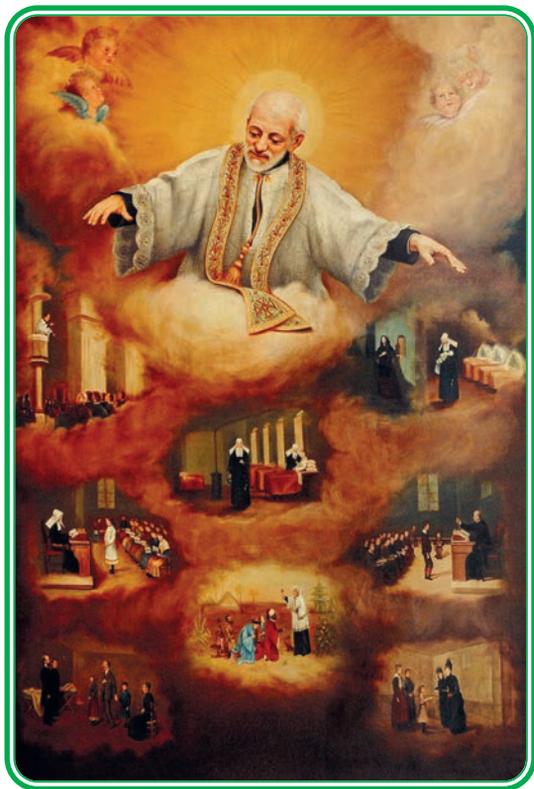


VINCENTIANA



60th Year - N. 2
April-June 2016

Vincentian Collaboration

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
GENERAL CURIA

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VINCENTIANA

60th Year - N. 2 April-June 2016

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Introduction

Editor's Note

It is with great joy that I place in your hands this second issue of *Vincentiana* for the year 2016. This edition is the fruit of communication with the Superior General, which took place during the past three months of April, May, and June. At the same time, this issue includes the reflections of some confreres who have shared their thoughts on the theme of **Vincentian Collaboration**. As a redaction team, we saw that a discussion of this theme is most relevant as we bring this Year of Collaboration to a close on the feast of Pentecost (15 May). We can all benefit from taking the time to reflect on this matter, which our Superior General addressed in his letter of 30 January 2015. In that letter, Father Gregory introduced the overall theme of the year: *Together in Christ, we Vincentians make a Difference* and then placed before us the objective of such an initiative: *During the course of the year, we ask that the local, regional, and international levels of the Vincentian Family explore ways to celebrate, connect and learn, and serve with one another ... especially, our lords and masters, the poor.*

Congratulations to our confrere from India, Father Aplinar Senapati, CM, who was ordained as bishop of the newly erected Diocese of Rayagada. At the present time, there are 34 bishops in the Congregation, 14 have completed their apostolic ministry and are therefore bishop-emeritus, while 18 others are currently responsible for an individual diocese.

In this issue, we publish a summary of the June 6-10 *Tempo Forte* and four letters of the Superior General: two addressed to the members of the Congregation of the Mission, another written to all the members of the Vincentian Family, and another addressed to the members of MISEVI. The 20 April letter was addressed to the Visitors and all the confreres inviting them to participate in the celebration of the 400th anniversary of our charism. He presented the theme of that celebration: **welcome the stranger**. In that letter, Father Gregory encouraged the Visitors to enter into dialog with the confreres of the province in order to search for affective and effective means to care for the stranger in their midst. The second letter outlined the various ways in which the confreres will be able to receive information about the happenings at the General Assembly. In the letter that was addressed to all the members of the Vincentian Family, Father Gregory

referred to the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the birth of our charism, announced to them the theme: **welcome the stranger**, and reflected on this theme by referring to Matthew 25:35 (*I was a stranger and you welcomed me*). Father asked the question: who are the strangers in our midst? The last letter was addressed to the members of MISEVI and, in it, Father expressed his gratitude to the members for the various ways in which they were able to minister together during these past 12 years.

In one of the sections of this issue we honor and give witness to the ministry of two confreres who served as Superior General: Father Richard McCullen and Father Gregory Gay. Father McCullen, Superior General from 1980 to 1992, died on 24 December 2015. A confrere from his province and another confrere who served as Assistant General share with us some reflections on this successor of Saint Vincent de Paul. In this section, one will also find an interview that Father Gregory offered to a confrere from CLAPVI, an interview in which he spoke about his ministry as Superior General, as well as his hopes for the future of the Congregation.

We also publish in this issue an article that as written by Father Robert Maloney, CM: *Freedom of the Children of God, the Fruit of Indifference*. Father presents some very timely reflections that can enable us to minister even more effectively as we begin to focus on the ways in which we can care for the strangers in our midst.

The central theme is this issue of *Vincentiana* is: Vincentian Collaboration. We present various perspectives on this theme: collaboration in general by John C. Darly (Depaul International), collaboration in the area of formation by Fenelón Castillo, CM (Colombia), collaboration and mission (experience in Tanzania) by George Joseph, CM, and another article written by Joseph Agostino, CM, from the perspective of his ministry with the worldwide Vincentian Family. Finally, we include an article that was written by our confrere, Guillermo Campuzano, who is ministering at the United Nations, an article in which he explains that collaboration is something that is proper to our charism.

I want to take a moment to thank all those who have contributed their time and effort in making this issue of *Vincentiana* possible. May all our readers find these articles both interesting and helpful for their prayer and reflection.

Alvaro Mauricio Fernández, CM
Director de “*Vincentiana*”

Tempo Forte Circular

6-10 June 2016

“... O Lord, let us bring the joy of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, so that no periphery will be deprived of your light, and the poor will again be in the center of the Church and of our lives”
(adapted from the “Prayer for the Time of Assemblies”).

Dear Confreres,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

We discussed the following points.

A. Updates

1. **General Assembly.** We had an open discussion on the method of Appreciative Discernment, led by Father Eli Chaves.
2. **Reconfiguration.** We spoke about the process of reconfiguration between the Eastern Province and the New England Province. Both provinces will be encouraged to continue to work toward reconfiguration.
3. We studied a list of the **membership of the new Vice-Province of Cameroon**, indicating those natives of Cameroon who will be fully incorporated into the Province of France and those who will be temporarily incorporated into it.
4. We considered a reflection that was sent to us by Abba Welde-mariam from the Province of Saint Justin De Jacobis, regarding a **worldwide reconfiguration of the Congregation of the Mission**. It reflects the direction in which we hope to go as a Congregation, recognizing our internationality and working from that perspective, rather than from the perspective of limits that are placed on us by provincial boundaries.

B. The General Curia

1. Father Jorge Rodríguez, Director of the Office of Communications, gave us a report on the coverage that will be given to the General Assembly, using different forms of multimedia. We hope that the General Assembly reaches as many people as possible, while safeguarding, as we always do, any matters that might be confidential.
2. *Vincentiana*. We recently made a transition to having *Vincentiana* published by Editorial La Milagrosa in Madrid at a substantially lower cost than we had been paying here in Italy. The magazine, *Vincentiana*, will continue to be distributed from Rome.
3. We studied a number of reports concerning SIEV's online project for Vincentian Studies, beginning with the minutes of a meeting of the Presidents of Vincentian Universities.
4. The Superior General gave a brief evaluation of the most recent CIF program. The program was based on the *Ratio Formationis*. A number of the Conferences of Visitors have also organized programs for discussing the *Ratio*, making the international project that was presented by CIF not as well attended as hoped. There were nine participants. The directors considered it most positive. At the same meeting, the new Director for CIF, Father Andrés Motto, was present to begin a process of transitioning with the CIF team, Fathers Daniel Borlik and Adam Bandura. The plan is that, at the end of 2016, Father Dan will finish his service as Director and Father Andrés Motto will assume it.
5. We received a report from the VSO. Father Miles Heinen mentioned a number of projects that are underway. There is a significant amount of money coming in that will help support the micro-projects that had been suspended. The Superior General sent a letter to 19 provinces of the Congregation, asking them to help contribute to the Vincentian Solidarity Office Fund. Previously, that fund was supported by the Provinces of the United States and a Foundation. Now more provinces have been invited to contribute funds for macro-projects and micro-projects. We are grateful for the solidarity that many provinces have shown toward the Vincentian Solidarity Office. This theme of solidarity will be discussed in our General Assembly.

6. **UN NGO Representative.** Father Guillermo Campuzano gave us an update on the application made to upgrade the status of the Congregation at the United Nations. The other branches of the Vincentian Family, together with Father Guillermo, have developed a logo for Vincentian Family collaboration at the United Nations. He spoke about the collaboration that is occurring with the universities. For example, DePaul students participated in a ten-day experience with internal refugees in Colombia, giving special attention to sustainable-development goals and global education. Saint John's University, together with the campus ministry's Justice Office, participated in a conference organized by the Mission of the Holy See to stop human trafficking. One of the senior students of VISA, the Vincentian Institute for Social Justice, will do an internship with the Vincentian Family at the United Nations. There will be another student, from Lebanon, who will work with Father Guillermo in social-media development, research, and representation of the office on different committees. Father Guillermo is working on the Committee of Social Development and the Stop-Human-Trafficking Committee.

In September 2016, there is the hope of sponsoring, with the *Big Questions* TV series, a program to combat underage sex trafficking in America. Father Guillermo has connected with the Commission of Latin American Religious Men and Women to stop human trafficking. The Vincentian Family members at the UN meet every month to share materials. One of their meetings was held with the coordinator of the FamVin website, Father Aidan Rooney. They have decided to develop a space on the website to inform the branches of the Family of collective efforts at the UN. Four of the members of the Vincentian Family at the UN went to Korea to participate in a conference on Education for Global Citizenship. Prior to that conference, a session was held for the Vincentian Family in Korea. There is hope of developing a formation project for the Family around *Laudato Si'* and our Vincentian charism.

Guillermo will be present at the General Assembly. He hopes to meet with all the Visitors and delegates to encourage them to develop local offices of Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Finally, there was a report on the VOM Conference that was held on Religious and Migration in the 21st Century. There were 100 participants, among them, eight Daughters of Charity and two

members of the Congregation of the Mission. We are very happy with the report. We hope that Father Guillermo continues to bring information from the UN down to the grassroots and what happens at the grassroots to the attention of the decision-makers at the UN.

7. **Interreligious Dialog.** There will be a session on Islam and Christianity from 21-26 November 2016, held at the Center for Interreligious Studies at the Gregorian University in Rome. It will be given in Italian, English, and French. For further information, please contact the Pontifical Gregorian University: interreligios@unigre.it. The cost of the session is 250 euro and the university is offering scholarships that can be obtained by sending a request to the Director, Father Basanese, at the above email address.

We discussed a memo from Father Claudio Santangelo, concerning the project of the CM presence in Muslim countries to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the birth of the charism. This will be presented at the General Assembly. Concretely, that project has begun with a contract with the Archbishop of Tunis. We are extending our presence by assuming a parish in Sousse. The contract will go into effect on 1 September. The two mission houses, that of Sousse and La Goulette, will be one canonical house and we have asked Father Narcisse Djerambete to serve as the superior.

Father Claudio, Father Pavle Novak (President of CEVIM), and Father Joaquín González (Visitor of Madrid) visited Melilla. They have a project to submit to CEVIM during their General Assembly session. If the project is accepted it will be recommended to formalize a commission composed of different Visitors, together with an Assistant General.

Father Claudio gave us a report on the USG-UISG's Commission for Interreligious Dialog. He participated in a meeting that dealt with violence and non-violence in Islam. The next event will be in October at the Gregorian University on the theme, *Christianity in India under Attack: Hindu Fundamentalism after Gandhi and the Response of the Indian Catholic Church*. With Father Claudio's assignment to the new mission in Sousse, the Superior General and his Council recommend names to substitute for him. The final report he gave was on the Working Group for Interreligious Dialog. They have begun discussing having a gathering in Kenya in 2017.

C. Economic Questions

1. The Treasurer General gave us a report on the statement and activities for the **General Fund**.
2. Together with the Assistant for Missions, Mathew Kallammakal, we determined the **Mission Fund Distribution** for this year, 2016. The provinces and the Conferences of Visitors will be informed of this matter through the Assistant for Missions. We made a decision to encourage the new administration to do a full evaluation of the Mission Distribution Fund.

D. International Missions

1. We read a glowing report from the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples regarding our seminary efforts in **Papua New Guinea**, Holy Spirit Seminary in Bomana, under the direction of our confrere, Father Jacek Tendej. We reviewed the minutes of the meeting that was held during the Superior General's visit. At Holy Spirit Seminary, Father Jacek is working with members of different dioceses in this diocesan-seminary. The young Polish confrere who arrived a few months ago, Father Marcin Wróbel, continues his orientation program, substituting at this time for one of the missionaries from the Philippines, Father Marceliano Oabel, who is on vacation and later will be taking a sabbatical. Father Neil Lams, from the Province of Oceania, has been transferred to the Diocese of Alotau-Sideia, which is under the direction of our confrere, Bishop Rolando Santos. Another member of the mission, Father Joel Bernardo Yco, works for the Malaysian Institute and encourages us to take into consideration a workshop to promote better community living in an intercultural setting.

