

# Second Reflection by the Superior General on the Year of Collaboration

Rome, 15 March 2015  
Feast of St. Louise de Marillac

Dear Members of the International Vincentian Family,

The following letter reiterates some ideas in my last correspondence of January 30 regarding the “Year of Collaboration,” but with more details on how to implement this yearlong plan. Our theme is ***“Together in Christ we Vincentians make a Difference.”*** We know that collaboration is rooted in our charism as a Vincentian Family, especially in the example of the lives of our Founders. We also know that we will most effectively serve those who live in poverty only as we collaborate with them and one another.

The Year of Collaboration will begin on the Feast of Pentecost, May 24, 2015, and end on the Feast of Pentecost, May 15, 2016. During the course of this year, we ask that the local, regional, and international levels of the Vincentian Family explore ways in which they may celebrate, connect, learn, and serve with one another. Our efforts will be coordinated by the Vincentian Family Collaboration Commission (the VFCC). This letter contains recommendations from the VFCC for the coming year. There are three components relating to the events for this year:

- A. Celebrate
- B. Connect and Learn
- C. Serve

What follows are some ideas and resources to assist you as a member of the Vincentian Family in commemorating the Year of Collaboration.

## **A. CELEBRATE**

We would like to highlight three special days to celebrate during the year: May 24, 2015 (Pentecost); September 27, 2015 (St. Vincent’s Feast); and May 15, 2016 (Pentecost). Here are suggestions for each of these days of celebration.

**1. Thanksgiving:** May 24, 2015: Gather with members of the Vincentian Family to give thanks to God and to celebrate together. Below are three readings of St. Vincent that you may include with your

prayer service or Mass of Thanksgiving. You may want to include time for testimony or a celebration of what has been done by the local Vincentian Family.

Options for readings of St. Vincent:

- a) TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL August 29, 1635; Coste, Vol. I, #204:  
“I am also overwhelmed by the charity you have extended and keep on extending to my poor brother. Because you have done all this for the love of God, and because gratitude for so many kindnesses is beyond our power, I beg Our Lord, Monsieur, to be Himself both your thanks and your reward.”
- b) TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL December 7, 1634; Coste, Vol. I, #189:  
“Now, for all that, Monsieur, I thank you most humbly and beg Our Lord Himself to be your thanks and reward and to shed upon you more and more abundantly His graces and blessings. O Monsieur, how my heart is filled with consolation every time the above-mentioned M. de la Salle writes to me about your zeal for the salvation of souls, your diligence in winning them over, the blessing Our Lord is bestowing on you, and the solid virtue you possess! I assure you, Monsieur, all that gives me a joy I cannot express to you and a very special fidelity in asking God to be pleased to continue for you and to increase the same graces within you.”
- c) TO ETIENNE BLATIRON February 14, 1648; Coste Vol. III, #1017: “The graces God is showering on your labors are the result of His pure mercy and not of our wretched prayers. We are poor people, more liable to turn aside His blessings than to draw them down. I thank His Divine Goodness for the zeal and fidelity He gives your heart and those who are with you. In fact, Monsieur, I am so touched by the use you make of these virtues and of many others that, when the opportunity arises to animate the Saint-Lazare community to its own perfection, I relate to it the examples that yours gives us of this. I tell them of your long labors, despite the weaknesses of some of your men, your patience in difficulties, your charity and support for one another, the gracious welcome, courtesy, and consideration outsiders find in each of you. So you see, Monsieur, that honey from your hive flows even into this house and serves as food for its children. O Dieu! What a source of consolation for the whole Company, but also what a motive for our little family to humble itself before God and to do ever better and better, since He is pleased to extend and multiply in this way the good it is doing even in places where it is not present!”

**2. Reflection:** September 27, 2015: This “24 Hours of Vincentian Prayer” is a time to reflect. Please include the *Vincentian Family Prayer* in your time of prayer. We suggest that you set time aside per-

sonally as well as with other members (branches) of the Vincentian Family to reflect on the present reality of the local Vincentian Family, being mindful of the emerging needs of those living in poverty in your region.

