



Vincentian Solidarity Office

October 2006 Bulletin

Comments from the VSO Administrator

Dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with us!

In September of 2006 the VSO funded 4 VSF Micro-Project Grant Applications through the generosity of confreres contributing to the Vincentian Solidarity Fund (VSF). The VSO awarded VSF micro-project grants to: the Province of Fortaleza in Brazil to furnish its new provincial assembly room; the Vice-Province of Nigeria to finance the electrical connection of the new complex at St. Justin's Seminary in Ogobia; the Province of the Congo for new plumbing for the Scholasticate of St. Vincent de Paul in Kimwenza; and the Province of Madagascar for the construction of a water reservoir basin for the Village of Ezambe.

This bulletin focuses on two VSO projects: one in the Vice-Province of Nigeria; the second in Province of Fortaleza in Brazil. The circumstances of these projects are representative of the realities facing our provinces, vice-provinces, and missions in many developing countries.

The number of applicants to our Congregation is exploding in developing countries. But our provinces, vice-provinces, and missions in developing countries often lack the means to accommodate more seminarians. Confreres in developing countries confront extreme poverty among the people they serve, but they often lack the financial resources to implement economic development measures to advance the welfare of the poor. How immensely helpful, then, when we contribute from own resources to support the needs and works of confreres in developing countries. More importantly, such solidarity promises all of us insight into the Gospel.

Faternally in St. Vincent,

Brother Peter A. Campbell, C.M.

Faith Rises in Ogobia

Confreres have served in Nigeria since its birth as an independent nation in 1960. Today they staff 10 parishes, serve dozens of mission stations, sponsor 7 schools, serve at 3 diocesan seminaries, run the prison chaplaincy for an archdiocese, direct a diocesan catechetical training center, and offer retreats and missions in many parishes. Confreres serve the poor in all these ministries. Its extensive works for the poor attract many applicants to the Vice-Province of Nigeria, annually totaling over 400! Sadly, many worthy candidates are turned away because of inadequate seminary facilities.

For this reason the VSO readily agreed to assist the Vice-Province in financing the construction of a new complex at St. Justin's Seminary in Ogobia in Benue State. The seminary serves as the Vice-Province's novitiate. It also provides retreat space for members of the local Otukpo Diocese. The complex at St. Justin's Seminary was physically decaying and had very limited capacity. The Vice-Province hoped to replace several buildings at the seminary and double its occupancy.



The new seminary in Ogobia, left to right: the chapel, administration building, and 2 accommodation buildings

The VSO assisted the Vice-Province of Nigeria in obtaining grants from several funding agencies to finance the construction of the new seminary complex. These included the Raskob and Koch

Foundations, and Missio Aachen. Other funding was provided by contributions from many individuals and the CWR Electronics Corporation in the United States. The VSO matched these grants and contributions with monies from the VSF. With this funding the Vice-Province of Nigeria constructed a new chapel; a new administration building with a classroom, dining room, kitchen, recreation room, office, and apartment suite; a new accommodation building with 14 bedrooms and 2 studies; and a second new accommodation building with 10 bedrooms, a library, and classroom. Seminarians and retreat participants will soon occupy these buildings at St. Justin's Seminary once the electrical and water connections are completed for the new complex.

School Support in Fortaleza

The country of Brazil, with the largest economy in South America, has one of the most unjust distributions of wealth of any nation in the world. The poorest 10% of Brazilian households account for less than 1% of the nation's total household income, while the wealthiest 10% of households account for nearly one-half of the nation's household income. Educational opportunities in Brazil reflect the broader disparity of resources between the country's rich and poor. The government puts relatively few resources into education. Public schools that mostly serve the poor are usually under-funded and ineffective.

The City of Fortaleza is located in northeastern Brazil—the region with the largest concentration of poverty. A key work of the confreres of the Fortaleza Province that addresses poverty is the Colégio São Vicente: a school serving pre-school, kindergarten, primary, and secondary education students. The Colégio São Vicente offers 700 poor children from the peripheral barrios of the City of Fortaleza a high quality education they cannot obtain in public schools.

In recent years the Colégio São Vicente has experienced growing financial challenges. The need to keep tuition low and to provide scholarships to assure that very poor children can attend the school, has mandated the delaying of repairs to the school buildings and purchasing of equipment and teaching supplies. The Province of Fortaleza requested the service of the VSO to help obtain funding to make repairs to the Colégio São Vicente and purchase equipment and teaching supplies for the school.



Students in front of the Colégio São Vicente at dismissal

The VSO obtained a grant to finance new fixtures, tiling, roofing, and painting for the school from the Raskob Foundation. A grant from Stichting Porticus funded the school's first computer lab. Both grants were matched with monies from the VSF. The VSO also obtained contributions from many individuals, 3 community houses of the Eastern Province in the United States, and the St. Vincent De Paul Societies at St. John Bosco Parish and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia (all matched with monies from the VSF) to finance the purchasing of a copy machine, teaching materials, sports equipment, and team uniforms for the school.

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Our goal: To assist the poorer provinces, vice-provinces, missions, and visitors' conferences of the Congregation of the Mission with obtaining funds for their works and needs.

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