

# Vincentian Contributions to the New Evangelization

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## Introduction

For some time in the Congregation of the Mission and in many circles of the Vincentian Family we have listened to people speak about the Vincentian manner of “being” and “doing”. On the one hand, we are in full accord with the fact that the charism, the being, the identity, the characteristic seal of the Vincentians has been, is and will be fully and completely relevant. On the other hand, the way in which we live and transmit this Vincentian manner of “being” is not so clear... and so we are dealing with a confrontation between our identity and our significance.

Frequently in meetings and assemblies and private conversations, we complain that in our ministries we hardly distinguish ourselves from diocesan priests, we do almost the same things that they do, our mission does not have a Vincentian character and our “doing” does not communicate anything, or hardly anything, that is specifically Vincentian.

Fr. Eli Chaves dos Santos, assistant general of the Congregation of the Mission, during a meeting of the Visitors from throughout the world held in New York in July 2013, stated: *There is a concern today among many confreres who ask themselves: Do Bishops, clergy and other people in general identify us as true missionaries? Why is there a great absence of the Congregation in the initiatives and in the missionary and charitable organisms of the Church?... we risk centering all our energy in what we call “ordinary pastoral work”, which I define as a work tied to a territory (parish), centered on the liturgy, catechesis and parish services; a work that absorbs the confreres’ best energies and which can become an obstacle instead of give impulse to a more decisive and missionary form of evangelization (Vincentiana, #57.3, July September 2013, p. 260).* Those words, which were spoken in reference to the Congregation of the Mission, are also applicable to the whole Vincentian Family.

Now is not the time or the place to evaluate or discuss those concerns or statements. It is, however, the time to reflect on a series of fundamental questions concerning our present and our future situation: can we, as Vincentians, contribute something to the urgent and new process of evangelization? Are we, as Vincentians, able to make our charism, our spirituality and our participation in the process of the new evan-

gelization... are we able to make these fruitful and productive? What are the Vincentian elements that we can contribute so that this universal plan of the new evangelization might be effective? In what areas of evangelization should we, as Vincentians, be present?

### **Evangelization, the task of all Christians**

I want to make it clear that we are reflecting on the question of whether or not the Vincentians (and by the word “Vincentians” I mean all the members of the Vincentian Family) have something to say about this universal process of evangelization. Clearly there is an urgency about evangelization which is a ministry and a universal command that is imposed on the whole church. Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, told us: *Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize (Evangelii Nuntiandi, #14).*

Therefore, we cannot speak about a “Vincentian evangelization” as such, nor can we refer to an Ignatian or Franciscan or Dominican evangelization because this vast area of evangelization involves all Christians. Evangelization is a task that involves the whole Church. It is not, however, one task among many other tasks. It is the Church’s fundamental task, *the* reason for her being Church... and notice that here the emphasis is on the article, *the*.

The rainbow is a combination of various colors and therein lies its beauty. It is a combination of colors and no one specific color, but rather all the colors are equally represented. Thus each color contributes to the beauty of the whole reality of the rainbow. We could say then that we are attempting to find that color that is uniquely Vincentian so that we can contribute to the beauty of the rainbow of evangelization. To ask this in another way: what can the Vincentian charism contribute to the universal task of evangelization?

### **Some clarifications with regard to the new evangelization**

In the title of this presentation we refer to the *new evangelization*. This is a phrase that in recent years has been used with greater frequency. Pope John Paul II, during his pastoral visit to Poland in 1979 spoke about *an evangelization that is new in its ardor, new in its methods and new in its expression*. His successor, Pope Benedict XVI, made the new evangelization the focus of his papacy and instituted the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization. The last Synod of Bishops dealt with the theme of the new evangelization. Pope Francis views the new evangelization as fundamental. In other words, today when we speak about evangelization, we always use the qualifying adjective, *new*.

I am not going to enter into a discussion about the use of the word *evangelization* with or without the adjective. Personally, I believe the word has the same meaning with or without the adjective and therefore the word that is important is the noun *evangelization*. But we must also be mindful of the following.

