

SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW

Bishop Vicente Zico, C.M.

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1. Who was our confrere, Bishop Vicente Zico?

A man of God, a joyful Vincentian and a zealous pastor. Those are the most outstanding characteristics of Bishop Vicente Zico, who went to his eternal rest on May 4th, 2015. Let us present some of his story. It is right and just that we, his brothers in the Congregation, rejoice in the inspirations that have been communicated to us through his life story. Let us then follow the advice of the sacred author who commands us: *[honor] those godly persons who virtues have not been forgotten* (Sirach 44:10).

Vicente Joaquim Zico was born on January 27th, 1927 in the city of Luz (Minas Gerais), the son of very Christian parents who gave birth to eight children. Two of Vicente's brothers were also ordained as priests in the Congregation: Belchior Joaquim, later appointed bishop of the Diocese of Luz, and José Tobias, known for the important services that he provided to the Congregation in Brazil. Both were distinguished for their vast literary writings... Belchior, as a poet, and José, as an historian. One of their sisters became a contemplative nun when she entered Carmel. The other four children were married and raised their respective families. All the Zico children received a precious heritage from their parents, namely, a life of solid virtue... and here we refer to their strong faith, their discreet charity, a spirit of prayer, concern for the poor, a love of work and dedication to family. Through their father, who was a member of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society from the age of fifteen, the Zico children came to know about Vincent de Paul. Vicente was born and raised in the midst of this fruitful environment. Encouraged by his older brothers and supported by the prayers of his parents, it was easy for Vicente to discern the Lord's call to embrace the priesthood as a son of Saint Vincent de Paul.

At the age of eleven Vicente entered the Apostolic School of Caraça, the first house of the Congregation of the Mission in Brazil (1820). He remained there for five years and was able to enjoy the magnificent, natural architecture as he adapted to the rigid discipline of that era. He then went to Petrópolis (Rio de Janeiro) where he entered the Internal Seminary. Under the guidance of some wise and holy formators, he was able to deepen his understanding of the spirit that the Holy Founder wanted to instill in all the Missionaries. There, also, he

studied philosophy and theology... thus preparing himself for the sacrament of Orders. That was the era of the Second World War and Brazil, as an allied nation, prepared young men for their eventual participation in combat. Even though Vicente was in the second year of the Internal Seminary he was called up for military service and had to engage in rigorous training. With the conclusion of the war, Vicente was able to return to a life of prayer and study.

On October 22nd, 1950, after eight years of preparation, Vicente was ordained to the priesthood in the seminary chapel of Petrópolis. He was the third Zico brother invested in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and as such, a member of the Little Company. Gifted with the ability to engage in the ministry of the formation of the clergy, Father Vicente served in various seminaries, the large diocesan seminaries (San Luis and Fortaleza) as well as the seminary of the Congregation (Petrópolis) and ministered as a professor, spiritual director, director of studies, rector, and superior. In each place he was admired for his goodness, wisdom, modesty, balance, good humor. His human qualities and priestly character were especially helpful during that turbulent period when ecclesiastical structures were being renewed and re-evaluated. The event that promoted such renewal was the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Father Vicente was also a provincial consultor and provincial secretary. Later, he spent two years in Paris and resided at the Motherhouse while studying Pastoral Theology at the Institut Catholique. Upon returning to Brazil he once again took up the position of provincial secretary (writing the newsletter and performing other services). In fact, the Visitor had planned for him to become the director of the Internal Seminary, but at that time there were no seminarians... the post-conciliar storm was still blowing hard.

Vicente was elected as a delegate to the 1974 General Assembly and then was elected as an Assistant General. He took up that position with his usual openness, happy to be able to serve the Congregation that had accepted him and prepared him for service in the Kingdom of God. For six years he worked beside Father James Richardson and then ministered for several months with Father Richard McCullen (Vicente had a great esteem for both of those Missionaries). As Assistant General he traveled to various countries, visited the confreres and encouraged them in their ministry of evangelizing the poor and forming the clergy and the laity... thus following the inspiration of the Founder of the Congregation. Many confreres still have fond memories of Father's presence and can still recall the words that he shared with them during his various visitations.

