, the courage you need in order to begin each day with enthusiasm and the necessary means to transmit the message to others. The expert presenters are going to obtain for you the doctrinal nourishment you are seeking and which will enrich and sustain you in your work. May you also know how to share: those who have more with those who do not have enough. Certainly, you all have much to give to others and much to receive from others. I see some faces here that I know well, who have been working at this for a long time and who can offer you their experience. This sharing, this exchange is perhaps one of the most enriching aspects of these meetings. I notice this same thing during international sessions at the Mother House for the sisters. When I ask them what impressed them the most, it is always the visit to the Archives that they name first. There, one is able to reflect upon the writings of the Founders which, in addition to being important documents of doctrine, are true relics for us. The second aspect that impresses them is the internationality itself, which enables them to put faces on people they have heard about. During these meetings, events, presentations, successes, failures, difficulties are shared and seen for their true value. Together, you can analyze the “whys” and seek and suggest solutions. All of this can encourage and impel you to continue this beautiful work of group animation that has been confided to you and which is not always easy.

As for the fifth petition of the **Our Father**, I do not think you will have trespasses for which to ask forgiveness, but, who knows? Sometimes in the holy places where we work for God and in God’s name, there can also be desires to be first or some jealousy that can offend, neutralize, counteract or even ruin apostolic work. These are times when the devil makes the most of a situation. Instead, create bonds of **friendship** that guarantee working together in solidarity now and in the future.

I also ask the Lord to deliver you from being led into certain temptations:

- the temptation to have the first place, of wanting to do things that are too impressive and extraordinary;
- the temptation to place more importance on methods and techniques, leaving aside the Holy Spirit and not giving him the place he deserves;
- the temptation (and this can also exist) of not putting at the Spirit’s disposal the many, useful modern means that he could use to spread his influence throughout the world;
- most of all, may the Spirit deliver you from the temptation of fear of failure and the temptation of discouragement. Everything that comes about is not according to our thoughts and desires, or even our efforts.

It is necessary to be convinced that effort is never lost and that sooner or later, it will bear fruit. As the gospel tells us, “some sow and others reap.” Sometimes we think we will have hundreds of people and we find ourselves with a very small group. This is not a sufficient reason to paralyze us. Who knows that perhaps from this small number, someone has been chosen by God to change the world. St. Vincent himself told us: “Three can do more than ten when Our Lord puts his hand to things” (Coste, Vol. 4, English ed., p. 122).

- Finally, may **God deliver you from all evil**, in all ways and in return may he give you all that is good: enthusiasm, joy, unity, fervor, etc.

I also invoke Mary, because through her intercession we receive all graces. The one who was chosen to be a privileged instrument in the Mystery of Salvation cannot be absent from our work, which has as its goal to free poor humanity from spiritual and material ills. May Mary and our Holy Founders accompany you throughout the course of your work.

Have a good Session!

Sister Juana Elizondo, D.C.
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(Translation: TRANSLATION CENTER – DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY, Paris)