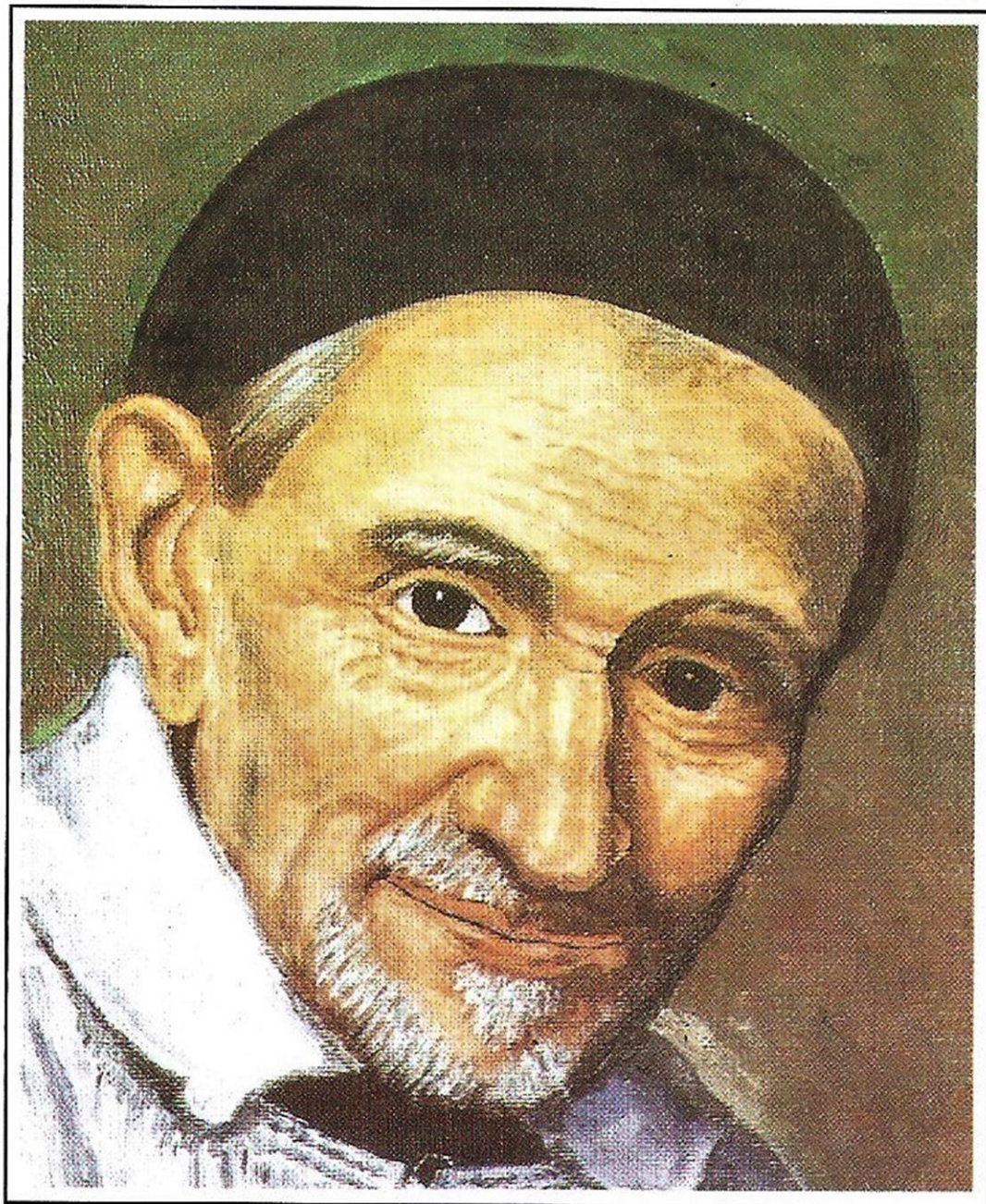


VINCENTIANA

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FEATURE:

Mission in Latin America

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
GENERAL CURIA

February 22, 1998

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission throughout the world

My very dear brothers,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

Today I am writing to give you an account of the 4th meeting of those responsible for some of the principal branches of our Vincentian Family. This time representatives from the Miraculous Medal Association and from the Religious of St. Vincent de Paul joined us for the first time. Present at the meeting were: the Mother General of the Daughters of Charity, Sr. Juana Elizondo, and Sr. Therezinha Remonato, the Assistant General; the President of the International Association of Charity, Mrs. Patricia Palacios de Nava, together with Mrs. Mauricette Borloo, Vice-President, and Mrs. Marianne Chevalier, Secretary General; the President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Mr. César Augusto Nunes Viana, together with Mr. Amin A. de Tarrazi, Vice-President, Mr. Gerry Martin, Vice-President, and Mr. Erich Schmitz; for the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, Miss Edurne Urdampilleta from Spain and Miss Isabelle Saint-Gérard from France; for the Miraculous Medal Association, Fr. Charles Shelby from St. Louis in the United States; for the Religious of St. Vincent de Paul, Fr. Yvon Laroche, Superior General, and Fr. Tito Marega, Vicar General. Fr. Lauro Palú, Assistant General, and I represented the Congregation of the Mission.

The objectives of this meeting were: 1) to exchange information about the activities of the various groups; 2) to investigate ways in which we can help one another in initial and ongoing formation; 3) to find further ways to work together with and for the poor. The agenda included 15 points. Here I will touch only on some of the most important ones.

1. We spent much of the first morning sharing information about the principal events of the past year and also coming to know the new participants at our meeting. Since we had recently concluded a meeting of those responsible for some of the major branches of the Miraculous Medal Association throughout the world, Fr. Shelby was able to fill us in on the life and activities of the Association. Fr. Yvon Laroche recounted the history of the Religious of St. Vincent de Paul, founded in 1845 by Jean-Léon Le Prevost who was one of the original companions of Frederick Ozanam. We spoke too of the recent General Assembly of the Daughters of Charity at which the members of AIC participated actively. We also discussed the beatification of Frederick Ozanam in Paris last August and the World Youth Day during which 2400 members of our own Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, from 48 different countries, gathered together for a week, living in tents at Villebon. We talked of our new missions in Siberia and Rwanda, as well as of the Congregation's decision to seek representation at the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO) in order to make our voice known on important social issues like poverty, hunger, education, health care, and human rights.

Looking to the future, we spoke about preparation and planning for the upcoming general assemblies of various branches and exchanged invitations:

The General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission which will be held July 6-31, 1998 and whose theme is "The Worldwide Vincentian Family and the Challenges of the Mission in the Third Millennium"

The AIC Assembly of Delegates which will be held in Querétaro, Mexico, November 9-15, 1998 and whose theme is "AIC 1998: Looking to the Third Millennium _ a challenge, a commitment, a hope"

The General Assembly of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul which will take place in Fatima, November 26-29, 1998 and whose theme is "The Society of St. Vincent de Paul after the year 2000 and after the beatification of Frederick Ozanam"

The first official General Assembly of the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, foreseen for the year 2000 in Rome, after the approbation of their International Statutes.

2. We discussed a draft of a document prepared by AIC on the role of their counsellors (chaplains, advisors). These are often Vincentians or Daughters of Charity but are also sometimes diocesan priests or trained lay people. This document will be further discussed at AIC's General Assembly next November. We will then, with the help of this document, be able to draft similar job descriptions for the counsellors of other Vincentian lay groups.

3. Each of us presented what we are presently doing for the initial and ongoing formation of our members. Out of this discussion arose a number of suggestions: 1) the preparation of a work focusing on significant figures in the history of the Vincentian Family, with brief monographs about their thought and their original contribution to the pastoral, missionary activity of the Church; 2) the organization of a congress on Vincentian spirituality for the year 2000; 3) the writing of a book on lay Vincentian spirituality, which would use as a starting point many of the writings that already exist but would focus on how our Vincentian heritage can be embodied in the lives of lay men and women, from the youth groups to our adult members.

4. In preparation for our meeting, we had prepared descriptions of projects in which the various branches are serving the poor together on all the continents. We examined these at length and decided to publish a description of seven such projects as examples that might stimulate other similar initiatives. These projects are located in Payatas (Philippines), Fianarontsoa (Madagascar), Mexico (the Federal District), Genoa (Italy), Cologne (Germany), Madrid (Spain), and Matola (Mozambique). They reach out to the poorest of the poor and have received financing from various agencies. We hope that other similar projects can be organized cooperatively by the branches of our family throughout the world. You will soon see more information in *Vincentiana*, *The Echoes of the Company*, the AIC bulletin, the bulletin of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, etc.

5. We treated many other matters at the meeting, including an evaluation of the annual day of prayer on September 27. All noted that there has been very lively, creative participation in such days, including not only the members of our various branches but also the poor themselves. In addition, we evaluated the implementation of the conclusions of our previous meetings and fixed January 14-16, 1999 as the date for our next meeting.

In conclusion, I simply want to say this. Over the last several years, we have developed a growing consciousness of our Vincentian *Family*. While striving to foster the distinctive charisms of each group in the family, we have also been seeking to forge closer mutual bonds by praying together, cooperating in formation programs, and collaborating in common apostolic projects. At our meeting, all of us were conscious that the third millennium challenges us to continue to create networks and to find further ways of channeling our energies in a unified way toward the service of the poor. I hope that our upcoming General Assembly will enable us to concretize further objectives whereby the members of our family can assist one another in growing as servants of the poor. In this "Year of the Holy Spirit" I join with you in praying for a deeper share in the fire of God's love.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

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

May 23, 1998

To all the Confreres of the Congregation of the Mission

My dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

In a month and a half we will already be in General Assembly. The Preparatory Commission worked well in developing the themes that were to be studied in the Domestic and Provincial Assemblies. Then, the same Commission worked on the replies from the provinces and vice-provinces and prepared the Documentum Laboris, with which we will begin the Assembly. This document will serve to direct the work of the Assembly and might also be chosen as the basis for the conclusions of our four weeks of meetings and discussions.

One of the weeks of the Assembly will have a special character because it will take place with the participation of 33 guests from the Vincentian Family. Since the central theme of the Assembly is the Vincentian Family in view of the third millennium, we wanted to speak with the Daughters of Charity, with the laity of the groups most closely tied to us and with representatives of religious Congregations which take their inspiration from St. Vincent, and not simply speak about them. Among the guests, we have invited a confrere from continental China, who has had a rich experience which will touch us and will be able to help us be courageous in the commitments which we must make for the future. All the guests accepted to participate in the Assembly.

We will have a round-table presentation by the participants of different groups of the Family and a series of conferences on the essential points of our belonging to the Family of St. Vincent. We will publish all this in Vincentiana, in order to give all the confreres the opportunity to benefit from these riches.

We have invited Br. Licínio Loureiro Miguelo, from the Vice-Province of Mozambique, to represent the Brothers of the Congregation, and I intend to ask the Assembly to give him the right to vote, like the Visitors and the delegates (cf. Decree 8 of the Assembly of 1980 and the decisions relative to the presence of the Brothers made in the Assemblies of 1986 and 1992).

In seeing the agreement expressed by the majority of the members of the Assembly with regard to the new Directory, I have taken the initiative in naming the people there indicated. Thus, to direct the Assembly (cf. Art. 19), I have chosen, with the General Council, three Moderators from among the members of the Assembly: Frs. Christian Sens (Visitor of Toulouse), Jaime Corera (delegate from Saragossa), and Joseph Levesque (Visitor of the Eastern Province of the United States). Moreover, we have chosen some Commissions for the good unfolding of the Assembly: there will be two "facilitators" (cf. Art. 20), Fr. Serafín Peralta (Philippines) and Sr. Germaine Price, Daughter of Charity of the Province of St. Louis in the United States; there will be a Commission for preparing the presentation and the vote on the postulates and decrees (cf. Art. 38), composed of Frs. Antoine Douaihy (delegate from the Province of the Orient), Miguel Pérez Flores (Vice-Visitor of Costa Rica), and W_adys_aw Bomba (delegate from Poland); there will be a Commission for the liturgy including Frs. Robert Stone (translator), and Gilson C  zar

Camargo (delegate from Curitiba); and other commissions for various services during the Assembly. I have asked three members of the Council or the Curia (Frs. Lauro Palú, Emeric Amyot d'Inville, and Patrick Griffin) to take care of the million details necessary for the good running of the Assembly.