The Papua New Guinea mission has another student candidate. The Province of the Philippines has been requested to help support his formation. We await a decision of the province's administration to see if it will be willing to assume the formation of other candidates from Papua New Guinea, as the Province of Oceania has assumed the responsibility for the formation of candidates from the Solomon Islands.

2. After having consulted the confreres in both Papua New Guinea and the **Solomon Islands**, Fathers Justin Eke and Teclmicael will

work in the Solomon Islands to help boost the staff there with the departure of Father Gregory Cooney. We expect both of them to arrive before the end of the year.

We reviewed a report from the Superior General after his visit to the Solomons. The Province of Oceania is considering establishing a canonical house of formation at Red Beach, which will include the parish house and church. It will work in conjunction with the members of the international mission. The question of personnel continues to be a concern for the Superior General and his Council. The matter will be discussed at the APVC meeting at the General Assembly, and it will be recommended to do a serious evaluation of this mission, which has experienced a lot of instability in recent years, because of change of personnel. We ask the Lord to help us continue this good work, but it cannot be done without the necessary personnel. The new superior is Father Paulus Suparmono, the former Visitor of the Province of Indonesia. He also has been named officially the rector of Holy Name of Mary Seminary in Honiara.

3. The Superior General reported on his visit to the International Mission of **Angola**, where presently there are three confreres, but will be reduced to two at the end of August. This mission also has a number of young men interested in pursuing a vocation in the Congregation of the Mission. At this time, there is one candidate studying at the local seminary, where two of our confreres participate actively in spiritual direction and helping form the spiritual life of the seminarians. The bishop wants to increase the number of communities that the confreres cover to an additional 40. Even with close to 80 communities, it continues to be the smallest parish in the Diocese of Malanje. They need at least one new missionary. I ask the confreres, especially those who are in provinces that have vocations and have not yet developed a sense of participating in international missions or with very few confreres who do so, to take this into serious consideration. We are a missionary Congregation and one of our options should be to go beyond our own provincial boundaries in order to serve the needs of the Church.
4. We had a brief sharing on our mission in **Tunisia**, which had been discussed previously.

5. Father Zeracristos Yosief, Assistant General, recently visited the mission in **Chad**, where we have expanded to include two confreres working in the minor seminary. The two newest arrivals, from the Province of Congo, are Fathers Léon Moninga and Sylvain Rémy Disuka. Father Onyeachi Sunday Ugwu from Nigeria soon will be finishing his experience and moving on for further studies. He has been in the mission since its beginning and has done very fine work as pastor of the parish. We are requesting the Province of Nigeria to provide another missionary. We hope to have three confreres in the parish: the pastor, the superior of the mission, and the principal of the school. A contract between the Diocese of Mondou and the Congregation of the Mission was signed and is effective from 29 May of this year to 28 May 2019.
6. We discussed the international mission of **Benin**. As of March, a third missionary has arrived from the Province of Poland to help reinforce the missionary efforts that are being carried out there. They are collaborating not only in the parish, but also with spiritual support for the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal.
7. We discussed **Punta Arenas** and the **Tierra del Fuego**, where there are three missionaries. We received a very positive commentary from the local bishop, indicating his happiness with the presence of the Vincentians in his diocese. We also reviewed a report from the Visitor of Chile, who made a visit to encourage the confreres in this very remote mission. We are looking for a fourth missionary to increase the support that they can find among themselves. The missionaries presented us with their Community Project, in which they give us a description of the work with an excellent breakdown of the different aspects of life in the mission. Father Pablo Vargas of Chile has been asked to accompany the Hope Foundation, which responds to all types of poverties in the diocese. This will give him the opportunity to serve those who are poorest and in different situations of poverty and abandonment. One of the positive things about this mission is that it is self-sustaining with the support received from the bishop and the contributions of the faithful. The missionaries are involved in the accompaniment of the Vincentian Family, particularly the Daughters of Charity.
8. We reviewed some correspondence with the mission superior in **Alaska**. The Congregation of the Mission has been given the Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe out of which to operate its Hispanic

ministry. Father Andrew Bellisario has been named the pastor and the vicar is Father Pedro Delgado from Colombia. Hopefully, by the end of this month or the middle of next month, they will have a third confrere joining them. This should help them consolidate their efforts to reach out to the Hispanics who are dispersed, not only throughout the Archdiocese of Anchorage, but also throughout the entire state. They are forming a pastoral mission team made up of the confreres themselves, as well as laity who are interested in being part of the evangelization team. Both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking communities have expressed interest.

The Congregation of the Mission made the Archbishop of Anchorage, Roger Schwietz, an affiliate. He is an Oblate of Mary Immaculate. In the letter he sent to the Superior General, he expressed his delight at becoming an affiliate. During the month of August, our Procurator General, Father Shijo, will join Fathers Pedro, Andy, and, hopefully, Jesús Gabriel Medina, in the mission. It will give him an opportunity to “come and see” this work, carried out in the very extreme northwest of the United States.

9. We updated our list of candidates for mission. These are: Father Rey Araneta from the Philippines soon will be joining the Vice-Province of Mozambique, when the necessary documentation is complete. Father Francisco Orlando Armellini from the Province of Venezuela will return shortly to Mozambique, where he had worked as a missionary a number of years ago, now that Venezuela, at least in terms of personnel, is becoming somewhat more stabilized with the assistance of the Province of Colombia. Recently, as was stated in some news releases, the Province of Colombia has assumed Venezuela as a Region. The Superior General and Council approved the Statutes for the new Region, hoping that the spirit of the charism might continue to grow in this new mission experience between Colombia and Venezuela. A confrere from the Province of the Orient, Father Fadi Bassil, will join Father Claudio Santangelo in our international mission in Sousse, Tunisia. Another candidate, Father Alexandre Fonseca de Paula from the Province of Fortaleza, has offered to be a missionary and is open to going wherever he might be called. The Superior General and his Council recommend that he form part of the team for the new international mission of Tefé in Brazil, where our confrere, Fernando Barbosa, is the bishop. As previously mentioned, we have two volunteers to begin, *ad*

experimentum, a mission in Beni, Bolivia. Father Andreas Medi Wijaya from Indonesia will travel shortly to Peru to further his studies in Spanish and prepare to get a visa to enter this mission. He will work with Father Julio César Villalobos of the Province of Peru. They begin this experience from September to December 2016.

10. The Superior General gave a report on his visit to Tefé, Brazil, the mission territory, under the responsibility of our confrere-bishop, as previously mentioned. Tefé is in the state of Amazonia, some 500 kilometers from the capital of Manaus. It is made up of ten cities, Tefé being the principal one. It is a mission mostly of rivers and most of the transportation is by boat. The communities are both mixed and indigenous. There are over 400 communities in the diocese, along four major rivers. Some communities are a three-day distance by boat from the main city. Tefé borders on Colombia. Missionaries willing truly to have the experience of a lifetime are invited to Tefé.

E. The Vincentian Family

Commission for Systemic Change. We reviewed the minutes of its most recent meeting, held in Brazil. The members continue to work out strategies to help people understand what constitutes real systemic change, as opposed to human promotion. They have initiated a program of regional coordinators. To help them, our confrere, Father Mizaél Poggioli from the Province of Curitiba, has prepared a manual, copies of which will be available at the General Assembly. The following workshops are planned: Thailand and Madagascar in November 2016. It is anticipated having one in Mozambique in May or November 2017. Together with all the Vincentian Family Commissions, they will gather in Rome in January 2017.

F. Conferences of Visitors

COVIAM held a meeting in Maputo, Mozambique, in addition to the one that will be held during the General Assembly. The reason for this meeting is that the majority of the members of COVIAM are not yet provinces or vice-provinces. They have three major regions: Kenya (USA-Western), Tanzania (South India), and Rwanda-Burundi (Colombia); as well as four international missions: Chad, Tunisia, Angola, and, hopefully, Benin, in the future. COVIAM's project of the interprovincial theologate was discussed. It is being held in Enugu,

Nigeria. COVIAM gives special attention to Chad, the international mission under its responsibility, together with the General Curia.

During this meeting, new leadership was elected. The President is Father José Luís Azevedo Fernandes, the Vice-Visitor of the Vice-Province of Mozambique, and the Vice-President is Father Cyril Mbata, the Visitor of Nigeria. The Secretary of COVIAM, who is nominated by the President, will continue to be Father Narcisse Djerambete from the Vice-Province of Cameroon, working in the international mission in Tunisia. They make up the Executive Council of COVIAM.

The rector of the interprovincial theologate is Abba Hagos Tewolde from the Province of Saint Justin De Jacobis and the vice-rector and treasurer is Father Longenus Odum from the Province of Nigeria. The project is ambitious and, as most things, expensive. In addition to the contributions that each of the provinces, vice-provinces, and regions in Africa make, the Superior General and Council made a decision to contribute, from the Mission Distribution Fund, to this interprovincial formation project. After the meeting that will be held during the General Assembly, the next meeting of COVIAM will be held in May 2017 at the international mission in Chad.

That wraps up our last *Tempo Forte* meeting of this administration. We only have two ordinary council meetings in the final two weeks of June, prior to departure for the General Assembly at DePaul University in Chicago.

As of 5 July, we will have elected a new Superior General. After the General Assembly, Father Gay will vacation with his family and confreres in the Eastern USA Province and then participate in an ongoing formation program run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in San Antonio, Texas. It is a holistic program, during which he hopes to discern what God wants of him when the sabbatical is completed at the end of 2016.

“Lord, send Your Church good workers, but they should be really good ones; send good Missioners ... persons, my God, truly detached from themselves, their own ease, and worldly goods; they can be a smaller number, provided they’re good” (CCD:XI:321-322).

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, CM
Superior General



The Little Company and the Church in South Odisha. The Birth of a New Diocese and a New Bishop

Babu Oonnukallinkal, CM

Ninety-four years have passed since the Little Company of Saint Vincent de Paul began its existence on Indian soil. Responding to the invitation of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (Propaganda Fide), four Spanish confreres of the Province of Madrid, namely, Fathers José María Fernández, Ferrer Ramon, Guemes Valeriano, and Coello Rey left Spain for India. On 10 January 1922, they reached Berhampur, in South Odisha, having travelled from Madrid through Barcelona, Paris, Marseilles, Colombo, and Vishakhapatnam. From Berhampur, Father Ramon took the road to Cuttack and the other three to Surada.

They took over the “Ganjam Mission,” of the presidency of Madras, from the Missionaries of Saint Francis de Sales (MSFS Fathers), who worked in the region for 72 years, from 1850 to 1922. The Ganjam Mission, with 4200 Catholics and 2500 catechumens was officially handed over on 3 February 1922, by Bishop Peter Rossillon, MSFS, of the Diocese of Vishakhapatnam at Surada, Orissa (cf. *The Little Mustard Seed* by Father Anslem F. Biswal). There were eight churches, four chapels, five residences with or without priests, and another 12 dilapidated residences as in the available inventory, as per the writings of Father Vincent Urbaneja, CM.

The tireless and continued efforts of our dedicated confreres gave growth to the church and got it established as the years passed by; and the same for the Congregation, with more confreres joining them. On 5 October 1925, the mission was declared a Vice-Province. On 18 July 1928, Pope Pius XI declared the “Cuttack Mission” that was comprised of “Ganjam” of the presidency of Madras and “Orissa” of the presidency of Bengal of the British rule, “*Missio Sui Juris*” and appointed Father Valerian Guemes its administrator.

After 15 years of committed evangelization work, from the start by the Vincentians, the Cuttack Mission was declared a diocese in 1937; and in January 1938, Father Florencio Sanz Esperanza, CM, was appointed the first Bishop of the Cuttack Diocese. He shepherded the diocese for 11 years. In 1947, Father Paul Tobar Gonzáles, CM, became the second Bishop of the Cuttack Diocese. Bishop Paul Tobar was called to the Lord on 18 April 1971, after shepherding the Diocese of Cuttack. It comprised the present four dioceses namely, Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, Berhampur, Balasore, and the newly erected Diocese of Rayagada, spread out over 17 of the 30 civil districts of Orissa, which constitute 56.66% of the total area of the state. The arrival of the Daughters of Charity in 1940 boosted the work of evangelization through their special focus on the pastoral, educational, and health ministries. After the death of Bishop Paul Tobar, Father Vincent Urbaneja, CM, was elected administrator of the diocese, continuing until 24 January 1974, when the Cuttack Diocese was bifurcated into the Metropolitan See of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar and the Diocese of Berhampur. Most Reverend Henry D'Souza was appointed the first Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar and Monsignor Thomas Thiruthalil, CM, was appointed the bishop of the new Diocese of Berhampur.