The new evangelization has two meanings: obviously, and in the first place, it means that we must take up the process of evangelization anew given the fact that secularization has disillusioned the West as its process of de-christianization has spread. Gospel values, for example, love, unity, equality, solidarity, etc., have given way to new “secular” values, for example, progress, efficiency, success, consumption. Although we continue to speak about Christian values, these values are no longer rooted in our hearts... they are no longer the values that motivate us on a daily basis but rather we make mention of these values and refer to them on specific days of the year... and we can count on one hand the number of those days.

The new evangelization also means that we have to evangelize anew, in a new way, with new methods and new goals and new strategies in order to avoid the errors of the past. The new goal cannot be to re-establish Christianity, but rather must be the building up of the Kingdom of God. That task then has nothing to do with the concern “to conquer the world” but is all about a presence of witness in the midst of the world. We are not dealing with the baptism of a culture or some specific area, but we want to baptize those who believe, that is, those who want to accept and share the message of Jesus Christ.

We should also remember that Pope Francis in his discourses and, more recently, in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, has continually stated that evangelization (or the new evangelization) has to place the church, the whole church, in a *state of mission* and the Church has to move out to the moral, material, geographical, existential and spiritual *peripheries*... and this evangelization must contain the elements of dialogue, healing, hope and joy (cf., *Evangelii Gaudium*, #20, 30, 46, 191). Last year, on October 13<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis, when he spoke with the members of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, stated: *The Church is the home where the doors are always open, not only because everyone finds a welcome and is able to breathe in love and hope, but also because we can go out bearing this love and this hope. The Holy Spirit urges us to go beyond our own narrow confines and he guides us to the outskirts of humanity* (Pope Francis, October 13, 2013, Address to the participants in the plenary session of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, #2).

Therefore, I will take up the challenge of highlighting some specific Vincentian elements or lines of action that will draw us closer to that which should be our genuine contribution to the process of the new and urgent evangelization.

## General Framework of the Vincentian Mission

We have to begin with some background or with a general Vincentian framework. On December 6, 1658, Vincent de Paul in one of his conferences to the Missionaries, spoke about the purpose of the Congregation of the Mission: [Our mission] *is to make God known to poor persons; to announce Jesus Christ to them; to tell them that the kingdom of heaven is at hand and that it is for persons who are poor* (CCD: XII: 71). It is interesting to note that these pivotal and fundamental words are rarely cited or referred to by members of the Congregation and yet the Daughters of Charity have referred to those words in their previous and in their current Constitutions.

For me, those words constitute the best summary of the Vincentian character with regard to our evangelization. Those words also echo the ideas that Pope Paul VI proclaimed in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the most complete document on evangelization.

This general framework ought to inspire, guide and find expression in our evangelizing activities; it should also influence all our attitudes and dispositions.

This general framework presents us with that which is central to the Vincentian heritage: *God, Jesus Christ, and the poor*. Those are the three columns that sustained the spirituality and the praxis of Vincent de Paul and therefore, they should also sustain the spirituality and the praxis of his followers.

- ***The primacy of God:*** God is first and is absolute. We are the channels of God's goodness and mercy. As Vincent would say, the God that Vincentians have to proclaim is the God who is *the protector of the poor* (CCD: X: 411), the God of love and of mercy. God has opted for the poor and therefore the cause of the poor is the cause of God and the concerns and questions of the poor are the concerns and the questions of God. We can say that the option for the poor instead of being viewed as a command or a commitment should be seen as a reality of faith and a theological truth.
- ***The centrality of Christ:*** Vincent's life was Christ centered and his Christology was not theoretical but alive and existential. Clearly then, our Vincentian identity is Christ centered and therefore, our option for the poor can only be understood from the reality that the cause of the poor is the cause of Christ and thus we follow Christ and proclaim *Jesus Christ, the evangelizer and the servant of the poor...* realities that Vincent de Paul also highlighted. Vincentians also focus their attention on the gospel passage of Luke 4:18-19: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor...* there we discover

the key to our option, our vocation and our mission in the Church and in society.