This little Commission will assure all the services that the confreres need during the Assembly, foreseeing and doing things at the most appropriate time and in the most convenient manner. For the convenience of the members of the Assembly, the two houses (Casa Maria Immacolata and the Leonine College) have made available for us a sufficient number of rooms, with improvement in the material conditions of the houses (showers, toilets, double

glass in the windows, air-conditioning, etc.). For the hall of the plenary sessions, they have purchased new chairs, surely more comfortable than those of preceding Assemblies. In the coming days, we will have installed additional lines for telephone, fax, the Internet, and e-mail. We are preparing the liturgies and the materials needed for the celebrations (missals, lectionaries, chalices, etc.). The Secretariat is being set up with a new photocopier and some computers for the young confreres who will help us with the texts that must be written in English (Fr. Raul Pura), Spanish (Fr. Diego Luis Vásquez) and French (Thierry Guené, theology student from Paris). We are preparing the prayers for the beginning and end of our meetings.

In the provinces, some confreres are preparing for special tasks: a chronicler (Fr. Alvaro Quevedo of Colombia), a "video-reporter" (Fr. Lourenço Mika of Curitiba), an Internet expert (Fr. John B. Freund, delegate from the Eastern Province of the United States) who will give us all the information needed for using the Internet most effectively, sharing with us good experiences of what can be done. The 14 translators are preparing to help us understand what is said in the variety of languages of the Congregation. For the first time, the Acts will no longer be in Latin. They will be translated each day into the three languages mentioned above. These pages will serve for the regular dissemination of Assembly news via the Internet. Starting on June 7, you will be able to find our site on the Internet: <http://www.famvin.org>.

In the coming days, we will send to the members of the Assembly the information on the rooms reserved for them, at the Via Ezio or at the Leonine College, with other interesting or necessary information.

This week I wrote a letter to all the members of the Vincentian Family with whom we have contact asking for prayers so that God might bless our efforts and give the Church and the poor good fruit following this Assembly. Today, I wanted to give you the above information on our daily work in preparing the Assembly. The members of the Assembly will find other information when they arrive. We are certain of your support and we count on your prayers.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Superior General

Ascension Thursday 1998

To the members of the worldwide Vincentian Family

My very dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

This year, as we approach the Third Millennium, the Church calls us to focus in a special way on the Holy Spirit. We will soon be celebrating Pentecost, so I am appealing today to the many members of our worldwide family to join with me in asking the Spirit to come upon us Vincentians as we prepare for our General Assembly, which will meet in Rome from July 6-31.

The theme of this Assembly is, as many of you already know, "The Worldwide Vincentian Family and the Challenges of the Mission in the Third Millennium." We want to make this an Assembly in which we talk not just *about* our family, but also *with* representatives from its various branches. To that end, we have invited a number of representatives from our family to join us from July 9-14 to express their hopes, their needs, and practical suggestions that will help us toward richer collaboration in the future. As we prepare, we have already received many suggestions about cooperation in formation programs, common prayer, apostolic ministries, and various short-range and long-range projects with and for the poor.

I hope that the Assembly will be a time when the Spirit fills our hearts and gives us "a sense of the true and a taste for the good." So the purpose of this letter is very simple: I ask you to pray with us during these days. I know I can count on that.

There will be a page on Internet giving frequent, even daily, news bulletins about the Assembly. Its address is: <http://www.famvin.org>. I trust that you will find the page very informative and that it will also be a reminder to continue to accompany us in your prayer.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

To the members of the Vincentian Family (1)

My very dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

Recently Pope John Paul II encouraged those using new technology to "increase the Church's presence on the Internet as a means of proclaiming the Good News in what we call the 'Information Age'" (Message to Information Network of the Church in Latin America, March 3-6, 1998).

As we inaugurate this page, I want to urge the many members of our Vincentian Family to employ this means of communication well. Today sharing information is extremely important. It raises consciousness, as the bishops of Vatican II envisioned, about "the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of our contemporaries, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1). It is my firm hope that, as we exchange information and creative ideas within our family, we will be able to channel our energies more effectively in the service of the most needy and also to investigate the causes of poverty and formulate short- and long-range solutions for dealing with it.

During the weeks ahead, this page will begin to publish news bulletins about the General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission, whose theme is "The Worldwide Vincentian Family and the Challenges of the Mission in the Third Millennium." I have asked all our Vincentian provinces to establish an Internet connection so that they can tap into this information, and an e-mail connection so that they can be in contact with one another and with our General Curia in Rome. I hope that all the branches of our family can profit similarly from the information provided on this page as it grows and on the many other pages offered by Vincentian groups.

On June 20, 1647, St. Vincent cried out very spontaneously at a meeting of the General Council of the Daughters of Charity: "Oh, my God, how necessary it is to have great communication with one another. To share everything. There is nothing more necessary. That is what binds hearts together" (SV XIII, 641).

I can only respond to that: Amen! So may it be among us.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission
and of the Company of the Daughters of Charity

(1) Message on the first page of the Internet site opened on the occasion of the General Assembly of 1998, 6 July 1998.

Secular Vincentian Missionaries

Statutes of MISEVI

0 Basic Principles

0.1 The Association sets out to develop an organized presence of lay people within the Church's missionary roles "ad gentes" (to the peoples), especially in missions attached to the Vincentian Family. Judicial links are being set up between the seculars; bonds with the congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity are of a spiritual charismatic, collaborative character.

0.2 The principal aim of this Association is support, fundamentally moral or spiritual coordination of the secular missionary adults. Obtaining funds to realize projects is a secondary aim which can be fulfilled with the ONG-d of the Vincentian Family, or through other ONGs' activities, or other appropriate means.

0.3 The Association will have a missionary Vincentian spirituality, which will take directions from the present social teaching of the Church, and founded upon the specific virtues that St. Vincent entrusts to his missionaries. This will be elaborated in a special document.

0.4 The Association will embrace the members of Vincentian groups and movements who have been sent on mission; the members of 'MISEVI' will continue to belong to their original association who will feel bound to support them; the Spirit will go on indicating the options each one of the lay people ought to assume.

0.5 Contact and collaboration will be sought with the Vincentian Family, especially at local level, both at the point of origin of missionary enterprises, and in locations of missionary service, within the possibilities of each concrete situation.

1 Nature

1.1 The Association of "Secular, Vincentian Missionaries" (MISEVI) is canonically erected as an Association of Faithful with autonomous, full juridical personality, and consequently it can possess, administer, and dispose of every kind of goods and rights; it can take on obligations in all circumstances, and perform actions in defence of its interests, before all kinds of persons, authorities, and jurisdictions.

2 ENDS

2.1 The Association of "Secular Vincentian Missionaries" (MISEVI) is formed to promote, facilitate, support, and co-ordinate the presence and missionary work of the laity on foreign ("ad gentes") missions, entrusted to the Vincentian Family or animated by it. It is included within the organizations not earmarked for development (ONG-d).

2.2 Among the ends of the Association are the following:

2.2.1 To offer human, moral, spiritual formative, economic backing to missions linked to the Vincentian Family, by sending lay people to work in the missions and by material assistance to the different projects.

2.2.2 To be a channel of communion and exchange between lay missionaries who take part in the Association.

2.2.3 To realize a spiritual life in groups and to share communally the lay members who are engaged in foreign missions.

2.2.4 To facilitate the relevance and presence of the Vincentian laity who work within the co-ordinating structures of Vincentian Associations according to their specific norms.

2.2.5 To support link-ups between the lay missionaries and the communities of origin, who have sent them on mission.

2.2.6 To welcome the missionaries on return from their missionary labours, offering human, formative, spiritual and economic support according to what is set down in their Internal Rule.

3 Extent

3.1 The Association is of national ambit, although in agreement with its aim, it is extended also to the countries of the mission.

4 Domicile

The social domicile of the Association is based in Madrid, 30 Jose Abascal Street. The general Assembly can agree to its transfer in accordance with agreement of an absolute majority of its members.

5. Members

5.1 The Association is comprised of lay Vincentians, whether preparing to live, living or having lived, in foreign missions, or are linked in some way to the missionary work of the Vincentian Family in their communities of origin.

5.2 The members of the Association can be:

5.2.1 Members in formation; youth or adults of different Vincentian Associations

- whether they are in preparation so as to undertake missionary activities in different Vincentian Associations, and wish to learn more of the talent of our Association, with a view to forming part of it
- or they are in the first years of presence on foreign missions

5.2.2 Collaborative Members: All persons who desire to collaborate with the Association taking on concrete commitments of service.

5.2.3 Honorary Members: those who had full rights and are now 5 years without being incorporated to the mission; and wish to continue being linked to this Association from their country of origin.

5.2.4 Members with full right are those seculars who renew their commitment to belong to this Association, every three years, without any limit to their renewals, with a minimum of a previous 2 years missionary work "ad gentes", and a maximum of 5 years without such missionary presence.

5.3 Highs and Lows of the members

5.3.1 Those who aspire to be members with full right should be accepted in writing by the co-ordinating Team after competing 2 years of lay ministry on the missions, and having come to know sufficiently the proper character of this Association, with a prior written application from those interested.

5.3.2 The members with full right, who are on mission will renew in writing every 3 years their commitment to belong to the Association, although they rescind that missionary commitment, when they consider it suitable, following dialogue on the reasons for their decision, with some member of the co-ordinating Team; in each case, to facilitate organising the ongoing missionary responsibilities, notice will be given six months in advance.

5.3.3 Members with full right lose this status if it takes them more than five successive years without going on foreign mission work, for at least one year's duration. And to be honorary members, they must make a request in writing.

5.3.4 The expulsion of members with full right following dialogue with the person concerned, requires an absolute majority of the co-ordinating team and the

V.B. of the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity, or of his Delegate in the Association.

6 Commitments of the Members

6.1 *The members in formation* will endeavour to assume the attitudes and content proper to an integral missionary preparation. Also, they will be formed in a lifestyle proper to members with full right. "MISEVI" will help to coordinate formation with the highest possible quality.

6.2 *Collaborative Members* will have available necessary, information on projects of the Association and will seek the mission's well-being by way of prayer, management of projects, raising funds, social awareness, contributing to the formation, satisfaction of quotas, etc.

6.3 *Honorary Members* will know in detail about the Associations projects, and will cooperate with their own means to bring them to completion in the best possible manner.

They will try to:

6.3.1 Live a concrete commitment of service/evangelization of the poor.

6.3.2 Be in communion with the mission by their prayer.

6.3.4 Be concerned about permanent formation and collaborate in the preparation of the formation of members.

6.3.5 Live out the communication of goods with economic contributions according to the Internal Rule.

6.4 *Members with Full Right* will offer their highest interest in collaborating with the ends of the Association.

Conceitedly, they will endeavour:

6.4.1. To give themselves generously to the missionary tasks defined in their mission commitment and in the communal pastoral projects.

6.4.2. To try and deepen their Vincentian spirituality a life of prayer, to bring their service into prayer, a knowledge of Vincentian doctrine and witnesses, etc.

6.4.3. To present suggestions and initiatives for the progress of the Association's identity.

6.4.4. To be ready to join the Co-ordinating Team of the Association.

6.4.5. To offer to the common fund the economic rewards of their mission according to the Internal Rule and the Common Project of each community.

7. Organisation

7.1. *The General Assembly* is the highest level of the Association's participation and government. All the Members have right of voice and vote.

7.1.1. Ordinarily it will meet every 4 years; its role is to review the Association's progress, give guidelines on a program, of future activity and look at economic balance and proposals.

7.1.2. An extraordinary gathering will take place by agreement of the Co-ordinating Team, or by request of a third of the Members with full right.