The newborn Diocese of Berhampur had its initial unrest and struggle for a couple of years. But simplicity of life, love for the poor, and constant contact with the faithful made Bishop Thomas well accepted in the new diocese. The Indian Province of the Congregation of the Mission and that of the Daughters of Charity backed him with the needed support. The late Bishop Joseph Das, who succeeded Bishop Thomas in the Diocese of Berhampur, wrote in an article in the Silver Jubilee Souvenir of the diocese, "with the creation of the new Diocese of Berhampur and the appointment of Bishop Thomas, the new bishop, a new hope dawned. New plans were conceived. The shepherd in Bishop Thomas Thiruthalil took the staff to tend the flock." By the year 1999, at the time of the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese of Berhampur, it had a Catholic population of 85,000 spread out in 470 mission stations in 35 parishes. There were 45 diocesan priests, 55 religious priests, including Vincentians, 165 religious sisters, including the Daughters of Charity, and seven religious brothers engaged in the works of evangelization.

On 8 June 1968, the then districts of Balasore, Mayurbhanj, and Keonjer were separated from the Archdiocese of Calcutta and the

Apostolic Prefecture of Balasore was erected, annexing it to the Ecclesiastical Province of Ranchi, until then under Calcutta; and, on 14 June 1968, Monsignor Jacob Vadakkeveetil, CM, was appointed its first Apostolic Administrator and the Prefecture was entrusted to the care of Vincentians, with 3000 Catholics and three established parishes. In 1974, it was placed under the Ecclesiastical Province of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar. On 13 January 1990, on the retirement of Monsignor Jacob Vadakkeveetil, CM, the Prefecture of Balasore was raised to a diocese; Bishop Thomas Thiruthalil, CM, was transferred from the Diocese of Berhampur and appointed first Bishop of Balasore. Today the Diocese of Balasore has over 30,000 Catholics in 22 parishes with 40 priests, 133 religious sisters, and about 60 full-time and part-time catechists engaged in missionary activities. After the retirement of Bishop Thomas Thiruthalil, CM, in 2014, Father Simon Kaipuram, CM, from the North India Province, was appointed to shepherd the Diocese of Balasore.

The Diocese of Berhampur has given birth to the new Diocese of Rayagada which will formally be inaugurated on 28 May 2016; yet another confrere of the North India Province, Father Aplinar Senapati, CM, has been appointed the first bishop of the new diocese. He will be consecrated on 28 May 2016 in Rayagada. Born on 28 October 1960 at Dantoingi, the place of the famous Marian Shrine in Surada, one of the first three houses of the Congregation of the Mission in India, Father Aplinar, a son of the soil, had his matriculation at Technical High School, Surada. He entered the Minor Seminary at Jyoti Nivas, Baripada in 1980. Having completed the Internal Seminary and philosophy in Gopalpur-on-Sea and theology in Jnana Deep Vidhyapeeth, Pune, he was ordained a priest at Surada on 28 November 1990. Father Aplinar served the Congregation as assistant parish priest, parish priest, formator, Director of the Internal Seminary, principal of school, and as the assistant Visitor of the North India Province. He holds two Masters Degrees: one in Political Science and the other in Economics.

The new diocese is carved out of the Diocese of Berhampur; six out of eight civil districts namely, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Nabarangpur, Koraput, and Malkangiri comprise the ecclesiastical territory of the new Diocese of Rayagada. It has an area of 39,368.4 sq. km., with a Catholic population of 61,827, in 24 parishes, with 30 diocesan priests and 270 catechists. There are members from five men's Congregations and 13 women's Congregations working in the Diocese

of Rayagada. In five Vincentian parishes, there are ten confreres engaged in pastoral, social, and educational ministries, including that of Rayagada where there is a parish, a school, and a hostel for boys, as well as a hostel for girls entrusted to the Sisters of Handmaids of Mary.

The Diocese of Berhampur now has the two civil districts of Ganjam and Gajapati for its territory under the pastoral care of Dr. Sarat Chandra Nayak, a schoolmate of Father Aplanar. The diocese has an area of 11,920.6 sq. km. It has 24 Parishes, including six Vincentian parishes, 40 diocesan priests, and 372 catechists. There are members from nine men's Congregations and 24 women's Congregations working in the Diocese of Berhampur. More than 20 confreres are engaged in pastoral, formation, retreat, social, educational, and technical-training ministries.

The Architects of the Cuttack Mission – the Church in South Odisha

1928 – 1938:	Father Valerian Guemes, CM Administrator of Cuttack “ <i>Missio Sui Juris</i> ”
1938 – 1949:	Bishop Florencio Sanz, CM First Bishop of the Diocese of Cuttack
1949 – 1971:	Bishop Paul Tobar, CM Second Bishop of the Diocese of Cuttack
1968 – 1990:	Msgr. Jacob Vadakkeveetil, CM Prefect Apostolic of Balasore Prefecture
1971 – 1974:	Father Vincent Urbaneja, CM Administrator of the Diocese Cuttack
1974 – 1990:	Bishop Thomas Thiruthalil, CM First Bishop of the Diocese of Berhampur
1990 – 2014:	Bishop Thomas Thiruthalil, CM First Bishop of the Diocese of Balasore
2014 – :	Bishop Simon Kaipuram, CM Second Bishop of the Diocese of Balasore
2016 – :	Bishop Aplanar Senapati, CM First Bishop of the Diocese of Rayagada

The “Vincentian leaven,” from the Church of South Odisha, has spread far beyond the frontiers of the Cuttack Mission. The Vincentians are not only in Odisha, but also in most of the states in India, including northeast India. The Fiji Islands, in the past, and Tanzania, China, Ethiopia, and Germany have been the vineyard of the Indian confreres. The Vicariate of Nekemte in Ethiopia has its Apostolic Vicar, Bishop Varghese Thottamkara, CM, from the South India Province, as its shepherd. After 94 years of the Little Company’s existence on Indian soil, the great legacy of Saint Vincent, handed over through the four pioneer confreres, continues to live vibrantly, through more than 240 confreres in two provinces, even far beyond the subcontinent. Standing at the threshold of the centenary of the birth of the Congregation in India, that is just six years away, one can look back with sincere gratitude and look forward with greater hope and say ardently with commitment and conviction, “*EVANGELIZARE PAUPERIBUS MISIT ME.*”

2

From the Superior General

Letter to the Visitors

20 April 2016

Dear Visitors,

May the joy of the risen Lord remain with you always!

In March, and then again this month, you may have seen the announcement that I sent out through the Vincentian Family Office regarding our celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the Birth of the Vincentian Charism. The special theme chosen for this year is "Welcoming the Stranger."

The international leaders of the Vincentian Family, in dialogue with their members, have been asked to submit their plans for this year-long celebration by October 2016.

During the General Assembly we will have an opportunity to discern our response as a Congregation. In order to prepare for this discussion, I ask each Visitor to speak with his confreres about how they might effectively make a difference in the lives of the strangers whom they serve as a province. You will have the opportunity to finalize your local plans after our dialogue on this topic. We will then share both our provincial and international strategies with the entire the Vincentian Family.

Thank you for your work in preparation for our General Assembly.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, CM
Superior General

Dear Leaders and Members of the Vincentian Family

As was mentioned in January at our meeting of the international Vincentian Family in Rome, 2017 marks the 400th Anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian charism.

The Vincentian Family Collaboration Commission, having received the approval of the Vincentian Family Executive Committee as well as an enthusiastic reception from those present in Rome, now presents to you our Vincentian Family's Global Initiative for the celebration of this year.

A special note to the international leaders: please make sure you send your Branch's work plan by 1 October 2016 to Father Joseph Agostino at vfo@famvin.org.

May the Lord bless all our efforts to welcome the stranger in our midst.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, CM
Superior General

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me..”

A global initiative of the Vincentian Family to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism in 2017.

In 2017 we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian charism. It was in 1617, while preaching in the parish church of Châtillon, that Vincent exhorted his congregation to take responsibility for a poor family from the parish that had taken seriously ill and were in need of food and comfort. The family was saved by the overwhelming response to this call to action and Vincent, as a result, had his great realization that for charity to be effective it must be properly organized – an event which has changed the world for the last 400 years.

This story also brings to life a gospel text at the heart of our shared Vincentian calling, Matthew 25:35 "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." By reaching out and helping the strangers in our midst we are showing solidarity with that event at Châtillon and we are as one with our Vincentian calling. We model the example of the Good Samaritan in our community.

Who are the strangers in our midst today? There are so many to choose from – the refugees fleeing from oppression and poverty, those internally displaced within their country due to civil war, the migrants seeking a new life, the homeless, those coping alone with physical or mental illness, those suffering discrimination perhaps because of their faith or race or color, the lonely and vulnerable both young and old. Many of these people and issues are already familiar areas of work to members of the Vincentian Family globally. However, can we do more?

Are there new poverties emerging to which we are being called to respond?

To celebrate the 400th anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian charism the leaders of the international Vincentian Family would like to invite all members of the Vincentian Family around the world to consider how we might better welcome the strangers in our communities by making it the focus of the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism.

The year of welcoming the stranger will run from 1 January to 31 December 2017. It will be launched formally by Father Gregory Gay,

the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, on 15 May 2016, the Feast of Pentecost.

This date is especially significant for our Vincentian Family. It also marks the end of the Year of Collaboration, issuing a call to action and inviting us to discover concrete ways to reach out to the strangers in our midst. It also connects us more deeply with the Universal Church, which, under the guidance of Pope Francis, is celebrating the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

From 15 May 2016 onwards, the international leaders of the Vincentian Family will take responsibility for developing a reflective process of consultation with their particular branch of the Family, working closely with their regional and national bodies. We invite them to focus on the following questions:

- ✓ Who are the strangers in our midst?
- ✓ How are we currently supporting them?
- ✓ What new needs are emerging?
- ✓ How might we respond to these needs?
- ✓ Might we be the strangers in need of welcoming?

This consultation and the ideas emerging from it will allow each Vincentian Family branch to develop a work plan by October 2016 to be rolled out in 2017. These work plans will then be forwarded to the Vincentian Family Collaboration Commission, which will coordinate and support activities globally through the production of materials for reflection and celebration, as well as promoting, on the Famvin website, the year and the activities generated. On the Famvin website. The commission will also collate a final report on the outcomes and impact of this initiative by mid-2018, so that we can judge the result of our actions at a global level.

Where the Vincentian Family has strong connections on the ground, we encourage the Family to collaborate at either a local, regional, national, or international level. As Vincent de Paul himself recognized, we are at our best and most effective when we work together.

Welcoming the strangers in our midst should also be seen as an invitation to everyone who shares (or might be interested in) our Vincentian values, mission, or spirituality. The people we currently serve are as capable of welcoming strangers as we are, if we invite them to do so. It is not dependent on power or wealth or hierarchy. This is an opportunity for everyone to be part of our Family and to share in our celebrations over the course of the year.

To All the Members of MISEVI International

Rome, 23 May 2016

May the grace and peace of the Lord be with all of you!

My dear brothers and sisters, members of MISEVI, I have spent 12 years accompanying MISEVI in its growth. I have attempted to invest much energy into the development of this organization which is known as Lay Vincentian Missionaries.

On the one hand, we have defined the word missionary as referring to those individuals who live in community or in missions *ad gentes*; they are, certainly, most important and most significant and we want to see their number increase. But MISEVI means more, much more. MISEVI is where people are active in their parish or participating in an apostolate with the Daughters of Charity or with members of the Congregation of the Mission or other branches of the Vincentian Family. MISEVI is where people are ministering in popular missions, in their parish, or beyond their parish and their homeland and ministering in accord with the spirit and the charism of Saint Vincent de Paul. This is MISEVI, laymen and women who love and minister in accord with the spirit of Vincent de Paul.

I have seen many examples of this. We can consider members of MISEVI those who formally become members, as well as those individuals who, for one reason or another, reject becoming part of this global institution of lay Vincentian missionaries, yet do everything that the members of MISEVI do. Perhaps there is a resistance to structures or to statutes or to whatever. Nevertheless, we have the opportunity to grow and that is what I hope will happen.

I would have liked to have seen even greater growth than has occurred, but we are moving forward and the seed has been planted in numerous places. There is much potential in various countries, where the seed of MISEVI has been planted, and we rely on our elder brothers and sisters, on those who initiated this great project of the Vincentian Family, namely, MISEVI in Spain.

We can grow. We can reflect, for example, on the idea of shared mission not only with the Daughters of Charity or members of the Congregation of the Mission, but also with new communities that are being developed. Here I am referring to communities composed of individuals from distinct countries; this is, indeed, a real challenge. Cultural differences are always difficult to confront, but we must not allow those differences to separate us, but rather those differences should be viewed as elements that can enrich our growth and our faith commitment. We can broaden our vision of the world so that we give witness to the fact that, as Christians, we can live together regardless of any difference with regard to origin, the color of one's skin, language, etc. This is precisely what we are called to do: to give witness. We are also called to form international communities and participate in a shared mission with other branches of the Vincentian Family, especially with members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

I am very impressed with the work that is being done by the missionaries in Bolivia and in Honduras and by members of the new community in Angola. These missionaries open their doors in order to receive others. They want to give of themselves. All of this enables them to grow and to learn how to deepen their love for the poor (not verbally or through means of academic courses, but through their own example). They are taught the art of loving the poor just as Blessed Rosalie Rendu did when she accompanied the young men who were the founders of what became the largest branch of the Vincentian Family, namely, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. Here, then, we are speaking about Frédéric Ozanam and his companions who were accompanied by that Daughter of Charity and who, because of her and with her, learned the art of loving the poor.