- ***Passion for the poor:*** We are not simply dealing with a concern for the poor or an act of drawing closer to the poor. Rather we are exhorted to live the words that Saint Vincent wrote to Monsieur Almeras on October 8, 1649: *But where can the poor turn? Where can they go? This is my worry and my sorrow* (Abelly III: 117). The poor then are our dominant passion, and in light of such a passion, everything else becomes secondary. Vincent de Paul, motivated by the same passion for the poor, stated: *We should sell ourselves to rescue our brothers and sisters from destitution* (CCD: IX: 390).

### **The binding thread of the Vincentian mission**

The *general Vincentian framework* is sustained by a type of *binding thread* that gives unity and coherence to the Vincentian mission. We face the constant danger that our Vincentian spirituality could become watered down and lose its strength and attractiveness to other ecclesial groups and spiritualities. Therefore, it is good for us to be mindful of this *binding thread* that from a Vincentian perspective holds together the mission or the process of evangelization.

This binding thread is the *structure of diakonia* which is proper to the Vincentian charism. Here I am referring to *charity*, to the *service of charity*, to the *mission of charity*, to *diakonia* in its etymological sense of loving service. In *diakonia* we find the perfect union of charity, communion, service, mission and total self-giving.

All the actions, thoughts and institutions of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac were motivated by and focused on charity as mission and were also a response to the urgent demands of charity as mission (and consequently, the urgent demands of mission as charity). The lifestyle that they recommended to their sons and daughters was that which they referred to as *the state of charity*. Furthermore, the perfection that their followers ought to aspire to is *the perfection of charity*.

Vincent de Paul united – and recommended that they be united – affective and effective love as two realities that become one. They should be seen in the same light as the union between charity and Mission (CCD: IX: 466, 467-468, 470-471). Vincent warned his followers that affective love without a commitment to the process of evangelization, that is, charity without mission, would, at the very least, be suspicious:

*“Let us love God, brothers, let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows; for very often many acts of love of God, of devotion, and of other similar affections and*

*interior practices of a tender heart, although very good and desirable, are, nevertheless, very suspect if they don't translate into the practice of effective love. "By this", says Our Lord, "is my Father glorified, that you may bear much fruit". We have to be very careful about that; for there are many who, recollected exteriorly, and filled with lofty sentiments of God interiorly, stop at that, and when it comes to the point of doing something, and they have the opportunity to act, they come up short. They flatter themselves with their ardent imagination; they are satisfied with the sweet conversations they have with God in meditation and even speak of them like angels; but when they leave there, if there is a question of working for God, of suffering, of mortifying themselves, of instructing poor persons, of going in search of the lost sheep, of being happy when they lack something, or of accepting sickness or some other misfortune, alas! they are no longer around; their courage fails them. No, no, let's not fool ourselves: Totum opus nostrum in operatione consistit [all our work consists in action] (CCD: XI: 32-33).*

Therefore, it can be said that the Vincentian charism is enlivened by an inextinguishable, searing fire: the fire of charity that provides us with cohesion and urges us forward and gives life to our mission. If we do not embrace this dimension of *diakonia* of the Vincentian charism, this inseparable union of charity and mission, then we run the risk of proclaiming a form of spirituality that is neither recommended for Christians nor for Vincentians.

### **The agent of the Vincentian mission**

When we speak about evangelization or the new evangelization we presume that for there to be a process of evangelization there are evangelizers. In order for there to be a *Vincentian contribution to the new evangelization* there has to be Vincentian evangelizers, agents of the mission who are motivated by the Vincentian charism and by Vincentian spirituality. Therefore, it is good to outline the image of a Vincentian evangelizer and highlight the more important and fundamental aspects of this image.

- a) They are persons who have a profound experience of God and this means much more than being pious.
- b) They are persons who identify themselves with Christ, the evangelizer of the poor... they identify themselves in a manner similar to that which Vincent spoke about in his conference to the Missionaries: *Oh, what a happiness, what a happiness, Messieurs, to do God's Will always and in all things! Isn't that doing what the Son of God came on earth to do, as we've already said? The Son of God came to evangelize the poor. And are not we, Messieurs, sent*

*for the same purpose? Yes, Missioners are sent to evangelize the poor. Oh, what a happiness to do on earth the same thing Our Lord did there, which is to teach poor persons the way to heaven!* (CCD: XI: 283-284). We find this same idea expressed in many of Vincent's conferences.