During this initial period of the life of Bishop Vicente we are able to see his ability to harmonize the constitutive elements of his vocation, namely, the development of an interior life through daily prayer and participation in the Eucharist. People took notice of his simple, cheer-

ful and respectful attitude and his warmth that illuminated and encouraged community life. He was an unselfish and generous missionary priest who graciously responded to the requests of the Congregation that he loved so much. The words of Jesus could easily be applied to the person of Vicente Zico: *he did all things well* (Mark 7:37). Saint Vincent's words seem to have been engraved on his heart, in gold letters: *how fortunate are those who use every moment of their life in the service of God* (CCD:XI:329)¹.

2. Could you speak about the episcopal ministry of the Bishop?

Vicente was a bishop who was shaped by the Second Vatican Council: an authentic pastor who possessed a deep spirituality, a tireless apostolic zeal, a great love for the Church and a desire to serve the People of God. From the very beginning the objective of his episcopal ministry was rooted in the threefold dimension of teaching, sanctifying and governing. He personified the description of the Council that is found in *Lumen Gentium: a bishop should keep before his eyes the example of the Good Shepherd, who came not to be waited upon but to serve* (#27). In his reflections during the Year of the Priest he presented one his deep convictions: *Our ministry is exercised not in the form of dominating the faithful or imposing our will upon them but rather in the form of serving them in a loving and dedicated manner*. Let us look at how all of this was done during the nearly thirty-five years that he served as bishop.

In December 1980 Vicente was appointed coadjutor archbishop of Belém and this appointment surprised him because at the time he was in Rome and was serving as a member of the General Curia. On January 6th, 1981, Vicente, together with ten other men, was ordained a bishop by Pope John Paul II in Saint Peter's Basilica. Beside the Holy Father was his brother, Belchior Neto who had been the bishop of Luz for many years. Bishop Vicente Zico chose as his motto, *Cum Maria, matre Jesu*, which expressed his love for the Mother of the Lord and his own willingness to embrace the Marian piety of the people. In fact, more than two centuries ago the people in Belém celebrated the *Cirio de Nazaret*, one of the most significant Marian feasts in the world which is celebrated on the second Sunday in October and at which time more than two million people process through the city. Bishop Zico would

¹ VINCENT DE PAUL, *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, translated and edited by Jacqueline Kilar, DC, and Marie Poole, DC, et al.; annotated by John W. Carven, C.M.; New City Press, Brooklyn and Hyde Park, 1985-2014; volume XI, p. 329; future references to this work will be inserted into the text using the initials [CCD] followed by the volume number, followed by the page number, for example (CCD:XI:329).

join this procession and viewed that as an opportunity to place himself *in the maternal hands of the one who bears all the sorrows of the world, the one who is infinitely beautiful, because she is infinitely good*, as Charles Péguy, the French poet and mystic liked to say (the bishop admired the process of conversion that led Péguy to embrace the Catholic faith).

The diocese with which Vicente entered into a covenant relationship is located in the heart of the Amazon... and that was unknown territory to the newly appointed bishop. Nevertheless, it became greatly loved by its pastor and from the very beginning the people were served with great missionary zeal, a zeal that was manifested by their pastor who was most anxious to serve the people of God. Belém, *the house of bread*, would now become his home and would remain as such for the remainder of his life. The Brazilian Amazon is an area of incredible biodiversity: rivers, virgin forests and diverse wildlife... all of these make up the majestic scenery that is so characteristic in the historic city of Belém, capital of the state of Pará. It is also a region of extreme social contrasts, lacking most resources while widely exploited as a result of its natural resources. There Bishop Zico found a reality that was both bewildering and challenging... a true mosaic of cultures and a vast poverty that enchained countless individuals. A ministry of charity and an evangelizing mission characterized the activity of this Vincentian bishop whose option on behalf of the poor was revealed in his pastoral initiatives. Faithful to the teaching of the Founder he came to understand that the charity that touched his heart was not only a treasure to preserve, but was also a way of life that was to consume him, a seed that was to be planted and cared for, a burning fire whose flame must be apostolic zeal for the salvation of his brothers and sisters (cf. CCD:XII:250). And so it was in his life: *When charity dwells in a soul, it takes full possession of all its powers; it gives it no rest; it's a fire that is constantly active* (CCD:XI:203).