7.1.3. The General Assembly is validly constituted when it has been convoked by the Co-ordinating Team, and two thirds of the Members are present. Decisions will be reached by an absolute majority on the first vote, or by a simple majority on the second, the exception being those for which the present Statutes indicate the need for another form of majority.

7.1.4. *Those who attend the General Assembly*

- Ex Officio, the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Company of the Daughters of Charity or his Delegate, and Members of the Co-ordinating Team.

- By election, a representative of the Members of Full] Right, who work in each diocesan mission area, elected by secret vote, postal, or by simple majority of the Members concerned.

- By election, a representation, one of the honorary Members, another of the collaborative Members, and another of the Members in formation, elected among each category of Members by secret internal ballot by post, or simple majority; the number of delegates for each representation will be decided by the Co-ordinating Team, so that always the total of the representations does not exceed 25% of All Members of the Assembly.

7.2. The President of the Association has the duty to animate and co-ordinate the Association's life, as also to represent it in civil and ecclesial situations.

7.2.1. The President will be chosen by the General Assembly in a secret ballot among the members with full right. An absolute majority is needed in the first two ballots; in case no one receives it, a third ballot is taken of the two who have obtained the highest vote, and the one receiving the majority of votes is then elected.

7.2.2. The Assembly election ought to be confirmed by the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

7.3. The Running of the Association will devolve upon a *Co-ordinating Team*, in accordance with the Statutes, Internal Rule, the Spirituality Document, and guidelines of the General Assemblies.

7.3.1. The Co-ordinating Team will distribute internally the functions of secretary, treasurer, "Vocalias" (speakers?) in accordance with decision made by the President.

7.3.2. This team will be composed of the President, three lay members with full right, a Daughter of Charity, a Vincentian Priest, and the representatives of the Vincentian Family lay Associations, who have members on MISEVI'. At least three of them will reside geographically near the secretary.

7.3.3. The members of the Co-ordinating Team will be elected in the General Assembly by secret ballot. This will be by an absolute majority in the first 2 ballots, and a simple majority in the third, among the members with full right, and the members of the General Assembly, after the introduction of the possible Candidates.

7.3.4. The Daughter of Charity is nominated by the Visitatrices of the Daughters of Charity from the Canonical Provinces of Spain.

7.3.5. The Vincentian Priest is nominated by the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission after prior consultation with the Visitors of the Canonical Provinces of Spain.

7.3.6. The representatives of the Vincentian Associations will be nominated by their own directional procedures in accordance with the guidelines of the Co-ordinating Team.

7.3.7. All the members of the Co-ordinating Team are nominated for 4 years, renewable for 2 more terms as a maximum. The time given to this service will not be so reckoned as to forfeit the status of member with full right. The duration of the nominations of the Daughter of Charity and Vincentian Priest will be flexible, adapted to times set for other functions of co-ordination liable to unfold in the Vincentian Family of Spain, with maximum length of time being 12 consecutive years.

7.3.8. The Co-ordinating Team will meet at least 3 times a year, by convocation order on the day set up by the President arranging the presence of two thirds of the members at the first convocation, and half at the second. Decision will be made

by a majority of two thirds at the first ballot, and by an absolute majority at the second.

8. Economy

8.1 The Association does not have any profit making character; its goods are the capital of the poor. The usual way of collaboration will be voluntary, and without remuneration, except in apostolates approved by the General Assembly. No labours bonds are forged with the members of the Association.

8.2 The Association will help to generate among the different social groups and institutions with whom they collaborate, sufficient economic concern to enable each one of the missionaries to provide for basic needs in food, accommodation, clothing, traveling, rest..., according to the habitual circumstances of their place of missionary work.

8.3 The economic funds used in the Association can proceed from:

- contribution and gifts from well-wishers.
- quotas from Association members.
- revenue obtained from possible fees for work of lay missionaries.
- contributions from institutions in which they render services.
- other appropriate means.

8.4 An account will be set up with the prime purpose of reserving and investing some resources to help defray the expenses of insurance and support for reinsertion in their country of origin, those members with more than 3 years duration with full right.

8.5. The Co-ordinating Team has the duty of fixing criteria for economic expenditure and looking after the correct application. The Treasurer will present an annual report of the accounts for the approval of the Co-ordinating Team. The Co-ordinating Team has the task of editing and approving the proposed balance and records of the Association, which will be sent annually for the approbation to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Company of Daughters of Charity.

9. Relations with the Vincentian Family

9.1 The Association, with the independence of full juridical personality, and autonomy, is linked to the Vincentian charism and its spirituality; therefore in the context mentioned it recognises the supreme authority of the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Company of Daughters of Charity.

It is for him so:

9.1.1. Give guidelines for living the Vincentian charism.

- 9.1.2. See to integrity of the of the missionary talent.
- 9.1.3. Approve the Statues and their possible modifications.
- 9.1.4. Nominate the Vincentian who forms part of the Co-ordinating Team.
- 9.1.5. Confirm the President elected by the General assembly.
- 9.1.6. Propose possible commitments and fields of action themes for study, etc.

9.2. For the pursuit and formation in the Vincentian charism of all Association members collaboration will be required, among the Daughters of Charity and the Vincentian associations, or person and Institutions who accord with the Vincentian charism; this spiritual accompaniment will be animated chiefly by the Vincentian and the Daughter of Charity on the Co-ordinating Team.

10. Fusion, reform of statues, dissolution

10.1. The fusion of the Association with others who pursue the same ends and the reform or their Statutes ought to be agreed in General Assembly, and will require a favorable vote of two-thirds of the members participating, and its approval by the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Company of Daughters of Charity.

10.2. The association will be dissolved by juridical sentence, disposition of the competent canonical authority, or by agreement of two-thirds of the General Assembly members, accepted in extraordinary session, and ratified by the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Company of Daughters of Charity.

10.3 With the dissolution of the Association, the remaining (finance) coming from the liquidation will be handed over to a non-profit making cause, to be designated by the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Company of Daughters of Charity, on the proposal of the General Assembly, among those who follow similar ends to those of the defunct Association, and who have provided for a like disposal of its goods, in case of dissolution.

The Challenge of the Sects in Latin America

by Francisco Sampedro Nieto, C.M.

In Europe and in the United States there is a lot of talk about the great growth of unbelief and materialism. In Latin America there is a similar growth of the sects. The way we talk of these phenomenon is not always adequate or exact. We believe that the problem is that not enough clarity has been given about what the sects are, and that we have mixed "sects" and "sectarianism," "sects" and "fundamentalism," which some authors call "fundamentalist sects." Let us do some analysis.(1)

The Problem in Latin America

In the 1960s the problem of the sects had not yet become a great concern in Latin America. For example, at the Second Conference of Latin American Bishops (Medellín), which took place in 1968, the main issues reflected upon were the inequalities that brought about poverty and human misery.(2) As a result there came a strong option for the poor.(3) The theme of the sects only came up in the Document where it indicated that it was necessary to know about these sects; they do not have interest in social problems, nor do they make commitments to remedy them.

In the '70s there existed in the United States a special drive toward social justice taken on by the Catholic Church. In contrast with this was the presence and action of the sects and fundamentalist groups.(4)

In the Third Conference of Latin America Bishops (Puebla), which took place in 1979, there was more direct attention paid to the problem of the sects.(5) They stated that the sects had taken an aggressive attitude with their propaganda and their methods of taking over; Puebla asked that this phenomenon be studied and that the religious piety of the people be reinterpreted.(6) Puebla named the sects "Free Religious Movements"; this terminology is still not adequate, because it can be confused with the free churches or the missionary churches.(7) In the document, the following things are spelled out about the sects: it speaks of their tactics as an invasion; they are aggressive, proselytizing, propagandizing, threatening, anti-catholic, syncretic.(8) At the same time, the Document recognizes that part of the problem is owed to the Catholic Church which "has not reinterpreted the religion of the Latin America people, thus producing an emptiness that the sects are ready to fill." It also admits that the Church has not provided sufficient

means to build up poor education in the faith of our people.(9) The Document also points out the positive aspects in the sects, like the desire for community and participation, and for a more vibrant liturgy. All of this demands response from the Catholic Church.

Since Puebla, there have been different documents of Episcopal Conferences, Commissions, Departments, or persons which have said the same and singled out some new aspects that have kept arising. In them all, great attention is to be given to the challenges that the sects present.(10) These writings call us to self-criticism.

Moving ahead one more step, the Fourth Conference of Latin America Bishops (Santo Domingo), which was celebrated in 1992, returned to the same theme. But there still is not clarity in the terminology used about the sects. The Document speaks of "fundamentalist sects," whose presence has grown increasingly since Puebla(11); then, it presents us with the New Religious Movements (NMR) which are, for us, the sects properly so-called.(12) So we move to make a brief critical analysis.

a) About the fundamentalist sects

These groups propose Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It is important to have a personal experience of Jesus. The center of the message ... We believe that this is the reason Santo Domingo gave such special attention to these groups called "fundamentalist sects." They are defined like this: "The fundamentalist sects are religious groups that insist that only faith in Jesus Christ saves and that the only foundation of faith is the Sacred Scripture, interpreted in a personal and fundamentalist way, which is why they exclude the Church, and insist in the nearness of the end of the world and the last judgement."(13) The same can be applied to many groups called "evangelicals."

As far as their characteristic attitudes, we see that they use very inappropriate methods as they go visiting homes; they accomplish their ends by giving literature that twists the truth, with money and the latest equipment to back them up.(14) They ask for strict adherence to their teachings and are aggressive against the Catholic Church. They read the Bible literally and out of context and with no connection to the life of the Church. They manipulate the use of social communications, tithing, and the emotional side of things.(15)

It is also clear that when these groups move into Latin America(16), that they search out the most vulnerable people: migrants, people who feel abandoned and with great material problems, simple people without any formation in the faith.(17) This is a

challenge for the Catholic Church, which ought to be more of an evangelizing Church and thus fill up the emptiness of so many.

b) About the New Religious Movements (NMR).

Santo Domingo gave this name to the groups that we call "sects properly so called." It defines them as "eclectic religious forms which satisfy their identity and human longings." (18) The current types of this phenomena are:

Para-christians or Semi-christians: [tondo]Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons. They are characterized by their proselytism, millenarianism, and their organized businesses. We also call them pseudo-christians. Here we also include Christian Scientists, God's Children, Moon and the International Way (Branches). (19)

Esoterics: *Spiritualists, Rosacrucians, Gnostics, Theosophy, etc. They are characterized by seeking out special illuminations, religious cultism, and secret knowledge.*

Philosophies and Oriental Cults: Hare Krishna, Divine Light, Ananda Marga, and others. They meddle in mysticism and experience.

Of Asiatic origin: Here are clustered all the groups derived from Buddhism (Sikh, etc.), from Hinduism (Yoga, etc.), and Islam (Fe Baha'i).

Social Religious: this is where we place the Moon sect, the New Acropolis, and electric churches. They consider themselves the experts in objective ideology, politics, and use conversion, healing, and modern means of communication.

Divine Cure: These are centers that are dedicated to spiritual and physical healings.

This classification is disputed, (20) but it allows us to make reference to the sects that now exist on this continent of hope.

The Growth

Much has been said about the high growth rate of sects in America. I believe that the high percentages reported are not real and are due to what was said earlier here, that evangelical groups are united with fundamentalist sects and sects properly so-called (NMR).