- c) They are persons who are firmly convinced of sharing in the Vincentian vocation. They are nourished by Vincentian spirituality and give witness to this reality in their life. Vincent was insistent upon this when he told the missionaries: *We are priests for the poor and God has chosen us to serve them... this is our primary concern and everything else is secondary* (P. COLLET, *La vie de Saint Vincent de Paul*, vol. I, p. 479).
- d) They are persons who make every effort to discern the will of God *in the signs of the time* and they read these *signs of the time* from the perspective of the needs and the situation of the poor, the marginalized, the helpless, the excluded...
- e) They are persons filled with zeal (a characteristic Vincentian virtue) and with everything that is implied in the process of evangelization, that is, they are bold and creative in order to open new paths for evangelization.
- f) They are people who feel the obligation and the urgency for ongoing formation. They are convinced that *formation for the process of evangelization* is a question of justice with regard to the poor who are to be evangelized. Good will and good intentions are not enough nor is it useful to repeat the phrase: *we have always done things this way!*

### **The beneficiaries of the Vincentian mission**

The Synod on the new evangelization dedicated proposition 50 to the members of consecrated life and stated: *“Consecrated life, fully evangelical and evangelizing, in profound communion with the pastors of the Church and in co-responsibility with the laity, faithful to the respective charisms, will offer a significant contribution to the New Evangelization. The Synod asks Religious Orders and Congregations to be fully available to go to the geographical, social and cultural frontiers of evangelization. The Synod invites religious to move toward the new aeropaghi of mission”*.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Synod on the new evangelization also gave importance to a series of new situations or new areopaghi – where today evangelization is all the more necessary and urgent. It spoke of the vast area of culture, the phenomenon of migration, the media, the global economy, scientific and technological advances, civic life (# 52-60).

At the same time, even though we might be aware of the following, it is nevertheless restated that consecrated individuals ought to be in the forefront of the mission: on the periphery with those who are most poor; in those places where the calls of the poor are most urgent; on the frontier where the church confronts new and difficult missionary problems and challenges that are found in the new situations of poverty – in new areopaghi; in the desert where the gospel is little known, where the church is poor and a minority, where the church is taking her first steps.

It should be clear that the references that we have just made to consecrated individuals are equally valid for all the members of the Vincentian Family and for all the branches of this great family. Thus applying this to the Vincentian evangelizer a series of questions arises: where do we put the emphasis in the process of evangelization? What are the new areopaghi that are our concern? Are we in the forefront with regard to the mission or have we become accustomed to a pastoral style that is sacramental and focused on preserving and maintaining the faith? Are we where we should be in relation to our charism and our spirituality?

We can easily see the previous questions are related to what we refer to as the *beneficiaries* of evangelization, that is, those persons to whom our Vincentian mission is or ought to be directed. If we want to be specific about who are or should be the beneficiaries of the process of Vincentian evangelization, then we could state the following.

- a) The poor, and here we speak about the poor in the fullest sense of the word *poor* and from the perspective of the true reality of *poverty*... thus we refer to everything from economic poverty to cultural, moral, psychological and social poverty. We must also include the new poverties that, as John Paul II states in his encyclical, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, are always being fabricated by *evil mechanisms* and by the *structures of sin* (# 40). So also we reach out to the victims of the intrinsically unjust and inhuman global system which includes those impoverished and ever more vulnerable individuals that have been “produced” by the economic and social crisis and by the realities that guide such an unjust system.
- b) Those who are in need of Christian formation and spiritual attention and who are also poor... and who because of this need are the most poor. Pope Francis speaks about this in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium: The worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith* (*Gaudium Evangelii*, # 200).

- c) The poor whom no one reaches out to and whom no one wants to provide for. In other words, those persons who are not even viewed as statistics with regard to poverty and misery and social marginalization... those who have lost their visibility and whom no one is concerned about making visible. We would certainly include here those whom Louise de Marillac referred to when she wrote about the service of the Company of the Daughters of Charity: *What a happiness if the Company could be employed only in the service of those who are destitute in all things!* (SWLM: 833 [A. 100]).