Nine years after his arrival (1990) Bishop Vicente became the titular archbishop of Belém. Nevertheless, from the beginning, in a spirit of cooperation with his predecessor, Vicente initiated a fruitful ministry by visiting the parishes, providing a new dynamism to pastoral ministry, and revitalizing formation in the seminary. His prudent, conciliatory, and affable temperament enabled him to gain the trust and the confidence of the clergy, as well as the People of God. He knew how to approach the poor with a certain levity, moving through the peripheries of the city on foot, visiting hospitals, prisons and asylums. He became known as "Don Zico", the smiling and attentive bishop who extended a hand to, listened to, embraced, counseled and blessed everyone. There are countless testimonies of persons who were captivated by the Bishop's presence or by his warm words or by his effective assistance. It becomes obvious why the people of this area venerate

him. He himself would become emotional as he recounted some of the stories of his various encounters with people, for example, the story about the man who lived on the periphery of Belém and after the community was visited by the archbishop this man wrote the words *Calle Don Zico* [Don Zico Street] in carbon on the walls of his house that was built over the waters of the river. Bishop Vicente stated that the action of that man *presented him with the greatest honor that he could ever receive as a son of Saint Vincent*. Péguy himself stated that one's children *are always on the mind of their parents, always in their heart and always before their eyes... they are their most precious treasure*. The same could be said about the relationship between the poor and Bishop Zico: they were etched in his mind and pressed upon his heart... they were jewels of great value.

With the appointment of Bishop Zico the archdiocese gained considerable momentum, aligning itself with the spirit of communion and participation that was encouraged by Vatican II. Bishop Zico knew how to animate and encourage those who surrounded him and he was able to create a network of collaborators with bishops, priests, women religious and the laity ministering together. The number and the quality of his accomplishments reveal the fruitfulness of his ministry. The daily schedule of the bishop included meetings in the communities that he regularly visited as well as attendance at meetings in the Curia and at his residence. In an effort to revitalize the Archdiocesan structures, he worked on the development and implementation of two successive Pastoral Plans. He energized catechesis at every level, invested resources in the initial and ongoing formation of the clergy, promoted the training of laity, implemented a permanent diaconate program, animated missionary activity through popular missions, expanded the venues of Consecrated Life, dedicated time and energy to married couples and families, encouraged the role of young people, established a radio station and a TV channel, ensured the preservation of the heritage of the archdiocese and made the diocese self-sustaining, implemented ministry on the university level, consolidated Cirio of Nazareth as a privileged opportunity for evangelization (beginning with the evangelization of small groups). Bishop Vicente possessed an extraordinary human sensitivity that led him to intervene forcefully and with discernment in those situations that required his word and his presence, especially in situations that he viewed as important in order to promote the cause of those most in need and those who were the victims of injustice. For example, we recall here his prophetic *pronouncement on the social and economic situation of Pará* (1997), which had a great impact on public authorities. Indeed, all the initiatives of Bishop Zico arose from his loving heart and from his identification with the people of Pará who welcomed him in their midst and who have kept his memory alive. Yes, Bishop Vicente also had to confront misunderstand-

ings and adversity... but he was able to do so with a calmness, never offending those who defamed him (his ability to forgive was strengthened through prayer). He was convinced that his pastoral approach had to be a “way of love”, as well as “an ascetical path and a path of purification of resignation”.

Bishop Vicente’s activity was not limited to his beloved diocese. As a result of his position within the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, he was responsible for the missionary dimension of the Church and as such he worked tirelessly to awaken the missionary consciousness in the many various dioceses of Brazil. He also traveled to seven African countries, visiting Brazilian missionaries who ministered in those countries. He was a member of the Missionary Commission of CELAM and was chosen to serve on the Pontifical Commission for Latin America (CAL). In each of these instances he was able to nourish and share his conviction that *the authenticity of the church was to be found in her missionary character*. In 1994 he was a delegate to the IV General Conference of Latin America Bishops which was held in Santo Domingo. All these different responsibilities required frequent international travel and yet, his heart remained in Belém and nothing could divert his gaze from the local Church that had been entrusted to his pastoral ministry. When he was questioned about those trips, he said that *the best part of the trip was his return to Belém*.