The message that I want to leave with you is the following: we must recognize that we work best when we work together, when we make real this idea of a shared mission. This is how we will grow.

We are at a time of preparation, a time when we are looking for strategies that will enable us to live in a more profound way the 400th anniversary of the origin of our Vincentian charism. This is an event that we are going to celebrate together as a Vincentian Family (an event that we will celebrate from 1 January to 31 December 2017).

Yes, it is a challenge to give witness to the fact that we can work together. We have chosen a particular theme based on the 25th chapter of the gospel of Saint Matthew (a chapter that was very dear to Saint Vincent). In light of this text, we come to understand that, when we deal with a person who is in need and when we come to his/her assistance, we are doing the same to Jesus. The verse that we are going to reflect upon during this time is verse 35c: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me*; I was a stranger in your midst and you made me feel welcome. That is the call that the Lord extends to us, and that call is extended in a special way to the lay missionaries.

The members of MISEVI have an incredible capacity to open their doors, to open their arms, and to receive persons into their midst who feel like strangers, to receive persons and make them feel welcome. This is a basic element of the Christian life and ought to characterize all Vincentians, especially those missionaries who are called to proclaim good news to the poor and who are to find in the poor the good news that will enable them to grow. This is our call, to serve and to evangelize; this is also our mission, which is to be accomplished in charity.

I want to conclude now and say farewell as Director General of MISEVI. I can assure you that this has been a very enriching experience. My prayer and my desire is that all of you will deepen your understanding of the missionary spirit. Our young men and women, all of our adult members who have given their life in service of the Lord and who, after many years of experience, continue to share the word and want to proclaim the word far and wide, all of these persons are truly a gift of God.

History is always the same. When we proclaim the good news, we discover that we have received more than we have given. This, then, is my invitation: let us act in accord with the Vincentian spirit; in accord with the spirit of the virtues that Vincent recognized as significant in the life of Jesus; in accord with the spirit that enables us to experience ourselves as simple men and women who are in a relationship with others, especially the poor; in accord with the spirit that enables us to recognize that we are humble individuals, in no way important or distinguished. Rather the poor are important and distinguished and the most distinguished person is the Lord to whom we are called to give glory.

We are called to be gentle so that, when we proclaim the good news, others will draw near to us and, through us, will be able to experience God's love and mercy.

As missionaries we are called to be willing to make sacrifices, willing to move out of our comfort zone, willing to look beyond our own self-interest and, thus, give ourselves to others. We are called, in the words of Pope Francis, to go out to the peripheries.

Above all we are called to be zealous with regard to the mission, zealous and enthusiastic in such a way that people can experience our joy in being messengers of the Good News. These are the characteristic virtues that Vincent recognized in the life of Jesus and that he himself wanted to live: simplicity, humility, gentleness, mortification, and apostolic zeal.

My brothers and sisters, members of MISEVI, those who have many years of experience and who have lived their lives committed to the mission, as well as those who are beginning as members of MISEVI, perhaps with the idea of serving for one or two or more years, let us all ask the Lord to help us to walk with him, to help us to be that which this year of mercy invites us to be, namely, people with open arms who reveal the mercy of God, the Father. We can be this only when we allow the Lord to embrace us with his love.

May God bless all of you. You can count on my prayers. Indeed, through my prayers, I will continue to be united with you after my time of service as Director General and Superior General has concluded. I will remain united with you as one more missionary involved in a shared mission.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, CM
Superior General

Letter to the Confreres

14 June 2016

Dear Confreres,

May the grace of Jesus Christ accompany us during this final stage of preparation for the XLII General Assembly, which will take place in Chicago (the United States) from 27 June – 15 July 2016.

There have been many preparations and there are great expectations as we gather together to celebrate this event. In fact, this will be the first time that a General Assembly is held outside of Europe and, during this gathering, we will elect a new Superior General who will serve the Congregation during the next six years.

In this context, communication will play an important role especially in light of the recent development of technology and the multiple modalities that can provide us with immediate information. The Office of Communications at the Curia has formulated a Communication Plan so that all the themes and work of the Assembly can be assessed by the confreres.

This Communication Plan involves the use of digital media and the social networks. Each one of those various forms of communication has its own public, its own language. Therefore, it is important to be mindful of these differences in order to make known the information with regard to the assembly.

Below you will find a list of the different sites that the confreres can utilize in order to be in touch with what occurs during the Assembly. We encourage you to make yourselves familiar with these various sites so that, together, all of us might experience the joy of this event.

The official site of the Assembly will be

<http://ag2016.cmglobal.org/>

You can follow the Assembly at the following sites

Social Network *Link*

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CMGlobal.org/>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/cmissionis>

Google+ [https://plus.google.com/b/
103977904748116053441/
103977904748116053441/posts](https://plus.google.com/b/103977904748116053441/103977904748116053441/posts)

YouTube [https://www.youtube.com/channel/
UCOteJsDxIIgaFG4OZPcBe1g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOteJsDxIIgaFG4OZPcBe1g)

Flickr <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cmglobal/>

Scribd (AG2016 collection)
[https://www.scribd.com/collections/16734116/
General-Assembly-2016](https://www.scribd.com/collections/16734116/General-Assembly-2016)

Let us continue to pray for the success of our next General Assembly.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, CM
Superior General

3

Character of the CM

**Father Richard McCullen, CM,
Superior General from 1980-1992
of the Congregation of the Mission
and the Company of the Daughters
of Charity**



Lauro Palú, CM

The Editorial Board of *Vincentiana* has asked me for a testimony about Father Richard McCullen, of happy memory among the members of the Congregation of the Mission, since I accompanied him during his second term as Superior General. My intention is to share a little of the lived experience with the successor of Saint Vincent de Paul during the time we worked together.

I write this with a lot of emotion recalling the atmosphere of the General Curia, the friendship all of us shared, the help of all kinds we gave each other. It is equally emotional to recall all the names and to hear only a few answering “present,” because the rest are in the Mission in heaven: Paul Henzmann, Miguel Pérez Flores, Jean-François Gaziello, Alberto Piras, Léon Lauwerier, Stanislao Prosperini, Luigi Festari, Alejandro Rigazio, Thomas Cawley, Victor Bieler, Brother Joseph Nagel, Sister Eleanor McNabb, Sister Mary Ellen Sheldon, and Sister Montserrat Roset, all of whom are affectionately remembered.

Since these are personal recollections about work and friendship, this is not a history of the Congregation nor a judgment about Father McCullen’s time in office.

I met Father Richard McCullen in the General Assembly of 1980. In the CLAPVI meetings prior to the Assembly, we were looking for criteria for electing the new Superior General who would replace Father James Richardson. We suggested many qualities (health, relatively young age, diverse pastoral works, experience with the Daughters of Charity, knowledge of various languages, etc.). Then Father Martiniano Leon asked the Moderator to suspend the session for a few hours so he could go to the Vatican to ask Pope John Paul II if he would accept being the next Superior General.

When the Assembly began we knew the most likely candidates were José Elias Chaves (from Rio de Janeiro who had been named bishop by the Pope a few months before), Florian Kapuściak (Assistant General from Poland who wrote to the Assembly saying that if elected, he could not accept), Miguel Pérez Flores (from Salamanca), Richard McCullen (from Ireland), and a few more. We began to exchange information, a kind of “electoral campaign.” We wanted to find out what the language groups had decided. There was an atmosphere of well-intentioned curiosity which sought to determine the direction of the Assembly and the writing of the new Constitutions.

Then we went to the beautiful chapel of the Leonine College, Provincial House of Rome, for the Eucharist invoking the Holy Spirit to show us the best candidate. Before entering I mentioned to Father McCullen that his name came up often. He told me he spoke no other languages, but only English. I told him this was not important, since that is why we had Assistants and the General Secretariat. A few years later, when someone asked him during a talk in the Province of Brazil (sic), how he felt when they chose him as Superior General, he confessed he could accept the office very calmly, because I had told him about the languages and the help he would have.

In the following ballots, Father McCullen surpassed Father Pérez Flores who had seemed to be the favorite in the previous ballot. Father Pérez Flores was immediately elected as Vicar General. One of the most beautiful testimonies of that Assembly and its results was the unstinting loyalty and the efficient collaboration Father Pérez Flores rendered to Father McCullen in the two terms they served together.

In that Assembly of 1980, which lasted for 54 days, we tried, among other things, to formulate the end of the Congregation (one end? two? three?). We did not arrive at a conclusion from all these discussions, because some asked to be heard and attacked the positions of others without weighing the reasons or understanding the motives for rejecting certain formulations, etc. One morning I asked the Central Commission to propose a long session in which we could speak *to* one another and not *against* one another. We only partly achieved that. Nevertheless, at the end of the morning Father Erminio Antonello (from Turin), speaking for the Italian language group, proposed a text which seemed to capture what the different groups wanted. This is the present Article 1 of the Constitutions.

In 1983, Father McCullen visited the Province of Rio de Janeiro. When the Visitor was presenting me, Father McCullen said: "I know him; this is Father Palú, the man who likes consensus." When I was elected at the 1986 Assembly, there were two new Assistants, Father Robert Maloney and I, and two who had been reelected: Fathers Pérez Flores and Jean-François Gaziello. Many times the four of us were of two minds, two on each side. Father McCullen should have had the deciding vote, but he never cast it, always moving us to new considerations and trying to achieve consensus. Sometimes Father Maloney suggested postponing the decision until the following day. It was truly moving to see him in the chapel praying, asking the Lord for light, and never going by our rooms to try to convince us of anything. Father McCullen entrusted to me the preparation of a short text about arriving at decisions through consensus, and not by majority. Consensus is not exactly consent, but rather an effort to find the common threads in what is desired and proposed.

As Assistant General one of my jobs was to accompany the General in his visits to some of the provinces or to some special meeting. Thus I helped him in Portugal, in Spain (for a meeting of the Vincentian Marian Youth in Torre de Benagalbón), in Italy (for the Marian Youth in Loreto), in Mozambique, in Egypt, and in the Brazilian Provinces (Rio, Curitiba, and Fortaleza). I was designated by him to accompany the Volunteers of Charity at the international level (International Association of Charities, AIC). He sent me to their meetings, to their General Assembly, and to other commemorations of the centennial of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society (SSVP). My job was to clarify and maintain tranquility, assuring the members that the Superior General was not trying to unite the Ladies with the men of Ozanam into a new international association. For 12 years I was the liaison of the General Council with these branches of the Vincentian Family; and, in the final years, I was named by the Vatican as the International Ecclesiastical Assistant for the AIC.

In the visits to the Portuguese-speaking provinces, I had to translate his homilies and talks. The beauty of his English was well known and much appreciated, as was the special care he took in what he wrote and published. He asked us for literal translations, being careful to be faithful to the text. On one occasion I had to tell him I knew the Portuguese language, when he insisted there were two negatives in a phrase to give the necessary force to a thought. I

answered him that, for simple people it was easier to understand “we should do...” rather than “we should not fail to do...” He understood and never again insisted. He said he thought of the simpler Brothers and Sisters when he spoke, never trying to appear too cultured or refined and inaccessible to them. In Mozambique he spoke in English, I translated into Portuguese and a school teacher spoke in *Changana*. He would ask: “Did I say all that?”, because *Changana* has a very different sentence structure from our western European languages, and it greatly lengthened the phrases.

On our first visit to Lisbon he said to me: “Now you translate into Portuguese.” Relax, I told him, I will. But I was greatly surprised when he began in English. I thought he would speak Italian. On such occasions I felt vividly and concretely the grace of office, because in Rome it was hard for me to understand everything he said in English. He would say that, in his visits to the provinces, he always spoke in English, because he wished to be sure of saying what he wanted to say; and it also tired him less.

He simply recognized he did not have much facility for languages. And so in Brazil, Portugal, and Mozambique, each night, he would prepare with me the reading of his texts for the next day. I would make him copies enlarged to 120%. The Sisters often commented that he understood the texts perfectly because his pauses were intelligent, in just the right part of each phrase. I had marked everything, with signs we understood, for a normal pause within an enumeration, a longer pause for opposition, a pause followed by other words to give a certain insistence he knew how to appreciate.

After visiting almost a dozen Portuguese-speaking provinces of the Daughters, sometimes he would tell me to answer directly myself what I knew he would answer to their questions or those of the young people for whom the Sisters cared. He would reserve ample time in his contacts with them to answer their questions and to satisfy their endless curiosity.

Young people were a special passion of Father McCullen, the reason for his hope, an area in which he wished to sow many truths and teachings in order to cultivate their hearts and elevate their spirits, by presenting to them the ideals of Christianity and of the following of Saint Vincent, Saint Louise, and Ozanam. The young men and women responded with near adulation to his personality, as I saw in Benagalbón and Loreto with the Vincentian Marian Youth.