In the first place, Jeffrey Klaiber affirms:

"More and more, the expansion of the fundamentalist groups and the non-christian sects in Latin America is arousing great interest among the social scientists. This phenomenon makes one think that Latin America is experiencing a cultural revolution perhaps more important, inclusive, and enduring than any political revolution. According to the most recent calculations, approximately 40 million Latin-Americans are protestants. That is to say, about 10% of the population. In Brazil, about 20% of the population is protestant. In Chile, between 20% and 25%. In Guatemala, it is estimated at 30%. In Nicaragua, about 20%. On the other hand, protestantism has not as such growth in other countries, like Colombia, Venezuela, or Uruguay. It is important to point out that the groups that grow the most are not from among those called "historical churches" (Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, or Presbyterian), but "fundamentalists," also known in the United States as "evangelicals." In Chile, for example, about 80% of protestants belong to the pentecostals (the Pentecostal Methodist Church). According to David Stoll, author of a recent book on this theme, if this actual rate of growth is maintained, in the year 2020, 57% of the population of Brazil will be protestant; in Puerto Rico, 75%, and in Guatemala, 127%."(21)

Hermenegildo Zanuso says:

"There is an irresistible growth of 11% annually of the churches and sects that are moving into Latin America. At such a rate, that from the beginning of the 20th century the non-catholics in Latin America numbered 50,000, and now they number 40 million; at this rate of growth, in 14 years they will be some 140 million. Every day, more or less 8,000 Catholic Latin Americans become protestant."(22)

At the same time the growth described here does not always bear out as projected. Regarding Chile, it is reported that there is a growth of protestant population from 20% to 25%. Nonetheless, the 1992 National Census gave the percentage of protestants at 0.8%, and of evangelists at 12.4%, totaling 13%. However, the decrease of Catholics since the 1970 Census has been only 3.9%. The difference in those figures is considerable. And you have to admit that a census, even with its limitations, is the most complete global statistic we have.

Nonetheless, we have must recognize the problem of the sects and NMR and the decrease in the number of Catholics. But we are of the opinion that the decrease comes from three factors: 1) the certain growth of pentecostals and other evangelicals, especially fundamentalists(23); 2) the sects and NMR; 3) the atheism and unbelief that has reached from 5.8% in some countries to 11% in others.(24).

It also must be said that the sects or NMR, although smallest by percentage, are especially dangerous. It is very important that we scrutinize them and make serious pastoral and juridical remarks about them.

Pastoral Challenges

The Document of Santo Domingo presents challenges and important pastoral guidance regarding the fundamentalist sects as well as the NMR.(25) Without diminishing their value, we propose these pastoral responses.

1. Response concerning the search for the Absolute.

Being human, a religious being looks for an encounter with the transcendent, the divine, the mysterious. Our evangelization and pastoral work offers the true way of meeting with God. He is the absolute who searches us out, and he is the "totally other" who can fulfill the life of every person.

God responds to the ultimate questions that modern man continues to ask. Jesus can fill the desire for the experience for which post modern man looks. Still, everyone needs illumination and orientation to follow the better way.

2. Formation of persons. Always, but very especially in these times, we need a serious and profound formation. Only with it can we resist the great variety of religious thought, ideologies, or sects of all types in the modern world. We think that formation should be on three levels:

a) General and systematic formation. After Vatican II many beautiful things were written. But perhaps what was missing was a systematized formation that presents all the fundamentals of the Catholic faith. In this formation everyone should touch upon revelation and the faith, Christ, the Church, the sacraments, and the future of the human race. If our Catholic education were more solid, perhaps some of our catechists and many of our faithful would not abandon the Church. What happened to them? What was wrong? Certainly we cannot be Catholics like our elders, but we must be prepared to defend our faith and hope.

b) Biblical formation. The Bible is a major attraction. Many say that they went to other groups because there they were taught to read the Bible. Surely they use the Bible a lot, and just as surely it can be abused. Sometimes it is a means of attracting people and winning them over. Our Catholics must know more about the Bible, be able to use it, and be able to find readings in it. There have already been some steps taken to form bible studies, bible circles and workshops, etc. But there is so much more to be done.

c) Specific formation in knowing how to refute them. The biblical texts and thoughts used by some evangelists and sects are not numerous. When one knows this and is prepared to answer them, they have very little success. Their doctrine is simple. It would be excellent to prepare our Catholics to know the poor use some religious groups make of their doctrinal points. It would be very useful to prepare our Catholics to ask them questions about things that do not make sense in what they are saying. Thus, if they say that Christ is not God, one can show them some bible passages that refer to his divinity. One cannot dialogue with the sects, but one can ask them questions. When we ask them such questions, they will not know how to respond because they are only prepared to sell their certain goods.(26)

3. More "personal" apostolic work, and accompaniment. The sects have no other type of apostolate but that of "person to person." A young person proposes a thought to another, a friend to a friend. In this way there is a great chance for success. In our Church such a personal approach is just beginning. We generally minister in large groups. We have to develop more means of home visiting and personal contact.

Such personal attention and accompaniment is desired by so many people. The longings deep within the mystery of the human person are usually only shown to God, the director of the spirit. For this reason, the sects encourage people to speak with their gurus and master leaders. And these undertakings employ special guides.

4. More participation of the laity. All that has preceded these remarks demands a greater force of lay ministers in our Church. And of course "we are all the Church." Only with collaboration with the laity can the more personal approach be realized, especially to prepare them to be spiritual guides, and cooperate in the pastoral approach to the sick; we cannot forget that the sick find themselves in a situation very existential and religious. This is how many sects work. We found that the evangelists had sent up to 10,000 missionaries through Latin America. In Chile, 1200 Mormon missionaries walk the street nine hours a day, from Monday to Sunday, with three hours break each day to study and rest. In this way they dedicate 10,800 hours a day to preach and convert.(27) Compared to that, how much missionary work do any of our lay people do?

Perhaps it is for this reason that the 1986 *Informe* of the Holy See about the sects and the new religious movements spoke of reviewing the parochial system we now have. We believe, for sure, that there must be a change of attitude, a structure for changing the economic contribution, and an evangelizing commitment.

5. Missionary revitalization. There are religious groups who have occupied places we have not tended to and have taken over old missions that the Church has abandoned. Surely the traditional mission work had its defects, but we cannot forget that it can and should be renewed. Moreover, we cannot forget that the Church is essentially "missionary" and every single member of it ought to do his part in spreading the message of Christ.

It is now time to revitalize the missionary spirit and action in the life of our faithful. By baptism, all of our lay people are to be missionaries. Some evangelicals and sects have them. There are some parishes and congregations that have put on the missionary attitude and returned to that work, but there is still a lot to do.

6. Youth ministry. It is said that most of those who join the sects are young people who are finishing high school or are in their first years at the university. Also, youths who are without work, middle-aged women who do not yet know what to do with their lives and their time, and older people who find themselves lonely seek refuge in these sects; the sects get close to these elders because they are interested in getting their inheritances.

Looking at our youth today, it seems a reality that many times they do not come from solid families and they have also been let down by society and the education system. At other times they find little chance for work and are left unattended and misunderstood by adults. Then, along come the sects offering the young person affection, a group to belong to, considering the youth to be "someone." They offer a new vision of humanity, of the world, and of history. This grabs the younger person.

Our ministry should dedicate much more energy to work with the young adult. This is not always easy, but the person of Jesus Christ attracts them. On both parish and college levels, we need specially trained persons dedicated to help young people become involved, participate and work in our Church.

7. Experience of God. We live in the day of "feelings" and the search for experience. We have spoken with people who have entered the sects in search of the occult, finding the experience they needed. In the sects one finds exercises, techniques, cults, and every class of strange activities.

We believe that we in the Church have failed to bring our faithful to experiences of prayer. We are rich in methods of prayer, but we fail to teach them. Christian meditation is the best, because it brings us into communication with the true God and helps us know the truth. Nevertheless, this means of prayer does not get to the majority of our Catholics. There is much to do in this area.

8. Base Communities (Comunidades eclesiales de base). Human beings aspire to community and need it. One pays more attention to an individual in a small group. Relationships can develop. This is what many people seek in the sects and in small groups of evangelicals. We believe that our CEBs can respond to these needs. In these groups the person is treated as "someone," can take a more active role, is recognized, and reads and reflects with others upon God's Word.

The parish itself should be a "community of communities." This would come closer to what many Catholics are seeking in other groups. In this way, better interrelationships would develop, the sharing of experiences and testimonies, which means very much to many people.

9. Mass media. We live in the time of the mass media and we have to put it to use at the service of the New Evangelization. The media has such a dominant place in the new culture, and it must have a prominent place in the present and future living and sharing of the Christian faith.

The evangelicals and other sects constantly utilize the mass media. In our Church, there is much left to be done in this area. We also have to take into account the "cultural identity" and the problem of inculturation. We have to talk to the person of this age with the means and the language that are their own. They call for a simple language with adequate responses.

10. Information. The problem of the sects demands that we inform people of them: what they are, their doctrine, their tactics, and the dangers. In this way we have a preventive ministry that will keep many from falling into these groups. Usually we are working in a curative mode, that is, after they have joined the sects; then everything is more difficult. We must remember that a sect is easy to enter but very hard to leave.

To do this, and to reorient those who have come back to us from the sects in an adequate manner, we must be informed ourselves. Only if I know what has happened in the group can I give a personal and adequately pastoral orientation. It is very important to know the sects, their mode of operation and the dangers involved; since I cannot know all of them, I should at least have a good bibliography to inform me when necessary. Informed I can inform and help others.

11. Family ministry. The family is the subject and the object of evangelization. An evangelized family that lives as a Christian family, in a real faith relationship as spouses, parents and children, is much less likely to fall into sects. And do not forget that the sects try to divide and destroy families. Many times it is one of the spouses or one of the children that leaves our faith. So we have to have an adequate catechesis beginning from early childhood, which teaches the faith and prayer. The whole family ought to be united in prayer, to reflect together on God's word, and participate together in the Church.

The unformed family with problems is a ripe field for the sects to work on. The Christian family that is well formed is protected against the sects. And the evangelizing family helps other brothers and sisters against the sects.

The sects or New Religious Movements also present legal challenges which surface in the United States; in Latin America there is little problem in this area. It has not yet taken hold that the sects are dangerous and affect not only the family, education, the person, but also the governments themselves. They work their way into economics, politics, and ideology.

We cannot go on any longer here, but we want to conclude by affirming that our continent ought to be very conscious of this great challenge facing the Church from without and from within, where there are many reasons that the sects are growing. Only if we do will we be the continent of hope.

1) About *Las sectas en América Latina* we have written on other occasions: cf. Sampedro, Francisco., in *Razón y Fe* 226 (1992) 311-321. We will not repeat what was written there, but will add to it. This is part of the project FONDECYT 1971 292-1997, entitled "Nuevos Movimientos Religiosos o sectas y libertad religiosa; Criterios para una solución jurídica."

2) Medellín, 14,1.

3) Medellín, 17,7.

4) Cf. Sampedro, Francisco, *Sectas y otras doctrinas en la actualidad*, Bogotá (1995) 319-320.

5) Cf. Documento final (1979). There are 12 sections that pertain to this theme.

6) Cf. Puebla, 469.

7) It must be said that there is no clarity of terminology in Latin America. Sometimes protestant groups are included in the sects. Likewise, the growth rate of the sects appears to be overestimated and unreal.

8) Cf. *Puebla*, 419, 342, 1108, 1109, 112, 456, 1102.

9) *Puebla*, 469 and 628.

10) Cf. Boch, Juan, *Para conocer las sectas*, Navarra (1994) 208-2.

11) *Santo Domingo*, 140.

12) Cf. Sampedro, Francisco, *Religiones, sectas y evangelización desde Santo Domingo*, en Medellín 87 (1996) 135.

13) *Santo Domingo*, 140.

14) *Santo Domingo*, 139-140.

15) *Santo Domingo*, 38.

16) *Santo Domingo*, 26.

17) *Santo Domingo*, 141.

18) *Santo Domingo*, 147.

19) Cf. Sampedro, F., *Evangélicos y Sectas*, Santiago (1992) 25.

- 20) Which is why we made another classification: cf. above, 25-27. We also allude therein to possible causes of these groups. Cf. Santo Domingo 147, 148, 149.
- 21) Klaiber Jeffrey, "Cambios religiosos en América Latina y entre los hispanos de Estados Unidos, in *Revista Teológica Limense* 3 (1992) 334.
- 22) Zanuso Hermenegildo, *Iglesias y sectas en América Latina*, Mexico (1989) 5.
- 23) In countries like Chile Pentecostals would be estimated to make up 75% or 80% of the evangelicals. Cf. Sampedro, Francisco, [toco]Sectas en América Latina... 317.
- 24) Cf. *Evangélicos y sectas*, 40.
- 25) Cf. Santo Domingo, 141-147 and 150-153. "Sobre las sectas fundamentalistas" cf. Navarra (1994). This is a good contribution.
- 26) Cf. Sampedro, Francisco. *Las Iglesias cristianas*. Bogotá (1996) 99-115.
- 27) Cf. Mujica E. "Aumentan acciones para atraer fieles de distintos credos," en *El mercurio* Santiago, November 20, 1993, A-27.

