

May 1, 1998
Feast of St. Joseph the Worker

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!

Over the last several years, around September 27, the members of our Vincentian Family have celebrated a day of common prayer. In January of this year when representatives of various branches of our family met in Paris, we evaluated this event. Enthusiastic comments from participants from all over the world attest that it has been a very positive experience. With rather unanimous accord, the various branches of our family have asked that this day of common prayer be continued.

Over the year ahead, as mentioned in an earlier letter, a number of our branches will be holding General Assemblies. This makes it all the more important that we pray together that the Spirit of the Lord might come upon us, enlightening us and strengthening us to find ever more practical ways of serving 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 St. 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 Daughters 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, other groups of laity, sisters, brothers, or priests living in the Vincentian spirit, 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. One could also organize, depending on the circumstances, a moment for ongoing formation and/or for relaxed social contact.
6. 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.
7. 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 prepared with intentions contributed by members of the various branches of the Vincentian Family.

St. Vincent once called prayer a "fountain of youth" by which we are invigorated (SV IX, 217). In this year dedicated to the Holy Spirit we encourage you to drink deeply of this fountain so that the Spirit might refresh us and renew us in our communal service of the poor and so that the fire of God's love might impel us to find ever more practical, concrete ways of serving them.

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Sr. Juana Elizondo, D.C.

César Nunes Viana, SSVP

Patricia Palacios de Nava, AIC