When his petition with regard to resigning was accepted by the Pope (Bishop Vicente was 77 years old), he wanted to return to the Congregation. He asked the Visitor of his province of origin to assign him to one of the houses of the province. The members of the province were very happy at the news of his return to them. His successor in Belém, however, wanted to have Vicente near to him and insisted that he remain in Belém and asked the people of the Diocese to join with him in that request. Bishop Zico decided to remain and his years as bishop-emeritus were fruitful... and here we are reminded of the words of the psalmist: *they shall bear fruit even in old age, always vigorous and sturdy* (Psalm 92:15). During this time the Bishop intensified his life of prayer by prolonging his time in contemplative mediation, thus deepening his relationship with the Lord. He updated himself theologically by selecting readings of renowned authors, rereading and reflecting upon the conciliar and papal documents, taking notes that would be incorporated into his later conferences. He dedicated much time to preaching retreats (especially to the clergy of the various dioceses and religious congregations) and to providing spiritual guidance to countless individuals. He spoke regularly on radio and television, responded to countless invitations to confer the sacrament of Holy Orders inside and out of the archdiocese, was frequently requested to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation and celebrate patronal feasts in parishes and communities. During the Pauline Year (2008-2009) he stated: *there is so*

much to do, so many calls from God to exercise our priestly ministry and therefore to remain "busy doing nothing" (2 Thessalonians 3:11) would be an embarrassing mistake and a scandal. The many requests that he received made his routine as archbishop-emeritus both active and fruitful. That is very easy to understand... who would not want to be around the person of Msgr. Zico? Who did not feel captivated by his kindness, wisdom and holiness? Who did not appreciate his ability to speak from the depths of his heart, adapting his words to the condition of his listeners? A priest once said: *Bishop Vicente is quiet and yet he speaks to us and as he speaks, we are enchanted with his words.*

Finally, a beautiful image of this very human bishop can be found in a passage of the Conciliar Decree, *Christus Dominus* (the decree on the pastoral office of bishops in the church): *As spiritual guides of their flocks, bishops should be zealous in promoting the sanctity of their clergy, their religious and their laity according to the vocation of each individual, remembering that they are under an obligation to give an example of sanctity in charity, humility and simplicity of life (#15).* It is impossible to find a better image of the Good Shepherd than that of Bishop Vicente Joaquim Zico!

3. What are the primary characteristics of his spirituality?

There is no doubt that the primary source of the bishop's spirituality was the heritage that he received from Saint Vincent de Paul. This can be understood when one considers the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ in the bishop's life and ministry. That was a lesson that he learned from the founder: *nothing pleases me except Jesus Christ*². Bishop Zico found in Jesus Christ the sure point of reference for his consecrated life and for his zealous ministry in the service of God and in the service of his brothers and sisters. At the time of his ordination, he had a holy card printed with the words, *the priest is an "other" Christ*. He often referred to the liturgical prayer that is recited at the Eucharist for the first Sunday in Lent: *Grant almighty God... that we may grow in our understanding of the riches hidden in Christ and by worthy conduct, pursue their effects.* In his meditations during the year of the priest (2009-2010) he stated: *We as priests, as apostles who wish to follow Jesus Christ... we ought to embrace him, generously walk with him, open ourselves to his teaching, become enthusiastic about him, adopt his lifestyle, become his true disciples, follow him and thus make Jesus Christ our*

² L. ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul: Founder and First Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission*, 3 vol., edited by John E. Rybolt, C.M., translated by William Quinn, FSC, notes by Edward R. Udovic, C.M. and John E. Rybolt, C.M., introduction by Stafford Poole, C.M., New City Press, New Rochelle, New York, 1993, volume I, p. 103.

life. He then went on to highlight the compassion of Jesus Christ for the poor, another aspect of Vincentian spirituality that the bishop internalized in his life as a missionary and as a pastor: *the human face of God became known through the person of Jesus Christ who was admired and loved by the people because of his attentiveness to the situation of the poor, the infirm, the "little ones", those afflicted in any manner, those who were excluded... an important aspect of Jesus' mission was to reveal his humanness, his compassionate heart... in following Jesus Christ, the priest should first of all give witness to the fact that he himself understands the human condition.*