Whenever it was possible during his visits to the provinces, he would speak to each confrere, attentive to their signs of affection for which he was deeply grateful. He would ask each confrere about his works, his joys, his hopes. Talking with the seminarians, he made them see the beauty of the Vincentian vocation. He was interested in their studies and their work, and he encouraged them to learn other languages.

To give life to this desire for communication among the members of the Congregation, he encouraged the provinces to install the first fax machines in their secretariats. He began the modernization of the Curia with the first computers, with the enthusiasm of Fathers Pérez-Flores, William Sheldon, Robert Maloney, and, shortly afterwards, of Victor Bieler. The General Secretariat went from the electric typewriters of Paul Henzmann to the computers of Victor Bieler and Emeric Amyot d'Inville.

During his visits he would usually do some sightseeing. He was always very learned, very interested in affairs and constructions. In Rio de Janeiro, the Visitor took him to the figure of Christ the Redeemer, the great statue that blesses the people of the *marvelous city* and of all Brazil. From the top of the mountain, he saw when they lit the public lights of the city, the necklace of lights along the avenues, and he opened his arms like the Christ figure, as if he himself were electrified. Returning to Rio, after six years, he asked to see the same marvels. I have seen him with similar emotions in Egypt, before the pyramids with a light-and-sound spectacle.

To go around as a tourist or a visitor, beloved and important, meant having to eat some exotic things typical of each culture (and he visited all the provinces of the different continents). Apparently he had no fears of strange meats or unknown sauces, knowing they would never offer him anything bad or dangerous. With no problem, he would taste Polish dishes in Curitiba, typical fish dishes in Fortaleza, rich fruits from northeastern Brazil, curiosities from Egypt, etc. But he was extremely careful not to get sick or contract any kind of stomach problem, which would prevent his being present when the poor began their parties with the artistic presentations they had been rehearsing for months. With this thoughtful pastoral attention, he would leave aside whatever seemed problematic, dangerous, or that he knew would give him problems.

He knew how to admire the dances, the songs, the choreography. He liked to see the gardens and the collections of plants of the Sisters. In Rio de Janeiro, they gave him a beautiful orchid which he kept for many days to take it to his elderly mother, because from Rio he was going to Ireland. Whoever heard him speak to his mother by telephone knew the tenderness, the affection, the warm-heartedness of a man in the warm and loving hands of his mother. He had for the Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity an affection like that of Saint Vincent for Saint Louise.

Another example of his thoughtful pastoral action: in Mozambique, they gave him dozens of figures, some simple and others of wonderful craftsmanship, many of precious wood like ebony or red cedar. Because they could cause some problems in the airport, we pondered what pieces he would take to the General Curia. Surely he read my mind, because he gave me a small horse in red cedar with a missionary mounted on it who carried a banner which read, *Love one another*. He said: *"I'll take these two scepters,"* symbolic black ebony, liturgical scepters of local tribal chieftains, *"and the horse is yours."* He felt he was truly our leader with all simplicity and friendship; he showed it in all simplicity and clarity.

Delicate, not scrupulous, but rather courteous in his requests. He called me to his office at five minutes to noon. I found him with a bottle and two glasses. He spoke to me of different things for the five minutes that were left until the deadline of pontifical secrecy and he could tell me that the Pope had named Jose Carlos Melo from my province as bishop. We celebrated the appointment with a toast.

When Father Maloney began his first term as Superior General, he sent us Assistants to learn or improve our command of some language. I went to Ireland for English. Father McCullen was waiting for me in the airport; he took me to "my house" (Raheny), where I stayed for a month. On the weekends, he took me to visit his country: the rich and precious greenery of the countryside and the coast, the typical crosses of the traditional places, and he explained to me in detail all the symbols of each place with its theological and historical richness. He took me to the places of Saint Patrick and other saints, happy to belong to the Irish race and to have such relatives.

Speaking of these larger realities helped Father McCullen to forget for a few moments the problems which distressed him, such as the lack of vocations in his province and in general, the sad cases of alcoholism

in the clergy, and the scandal of priests who were denounced as pedophiles. Surely his last years were sad. It is very nice to see on the Internet the photo gallery that appears when one searches for Richard McCullen, CM Two things strike me: the last photos of his face on the eve of his 90th birthday, marked by age like that of John Paul II, the light, the depth, and firmness of his look. He liked it very much when André Dodin published the first portrait of Saint Vincent with his head inclined, which would be the typical characteristic of Saint Vincent. In many of these photos, Father McCullen also has his head inclined like Vincent. And in these photos, he looks at us attentively as though wanting to enter into our souls, with intensity and affection, with no trembling, without fear or threats, with his great heart.

We exchanged greetings at Easter and Christmas for many years. His words were always very personal, because he would refer to what we had lived together during the six years of his second term. He thanked me repeatedly for the small help I gave him as Assistant. When we finished the *Tempo Forte* Meetings of the Curia, twice a year, we would generally leave for new visitations or for a retreat for the confreres or the Daughters of Charity. As often as I could, I offered to write letters in the languages I know. This seemed to him like some extraordinary help, something unforeseen, as though it were something worthy of merit. I took advantage to further my knowledge and familiarize myself with the fine points of the different cultures. In the letters to the Italians, he would ask me to use the most agreeable superlatives like “my dearest” or “most devoted.” To the Brazilians, he would say “missing you,” etc. After 1992, he would write to friends in Brazil in what he remembered of Portuguese. He would read the magazine *Colegio San Vicente de Paul* which I directed in Rio de Janeiro and he would comment on its contents. He sent me his last letter when I celebrated my 50 years of priesthood. It made me very happy to see how generous he was and how he nurtured memories, recalling past events; and, above all, how he learned from Saint Vincent that we should be grateful to those who help us, however humble that service was.

A wonderful confrere, a model, a friend, an unforgettable older brother.

Translated: Joseph V. Cummins, CM

FATHER RICHARD McCULLEN, CM APPRECIATION, MAINLY IN RELATION TO THE YEARS 1992-2015

Eamon Flanagan, CM

INTRODUCTION:

I was impressed by my first glimpse of Father Richard McCullen. It was at the beginning of my Vincentian life. He had recently returned from Rome, where he had completed highly acclaimed doctoral studies. What impressed me most about him then, and ever since, was his demeanour of quiet, strong dignity and sincere, unforced spiritual authority.

Later, in my student days, I had Father McCullen successively as spiritual director, professor of moral theology, and superior. My abiding memory of him from this period (1960-64) is of a priest, truly Vincentian, very prayerful, most intelligent, and deeply aware of the Church. He saw that relevant formation was required for us seminarians as we entered a world taking on new shape and as Vatican Council II was plotting a way of dialogue, hope, and fidelity.

Father McCullen went on to exercise the role of spiritual director in Ireland's National Seminary at Maynooth from 1967-1975. He then was Provincial Superior of our Province (1975-80). At the 1980 General Assembly, he was elected to the most demanding, responsible, highly-esteemed, and Christ-like serving ministry of Superior General.

RETURN TO IRELAND: SAINT PATRICK'S:

Over 12 years (1980-92), Father McCullen faithfully performed worldwide service for our Congregation, the Daughters of Charity, and several groups owning the charism. In 1992, returning to Ireland he was based in the community attached to Saint Patrick's College of Education for Teachers, Dublin and, in this university context, he was chaplain to the students.

However, the confines of a college campus were too limiting for a man of his zeal and talents. Having been so well known and respected

throughout the world by his confreres, the Daughters, and the Vincentian groups, he was now invited far and wide to give talks and retreats, and to participate in the extended gatherings under the Founder's inspiration. Thus, he travelled to share the good news, plant new seeds of the Spirit, and assist in watering or reaping golden harvests (see 1 Corinthians 3:6) in places from Britain and the continent of Europe to the USA and the Far East. He continued these spiritual missionary labours through his sojourn at Saint Patrick's (1992-96) and through his time as Superior in Saint Paul's Provincial House, Dublin (1996-2008).

SUPERIOR AT SAINT PAUL'S (1996-2008) AND LATER:

All through this lengthy period, both during his years as Superior and afterwards when I resided in that community (2008 and later), Richard maintained an almost uninterrupted ministry, along the lines mentioned, in his customary evangelistic vigorous mode. He only slowed down as the years and inevitable energy deficit took a toll on his long marathon course (see 1 Corinthians 9:24). Up until his final years, he undertook awesome flights to California in order to inspire Vincentian friends under the auspices of the Daughters. Nearer home, he was available for talks, days of recollection, keynote addresses, and homilies. The Pauline ideal never deserted him: preach the word; be urgent in season and out of season; ... be unfailing in patience and in teaching (2 Timothy 4:1, 2).

PRIESTS, THE FAITHFUL:

In the years from 1982, Father Richard maintained, as before, his concern for the whole Church – and a very concrete expression of this, ongoing assistance for priests to whom he gave spiritual guidance and support. In an increasingly harsh climate, his open welcome and appropriate sound direction were a soothing balm for many. As shepherd of the shepherds, he raised hearts and prolonged a Vincentian quality of what is true and ever new.

His own formation, early ministry, and indeed his family story against the background of his famous uncle, Msgr. McCullen, of Meath Diocese, afforded him a certain head start in this field. In this regard, he always kept in mind his former directees from his work in seminary and so he had numerous contacts and friends among his fellow priests.

This involvement with diocesan priests and others made him very accessible and sought after, not least in the Dublin Archdiocese.

We have seen major changes in the secular culture of our country in recent decades. Father Richard was acutely aware of the challenges posed to Catholic life and faith-commitment. He was a wholesome influence among his relatives, including two first cousins who served at different phases in the Irish Government. His two brothers who predeceased him were in professional life; they, his sister, Mary, her husband, Billy, and their family were very close and dear to him. He was involved with all his extended family and had deep interest in them all, including his cousin Sister Mura McCullen, DC. In all this, he reminds us of Saint Catherine Labouré whose letters dearly recall her love and apostolate among her family members.

POOR, SPECIAL OUTREACH:

I often noticed in Father Richard a genuine universal charity. All persons mattered to him, in the best sense, like the Lord. He did not calculate who the individual was, his/her background, ability, status, or virtue, though of course he was prudent, discerning, and esteemed the uniqueness of each one. Like the missionaries being sent forth in Jerusalem (Gal 2:10), he had a special love for the poor. There were needy people whom he met on his travels, some who begged for material aid, and some whom he assisted, consoled, and guided. In this last context, Richard showed compassion, interest, and gave time to Christ in his peripheral members. This hidden, unheralded attention in less fashionable areas of charity is noteworthy in the former General's pastoral inclusion.

SOURCE OF IT ALL:

The wide-ranging goodness and service of Father Richard was not something fortuitous. It was founded on a sound spiritual life and prayer. He was most devoted to the liturgy of daily Mass and the Hours, daily Rosary of Our Lady, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and personal intercession for the many intentions he took to his heart. His meditative prayer, so far as I could see (from my six years at Saint Paul's) was closely bound to scripture, especially the Psalms and the New Testament, prominently the Gospels of Saint John and Saint Luke. He had some favourite texts such as Ephesians 1:3-10, which appears

every Monday at Evening Prayer. His specific method or school of prayer was not easy to detect. Yet, I think he always kept basic, tried practices at hand, those helpful tools we learned in seminary days. We have, for example, the Vincentian method derived from Saint Francis de Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life* (Part II). Variations on this theme are Vincentian insights on the use of scripture story and religious practices as seen in the Conferences of Saint Vincent to the Daughters of Charity (translated by Joseph Leonard, CM) on pages 26-28 and 1131-1132. Father Richard used beautiful images and drew upon biblical texts: Saint Vincent's distinction of discursive (active) and contemplative (more passive, divinely inspired) forms of prayer would be familiar (see *idem*, p. 374). Father Richard was well versed in mystical theology and, I daresay, he was sometimes favoured with bright beams of heavenly light. I really think he reached Teresian prayer of quiet and passive recollection, if not Prayer of Union.

SIMPLICITY, TRUTH:

Coming down to earth now, we saw him among us every day, doing the most ordinary things, like helping in the kitchen. His simplicity was tangible, as seen in admission of faults, as he saw them, in telling humorous tales of student days or of childhood years and even his personal tribulations along his journey, but always with prudence and charity. He spoke the truth in concern for the Glory of God, the good of everyone, out of pure Christian love and integrity. His simplicity and truth were refreshing and transparent, and especially at a time when blurring of clear thought had become commonplace. Sure conviction led Richard to write to editors and public figures who had been cavalier on essential realities, or arbitrary and selective on definition of human rights. Again, we see the man of evangelistic and prophetic fruition rising up amidst the nettles of hostility and indifference. This courage and real confidence in God's grace and his own gifts are significant qualities, perhaps needed now more than ever.

