

INTRODUCTION

Note from the Editor

The publication of the Congregation of the Mission, *Vincentiana*, has as its objective the promotion and the spread of Vincentian spirituality, as well as reflection upon the Vincentian charism. Through the written word we attempt to make a contribution to the ongoing formation of the members of the Congregation of the Mission, the Company of the Daughters of Charity, and many men and women who are members of the various branches of the Vincentian Family,

This present issue, the fourth of the 59th year of our publication (October-December 2015), begins with information from the General Curia: two circular letters which present the matters that were discussed during the *Tempo Forte* of October and December and other letters written by the Superior General (*Vincentiana* is the Congregation's official means of communication with its members). More specifically those letters are: the letter that was published on the occasion of the Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul (September 27) and the letter that was published as a follow-up to the meeting of the Vincentian bishops (October 12). It seemed appropriate to include here a third letter (dated October 19) which contains information about the request for volunteers to serve in our International Missions. That letter is followed by the words of a Missionary who had committed his life to service in our missions and who died recently in the Solomon Islands. The final item in this section is the Advent Message of 2015. It could be said that our Superior General, Gregory Gay, is establishing a bond of communication with each and every missionary in the very place where they live and minister.

The Vincentian Family is preparing for the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the birth of that charism which throughout all these years has inspired the service of the various branches of the Vincentian Family, service on behalf of those men and women who are poor. In light of this reality the last issue of 2015 is intended to deepen our understanding of that reality and therefore, we have entitled this issue: ***400 Years of Service to the Poor in the Vincentian Family.***

In light of that celebration we requested some individuals from the various branches to share their reflections on the manner in which their specific branch has lived and adapted the charism in recent years. The authors have highlighted certain significant elements and challenges that they must confront if the heritage of the Vincent de Paul is to continue to be relevant in today's world.

The reflections of these individuals are both enriching and valuable. We begin with the reflections of a member of the AIC (The International Association of Charities), the first foundation of Vincent de Paul (1617)

giving as a precious summary: *Everything began 400 years ago in Châtillon*. That is followed by a reflection on the Congregation of the Mission, *Seasoned Fruits of Charity*, which highlights the missionary activity of the members throughout the world, an activity that began in 1625 (the time of its foundation). The reflection on the Daughters of Charity on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian charism, continues the theme of the reflection that was begun by the volunteers/members of the Confraternity of Charity and that led to the establishment of the Daughters of Charity, a treasure for the Church.

Members of the various lay groups that were established after the death of Saint Vicente de Paul (the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, the Vincentian Marian Youth Association, The Miraculous Medal Association and MISEVI) have also shared with us their reflections on the Vincentian charism.

Reflections on the Vincentian charim have also been shared with us by some of the non-traditional branches of the Vincentian Family. This issue includes the thoughts of members of other Religious Congregations that have been inspired by the Vincentian Charism. More specifically, this issue has been enriched by the reflections of the members of the Brothers of Our Lady, Mother of Mercy who were founded by Rev. Joannes Zwijsen, a pastor in Tilburg, Holland (1844) and by members of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, Servants of the Poor of Gijzegem (founded in 1818 by Elizabeth de Robiano: the Sisters were given the Rule that Vincent de Paul gave to the Daughters of Charity, but the Rule was adapted to the specific objectives of their mission). This section concludes with reflections from a member of the Federation of Vincentian Congregations (origins in Strasbourg. This group was established in the 18th century when the Bishop of Strasbourg, Cardinal Amand Gaston de Rohan, took the initiative and sent forth some young women with the intention of establishing a Congregation of Women to serve the poor and the infirm; thus the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg were founded). There are countless Congregations that are part of this magnificent heritage that has been passed on to us by Vincent de Paul and many pages could be written about the men and women who share in this Vincentian charism.

We cannot ignore the interesting article, with a familiar ring, written by the Assistant General, entitled, "An Horizon of Creative Fidelity." This issue of *Vincentiana* also includes a "Spotlight Interview" about Bishop Vicente Zico, Brazilian Bishop of the Congregation of the Mission at the service of the poor and the Congregation itself until the day of his death.

We hope that the reflections in the October-December issue of *Vincentiana* will enable all our readers to deepen their understanding of the Vincentian charism.

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