The First Television Station of The Congregation Of The Mission

By Jose Alberto Orlovski, C.M.

Director

In 1994, the Congregation of the Mission launched a television station in the city of Araucaria, in the state of Parana, Brazil. The station is owned by the St. Vincent De Paul Foundation which is active in education and mediums of social communication. The Foundation is managed by members of the Congregation of the Mission and lay people from the local community.

General Situation

The Foundation owns RADIO IGUACU AM 830 which was founded in 1958 and TV ARAUCARIA UHF Channel 23 which was founded in 1994. Both are located in Araucaria, a city with 90,000 inhabitants. Araucaria is only 25 kilometers outside of Curitiba which is the capital of the state of Parana and has 1,800,000 inhabitants.

The radio station reaches a distance of 120 kilometers and operates 24 hours a day. Several hours are dedicated each day exclusively toward evangelism.

The television station operates from seven in the morning until midnight and reaches a distance of 25 kilometers.

Projects

In 1998 the television station adopted digital technology for its cameras and video equipment which has improved picture quality. The SVHS system was used prior to the digital technology.

The construction of a 95-meter tower near Curitiba is expected to be complete by December 1998. The tower will allow us to reach the entire metropolitan region, which has a population of 2,500,000 people.

General Programming

General television programming is transmitted via satellite. The station provides educational and Christian programming to its viewers. On Sundays from eight to nine in the morning, mass is transmitted from the Aparecida (Brazil's patron saint) Basilica.

Local Programming

From Monday through Saturday from eight to ten p.m., programs featuring local parishes, commentaries, interviews, religion, and the bible are transmitted. The Telediario Regional is also transmitted. It focuses on local news, social issues, politics, economics, religion, and community services. Furthermore, current events are always interpreted from a Christian perspective.

Sundays from eleven to twelve noon, "Club TV" is broadcast containing the most important news of the week, biblical commentaries, liturgical commentaries, interviews, programs produced by religious entities, and masses from parishes within the region.

Values and Advantages

Before the Church obtained its own mediums of communication, it was costly and difficult to find time slots for evangelical programming despite all of the television and radio stations in Brazil. Each day these stations place more and more hurdles for the Church to overcome.

So much so that it is worth the sacrifice and investment for the Church to own its own mediums of communication. The content of evangelical programming is important so that the programs can be used in parish catechisms and pastorals. These are the objectives of TV ARAUCARIA, which will amplify its magnitude so that it will reach the entire metropolitan region of Curitiba. The programs and video recordings made at the station through the use of its digital equipment and increased magnitude from the new tower can be used to reach schools and communities in other Brazilian cities.

It is gratifying to see the reach of the Vincentian Fathers of the Southern Province, who are assuming this evangelical work through Radio Iguacu and TV Araucaria, grow. Their work is facilitated by the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, which pervades our acts and the lives of our communities.

A Highway Pastoral in Brazil

*By Marian Litewka, C.M.
Province of Curitiba*

A Concrete Act

It happened on the Sunday afternoon of April 27, 1997. I descended from north to south on the Autovia Transbrasilena (Brazilian Highway System). The temperature exceeded thirty degrees centigrade. I was coming from Jaraqua and passed by Goiania, the capital of the state of Goias, from there I went to Goiatuba. This 300 kilometer journey was part of a fifty-day pastoral trip. The trip began on April 6, 1997, as I departed from Carreteaba. My return was scheduled for May 25, 1997. Between April 6th and 27th, I had traveled about 3500 kilometers across the states of: Parana, Sao Paulo, Minas Gerais, Distrito Federal, and now I was going to finish my pastoral work in the state of Goias. Only 100 kilometers remained until I reached my destination in Goiatuba on April 27th. Suddenly at an altitude of 1340 kilometers along the highway, one of the tires blew out. I was scared when I heard the blast. I struggled to regain control of the vehicle, which landed on its side in the middle of heavy undergrowth. I turned off the motor and got out of the car to assess the damage. Then I got the wheel-jack out of the car. With the wheel-jack in hand, I struggled to get underneath the car to turn it upright. I tried for twenty minutes but to no avail. I was tired and frustrated. My face, arms, and clothes were covered with sweat and dirt. Several cars and trucks passed near me on the highway. I tried to signal for help but no one stopped. Since I was so dirty, they probably thought that I was a bandit. Even people who knew me probably would not have recognized me. I was not offended because I knew that people do not stop on the highway for fear of being robbed. However I was worried because it late and nightfall would soon set. I got back inside the car, yet another frustration. Desperately, I got out from under the car and went to see if anyone would stop to help me. After fifteen minutes, someone finally stopped. I went to introduce myself but the truck driver said he recognized me from the truckers magazines. I then explained my situation to him and asked if he had a better wheel jack. He did. We were able to get the car upright. Then I proceeded to take off the blown out tire. While we were working he said, "The only fear I have is that some nut will run off the side of the road and hit us." Thanks to God, that did not happen. After he helped me change the tire, I tried to pay him for his assistance but he would not accept it. In parting he said, "Hey Father, I admire your work based on what I have read in the magazines. I like your work I am not Catholic. I am a believer and member of the Pentecostal Church." Thinking back on his words, the parable of the Good Samaritan always comes to mind.

Comparisons

The act, which I have just presented, illustrates at least in part, the reality of the traffic and transportation in Brazil, bears many similarities to our pastoral work. Brazil is a country with more than 8,000,000 square kilometers. It has a myriad of roads and highways, that across the country in all directions. Ninety percent of all transportation occurs by truck on the highway. The truckers, there are over one million registered truckers, travel day and night without stopping, tired, hot, despite inhumane hours, pay, dangerous roads, with the threat of being robbed, separated from their families for weeks and sometimes even months at a time. About 50,000 people die each year on the road. It is in this framework that we insert our Highway Pastoral. We accompany the truckers on their travels throughout the highways of Brazil. We bring solace of the Word of God, the opportunity for prayer, the sacraments, the presence of the Church, and our friendship. However the main focus of our work at the end of the day is the Highway Mass. Mass is usually celebrated at the service stations, although it is sometimes celebrated at restaurants or garages. That is why along with the truckers, we also attend to the needs of the people at these establishments.

Something Of History

The Pastoral on the Highway is a religious service of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church for the Highway Community (truckers, bus drivers, cab drivers, their passengers, also the personnel at service stations, automotive repair shops, restaurants, etc...). The Highway Pastoral was initiated in 1976 in the state of Parana, under the authority of D. Geraldo M. Pellanda, Archbishop of Ponta Grossa. Since the start, Father Marian Litewka C.M. assumed the work. Until 1981, the Highway Pastoral was limited to the state of Parana. In October 1981, the pastoral was extended to Santa Catarina and Rio Grande, two states in the south. In 1982, we began serving the states of Mato Grosso, Goias, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Espirito Santo, and Bahia. Since 1985 sisters from the religious mission of Our Lady of Sorrows have assisted us in our Highway Pastoral.

In 1988, Father Jose Carlos Chacorowski C.M. joined the Pastoral Highway. He developed the Highway Pastorals in the states of Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Espirito Santo, and Bahia. Father Jose Carlos also initiated religious services along the highways of Northeastern states and the states of Tocantins, Maranhao, and Para. In 1993, Father Miguel Staron C.M. joined the mission and he reinforced our work

in the states of Mato Grosso del Sur and in Mato Grosso. He also developed the Highway Pastoral in the state of Rondonia. In 1996, Father Germano Nalepa replaced father Jose Carlos who was given another assignment within the Church and our congregation. We travel on all the highways in the Brazilian States except for those in the states of Amapa, Roraima, Amazonas, and Acre. Along the way, we visit about 7000 service stations and other road side establishments each year. We work 220-250 days on the highways each year. Masses are celebrated at over 1400 service stations across the country.

Our Lady Of The Road

We selected the Virgin Mary, with the title of Our Lady of the Road, as the patron of our pastoral work. The original portrait for Our lady of the Road is in the Del Gesu Church in Rome, Italy. It was painted by an unknown artist around 800 years ago.

Since 1976 we have distributed, after every mass, images of Our Lady of the Road on posters and flyers. We have placed more than 300,000 copies of the image in the hands of the people.

Is The Highway Pastoral Viable In Other Countries?

There is no doubt. For our part, we would like to see the Highway Pastoral in Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile. In Brazil, we help many truck drivers from neighboring countries; we also know that thousands of Brazilian truck drivers travel on the highways of neighboring countries. It is important that the truck drivers in all Latin America, at least those in South America, feel the friendly and comforting presence of the Church in their lives, work, and on their journeys.

I believe that the Highway Pastoral is viable in other countries if it is tailored to the individual characteristics of each country. For me, it was an inspiration, excellently organized, although different from our "Pastoral of the Road" in Spain. Who knows if our twenty-two years of experience can be utilized in other pastoral situations. For example, when I visit Paris, France and travel on the metro, watching the multitudes of dehumanized people I think: what an excellent missionary assignment it would be to have a priest treat travelers as friends, brothers, distributing flyers with Evangelical messages, giving his undivided attention to whoever needs it. But that would require an enormous amount of humility, patience, and hope.

Mission Of Inner-earth, Colombia "Our Land"

Jorge Luis Rodriquez, c.m.

Talking about Inner-earth means talking about one of the most beloved and significant missions of the Vincentian Missionaries in Colombia. Entering this territory for this first time generates the sensation of entering the deepest part of the earth. This is how it derives its name. The majestic mountains, which emerge side by side along the Paez River, are like giants guarding a treasure filled with culture, history, and legend.

It is a region where materialistic poverty is contrasted by human richness, where the past is marked by a people's suffering and efforts to achieve a prosperous future. A region where the influence of the modern world brought by the colonists was blended together with the autonomous cultures of the various ethnicities (the indigenous people, the slaves, and those who came from other parts of the country in search of fortune) that inhabited the region.

Its inhabitants have suffered from a forgotten history, abandonment, violence, and destruction. The colonization of the "white man" destroyed everything in its path later nature exhibited its force against the people. In 1994 an earthquake and a subsequent avalanche of mud and rock from the Paez River. An inhabitant described the event in this manner, *"For us the avalanche was not a natural phenomenon in which water and debris descended on an inclined topography. No, for us the avalanche was an intelligent being, maybe a serpent with a crest as its head or maybe a dragon who at its whim unleashed some of its destructive force, in all cases an animal."*

Inspite of the pain left behind by the avalanche, the Inner-earth community is reborn with the hope of recovering what was lost. The grave cultural and environmental consequences have made the reconstruction difficult. Most of the indigenous population was relocated to other areas outside the region.

For 77 years, the presence of the Vincentian Missionaries in the region has responded to this complex reality through embracing and learning about the life, culture, and problems of the inhabitants. This effort is centered on the following five aspects: working with the laicos, the vocational pastoral, education and culture, the indigenous pastoral, and the social and means of communication pastoral.

The lay ministers are a force within the Church. Inner-earth is no exception. The great distances between one community and another make frequent visits difficult especially on Sundays for the mass celebrations. This is why each community together with the parish names a representative called the "Animator of the Word" who is in charge of the Word of God in the absence of mass. The Animators of the Word and the Catechists are also responsible for spiritually animating the community. Both the Catechists and the Animators of the Word receive periodic instructions from the Center of Catechists. The Center of Catechists is composed of a Vincentian Missionary, the Daughters of Charity, and some lay ministers. The goals of the Center are to assist Catechists in their understanding of the Bible, liturgy, and Christian development, to assess parishes, and to help the lay people with their responsibilities within the community. The Center of Catechists is divided into 12 parishes: Calderas, Togoima, Vitonco, Caloto, Belalcazar, Ricaurte, Pedregal, San Luis, Inza, Turmina, Itaibe, and Rio Chiquito.