HUMILITY:

Humility is a virtue sometimes present in people when it seems absent or absent despite a false humble façade so that often a long testing is needed. Father Richard met the test of this virtue. I imagine his love of the poor, his closeness to Christ in prayer life, and, always,

his sense of all giftedness were streams flowing into and forming his 'lowliness' reminding us of Mary in the Magnificat. God looked upon the lowliness of his maidservant (Luke 1:48). Humility is most often built on humiliation. A few times, I saw him placed under a truly embarrassing disregard, but while he felt it, I thought he triumphed admirably. Gentleness, controlled conquered anger went hand in hand with the humble characteristics present. Wise restraint and harnessed energy added authentic serenity.

Vows:

Father Richard lived his vowed life in constancy and faithfulness. He was very aware of having his affairs in order as he came along the finishing stretch. His earthly goods were taken care of and congregational norms were observed.

His vows expressed his full dedication to God and the evangelising of the poor. As poverty, virginity, and obedience in the New Testament are directly inspired by fascination with God, and the abundant life of God (John 10:10), so Richard grew more and more into this total oblation abounding all the more (1 Thessalonians 4:1). This life centred on God had great effects on the lives and hearts of people encountered. He had a rich capacity for friendship, true compassion, and cheerfulness, so that many felt an attraction towards him, and a certain fatherliness and freedom in his presence. His extensive correspondence and use of modern technology in communication greatly aided his valued relationships and pastoral benefit.

CULTURE:

Father McCullen was a man of culture. As students, we benefited from his musical skill, as he applied it to the liturgy. I recall him, up until his final days, having a well-informed interest in and love for high quality music and singing. He loved like Saint Augustine 'the sweet sound of the Church's singing!' I remember his observing something divine in the most beautiful classical symphonies. He was an admirer of good literature, especially fine poetry (Hopkins was perhaps his favourite). Translations of the bible were most appealing to him, as he looked for fresh nuances of the true meaning.

Richard himself wrote and spoke flawless English. His peers from student times mention his keen determination to write clearly and

vividly. His work, *Deep Down Things*, is a testimony to his art in transmitting the word and shaping it relevantly for hearer and reader. True appreciation of art and apt liturgical adornment were always observable. As we saw, he drew upon beautiful images for prayer – inspiration.

STRONG HOME BACKGROUND:

During my years in close proximity to Father Richard at Saint Paul's, I got to know more of the man and his solid provenance in the threads of history and family-faith woven into his formation.

His people had origins in County Meath, rich in tradition, Catholicism, and great farmland. The royal county, as it is called, boasts of Tara, seat of the ancient high kings of Ireland. It also contains the Hill of Slane where Saint Patrick is said to have set alight the Easter fire, which desirably will set aflame our country for all time. Saint Oliver Plunkett, the heroic Archbishop of Armagh, martyred for our Catholic faith in 1681, came from Oldcastle in the north of the county. The relics of Saint Oliver rest in Drogheda, Father Richard's hometown where his father, a medical doctor, and his mother, excellent Catholics, raised their family. I learned from Richard that his grandparents went on their honeymoon to Knock soon after the Apparition there in 1879! One could say that true faith was in the air he breathed. His home, early schooling, and secondary education with the Vincentians at Saint Patrick's College, Armagh gave him a permanent, wholesome preparation and direction for life and for all that was to follow.

TOWARDS THE ULTIMATE GOAL:

At local community level, Richard was exemplary, very spiritual but also most human, kind, joyful, and helpful. He had a good sense of humour and could calmly take jokes aimed at himself. His witty responses were always friendly, positive, and sometimes challenging. Advised by his doctor to take a glass of beer now and again, he joked that he was in solidarity with the Labour party!

His presence, even when he was greatly reduced in energy, was always cheerful and full of charity (Christian 'agape'). He always made his way to community exercises right up to his final illness, and his commitment to Eucharist, prayer of the Church, and morning meditation never waned. On a personal note, I found him unfailingly

gracious, and as we would have a while of conversation daily, I was impressed by his mingling of the earthly and heavenly spiritual thoughts going with everyday news; yearning for God's reign, yet awareness of the mundane and opposing forces. The inner markings of faith and hope were there, injecting a sense of Trinitarian vitality. Longing for heaven was a light beckoning onwards.

MATINS IN HEAVEN:

Father Richard had a very serious illness a few years before his death; we thought for a while that he had left us, but he rallied and came out for another lap of the stadium, so to speak. On the occasion of that sickness and slow recovery as we watched him, we could see something like a final purification of the person. Some moments revealed the process more evidently, like the agony of Gethsemane; at other times the victory of faith and acceptance of the Cross were apparent.

Our Provincial, Father Eamon Devlin, CM, was with him at the supreme moment of meeting with the Creator of us all. Serenity and oblation were characteristics of the Great Encounter. Death was swallowed in victory. It was early morning on 24 December 2015. Just before the passing of Saint John of the Cross in December 1591 the Great Mystic looked to glory: *hac nocte cantabo Matutinas in coelo* (tonight I will sing matins in heaven). Likewise, Father Richard could have turned towards heaven for matins (now Office of Readings) and wonderfully, they would be matins of Christmas Day. We pray for Father Richard McCullen; we thank God for him and his gifts shared with us; and we ask him to think about us 'in via' along the journey of all our Vincentian lives.

Father Gregory Gay, our Superior General, in his homily at the funeral, quoting Saint Vincent, summed up in succinct words the central qualities of Father Richard, 'a courteous welcome, an open heart, and a winning simplicity.'

I end with emphasis on the major sources of Father Richard's Vincentian spirituality and active life of holiness and charity: his love and dependence on God, the Holy Trinity, and, especially, his personal love for Christ and the Eucharist, and also his fervent, filial, authentic, truly Catholic veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Interview with the Superior General¹ G. Gregory Gay, CM

2 June 2016



1. As your term of office as Superior General comes to a close, how would you evaluate the present situation?

I imagine, from the sense of this question, that you are asking for my personal evaluation of these past years. First, I must say that I am satisfied with the way things unfolded during these past 12 years that I served as Superior General. I have no hesitation in saying that I have received much more than I have given. True, I am a little tired, but this tiredness means I have worked throughout all these years. Every night when I go to sleep, I experience a certain satisfaction that I am tired after having spent another day giving of myself, serving, and encouraging the members of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Vincentian Family.

2. What did you experience when the people referred to you as “the successor of Saint Vincent”?

To tell the truth, I was embarrassed. There were occasions when the Sisters would take my hands and kiss them or would embrace me and tell me that they felt as though they were embracing Saint Vincent and yes, I was embarrassed. I personally feel that I am far from being the holy man, the committed man, the poor man, the missionary that Saint Vincent was. Nevertheless, I have taken seriously the fact that I am the 23rd successor of Saint Vincent de Paul and I do my part by incarnating the charism that I discovered through my formation and my lived experiences among the people whom I have visited and with whom I have shared my life.

¹ This interview was conducted by a member of CLAPVI.

3. What are the challenges that you believe the new Superior General ought to confront?

Two simple words. I believe the new Superior General will have to continue to confront the reality that we are an international community and will therefore have to break down the walls of provincialism. The second challenge revolves around the fact that we have become too comfortable. Therefore, we have to deepen our missionary spirit. Those two elements, our international and missionary character, are intimately related to one another. We receive our identity from the fact that we are members of the Congregation of the Mission and as such, we are members of an international and a missionary congregation.

4. What are the challenges for the Vincentian Family?

During these past 12 years we have taken many steps forward as a Vincentian Family and that forward movement is the result of the collaboration that exists among so many branches and in so many places. At times, it was members of the Congregation of the Mission, who promoted and encouraged said collaboration. At other times and in other places, it was the Daughters of Charity or members of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society or the Vincentian Volunteers (AIC). Nevertheless, deepening our understanding of the meaning of collaboration will continue to be a great challenge.

Here, perhaps it could be said that we must come to a better understanding of what it means to work together in a common mission, in a shared mission. There is too much individualism in the different branches of the Vincentian Family: much individualism in the Congregation of the Mission, and, at times, in the Company of the Daughters of Charity and the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. In other words, there is much individualism and little desire to minister together. We impose “our focus” over the common desire to evangelize and to serve our lords and masters, the poor, in whom we discover the person of Jesus Christ.

5. What things remain to be done?

As a General Council, we have attempted to fulfill all the Lines of the Action that were recommended by the General Assemblies of 2004 and 2010. These are things that the Congregation requested

of us (the Superior General and the Council), things that we were asked to put in motion. I would have liked to have given greater consolidation to the international missions and also would have liked to have given a better formation to those who volunteered for those missions and to those who were appointed as local superiors of those missions.

With regard to the Vincentian Family, I wish I had had the opportunity to create different centers of the Vincentian Family in those places where the members have been most active. For example, a center in Asia, preferably in India, because there is much collaboration among the members of the Vincentian Family in that region; another center in Latin America, perhaps in Peru or Mexico or in some place in Brazil, where there is so much active collaboration; another center in Africa where there is an urgency and a need to promote the Vincentian Family.

Another reality that remains to be confronted involves a greater understanding and commitment with regard to some programs that were initiated in 2005. Here I am referring to a systemic-change approach to ministry, a concept that still needs to be understood and accepted in the wider Vincentian Family. In my opinion, this approach is one of the best ways to accomplish our mission of charity. We must frame our charitable activity in terms of the promotion of justice (in other words, we must frame our activity in accord with the spirit of Frédéric Ozanam and the social doctrine of the Church).

From a financial perspective, I would have liked to have set up some patrimonial funds, not so much for individual provinces, but rather a patrimony fund for initial and ongoing formation (for the use of those provinces on the path to development). I also would have liked to have set up another fund for emergencies, thus having available funds when disasters arise in the various provinces. We have always attempted to contribute something when such situations occur, but our resources are very limited. It would be wonderful to be able to develop such a fund so that we could respond more effectively during times of crisis.

Another matter concerns those confreres in difficulty. Even though we have made strides in dealing with those situations, there is still much to do in order to regularize those situations in such a way that

redound to the good of the individual confrere and the particular province. This is especially necessary at this time where there is great suspicion with regard to religious life, suspicions that are caused because of our inappropriate action in various situations.

6. What has given you the greatest satisfaction as Superior General?

My greatest satisfaction has been that I have had the opportunity to experience ways in which our charism is being lived in all the different places that I visited. I know that many have and do criticize me (including members of my council). They say that I travel too much. But, in reality, that has given me great satisfaction because it has enabled me to witness the ways in which our charism is being lived. At the same time, my travels have given me the opportunity to animate and encourage the members of the Congregation of the Mission and the members of the larger Vincentian Family to continue to give witness to our mission of charity and evangelization.

7. Besides the election of a new Superior General, what else do you believe will occur during the General Assembly?

Hopefully we will be able to deepen our understanding of the primary theme of the Assembly which is evangelization, as well as deepen our understanding of the various ways in which we can continue to impact the world with our charism. In order to do this, I believe we must deepen our understanding of those themes that I have already mentioned: our international and missionary character. I have no hesitation in saying that the Church has many needs.

As Superior General, I would like to be able to respond to all the requests that the bishops present to us, especially the requests that come from our Vincentian bishops who minister in difficult situations and who do not experience the support/accompaniment of the Congregation of the Mission. I also believe there is a need to insist on the formation of our own and thus cultivate this missionary spirit from the initial stage of formation. When I speak with our seminarians, I discover that they are being formed in this or that province but, at times, I wonder if they are being formed for the whole Congregation of the Mission. In other words, are they being formed to be available to go anywhere in the world, even India (as

Vincent would say)? At the present time, instead of India, I would say even Papua New Guinea, Tefé, Beni (Bolivia), Alaska, Punta Arenas, all those places where we have international missions; even Chad, Angola, Mozambique (which is the poorest province in terms of personnel and finances). I would like to dialogue about the need to move out of our comfort zone and to go to those places where the Church needs us (thus responding to those needs from the perspective of our charism).

8. Do you have some message to give to the Congregation of the Mission?

My dear confreres, perhaps you will regret having asked me that question. My message is that we must be what we are meant to be; we have to deepen our identity as members of the Congregation of the Mission. In our initial formation, as well as in our ongoing formation, we have to deepen our understanding of the missionary spirit. If we want to respond positively to the petitions of the Superior General (requests for the international missions and for the most abandoned provinces), then we must be willing to go to the peripheries of our provinces, to the most abandoned places.

At times, we are satisfied with the things that we do in common and yes, we have reason to be grateful for those accomplishments. But we can still do much more. We can reach out to those living beyond the borders of our province of origin. I believe that having formators imbued with a missionary spirit will enable our charism to be passed on in an integral manner to each one of our candidates. As a result of that formation, these young men will have no fear of leaving their province, no fear of ministering in a place that is different from the place in which they were born. We are missionaries and this is one of our greatest challenges.

Another aspect of my message, and this I address particularly to the Visitors, would be to improve communication with the General Curia.

These, then, are the challenges that all of you face. I hope that all of us will have the courage to move out of our comfort zone and to go on mission, be that a mission of your province, an international mission, or another province that has need of more missionaries.