As a result of this radical identification with the Lord, Bishop Zico highlighted another aspect of his spirituality, an aspect that was in accord with the spirit of Vincent de Paul... and here we refer to his trust in Divine Providence. During a retreat that he preached for our seminarians during the Year of Faith (2012-2013) he stated: *I am constantly invited to live with an awareness of the truth of the words that Vincent de Paul spoke: if we allow ourselves to be led by Divine Providence, everything will come to a good conclusion.* Throughout his life the bishop was strengthened by that trust in Providence which made him more available, more trusting, fruitful in his discernment and tireless in giving of himself. Another aspect of the Vincentian heritage that Bishop Vicente clothed himself in was the five virtues that Vincent de Paul impressed upon the members of the Congregation as indelible marks of their spiritual and missionary life: *let each and every one of us strive to enclose ourselves in these five virtues, like snails in their shells, and act in such a way that all our actions savor of these virtues* (CCD:XII:252). In fact, the life of Bishop Zico reflected all of those virtues. He developed **simplicity** which made him accessible to all people, especially to the poor and enabled him to act almost flawlessly in his procedures. **Humility** did not allow him to place himself at the center of things or attribute some merit to the things that he did. **Gentleness** was revealed in the calmness of his face... the bishop radiated peace and his gestures were expressions of tenderness and consolation. The bishop exercised **mortification** during times of trial, especially when his good intentions were viewed as suspect... at all times he revealed his willingness to persevere in doing good and to never repay evil with evil. The creative fulfillment of his duties, particularly his evangelizing activity, was marked by missionary **zeal** and it was this same zeal that enabled him to become *all things to all people* (I Corinthians 9:22). It is clear that Vincent de Paul played an important role as the bishop defined his personality. We refer at this time to a fragment from a retreat that he preached to the confreres of the Fortaleza Province on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of the death of Saint Louise and Saint Vincent. He stated: *In my opinion to know Vincent de Paul is to value and admire his spiritual experience, the genuineness of*

his charity and his zeal on behalf of the poor... this enables us to also love Vincent de Paul. As a priest and in my ministry as a bishop I continue to nourish and develop my knowledge about this saint; I continue to familiarize myself with his spirituality. Yes, we have an obligation to know him and to make him known to others. This obligation arises from the conviction that Saint Vincent has much to say to the world today... especially to the members of the Vincentian Family.

Another key to understanding the spirituality of Bishop Zico is found in his coat of arms which summarizes the programmatic content of his ministry. Side by side are the Word and the Eucharist... the word which Bishop Zico reflected upon with docility, the word that he attempted to live and that he preached with humble eloquence. There also is the Eucharist which he celebrated every day, the center of his life and the driving force behind his ministry. The star on the blue background evokes the presence of Mary, the mother of Jesus and a model for those who love and follow Jesus. The selection of his motto, taken from Acts 1:14, was intended to honor Saint John Paul II, the pope who appointed him and ordained him as bishop. The river running through the crest symbolizes the Amazon, where his ministry was developed in a fruitful manner. The words that Bishop Vicente Zico utilized when referring to his predecessor in 1991, provide us with his own profile: *the more a bishop identifies himself with the desires and preferences of the flock that he shepherds, the more it becomes apparent that the Holy Spirit has discovered in that individual the appropriate person to exercise the episcopal ministry.*

4. Bishop Zico's relationship with the Congregation of the Mission and with the Vincentian Family

Even after his appointment as Bishop, Vicente Zico always maintained a close relationship of unity with the Congregation. He was truly happy and grateful to be a member of the Little Company. He was concerned about all that happened in the Congregation and faithfully read *Vincentiana*, *Nuntia*, *CLAPVI* and *Informativo São Vicente*. Once during a visit, he showed me his copy of the Constitutions and Statutes... it was wonderful to hear him speak about Saint Vincent and the charism that had been passed on to us. The bishop spoke about our Founder and the saints and the blessed of the Vincentian Family with great reverence... he often cited them in his writings, speeches and dialogues. He took advantage of every opportunity to visit our houses and to spend time with the confreres. He accepted every invitation to participate in our feast day celebrations and ordinations... Bishop Zico ordained many of our confreres. At the same time the Bishop had many fond memories of his time in our Province and at the General Curia (he would speak about specific individuals and events). The retreats

that he preached to us are memorable for the manner in which he presented to us the Vincentian heritage.

The Daughters of Charity also experienced the fraternal concern of Bishop Vicente: spiritual direction, retreats, special celebrations, confessions, visits, etc... countless Sisters can speak about the encouragement that they received from the bishop. I remember what a young Sister once told me: *When I would go to confession to Bishop Zico, I would leave with the impression that I became better than I was.* Those words reflect the usual ease with which he comforted and encouraged those persons who approached him. We could also say that the zeal of Bishop Vicente was extended to the Vincentian Family, to the many men and women who belong to that Family, who found his words and ministry to be an ardent incentive to practice missionary charity. He was most happy to see the *Obras Completas de San Vicente* being translated into Portuguese. The *imprimatur* for the first four volumes was obtained from him. He spoke about the joy of being able to savor the spiritual wisdom of our Holy Founder in his own language. During that retreat to the confreres of the Fortaleza Province, he stated: *it is a joy and a grace to read and to listen to Saint Vincent who reveals himself as true spiritual master, simple, a man of great clarity as he explains his thoughts and ideas, concise, and able to nourish the hearts of his sons and daughters with great wisdom and enthusiasm.*