For many, a local church such as the one in Inner-earth is the final stops on the road to the priesthood. Two seminaries that respond to diverse realities are the Menor Juan Gabriel Seminary and the Indigena Paez Seminary.

The Indigena Paez Seminary, in addition to vocational responsibilities, teaches indigenous young men to become leaders within their communities. This is reinforced by working with families and the community. The seminary teaches principles of the Christian faith, cultural values, and the preservation of the indigenous language. It is staffed by Vincentian Missionaries and professors.

There are 11 students studying philosophy and religion in the Inner-earth region. Although the numbers may be nothing more than statistics, they signify hope that the church is growing day by day within the region. The region has six priests, two of them from the indigenous population.

Most indigenous communities tend to disappear with the influence of "white culture," especially with the loss of the native language, customs, and traditions. This is why a bilingual radio station, Radio Eucha, was established eleven years ago to preserve the native culture. "Eucha" is the traditional greeting of the indigenous people. During its years of service, the radio station has given the poor a place to voice their feelings, concerns, and complaints. Radio Eucha is for the people, of the poor, and by the poor. The poor usually have something to communicate but often lacks the resources to do so.

The station's focus is on analyzing and examining current events within the community and the world. It offers daily programming that is interactive, evangelical, informational, recreational, and educational. The station promotes cultural events,

community projects, and the activities of various local organizations. It stays abreast of what is going on in the region.

Social aspects within the community are addressed through the DIT Desarrollo Integral de Tierradentro (The Integral Development of Inner-earth). It seeks to provide guidance on health problems, daily life, society, and promotes women's rights. These issues were magnified with the tragedy of 1994. As a result, the Department of Social Pastoral was created to better deal with these issues. Through the efforts of a Vincentian priest, three sisters, three lay ministers, and various families, emergency housing was constructed. Furthermore, several houses that were partially destroyed were reconstructed. They have also helped families within the community establish agricultural and industrial businesses. DIT has also helped women in the community setup and run businesses that feature crafts by local artists. Additionally, the group emphasizes the role of lay people in promoting human rights and economic solidarity.

DIT has also played an important educational role within the community.

The Daughters of Charity assist in the education effort by instructing professors at the National Teachers College. An essential part of pastoral work is to recognize the need to reflect, investigate, and to integrate and permeate further into the community each day. This is necessary in order to understand the needs of the people we intend to evangelize.

All of these evangelical efforts seek to increase the Word of God in the community not just as a sign of hope, but as a force that guides the progress of a community that has always kept God in the lives of its people.

Confronting the challenge of Catholics who leave the Church

by Honorio López Alfonso, C.M.

In the 1970's, the non-catholic confessions had 10 million followers in Latin America. By the year 2000 they will be 140 million. The desertions among Hispanic immigrants in the United States continue along the same statistical line. More than 90 percent of these people belong to the popular classes, poor people in the majority. As a goal, the Amanecer Program (started by several denominations) hopes to capture 50 percent of the population of Guatemala by next year. For other countries the goals are less optimistic, but no less ambitious. In Chiapas, Mexico, the catholic population went from 91.21 percent in 1970 to 67.62 percent in 1990 and the decrease has continued in these last few years. In the 1980's, the missionary agencies of the churches and New Religious Groups (NRG's) from the United States and Canada invested a billion dollars each year in support of different non-catholic denominations. Today that figure has doubled. In Mexico, the Jehovah's Witnesses alone have more than a million publicists. The magazines, books, pamphlets cassettes, videos, etc. of this group alone outnumber by far those of the Catholic Church in the country, even if we include parish bulletins. In the Federal District of Mexico there are 390 bookstores dealing with esoteric subjects. How many exist in Madrid and Zaragoza? (In the wealthy countries, astrologists are three time more numerous than chemists and physicists.) Here, and this is only one more example, the denomination called the Mexican Church of Christ—they only have ten thousand members—is preparing a whole team of communicators for the day when religious programming will be possible on the national television networks.

In the days of the Reformation, the nescient Protestants won the battle especially by means of books, pamphlets, catechisms, fliers and other things made possible by the still new and marvelous printing press. Today, the New Religious Groups (NRG's) and the sects are also winning, not in small part, through the huge possibilities of the media.

Nevertheless, I do not believe that the cause or the blame for the desertions by simple Catholics is the sects or NRG's. It hurts me to say it, but I am sure that the fault is our own, the Church, and it seems to me that Providence is challenging us through these new groups brimming with life and fundamentalism, evangelism, Methodism, pentecostalism and conservatism (shake contents well before using!). They have good intentions—or, at least, they do their work. In a confusing world, which is increasingly unjust and culturally fragmented, they offer security, participation, strong and warm human relations, hope of getting ahead, a morality with clear guidelines, alive liturgies and—the Bible! (Also indoctrination, manipulation, strong marketing, submission, exploitation and other ingredients that the critics and reality highlight.)

Last summer I participated, as a Catholic layperson, in a Mass in a church in Madrid de las Asturias. In a beautiful, but half-empty, church, an educated and thoughtful celebrant, delivered a prepared homily, but we, the laity, were an audience. As I left, I was sure that the mummies of Guanajuato would not have participated any less than we did, except for our moving to receive communion. It is an example that can be found in most of our countries and which, although it does not happen in the parishes of our province, may not be the exception. The cold, doctrinal reasoning, clericalism, catechesis as a formality, the minimal participation of the laity, the limited presence of women in different ministries, cheap morality, the routine, the unbelievable religious ignorance, the scarce inculturation—especially among the poor—, the ridiculous wars between semi-conservatives and semi-progressives, the near-sighted contentment and pride because we have a few active groups which consume eighty percent of our energies, the minimal use of the media...none of this is the fault of the sects or NRG's. We could also add, without trying to complete the list, the practical unconsciousness of Catholics, whether they are members of the hierarchy or tie salesmen, when faced with the significance of the new religious offerings to the majority. Moreover, the large ecclesiastical structures seem, at times, like old panting dogs incapable of climbing a hill. And the small structures are like little enclosures with the narrow but friendly horizons of home. The NRG's and sects bear none of the blame for this. If they are unhealthy (because of manipulations, doctrinal distortions and anti-ecumenical proselytism) that does not make us well (because our spirit and zeal have been anesthetized). And

“our inheritance is the poor” and the evangelization of the poor. From 1620 until today, the Huguenot de Montmirail—faced with the spectacle of the ignorant and abandoned poor—asks Monsieur Vincent, “And you want to convince me that this is under the direction of the Holy Spirit?”

On the other hand, the patient reader might be asking himself, “And what does this long (but partial) development have to do with the pamphlets of Mission XXI?”

“What solution can we give, Monsieur Vincent?,” (XI,669)

Our reality inevitably affects us if we are not deaf to its voice. The confrere who works in the prisons will see this world as the criticism of social systems and he will see it with real faces. The confrere who teaches will perceive, from that perspective, the deterioration of many families, the loss of values in society and the difficult marriage between placing tuitions within the means of the poor and sustaining the quality of the means of education and teaching. (There are also many positive things in each case which always outweigh the negative.) My lot fell in another part of reality: the media (La Milagrosa-Yelda) and the needs of young people (cursillos and retreats) first; then, in Mexico, the formation of our students (philosophers and theologians). Next, I was allowed to work completely in the world of the poor, for whom I had come, in two well populated parishes in the neighborhoods of Netzahualcoyolt, and from there—and later from the provincial house—I published the magazine Mission XXI. Finally, I had the blessing of working among the Hispanic immigrants in Los Angeles for ten years. I also had the opportunity to give missions and mini-missions in Mexico and northern California. Neither in my times at Yelda nor in the seminary in Mexico did I have my

eyes open to the painful reality of the religious ignorance of the masses or the attacks by the sects. I knew something on a theoretical level, but very little, and none of this was incarnated in concrete faces. Subsequently—except when giving retreats or formation weeks to the sisters and priests—I experienced this problem everywhere: the poor are not evangelized, the poor are abandoned to their fate (which the system imposes on them). There are attempts at renewal—small communities, family and youth movements, biblical circles or their equivalent, alive parishes, renewed catechesis, basic ecclesial communities, missions, institutions for helping and human promotion, pastoral wisdom from the bishops, theological discussions for the erudite—but the majority are abandoned. And the structure of ministries in the Church has something to do with this. The retreat from the creative world of culture and from the means of communication which vulgarizes culture has something to do with this. But no less responsible is the general insensitivity and lack of consciousness towards the means of communication, the lack of preparation among pastoral agents and the lack of will where the decisions are made for creating experts in communication and media which can reach the masses. Yet, how can we reach the masses today if not through the media? Does anyone know a miraculous formula that can do it? What can we few followers of St. Vincent do? In the time of our founder, Paris was a city and the other populated areas were smaller. The laborers were comparatively numerous and the means of communication in their infancy. Moreover, illiteracy was the norm. Today we can laugh at the tele-evangelists and take a certain delight in their scandals and manipulations, but this does not resolve our problems. We can write off as fanatics the publicists of the Jehovah's Witnesses, but this does nothing to help the masses. We can belittle, from our posture of superiority, the soap-operas and talk shows, but they, some of them, are getting to the masses whom we call (rhetorically?) our inheritance. Or do we lack confidence in the power of the Good News through the media? (When I become aware of someone in the province putting Vincentian texts and news on the Internet, it fills me with joy and gratitude.) If it can be expressed through Platonism and Aristotelianism or even through the newer Marxism, why cannot the Good News be expressed through the culture of the media? In the Bible—and not only there—the Holy Spirit also works by means of writing. John Paul II speaks in RM about the new areopagi for evangelization. The first one that he points out (not so new, certainly) is that of communications and he laments the fact that the media have been left to the initiative of individuals or small groups and enter into pastoral planning only as a secondary level. How do they enter into the planning of the C.M.?

The Media and the Masses who are scarcely evangelized or are not evangelized at all

If I have given a résumé of personal or biographical data—minimal and ridiculous in themselves—it was to explain the dreams and ambitions of Folletos Mission XXI. The ups and downs of my life put me in contact with these two realities: the poor masses and the means of communication (in their poor version). The magazine Mission XXI was a

modest attempt to connect the language and the concerns of these masses with evangelization by this medium. But, the problem was its small circulation. So I planted—with the competent authority—the possibility of creating popular pamphlets with a larger circulation (this was at the end of 1982), but the suggestion was not considered. In 1984, with the collusion of the owner of a print shop—who waited for payment until I had distributed the copies—I put out, anyway, forty thousand copies of a twenty page pamphlet, which were distributed in a few months. (Of course from this simple pamphlet, which was an expansion of an article from the magazine, other editions were made: in Mexico, el Servicio a la Iglesia AC; in Puerto Rico, the tireless Fr. Sádaba put out 150.000 copies; and in Honduras, Fr Jose Luis Echarte published it. I cannot remember the number of copies.) Still, I am part of a community and if it does not assume as its own these tasks, freeing someone for the job, how could the work continue? I was not interested in pursuing something which might be more a personal whim than a mission. With the first pamphlet I—as positivist as Comte and the fanatics of the Vienna Circle—wanted to verify whether things were as I thought, or subjective dreams. The verification did not turn out badly and confirmed overwhelmingly the hypothesis, but it convinced only me. With these and other circumstances, during the ten years I had been in Mexico, I returned to Spain at the end of 1984.

After several months of a renewal course, Fr. Rafael Sáinz and his council accepted me into the province of Zaragoza and I was sent to Los Angeles. I had a small treasure of knowledge regarding the popular Mexican world and connecting with those dear people from Talpa was easy for me. I worked there—with the exception of a few months in San Francisco—from 1985 until 1995. But, once again, due to the reality of the attacks by the sects and the ease with which not a few simple Catholics are confused because of the reasons mentioned before, there arose in me the impulse to try something.