9. Can you tell us about your plans when you complete your service as Superior General?

My term of office will be concluded on 5 July, the date that we are scheduled to elect a new Superior General. The first thing that I am going to do is spend some time with my family and with the members of my Province of Origin, which is Philadelphia. After that I have already signed up to participate in a program called, Ministering to the Ministers, located in San Antonio, Texas. This Institute is administered by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the program itself will continue for four months (August 15-December 10). I plan to update myself theologically, spiritually, and psychologically. I also want to take care of my health because I know that I am out of shape. I have not had the opportunity to exercise on a regular basis. There have not been enough hours in the day for me to walk, which is something that I love to do and my eating habits have not been good. Wherever I go, people want to celebrate and offer me wonderful food. Because I want to honor my host, I find it impossible to refuse such hospitality. I believe this is the way that we should all share around the table. During this sabbatical, I will engage in a process of discernment with regard to God's will for my future ministry. As Superior General of the Congregation, I have the right to choose the province to which I will belong. In this regard, I am going to take time to discern with others what it is that God desires of me. In this way, I hope to be able to respond in a more intentional way and perhaps become involved in one of the international missions. This is a decision that I will make, perhaps at the end of October, so that by the beginning of the new year, I will be able to begin some ministry of serving and evangelizing the poor in that place where God is calling me.

10. Anything else?

I want to thank the members of CLAPVI for the support that they have given, not only to me, but also to the Assistants General, who have visited the various provinces or vice-provinces. We have experienced a great support from all of you. As I stated before, perhaps we could have deepened those relationships through better communication among the provinces and the Secretary General or with the Superior General himself or his Assistants. We are offering

the new Superior General and his Council a series of suggestions that we hope will better the relationship between the Superior General and his Council, between the Curia and the provinces. We want to provide the Assistants with an opportunity to come to know the provinces during the first three years and then during the second three years to make a formal visitation of the various provinces. This would mean that we would continue what we decided in the previous Assembly, namely, to elect five Assistants, one of whom would be the Vicar General, all of whom would assist the Superior General with the canonical visitations.

I hope that we elect a Superior General and a General Council that desire to move forward the processes that have been initiated through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Also, as stated previously, I hope there is a desire to deepen our understanding of our missionary and international character, to deepen our understanding of a common or shared mission with the Vincentian Family, as well as with other individuals, who collaborate in the process of evangelization, on behalf of our sisters and brothers, who are most poor, who are our lords and masters.

May God bless all of you and once again thank you for your support and forgive me for the times that I have not taken the time to understand you.

Translated: Charles T. Plock, CM

The Freedom of the Children of God, the Fruit of Indifference

Vincent de Paul's Image-Filled Teaching

Robert P. Maloney, CM

The road to beatification and canonization is often long and bumpy. Examiners make careful inquiries about the life, work, and writings of the proposed saint. A long list of questions aims at verifying whether he or she “has practiced to a heroic degree the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity as much toward God as toward the neighbor, as well as the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance, with supplementary virtues.”¹ In the case of a member of the Vincentian Family, examiners might also ask, “Was he or she a model of simplicity, humility, gentleness, self-denial, and zeal?” Promoters of causes write long documents to respond adequately to such questions.

But conspicuously absent from the list of questions is this one: Did the proposed saint express the liberty of the children of God that Paul so emphasizes? Was he or she genuinely free? By this question I do not mean: did he or she make decisions with at least basic moral freedom, rather than acting out of fear or force or ignorance or passion? That type of freedom is, of course, very important. Rather, I mean: did he or she also walk through life with a liberty that went beyond the ordinary, making decisions consistently and courageously, without fear of criticism or adverse consequences?

Many saints have shown such freedom. Among them was Vincent de Paul. As I will attempt to demonstrate below, Vincent held inner freedom in high regard and spoke of it often. Strangely, however, one searches in vain for an extensive treatment of freedom in the many books and articles written about Vincent over the centuries.

¹ Cf. the opening paragraph of Pope John Paul II's *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*, 25 January 1983, cf. also, 1917 *Code of Canon Law*, 2104.

I offer these reflections under three headings:

1. The freedom of the children of God
2. Inner freedom in the life and works of Vincent de Paul
3. Some implications today

I. FREEDOM OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

We may be tempted to think of freedom as a quality emphasized only in modern times, linked particularly with the 18th century's focus on human rights. In the United States, the words "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" flow easily from the lips of citizens who, since 1776, have memorized the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence. "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" are central to the ethos of the French Revolution and, since 1789, are etched on the face of countless buildings throughout France.

But emphasis on freedom long antedates the modern era. Freedom is central to the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Old Testament never tires of reminding God's People of their liberation from Egypt. The New Testament continues the theme and deepens it. In Luke's gospel, as the old era comes to an end and a new age dawns, Zechariah cries out, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, he has come to his people and set them free!" (Luke 1:68).

The gospels and the Pauline letters frequently proclaim a new type of freedom in Christ. In his dialogues with the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus shows remarkable freedom from the constraints of the law (cf. Mark 7:19). He proclaims a truth that sets us free (John 8:32). "So if the Son sets you free," John tells us, "you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). Jesus embraces death freely, and in doing so, he breaks the bonds of death, raised up by his Father.

Paul focuses often on freedom from the law, from sin, and from death. He speaks eloquently of the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21). He tells us that where the Spirit is, there is freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Yet Paul characterizes himself as a servant or "slave" of Christ and is willing to make himself a slave of everyone (1 Corinthians 9:19). He wants no part of the popular notion of freedom as "being able to do whatever you want." The freedom he envisions is freedom for serving the Lord and serving the people of God, for giving one's life away on

behalf of others. Paul makes it clear that this freedom leads to moral transformation (2 Corinthians 3:18), so that we are no longer slaves to sin.

His letters to the Galatians and the Romans address the topic of freedom forcefully. In Galatia, Judaizing groups were urging Gentile Christians to adopt circumcision and other distinctive Jewish practices. They argued that if the Galatians wanted to be part of God's people, they must submit to the Mosaic Law. Paul had little patience with that way of thinking. In his view, it was "another gospel" unworthy of the name "gospel." Those who proclaimed such a message were undermining the freedom that believers have in Christ (Galatians 2:4-5). Paul emphasizes that, through faith and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are freed from the yoke of slavery and can speak with God confidently as sons and daughters (Galatians 3:26; 4:6-7; Romans 8:15).

The Spirit is the source of Christian freedom. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom," Paul tells the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 3:17). It is important to note that the believer's experience of the freeing power of the Holy Spirit is only a down payment, a foretaste, of our inheritance (cf. Ephesians 1:13-14). Our final liberation is yet to come, when we receive full adoption, when even our bodies are redeemed, and when all creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:18-23).

II. INNER FREEDOM IN THE LIFE AND WORKS OF VINCENT DE PAUL

In this Year of Mercy, it may be helpful to note that Vincent was very conscious of the biblical teaching about jubilees and their role in restoring the freedom of the children of God. He says to the Daughters of Charity on 14 December 1656:

The Jubilee of the New Law of Our Lord Jesus Christ ... is a great source of consolation for all Christians, but not of temporal consolation like the one of the Old Law, which concerned only the body. The present one concerns the soul. The same consolations the Jubilee brought in the temporal order we receive spiritually in our year of Jubilee. And how is that? Those who are in debt in their passions, and those who have given themselves over to the evil spirit by obeying his temptations, will be set free from all that after gaining the Jubilee properly. And just as slaves were set at liberty, in like manner those who are slaves of the devil will

*be set free by the grace they'll receive and will be restored to the freedom of the children of God.*²

None of Vincent's extant writings or conferences focuses on freedom as its explicit theme, but, if we examine his life, letters, and talks, we find abundant material on the subject. Freedom comes to the fore especially in the conferences that he gave to his priests, brothers and sisters on "indifference." This teaching is not Vincent's original creation. He absorbed it from the Church's long spiritual tradition and from masters whom he admired, like Ignatius of Loyola,³ Benedict of Canfield,⁴ and Francis de Sales.⁵

For Vincent, freedom and indifference are intimately linked and are essential for those who want to do God's will. The title of five of his conferences to the Daughters of Charity includes the word

² CCD:X:186. CCD refers to the English translation of *Vincent de Paul, Correspondence, Conferences, Documents, translated and edited by Jacqueline Kilar, DC; and Marie Poole, DC; et al; annotated by John W. Carven, CM; New City Press, Brooklyn and Hyde Park, 1985-2014: volume X, page 186. Future references to this work will be footnoted using the initials CCD, followed by the volume number, followed by the page number.* On occasion, to fit the context, I have changed the translation slightly, in light of the original text.

³ The last part of "Principle and Foundation" in the *Spiritual Exercises* has often been called "Ignatian Holy Indifference." By "Indifference," Ignatius means a total openness to the will of God in one's life. In other words, I strive to conform my will and even my way of thinking to whatever God wills for me. "Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed by free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short. The same holds for all other things" (*Spiritual Exercises* #23).

⁴ Benedict of Canfield, an English Capuchin named William Fitch (1562-1611), having been converted from Puritanism, took refuge in France. He had an enormous influence on his contemporaries and was a much sought-after spiritual director. Henri Brémond states that his *Rule of Perfection* was the manual for two or three generations of mystics, calling him "the teacher of teachers." Cf. *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France* (Paris, 1916 and 1928), II:155-158, as well as VII:266. Cf. H. Brémond, *A Literary History of Religious Thought in France: From the Wars of Religion Down to Our Times. Vol. II: The Coming of Mysticism (1590-1620)*, translated by K. L. Montgomery (London: SPCK, 1930). Cf. also T. Davitt, "An Introduction to Benet of Canfield," *Colloque* 16 (1987) 268-282.

⁵ Francis de Sales. *Introduction to a Devout Life*, first published in 1609 and subsequently published in countless editions and languages; cf. Part III, chapters XI, XXVIII, XXIX; Part IV, chapter IV.

“indifference.”⁶ On perhaps no other theme is his imagery so varied. For Vincent, indifference is the disposition, or the inner freedom, to go anywhere that God calls and do anything that God asks in the service of the poor.

Indifference as the ground of freedom – a series of striking images

A fascinating article by Sung-Hae Kim,⁷ Superior General of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, speaks of indifference as the key to freedom of heart in Saint Vincent. Convincingly, she compares his teaching with that of leaders in other religious traditions like Confucianism and Daoism, showing how, in each of these traditions, indifference plays a crucial role as the ground of freedom. From each writer, she chooses a striking image. For Vincent, it is the mare. For the neo-Confucian Cheng Yi (1033-1107), it is the mountain. For the Daoist Yin Zhiping (1169-1251), it is the moon.

Below I will highlight not just the mare, but the many other images that Vincent uses to underline the importance of freedom.

• The mare, the mule, and the carriage horse

As Sung-Hae Kim points out, Vincent uses the mare, the mule, and the carriage horse to illustrate this virtue; they never resist the will of

⁶ The word “indifferent” has a very different meaning in many modern languages. It can mean “mediocre.” It can also describe the attitude of a person who “couldn’t care less.”

⁷ Sung-Hae Kim, “Indifference as the Freedom of the Heart: The Spiritual Fruit of Apostolic Mysticism — Christian, Confucian, and Daoist Cases,” *Vincentian Heritage* 30 (2011), 27-46. After comparing the representatives of the three traditions, she concludes, on p. 46: “... notice that all three mystics employed central symbols from the natural world. Vincent de Paul used a mare which pulls a cart following the will of her master; Cheng Yi chose the mountain, nurturing all forms of life according to a proper time; and Yin Zhiping envisioned a bright moon which shines upon the world, though occasionally darkened by fleeting clouds. They probably chose natural examples due to their innate lack of artificiality or falsity. Cheng Yi warned as superficial the notion of practice with effort, believing that as we artificially arouse our will it becomes selfishness. Yin Zhiping asserted that preserving a constant mind and accumulating worldly merits derives from the person, but the manifestation of the Dao, and the sages leading you, belong to Heaven. Paradoxically, it is in this entrusting passivity that the most energetic passion for apostolic outreach is born and preserved.”

their master and allow themselves to be driven wherever the master wants. Opposite to this type of indifference is inordinate attachment to any person or thing that holds us back from doing God's will.

In a conference given to the Daughters of Charity on 8 December 1659, he speaks of the mare, the mule, and the carriage horse:

*Since this virtue is repugnant to nature, which always tries to do its own will, ask Our Lord for it and say to Him, 'Lord, grant me the grace to be as You were.' And in what state was Our Lord? He tells us himself: He was like a mare, like a mule or a carriage horse. Just reflect how carriage horses allow themselves to be driven and led wherever people want, for no one has ever heard that they resisted the will of their masters. And Our Lord, to show that He was indifferent, said, 'I have been like the horse and the mule, which allow themselves to be led wherever anyone pleases.' Isn't it a great pity that senseless animals teach us this lesson of indifference, and we have such trouble practicing it!'*⁸

• The man tied to the tree

In a conference given to the Daughters of Charity on 6 June 1656, Vincent describes a man tied to a tree and enumerates four ways in which he loses his freedom. He then compares to the man a sister who is attached to the place where she lives or the clothes which she wears.