### **The Vincentian message (some elements from the perspective of the Vincentian charism)**

Evangelization or the new evangelization implies a *message, a proclamation, a good news of salvation*. In reality, the central and fundamental message of evangelization is the message of Jesus Christ that is proclaimed with words and deeds. This is what we call the kerygma: *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved* (Romans 10:9).

Nevertheless, in this universal message there can be some more specific elements... and we, as Vincentians, can contribute some of the elements that are derived from our proper charism and spirituality. I am going to point out four elements within the universal message of evangelization.

- a) The living and true God revealed by Jesus Christ – if we look at the gospel we discover that we are dealing with *the God who is good*, that is, God as Father, as love, as mercy, as infinite forgiveness, as protector and defender of the poor. Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, commented on the phrase of Saint Irenaeus (*the glory of God is the human person fully alive*) and stated: *the glory of God is the poor person who is fully alive!*
- b) Jesus Christ as savior and liberator: Jesus Christ, incarnated, who became the least of all, the servant of all, who serves us through his life and death and resurrection; Jesus Christ who presents himself as the Messiah anointed by the Spirit in order to free the captives and the poor, to break the bonds that enslave people; Jesus Christ who established the kingdom and this kingdom is primarily for the poor.
- c) Charity, which is the fundamental element of our life as believers; affective and effective love which is the life-giving center of the believer and the ultimate proof of faith. Saint Paul told the Galatians: *For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love* (Galatians 5:6).

d) The poor as *the sacrament of Christ* (Matthew 25:31-46) and as *our lords and masters*. This element is very Vincentian. And so that we would not forget this, Vincent de Paul said this to us in a thousand different ways... for example when he spoke to the members of the Confraternity of Charity (today the AIC): “*Jesus willed to be born poor, to welcome poor persons into his company, to serve those who were poor, to put himself in their place, even going so far as to say that the good and the harm we do to those who are poor he will consider as done to his divine person... and I ask you, what love can we have for him if we do not love what he loved! That being the case, Ladies, loving those who are poor is to love him in that way; serving poor persons is to serve him well!*” (CCD: XIIIb: 433-434).

### **Fundamental attitude and some Vincentian criteria**

The apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, states:

*“The obvious importance of the content of evangelization must not overshadow the importance of the way and means. This question of ‘how to evangelizae’ is permanently relevant, because the methods of evangelizing vary according to the different circumstances, of time, place and culture and because they thereby present a certain challenge to our capacity for discover and adaptation” (Evangelii Nuntiandi, # 40).*

Therefore I am going to point out the criteria that the members of the Vincentian Family ought to be mindful of in order to evangelize from a Vincentian perspective and in a Vincentian manner... to say this in another way, what would be some ways in which we could collaborate in the Church’s evangelizing process?

I am going to describe a fundamental attitude which should be the starting point for our evangelizing activity and then I will refer to a series of criteria which must be internalized in order to engage in the process of evangelization... this attitude and these criteria are wholly Vincentian.

#### a) *The missionary spirit as a basic attitude*

On various occasion Pope Francis has used a word that is not very common in our pastoral vocabulary... I refer to the word *missionary spirit*<sup>1</sup> which implies an attitude that impregnates our whole life, that

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<sup>1</sup> Translator’s Note: the word that is used in Spanish is *misionariedad* (this is not a common word) and that word has been translated into English as *missionary spirit*<sup>1</sup> (this is a very common word), but there is no other word to

gives meaning to our Christian and our ecclesial life and that guides all our evangelizing activity... an attitude that goes beyond mere acts or missionary programs.

This attitude, this missionary spirit, is a constitutive element of the charism, the spirituality and the best Vincentian tradition. As someone has said: *The innovative missionary witness of Saint Vincent calls us to prioritize and deepen our missionary ministry among the poor and also invites us to be in the forefront with regard to the mission.*

#### *b) Vincentian criteria for the process of evangelization*

I am going to focus on certain Vincentian criteria that provide a valuable contribution to the new evangelization. I call these Vincentian criteria because they are an integral part of the Vincentian charism and because they give life to the Vincentian charism that Vincent has passed on to us. Obviously I can highlight only some criteria even though there are many others that will not be listed here.