In fact, many works of catechesis, formation courses in the faith, week-long workshops, house by house missions, etc. arose from the same concern. But, as always, the people whom one touches are, in any case, a minority, even in a populous parish like Talpa. I continued with this concern like a person who has a promise to fulfill. In January 1995 I returned once again to Mexico for retreats with the sisters. One evening, three or four young Mexican priests invited me to dinner at a restaurant near Coyoacán. Among them were Fr. Benjamin Romo, then the visitor, and Fr. Manuel González (presently the visitor). Amidst the food and spicy sauces, we spoke of the problems of the country, pastoral problems, the religious ignorance, the sects and the abandoned masses. There was born the decision to present to Fr Carlos Esparza, provincial of Zaragoza, the possibility of attempting a collection of popular pamphlets in Mexico, with my coming to these surroundings to begin the project.

Finding the means, producing the pamphlets and creating networks

I came to Mexico at the end of 1995 to the house at León, Guanajuato. I came with three clear commitments with regard to the pamphlets: 1) finding economic support, 2)

writing and publishing the pamphlets, and 3) creating a network of distribution so that the pamphlets could be placed with the people in whom we were interested. With publications the same thing can happen as with direct pastoral work: contacting very few people and thinking that everything is going well because a few fans sing our praises.

What perspectives are opened by the pamphlets?

The printed pamphlets constitute the first part of the job. With time, when we are doing about the tenth one, we will begin a line of cassettes and, later, videos. These are the plans. Moreover, possibly this year, I will begin another small collection of the pamphlets with only half the number of pages. The reception has been very positive in the places where they have arrived. The sects do the preparatory work for us: they upset the people, move them, leave them with questions which they do not know how to answer. And so the people are more open and committed to obtaining the pamphlets. (In León, the first Sunday that we put the first two numbers on sale, they bought 518 copies and that is in a small community which is not even a parish.) There is some hope that the other provinces of America will publish and distribute the pamphlets in their respective countries, as Fr. Sádaba already does in Puerto Rico.

I should also say that the pamphlets are not about the sects or against them. They are for simple Catholics and about the great themes of our faith, about its social dimension, and about the points on which the sects sow confusion in the masses of the poor. This is the objective: evangelization, not controversy, even if I do use some controversy for literary purposes. Some parishes are already using the pamphlets as materials for groups and for missions. I know of a nursing school which uses them for formation in the faith, and I know other stories, but the goal here is not to continue telling edifying anecdotes.

That is the way things stand for the moment. From January 19th until the 24th, we had an official visitation in Los Angeles. I participated in it, but also took advantage to visit some pastors about the pamphlets and I had an interview with someone who works in the newspaper, La Opinión, and who presented me with the possibility—with good terms—of announcing the pamphlets in the paper. Moreover, I have ready for the printer a flier in color to make the pamphlets known (Spanish for Mexico; Spanish and English for the United States). But, do you know how much it costs for an envelope, flier, two or three copies of the pamphlets, sending them to a thousand or two thousand places and paying the postage? These and other similar decisions cannot be made if the continuity is at risk.

Finally, for those who have put up with this up to here, I give you my gratitude. I also thank the authorities who have made possible this enterprise and those who continue supporting it. In Mexico, the confreres help me a lot, especially the provincials previously mentioned. I am also grateful to those who work in the parishes and with parish groups and the Vincentian lay groups.

Ozanam, who struggled through the press of his time, said to his friend Cournier in February 1835: “The humanity of our time seems to me like the traveler mentioned in the gospel. It also, while it follows the route which Christ has pointed out, has been assaulted by thieves, robbers of thoughts, by evil men who have taken the best of its possessions: the treasure of faith and love; they have left it naked and unconscious, weeping and bewildered along the road...” Today, the same thing happens to the abandoned masses, but by more subtle and effective means. Religious ignorance, the sects and their offerings, the lack of pastoral attention, the esoteric programs, the economy of sharks dressed as neo-liberals, the scorn and ridicule of their faith by the greater part of the media are different forms of this assault on the poor masses. In the Retiro Madrileño [a great plaza in Madrid], there is a host of tables with amulets for all kinds of superstitions, and radio programs offer the same. What can we do to bring the Good News of Jesus of Nazareth to these masses? The pamphlets do not resolve the problem; they are only a simple attempt to support other attempts.

(translated by John P. Prager, C.M.)

An upside-down sign

_ The Church of Paradox _

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

As Cornwallis surrendered to Washington, the British fifers at Yorktown sensed the dawn of a new era. They struck up a popular song of tribute to the revolutionary spirit that reigned in this foreign land:

*If buttercups buzz'd after the bee,
If boats were on land, churches on sea,
If ponies rode men and if grass ate the cows,
And cats should be chased into holes by the mouse,
If summer were spring and the other way round,
Then all the world would be upside down.*

The new world announced by the gospels abounded with such paradoxes. Jesus, his apostles, and the early Christians loved to use them in teaching. In the Kingdom of God the last are first and the first last. Those who save their life lose it; those who lose their life save it. The humbled are exalted; the exalted humbled. Those who mourn will rejoice; those who laugh will cry.

The evangelists, especially Luke, see the world upside down, so to speak. The coming of Jesus ushers in a new era: the reign of God is at hand. In it the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame leap, the gentle are conquerors, sinners become saints, the dead rise _ all paradoxes.

Clearly, Jesus' use of paradoxes startled his listeners, shook their presuppositions, and drew them to examine their lives in light of his puzzling statements. As he challenged the way they viewed God, the world, material goods, and life itself, paradoxes were one of his favorite instruments for sounding the call to repentance.¹

The challenge for the Church, sign and servant of the Kingdom, is to live these paradoxes. The Church is a vivid sign and an effective servant to the extent that the energies of the Kingdom work within her. As she preaches God's word, she herself is subject to it. Consequently the paradoxes of the New Testament must find a prominent place in her life.

¹ Cf. John Meier. *A Marginal Jew* (New York: Doubleday, 1994) vol. 2, p. 146.

Of course, the Church is not merely the hierarchy, but all its members. We are the Church, God's people. Let me suggest some ways in which these paradoxes express themselves in the Church's _ in our _ life.

1. *When the Church saves her life, she loses it; when she loses it, she saves it.*

The Church must not be too concerned about the Church. She is for the Kingdom. Her ultimate concern lies there. She is a servant of the Lord and a servant of the world in view of the Kingdom. Rather starkly, the Lord promises her a full share in his sufferings and death. His paradoxical saying must always ring in her ears: "One who loses his or her life will save it."²

In that perilous context, the Church can be utterly confident that the Lord takes care of his own. Luke's gospel, the most paradoxical of them all, brims over with sayings about God's providence. God loves his chosen ones in the dramatically varied experiences of human existence: light and darkness, grace and sin, plan and disruption, peace and turmoil, health and sickness, life and death. The risen Lord walks with them, listens to them, speaks with them. He accompanies them in their suffering and dying and raises them up in the power of the Spirit. In times of crisis his Spirit teaches the members of the Christian community what to say and how to act.

The Church, therefore, must not be overly preoccupied about herself and her own future; otherwise she will be too timid in times of crisis, too silent when confronted with evident evils.

Some, over the many years of the Church's history, have been strikingly unafraid to lose their life, since they were utterly confident that they would thereby save it. There have been countless martyrs, known and unknown. Sometimes they stood together in great numbers, strengthening one another by their faith, like the martyrs of Nagasaki, of Uganda, of China, or of the French and Spanish Revolutions. At other times they stood almost alone. Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian peasant, refused to fight in Hitler's army when many other much better educated members of the Church cooperated, or remained silent, as Nazism crushed human rights and committed incredible atrocities. In Reformation England, Thomas More and John Fisher went to their deaths largely abandoned by fellow politicians or fellow bishops, most of whom found reasons to accommodate themselves to the king's desires.

2. *The poor are rich. The weak are strong.*

Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul, the founders of the Daughters of Charity, used to say this to the young women who came to their community:

Everyone loves to see the king and queen. People stand on lines in the streets for hours to catch a glimpse of them. They come home excited to

² Mk 8:35; Mt 10:39; Lk 9:24; Jn 12:25.

tell their families, "I saw the king and the queen today! They passed right by me in their carriage." But in the Kingdom of God the poor are the royalty. You have the privilege of seeing them every day, of listening to their needs, of serving them. What a wonderful gift God has given us if only we can see with the eyes of faith!

We may be tempted to think that it is just the saints who talk that way! But actually, the saints only highlight what the New Testament clearly states to all of us: the real royalty in the Kingdom of God are the poor. Those who are really powerful are those bereft of power. The poor Christ ushers in the Kingdom of God. The crucified Lord, in his weakness, stands at the center of history.

This paradox has two striking implications. First, the Church, if she is to be truly Church, must be the "Church of the poor," as John XXIII said at the opening of Vatican II. Today, with great insistence, the Church asserts her preferential option for the poor. She reminds us again and again that the proclamation of her social doctrine is an essential element in the new evangelization.³ One must surely ask, however, whether this teaching has dug deep roots in the life of the Church globally, or whether, at least in many parts of the world, it remains an eloquently stated, but still theoretical assertion.

A second implication of this paradox is that the Church herself must be content to be "powerless." St. Paul points out that many will regard this as "foolishness."⁴ But the crucified Lord, the foolishness of God, is present today, as always, in the "crucified peoples." The Church will find her greatest vitality when she is at ease among them, at the grassroots, where they suffer. The measure of the Church's strength is not her political influence, nor her prestige in any given era, it is her ability to live in solidarity with the powerless. Her pre-eminent weapons will not be her influence in the corridors of power; her strength will be the word of God, as it proclaims the truth, and the witness of sacrificial love, as it proclaims the abiding presence of the crucified Lord.

There is a perennial temptation to which the Church can easily succumb: to love to be with the wealthy and powerful rather than with the poor and weak. In some ways this is understandable. Wouldn't we all like an invitation to dine at the White House! Yet the real Church heroes are those who dine with the needy, who ladle out soup in a hostel for the homeless, or who search to find the causes of poverty and ways of eradicating it.

A few years ago, during the Synod on Consecrated Life, I thanked Cardinal Bernardin for a moving homily that he had given on prayer one evening at a tiny church in Rome. He told me that he had really learned to pray, and to feel God's strength, during the terribly trying months in which he had faced false accusations. It

³ *Centesimus Annus*, 5.

⁴ 1 Cor 1:22.

seems to me that it was then, and in the months of his dying, that he was most powerful as a Christian witness.

3. *Those in charge are the servants.*

Few assertions are clearer in the New Testament. Jesus repeats this lesson over and over to his apostles: "The leaders of the gentiles lord it over them but it is not to be that way among you. The one who is first of all must be the least of all and the servant of all, for I am in your midst as one who serves."⁵ In washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus demonstrates this conviction as a parable in action.⁶

As one who exercises authority in the Church, I know how easily one can forget this lesson. One gets used to commanding. Of course, it is necessary to make decisions; at times, in fact, one must be quite decisive, for better or for worse. But leaders in the Church, even as they make decisions, are ultimately servants.

They are, first of all, servants of God's word in its many forms. As servants of the word, they must be good listeners. The scriptures form the foundation upon which all their decisions are to be built. The words of the community too have a high place on the list of criteria for discernment. In the Church, the leader is never separate from the community, nor the community from the leader. Together they form one body, "hearers of the word," as Karl Rahner so often put it. The servant leader does not dictate to the community; rather, as one who emerges from it, the leader utters the community's deepest beliefs and concretizes her practical judgments.

Listening always involves risk for a leader. It may force me to change my mind, or even to change my life! Occasionally, out of fear or even out of a conviction that we "possess" the truth, church leaders (and others as well) do not listen. "They have ears, but do not hear."⁷ Sometimes too the structures of authority — the bureaucracies, the curiae — become hard-of-hearing, impervious to outside influence; rather than serving others, "they lord it over them," as Jesus stated. But the best of leaders are good listeners. They meditate on the words of the gospels, the cries of the poor, the calls of the Church — all voices through which God speaks. They are genuine servants.