5. A personal testimony concerning Bishop Vicente Zico

What impressed me most about Bishop Vicente was his extraordinary ability to harmonize goodness and truth, generosity and uprightness. There was great coherency among his convictions, his words and his attitudes. The attribute of loyalty is clearly visible in the manner in which he interacted with and related with others. Through his gentle presence he was able to communicate to others the values that guided him as a man of God. The integrity of a person might seem to be extremely dry unless a magnanimous heart throbs inside that same individual. Largeness of heart, human sensitivity, willingness to go out to meet others... all these were prominent personality traits of Bishop Vicente. He knew how to be both cheerful and polite, how to be close to people and prudent. He did not become upset with people... indelicate words and arrogant gestures were never associated with him. Those who approached him felt welcomed, respected and valued; everyone, even the simplest, felt that they could be more and better. That was Bishop Vicente: truthful and good until the end of his days, like a fresh-flowing river where everyone could quench his/her thirst.

Another characteristic of Bishop Vicente that greatly edified me was his identification with his vocation and ministry. He was excited to be a Vincentian priest and bishop. He said that he did not know how to live in any other way than that of being truthful. No wonder he could identify himself with the words of Saint Paul: *by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective* (1 Corinthians 15:10). He did not need to seek anything beyond the horizons of his consecration: contemplation and action, prayer and service. Everything in his life was directed to the mission. In Brazil, we have a song that states: *I am the good shepherd and I will guard the sheep. I have and never will have any other job. How ever many lives I have, I will give them all to my sheep.* Such was Bishop Vicente. He had no other job, no other satisfaction and no other occupation but that which was entrusted to him in order to continue the mission of Christ. Thus he gave his all in everything he did, and did well all those things that were entrusted to him... in fact, everything that he touched was imprinted with his wisdom and holiness. To paraphrase Pope Francis, the mission was not an *appendix* in the life of Bishop Zico. *"The mission was his life"* (Evangelii Gaudium, #273). And the secret of all this, the mystery of the heart of Bishop Vicente (a heart that never lost its purity and cheerfulness) was revealed in the words that he spoke to his successor at the time that his earthly pilgrimage was about to come to an end, that is, when he was informed about the irreversible condition of his health: *I have no fear of eternity; I love the Lord with all my heart!*

I recall here the fact that I had the privilege to accompany the bishop on his last trip to Belém where the Lord would gather him up, like ripe fruit, and gift him with eternal life. He had gone to spend some time in Belo Horizonte where he visited his family and his confreres. As usual, he stayed at our house and we all rejoiced at his presence and his participation in the life of community. He celebrated the Eucharist in our parish and attended all those who approached him. I, myself, would take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation with him. On the fourth day of his visit, he experienced severe abdominal pain. We wanted to take him to the hospital and place at his disposal all the resources of the Province. He, however, expressed his desire to return quickly to his beloved Belém. He called me aside and asked me if I could accompany him on this trip back. Without blinking an eye, I said, *yes*. Actually, that same night I had planned to travel to the house of the Daughters of Charity in Rio de Janeiro where I was to participate in a meeting. I called the Sisters and explained the situation and I asked to be excused from that commitment. The next day, Saturday, I bought an airline ticket and traveled to Belém. What an unforgettable experience! During the three-hour flight, the Bishop tried to sleep and also tried to hide the pain that

consumed him. I was emotional and yet grateful because I knew that I was sitting beside a saint, a man who knew how to serve God and others with integrity. The bishop was beginning his last offertory, *lying in the arms of maternal Providence while listening closely to the soft chimes of the bell of an eternal Easter* (C. Péguy).

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As a result of the manner in which he lived, Bishop Vicente Joaquim Zico will always be remembered by those who knew him. He will continue to inspire us, his confreres, with the desire to be good and true, to be faithful to the vocation that we have received and to fulfill our mission, so that, as for him, so also for us, “God speaks, and in speaking he hands himself over to us. He loves, and in loving he hands his happiness over to us. The God we hear speaking is efficacious hope, a God new from all eternity” (C. Péguy). Thank you, beloved Bishop Vicente!

Translated: CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M.