- A clear and expressed preference for the apostolate among the poor, or what is the same, a convinced and convincing option for the evangelization of the poor. Without this criterion everything else fades into the background.
- Involvement in and attention to the human reality, especially the painful reality of the victims of the system. The beginning of the missionary commitment is found in experience and this experience flows from the impact that is provided by the human reality.
- Recover an incarnational spirituality: we run the risk of thinking we can have a commitment *from afar*. Therefore, we set down this golden rule: we cannot have mission without incarnation and we cannot have mission without inculturation into the world of the poor.
- Communion with the poor: this implies a true knowledge of their problems and their needs, an authentic encounter and an acceptance of them, a true participation in their hardships, sensitivity to and respect of their rights, humble service in light of their demands, listening and dialogue in order to discover their values and in order to help them become aware of their liberating potential.
- Integral evangelization, with words and actions: Vincent de Paul stated: *If there are any among us who think they are in the mission*

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use and this is also the official translation of that “uncommon” word; cf. Pope FRANCIS, *Discourse* to the Coordinating Committee of CELAM, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013.

*to evangelize poor people but not to alleviate their sufferings, to take care of their spiritual needs but not their temporal ones, I reply that we have to help them and have them assisted in every way, by us or by others... that is to preach the Gospel by words and by works and that is the most perfect way; it is also what our Lord did (CCD: XII: 78).*

- To promote, to accompany and to form the laity, especially in those matters regarding the Vincentian charism, Vincentian spirituality and the Vincentian mission.
- To form and be formed in the Social Doctrine of the church so that this becomes a living and actual revelation of the Vincentian spirit. Some years ago Father Robert Maloney, then the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, said: *I would suggest that all our programs of Vincentian formation during the 21<sup>st</sup> century should include a healthy dose of this doctrine. I hope that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century some lay Vincentians will be experts in the social doctrine of the Church.*
- Promote the idea that we refer to today as *a shared mission*.
- To look anew at popular missions and to do this with boldness, creativity, a new imagination and with enthusiasm. This is one of the signs of the evangelizing identity of Vincentians.
- Organize charity in such a way that it is highlighted in our evangelization centers. This is an element of our Vincentian heritage that we should not lose. Vincent de Paul recommended that a Confraternity of Charity be established in every place where a popular mission was preached... those confraternities became the visible fruit of the evangelizing activity.
- Apply the methodology of systemic change – some years ago Paul VI wrote:

*“Between evangelization and human advancement – development and liberation – there are in fact profound links. These include links of an anthropological order, because the man who is to be evangelized is not an abstract being but is subject to social and economic questions. They also include links in the theological order, since one cannot dissociate the plan of creation from the plan of Redemption. The latter plan touches the very concrete situations of injustice to be combated and of justice to be restored. They include links of the eminently evangelical order, which is that of charity: how in fact can one proclaim the new commandment without promoting in justice and in peace the true, authentic advancement of man?” (Evangelii Nuntuandi, # 31).*

Pope Francis, as a manner of prolonging the words of Paul VI, states:

*“From the heart of the Gospel we see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every work of evangelization” (Gaudium Evangelii, # 178).*

## **Conclusion**

To evangelize from the perspective of a commitment toward the poor and with a vision that charitable service is one of the most genuine characteristics of Vincentian evangelization... this is indeed our best contribution to the new evangelization. From this Vincentian perspective the option for the poor becomes the fundamental focus of the new evangelization.

From the perspective of the poor we, as Vincentians, have to evaluate our vital evangelizing commitment. Therefore, it is good to conclude this presentation in the same way that we began it, with a series of questions: do the poor really determine our services and our ministries? Do the poor guide our attitudes and our criteria? Do we have adequate structures in order to serve the poor? Do we value Christ's love and do we approach the poor from this same perspective of love?

The response that we give to these questions will determine our contribution to the new evangelization.

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### *Editor's Note:*

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