Two of the best servants whom I have ever known were former provincial superiors. One, whom I lived with, would do anything in the house: washing floors, making beds, cleaning toilets. Another had the true "simplicity of a little child," knowing how to listen endlessly, discern, and offer wise advice. I am convinced that both had grown in servanthood during their years of leadership.

⁵ Cf. Mt 20:25-28; Mk 10:42-45; Lk 22: 25-27.

⁶ Jn 13: 1-20.

⁷ Mk 4:12; Mt 13:14; Lk 9:10.

4. *Even sinning provides an opening to the good (or, to paraphrase Paul's letter to the Romans⁸: where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more).*

Felix culpa (O happy fault) is one of the Church's loveliest tunes. It is a hymn to God's mercy. We chant it with joy every year at the Easter Vigil. Who is not moved by the story of the penitent woman in Luke's gospel who washes Jesus' feet with her tears and dries them with her hair? Who can fail to be struck by John's touching accounts of Jesus' conversations with the Samaritan woman and with the woman taken in adultery?

Actually, the gospels make it clear that some *are* unmoved; in all these stories there are observers standing nearby, shaking their heads. Unfortunately, the dangers of "pharisaism" and "perfectionism" have always plagued the Church. Every era has its inquisitors and its pelagians. There are always some who are too eager to expel sinners from the Church, who are not patient enough to let the weeds and the wheat grow together until the harvest. But the "holy Church" is also the "Church of sinners." Paradoxically, the two groups help one another. In fact, they are not really two groups; each of us lives more or less as members of both. As John's first letter puts it,⁹ we deceive ourselves if we say that we are without sin. We are harshest with others when we fail to recognize our own sinfulness; we are gentlest when we know that we too have often fallen.

The startling belief of the Church is this: we become truly holy only when we recognize that we are sinners. We can praise God even for the workings of sin in our lives if it leads us to come to him with humble, exuberant confidence. Those who have been forgiven much, love much. The Kingdom is a home filled with God's mercy: "This my child was lost but has been found. He was dead but has come back to life again."¹⁰ The author of Hebrews sings out: "Let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy."¹¹

Some of the Church's most illustrious members emerged from shadowy pasts: Peter, Paul, Augustine, to name just a few. We are in good company if recognition of our sinfulness becomes one of our strengths.

5. *Giving is better than receiving.*

Like all paradoxes, this not a universal principle that can be applied to every case. At times it is better for us to receive than to give, especially if we are among those who hate to be on the receiving end of things!

⁸ Rom 5:20.

⁹ 1 Jn 1:8.

¹⁰ Lk 15:24.

¹¹ Heb 4:16.

But the Pauline saying, sometimes judged to be an actual saying of Jesus, has been a constant challenge for the Church: "It is much more blessed to give than to receive." Riches are always a great lure. On the one hand, material things are surely good (God created them!); on the other hand, paradoxically, they easily draw us away from greater goods, particularly from practical love and concern for those who are less fortunate.

One of the paradoxical sayings that was hardest for his disciples to understand was "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God." Riches tend to isolate us. They surround us with a world where our pleasures, even our whims, are easily satisfied, where we become cut off from the pain and needs of the poor, where lavish entertainment is readily at hand, where praise is abundant and honest criticism is often lacking. I remember visiting the home of a rich man who asked me quite sincerely, "Are things really as bad in this country (his own!) as people say? Are there really that many people without work?" I saw that, at heart, he was a very genuine man, but I also saw, with sadness, that wealth had built a wall around him and that he rarely exited from his enclosure.

On the other hand, I know a number of rich people who have passed through the eye of the needle. In fact, I will always recall the day when I was taking part in a board of trustees meeting and someone stated: "We need a van to transport people and supplies to the soup kitchen." The chairman asked: "How much will it cost?" The person answered: "\$20,000." A board member looked up and interjected very simply: "I'll take care of that. Let's move on to the next point." After the meeting I went up to him and said: "That was very generous. Thank you." He responded: "I was just reading that saying about the eye of the needle and I told myself: you'd better do something good with all that money you have!"

Money must flow outward in the Church on all levels _ from the laity, the hierarchy, the clergy, religious communities. It should be a means for expressing our love rather than for insulating ourselves from others. Pauline sayings abound in this regard: "Those who sow bountifully will also reap bountifully,"¹² "God loves a cheerful giver."¹³

A final word about this upside-down sign, which is the Church. Paul's awareness of the presence of the Kingdom has a wonderful sense of urgency: "I tell you, the time is running out. From now on, let those having wives act as not having them, those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not owning, those using the world as not using it fully. For the world in its present form is passing away."¹⁴

¹² 2 Cor 9:6.

¹³ 2 Cor 9:7.

¹⁴ 1 Cor 7:29-31.

Theologians have attempted to describe the paradoxical nature of the Kingdom by saying that it is here "already," but "not yet" fully. Its energies are at work among us now by the power of the Risen Lord, but we await its fullness when all things are finally restored in Christ.

This already-not-yet tension places the Church in a paradoxical position even in regard to time. She adheres to the *past*, with its rich tradition, but is not shackled to it; rather, she develops it, constantly mediating between the word of God and contemporary circumstances. She attends to the *present*, but she is not coerced by its demands; rather, she is continually discerning what is of God and truly promotes the human person, in contrast with what is of sin and ultimately corrupts humankind. She looks forward to the *future*, but not with anxiety; rather, she awaits the Lord's coming with confidence knowing that "eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the human heart what things God has prepared for those who love him."¹⁵

A letter written at the end of the first century summed up the attitude of Christians in this way: "There is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all of the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country.... They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all, but all persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many. They are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffered dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do, they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life."¹⁶ Very paradoxical.

¹⁵ 1 Cor 2:9.

¹⁶ Letter to Diognetus, 5-6.

Vincentian Bibliography

ROBERT P. MALONEY, C.M.

***Des saisons dans la vie spirituelle
Réflexions sur la spiritualité vincentienne
dans le monde d'aujourd'hui***

Published by the Congregation of the Mission, Rome, Italy, 1998 (188 pages)

This is the French translation of Fr. Maloney's third book which appeared under the title, *Seasons in Spirituality. Reflection on Vincentian Spirituality in Today's World* (published by New City Press, New York, 1997). You will find a review of the book in *Vincentiana* 1997/6, p. 503. The French edition is available through the Visitors and Visitatrices of the French language provinces (and, also, at the Procure, Maison-Mère, 95 rue de Sèvres, 75006 Paris, France).

ALOISIO D. GOCH, C.M.

O Meu Heroi Vicente de Paulo

Published by Grafica Vicentina Ltda, Curitiba, Brazil, 1998 (318 pages)

This book, divided into 80 chapters, is a life of St. Vincent written in the style of a novel, in simple lively language. It is intended for young people who reject dry works. Through historical personalities and authentic facts, presented in their chronological context in an effort to be faithful to history, the author presents a portrait of St. Vincent, his character, personality, organizational sense, faith, and supernatural vision of the poor and the abandoned.

YVES KRUMENACKER

***L'école française de spiritualité
Des mystiques, des fondateurs, des courants et leurs interprètes***

Published by Cerf Editions, Paris, France, 1998 (660 pages)

This book is the fruit of seven years of work in a Research Seminary at the Catholic Institute of Lyon by representatives of the communities of the French School of Spirituality.

It is a "summa," covering the various trends which issued more or less directly from Bérulle from the origins to our day. In spite of its enormous volume, it does not try to get into a technical discussion on each theme, but simply to "make the point," by opening some leads. After a first chapter which recalls the origin of the expression "French School of Spirituality," which came about recently and outside of this "school," its ambition is first of all to reproduce the thought of the founders as exactly as possible: Bérulle, the Carmelites under his influence and the first Oratorians, Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, Jean-Jacques Olier, and Jean Eudes. Not forgotten are the Jansenist trends which took their inspiration from certain views, but deviated from them (chapters II to V). These spiritualities have in common a deep sense of the greatness of God and of adoration, as well as our condition of creatures, a contemplation of the relationship among the Three Divine Persons, and the central place accorded to the Incarnation, to the divine humanity of Jesus, continued through the Eucharist and the Church, especially among the poor in whom, as Vincent de Paul adds, Jesus is really present. Thus, all insist on apostolic commitment, in connection with the bishops and founded on baptismal spirituality and the dignity of the Christian, of every baptized person.

The work continues by discussing the various interpretations and popularizations throughout 300 years which left certain aspects of the original spirit forgotten or deformed, while continuing to live the essential in the original institutes and in many new institutes of the same spirit. Chapters VII to IX clarify well these transformations and rebirths with Henri Marie Bourdon, Charles Démia, Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, Grignon de Montfort, etc., up to the Mission of France in the 20th century.

Chapter VI treats basic questions common to the whole on anthropology, contemplative theology and the apostolic commitment intimately tied to contemplation.

Is it necessary to add that a Vincentian will find herein enlightenment not only on St. Vincent and St. Louise, which will revive what we already know, but on their epoch and the network of relationships which helped to develop their thought and action; these strengthen us today where we also are steeped in networks of spirituality and action (Bernard Koch, C.M.)

M. IRENE FUGAZY, SC

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

Published by Signe, Strasbourg, France, 1997 (56 pages)

This beautiful, large size, well-illustrated book on glossy paper presents the life of Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first saint born in the United States. Wife, mother, convert to Catholicism, then foundress of the Sisters of Charity, she gave herself in works of charity, especially through teaching, to the service of the poor in her country

during the first half of the 19th century. The book also presents the members of the community she founded, who have become the Federation of Sisters of Charity, in their life and apostolates today. (The text is in English.)

GEORGES-ALBERT BOISSINOT, S.V.

***La vie spirituelle selon Vincent de Paul et Jean-Léon Le Prévost
À la rencontre de Dieu***

Published by Editions Fides, Montreal, Canada, 1997 (206 pages)

This work makes a connection between the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul and that of Jean-Léon Le Prévost, founder of the Religious of St. Vincent de Paul, who took his inspiration directly from his patron saint. Their teachings coincide considerably.

After a brief account of the journeys of Vincent de Paul and Le Prévost, there is a study of nine fundamental themes of their common spirituality. The originality of Fr. Le Prévost will be made evident especially in the subject of certain themes which are particular to him, such as: the Christian family, the role of Christian lay people in a society becoming secularized, certain aspects of Marian piety, etc. Moreover, the author adds considerations for interpreting their thought in relation to our world and our present issues.

COLLECTION

***Liturgia de las Horas
Familia Vicentina***

Published by Tipografias Editoriales, Mexico, 1998 (567 pages)

This book of the Liturgy of the Hours was conceived as an instrument of ecclesial and Vincentian prayer. Its purpose is, on the one hand, to help those who are becoming initiated little by little to the prayer of the Church and, on the other hand, to give the Vincentian Family an instrument for prayer in common. It contains the offices of Lauds and Vespers, spread out over four weeks, as well as Compline for one week. While respecting the usual structure of the offices, some elements have been introduced which help us to deepen the value of our vocation and the Vincentian charism. Thus, each psalm is preceded by an introduction, a brief explanation on the contents and the message that it offers us. The hymns chosen have the themes of vocation, mission, service, charity, evangelization of the poor, and Mary. The short readings, taken from scripture, invite us to reflect on justice, charity, evangelization, and the virtues specific to the Vincentian charism. Finally, there is a collection of hymns for the various liturgical seasons and another for the Vincentian Family, as well as the entire proper of the Vincentian Family.

LUIGI CHIEROTTI, C.M.

La S. Vincenzo giovanile in Italia et la sua storia

Published by Cooperazione Vincenziana, Genoa, Italy, 1998 (78 pages)

This small work describes the life and commitment of the young of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Italy, whose first conference was founded in Genoa in 1846. Though not a history due to a lack of sufficient archives, the author depicts these young people for us, in particular from the recollections that he got from them themselves. So, he speaks about the "Ozanam Camps," the "Christmases together," and other charitable activities or educational projects of these young people as well as their development in Italy.