**3. Action:** May 15, 2016: Ask the Holy Spirit to bless us and move us into action locally as the Vincentian Family. We request that you use this quote of St. Vincent in your celebration, “May God be pleased to strengthen you and to establish great union among you; for you will be even stronger if you are all closely united” (VII: 473). Take time to reflect on the scripture readings of the day and these quotes from the AIC publication, “To Be a Prophetic Member of the Vincentian Family” and Sister Julma Neo, DC’s article “Remembering Vincent and Louise Two Great Prophets of Charity”:

- a) “In this world which is going awry, full of contradictions, the prophets are all those men and women who have dedicated their lives to proclaiming the Kingdom, proclaiming the truths of our faith, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is near and is promised to the poor, speaking out against all injustices which prevent God’s plans being fulfilled” (<http://www.aicinternational.org/pdf/publications/cahier5en.pdf>).
- b) “...If Vincent and Louise were in our midst today, how would they read today’s situation in the light of the Christ they wanted to follow? What word would they speak to us? How would they respond to the new situations that confront us today? What choices would they make?” 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Monthly Reflection (Reflection # 1) – by Sr. Julma C. Neo, DC (<http://vinformation.famvin.org/vincentian-formation-resources/prayerscelebrations-seasonal/350th-anniversary/350th-anniversary-monthly-reflection-1>).
- c) “Ours is a world radically different in many ways from that of Vincent and Louise. New questions force themselves upon us. In a world that has generated new forms of poverty, new faces of the poor, what and who should be our priorities? Vincent and Louise were constantly attentive to events as ‘locus’ for encountering the Spirit. In a world obsessed with the ‘instant’ and the ‘super fast’, how do we continue to be truly attentive and discerning?...” 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Monthly Reflection (Reflection # 1) – by Sr. Julma C. Neo, DC (<http://vinformation.famvin.org/vincentian-formation-resources/prayerscelebrations-seasonal/350th-anniversary/350th-anniversary-monthly-reflection-1/>).
- d) **Forging Ahead... Together:** “We are heirs of a great legacy, sons and daughters of two great prophets of charity. In this common heritage, we take pride. Our bonds are strengthened. With a vast membership in all the continents, we as Vincentian Family have

a great potential for making a difference in our time as did Vincent and Louise in theirs. We have the 'genes' of Vincent and Louise. We have their heart and their spirit. Fidelity to their legacy urges us to forge ahead together to be prophets of charity in today's world... to be prophetic and to generate hope..." (<http://www.aic-international.org/pdf/F-1-EN.pdf>).

4. Please post photos and/or videos of your celebrations to *Vincentian Collaboration* Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Vincentian.Collaboration>) and send them to *famvin.org* (<http://famvin.org/en/contact-us/>). There will be no international gatherings, apart from the meeting of the international leaders of the Vincentian Family in Rome (January 2016). These celebrations will take place on the local and regional levels.

## **B. CONNECT AND LEARN**

It is very inspiring to discover more about our Vincentian Family, especially those branches that are not well known internationally. Learning more about each other will create a better environment for collaboration. Follow the Vincentian Family on the *Vincentian Collaboration* Facebook page and on *famvin.org* (as cited above). During each of the 52 weeks of the Year of Collaboration, we will highlight a branch of the Vincentian Family and thus get to learn more about each other. Once a month, we will publish stories of collaboration, highlighting how the Vincentian Family is working together. Through the same Facebook community and *famvin.org*, you are also invited to post your own experience of efficient collaboration in the service of the impoverished, within or beyond the Vincentian Family. There is so much happening and we could do so much more together!

## **C. SERVE**

The previously mentioned VFCC oversaw the development of a formation experience on collaboration. The Vincentian Family Collaborative Action Program (or VFCAP) was held in Paris in 2013 and 2014 (cf. <http://tinyurl.com/VFCAP>). Over 70 members of the Vincentian Family participated. We are asking them to post three-minute videos about what they learned during their time in Paris and how it has helped with their own efforts to promote collaboration in their respective regions or countries. We are also inviting participants from the 2015 and 2016 regional VFCAP experiences to do the same. These videos will appear on the *Vincentian Collaboration* Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Vincentian.Collaboration>) and on *famvin.org* over the coming months. Please visit and comment on what is there. We have much to learn from each other.

As you can see, we have a wealth of activities planned to mark this special year for the Vincentian Family. Thank you for all you do in collaboration with the Vincentian Family and for those living in poverty. Thank you, most especially, for the ways in which you model this virtue, which gives our charism its special nature and impact.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General