

June 29, 1997
Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul

Dear brothers and sisters, members of the Vincentian Family,

May the grace and peace of God, Our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

Last year, on September 27, the members of our Vincentian Family celebrated a day of common prayer. Enthusiastic comments from participants from all over the world attest that it was a very positive experience. With quite unanimous accord, the various branches of our Family asked that this day of common prayer be an annual event.

As you know, St. Vincent was deeply convinced that our practical works of charity must flow from God's love. For that reason, he encouraged the members of all of the groups that he founded to support one another in prayer so that their own experience of God's love might be the source of their love for the poor.

We write today in order to provide some details about organizing this year's annual day of prayer. So that it might be well prepared, we ask you to take the following steps:

1. The heads of the Vincentians, the Daughters of Charity, AIC, and the Vincent de Paul Society in each city or area should meet as soon as possible in order to begin to plan the prayer celebration. After receiving this letter, would you please contact one another by phone or other suitable means as soon as possible. To facilitate this matter, we ask the Vincentian superior in each area to initiate these contacts. If there are no Vincentians in the area, then we ask the superior of the Daughter of Charity to be the initiator.
2. Please invite the other branches of the Vincentian Family in your area to join in this celebration (e.g., the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, the members of the Miraculous Medal Association, etc.). It is especially important that the young feel at home at our celebrations.
3. We encourage you too to provide for the participation of the poor, who evangelize us by their presence.
4. The prayer could be a common celebration of the Eucharist or some other communal service, according to the circumstances in each area. If a Mass is not possible, one might envision a celebration of the word,

with readings, hymns, prayers, sharing of thoughts, etc. In other contexts, one could envision a "Holy Hour," with the usual liturgical actions (processions, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, readings, etc.).

5. The celebration should be organized on or around September 27, in accord with what date would best promote the participation of the various members of our family. It is important that the celebration be truly *communal*, with the active participation of members of the various branches. A wise distribution of roles will guarantee that all groups take part.
6. The readings suggested for the Mass of St. Vincent should be used, along with, if you judge it helpful, other appropriate selections from his writings. Much will depend on the kind of celebration that is organized in each area. A prayer of the faithful should be organized with intentions contributed by members of the various branches of the Vincentian Family.
7. Last year many groups used this occasion to recall John Gabriel Perboyre, who had been canonized a few months earlier. This year you may wish to give special attention to Frédéric Ozanam, whose beatification we will be celebrating in Paris on August 22.

St. Vincent has given us a wonderful heritage. With him, on September 27, we ask that God continue to enkindle in our hearts the charity of Christ so that it might reach out to the poor, through us, in ever more concrete ways.

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Sr. Juana Elizondo, D.C.

César Nunes Viana

Patricia Palacios de Nava