To understand better what's meant by an attachment, dear Sisters, picture a man tied to a tree by a rope, his hands and feet bound in chains, with the ropes well knotted and the chains well riveted; what can he do? There he is, enslaved; for, in the first place, the poor man can't free himself by his own efforts if no one breaks his chains and helps him to get free. Second, he can't go anywhere to look for something to eat or to sustain his life. As a result, he'll die of hunger if something isn't brought to him, and that's his third misfortune. Fourth, if he's left there during the night he's in danger of being devoured by animals because he can't defend himself against them. So, those are four things that can be said about this poor man in chains, all of which make him miserable. In the same way, dear Sisters, imagine that a Daughter of Charity who's attached to anything whatsoever is like that poor man. She can't free herself on her own if she's tightly fastened and bound; that is, if she's strongly attached it's impossible to become detached, unless she's helped by someone. So

⁸ CCD:X:560.

then, what can a Sister do who finds herself in that state? To whom shall she turn? There she is, trapped. A liking for a dress, a headdress, cuffs that show a little so people can see them, keeps her so firmly attached that she can't free herself of it.⁹

• **Those entangled in brambles**

He tells the members of the Congregation of the Mission about the great freedom that he has found in some of the confreres and the lack of freedom in others.

There are sickly old men who have asked to be sent there and who have asked it even if they have a serious disability. Oh, that's because their hearts are free; they go in spirit wherever God wants to be known, and nothing detains them here except His Will! If we weren't entangled in some wretched bramble, we'd all say: 'My God, send me, I give myself to You for any place on earth where my Superiors will think it suitable for me to go to announce Jesus Christ, and, even if I should die there, I'd be disposed to go ...'¹⁰

It is clear that Vincent has very strong feelings about this matter. He describes as *animals* those whose lives are dominated by sensual pleasure and who are attached to creatures rather than the Creator!

But how can we renounce ourselves, according to Our Lord's counsel, if we're attached to these things? How can we detach ourselves from everything, if we don't renounce the slightest thing that blocks us? Do you want a remedy for this, Messieurs? Openness to God's Will must set the captive free; this virtue alone draws us away from the tyranny of the senses and the love of creatures. Therefore, you see how necessary this virtue is and what an obligation we have to give ourselves to God to work at acquiring it, if we don't want to be slaves to ourselves and slaves to an animal – because he who lets himself be led by his sensual nature doesn't deserve to be called a man, but an animal.¹¹

⁹ CCD:X:132.

¹⁰ CCD:XII:198.

¹¹ CCD:XII:188.

- **The weakness of silk threads**

Vincent contrasts genuine freedom with illusory freedom, using the image of the silk threads. Writing to Mademoiselle Champagne, a novice, he advises her:

*We cannot serve two masters, and if you want to enjoy the freedom of the children of God, you must follow Jesus Christ on the narrow path of subjection that leads to salvation. For, regardless of how disposed you may be to do good by walking on the broad way of your own freedom, you might fall by the wayside. That is where those usually fall who are attached to God only by silk threads, so great is the inconstancy of human nature.*¹²

- **Flying – living the evangelical counsels as a road to freedom**

When he addresses the topic of the evangelical counsels, Vincent speaks eloquently about the freedom of the children of God. He states that chastity, poverty, and obedience are liberating. He urges his followers to fly!

*Those detached from a love for worldly possessions, from the greedy desire for pleasures, and from their own will become the children of God and enjoy perfect freedom; for that's to be found in the love of God alone. Those are the persons who are free, brothers, who have no laws, who fly, who go to the right and to the left; once again, who fly, who can't be stopped, and who are never slaves of the devil or of their passions. Oh, blessed freedom of the children of God! ... Now, my dear confreres, this is clearly seen in the practice of the Evangelical Counsels. These teachings are reduced to three points: love of poverty, mortification of one's pleasures, and submission to God's Will. They place a person in a state of Christian liberty.*¹³

- **The seductive, deadly basilisk – the importance of recognizing and resisting temptation**

Modern readers may not be familiar with the image that Vincent uses in speaking with the sisters on 25 May 1654. He refers to the basilisk, a legendary reptile thought to be the king of all serpents. It

¹² CCD:VII:201.

¹³ CCD:XII:245.

was reputed to be highly venomous and to have the power to cause death with a single glance.¹⁴

*There's no Daughter of Charity who doesn't have temptations against her vocation, but you must resist them courageously and never listen to them, no matter how good they may appear; for whatever good they may offer you, Sisters, they're basilisks that put up lovely pretenses in order to seduce you.*¹⁵

- **Even good trees have worms – humility as the foundation of freedom**

Vincent emphasizes that humility is basic to freedom. In the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission, he calls it “the foundation of all evangelical perfection, the core of the entire spiritual life.”¹⁶

*Be aware, Sisters, that it's nothing to be attacked by one, two, or even several temptations; no, that's nothing if, from the beginning, we reject them, after recognizing that the devil is putting these wicked thoughts into our minds. You should say, 'Lord, I know there will never be a Daughter of Charity who isn't tempted.' No, dear Sisters, there are none and there never will be any. All good people must resign themselves to being tempted. No tree is free from worms.*¹⁷

In a letter written on 13 November 1640, he tells Jacques Tholard:¹⁸

Therefore, submit your judgment to what the Bishop and I have told you, please, and do not think about and do not even confess these things. Scorn both these evil suggestions and the wickedness of their author, who is the devil. Be very cheerful and humble yourself as much as you can.

¹⁴ The basilisk appears in the writings of Pliny the Elder, Isidore of Seville, Albert the Great, Geoffrey Chaucer, Leonardo da Vinci, Shakespeare, and many others. Jerome alludes to the basilisk in the Vulgate. The King James Bible uses the word to translate Isaiah 14:29.

¹⁵ CCD:IX:540.

¹⁶ CR II. 7.

¹⁷ CCD:IX:540.

¹⁸ Jacques Tholard suffered from scrupulosity. Vincent often wrote to him with compassionate advice and the assurance of prayers for his liberation. It seems that Tholard was eventually healed of his painful anxieties Cf. CCD:II:19; CCD:II:21-22. Vincent's letters to Tholard are filled with wisdom. Pierre Coste edited them heavily because of a concern about the sexual matters that they treat. They are now available in their entirety in many of the recent translations of the works of Saint Vincent.

Ordinarily, God allows these things to happen to free us from some hidden pride and to engender in us holy humility. They will diminish in the measure that you humble your understanding, and will disappear when you have made noticeable progress in that virtue. Strive therefore to acquire it.¹⁹

• **Sacrificing your own Isaacs – renouncing even precious goods for the sake of other goods**

Years ago, one of my teachers, a popular spiritual director, frequently urged us to “sacrifice your Isaacs.” I thought that he had invented the phrase himself. Only later did I discover that he had taken it from Saint Vincent, who challenges the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission:

Are you prepared, brothers, to sacrifice them to God? Let's take a close look at ourselves, and let's suppose a Superior says to us, 'Let's stop at that; you've studied enough; change houses; do something else.' That may happen to some of you; how will you feel about it? How will you feel, brothers, if you're asked for your Isaac? Will you cut the throat of this thirst for knowledge, of the pleasure of being in this place and not in another, of this stubbornness in wanting one thing and rejecting another? Examine your conscience sincerely; you'll find that you're not open to God's Will. ... Go, learn how to free yourself and to be open to God's Will; let that be your lesson.²⁰

The list of images is impressive:

- The mare, the mule, and the carriage horse
- The man tied to a tree
- Those tangled in brambles
- The silk threads
- Flying
- The seductive, deadly basilisk
- Trees that have worms
- Sacrificing one's own Isaacs

¹⁹ CCD:II:153.

²⁰ CCD:XII:197.

As one might imagine, Vincent speaks of freedom under many other headings. He often talks to the Daughters of Charity, for example, about what to do with their free time.²¹

In the course of his long life, Vincent learned, as do so many other contemplatives who lead active lives, that doing the will of God required freedom from whatever held him back: attachment to material things, to relatives, to his birthplace, to sexual desires, to his own will. Of course, he was aware that the road to indifference is a journey. Like most things, it is not obtained quickly, nor is it acquired once and for all.

In a touching letter to Louise de Marillac, Vincent states:²²

Rest assured, Mademoiselle, of the heart of one who is, in the heart of Our Lord and in His love, your most humble servant. Permit me to add to this the recommendation of holy indifference, although nature grumbles against it. I tell you that everything is to be feared until we succeed in this, since our inclinations are so evil that they seek themselves in all things. Courage! May Our Lord be in our hearts and our hearts in His, so that they may be three in one and one in three and that we may wish only what He wills.

III. SOME IMPLICATIONS TODAY

1. Being mobile, free to go anywhere in the service of the poor

At this time in history, freedom as mobility is more important than ever. Never before has the Vincentian Family been so universal. Never before have transportation and communication made it so possible to “be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Our Family now serves the poor in more than 150 countries. In recent years, our priests, brothers, sisters, laywomen, and laymen have begun new missions in Tanzania, El Alto in Bolivia, Albania, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Burundi, Benin, Chad, Angola, the Central African Republic, Ghana, Libya, Punta Arenas in Chile, Tunis, Sudan, continental China, Kazakhstan, Alaska, Mongolia, and many other places.

²¹ CCD:X:523; CCD:IX:6.

²² CCD:I:212-213.

Mobility need not take us to foreign lands. Pope Francis consistently urges us to go out to those living on the periphery in our own community, our own city, our own country. We can find the marginalized both near and far.

Of course, to go anywhere one must be free. Attachments keep us at home. Vincent tells the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission that detachment is essential for a true missionary.

... we have to detach ourselves from what we have or from something that may be willed to us, free our spirit of all those things and have no attachment to them, or even to our relatives and friends; yes, my dear confreres, that's what I'm saying, we have to detach ourselves from too great a love of relatives and friends and from their interests, etc. In short, whoever says 'Missioner' (I mean a true Missioner) says a man who has God alone in view, his own salvation and that of his neighbor, a man who has no other attachment than the one that unites him more closely to God.²³

When we invite the young to join our Family, do we invite them to go wherever God asks? Wherever! That is certainly a challenging invitation.²⁴

2. Taking initiative as freedom

In his insightful book, *Vincent de Paul and Charity*, André Dodin emphasizes Vincent's gift for responding to events. From 1617 until his death, attentive to needs as they arose, he took one initiative after another without fear of failure. He engaged women and men, clergy and lay, young and old, rich and poor in meeting the urgent needs of the time. Even if we highlight only his principal accomplishments, the list is astounding:

²³ CCD:XII:23.

²⁴ Saint Vincent and Saint Louise put it eloquently in the fifth paragraph of the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity: "They will not be attached to any created thing, especially to places, duties, and persons, being careful not to become attached even to their relatives and confessors. They will always be prepared to leave everything when they are instructed to do so, reflecting that Our Lord says we are not worthy of Him nor of following Him if we do not renounce ourselves and our disordered actions in every way whatsoever, and even leave father, mother, brothers, and sisters to follow Him when He calls us." (CCD:XIIIb:149).

- In 1617, struck by the need to organize practical works of charity in Châtillon, he founded “the Charities” (later known as the Ladies of Charity and now called AIC). During his lifetime, he wrote the statutes for numerous “Charities” that sprang into existence throughout France. These confraternities spread rapidly throughout France and afterwards throughout the world, counting today more than 150,000 members in 53 countries.
- In 1625, he founded the Congregation of the Mission. By the time of his death, the Congregation had spread to Poland, Italy, Algeria, Madagascar, Ireland, Scotland, the Hebrides, and the Orkneys. During his lifetime, the missionaries at the central house, Saint Lazare, in Paris, gave more than a thousand missions. He acted as Superior General of the Congregation until his death, holding regular council meetings, writing its rules, conducting general assemblies, and resolving a host of foundational questions.
- From 1628 on, he became more and more involved in the reform of the clergy, organizing retreats for ordinands, the Tuesday conferences, and retreats for priests. Abelly, his first biographer, tells us that more than 12,000 ordinands made retreats in Paris at Saint Lazare. In the last 25 years of his life, he established 20 seminaries!
- In 1633, along with Louise de Marillac, he founded the Company of the Daughters of Charity. With Louise at his side, he acted as Superior General, guiding frequent meetings of their General Council, drafting a rule, and working out the rather revolutionary juridical base that would make the Company such a powerful apostolic force in the years to come. In his lifetime, more than 60 houses sprang up in both France and Poland. The Company later became one of the largest congregations the Church had ever seen.
- In the process of guiding the three groups that he founded, Vincent carried on an enormous correspondence, writing more than 30,000 letters. He gave frequent conferences to both the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters. Only a small number of these are extant, and even these are merely copiers’ accounts of what he said. He also gave conferences to the Visitation nuns who had been entrusted to his care by Francis de Sales in 1622; none of these has been passed down to us.

- In 1638, he took up the work of the foundlings. Eventually he assigned numerous Daughters of Charity to the work and had 13 houses built to receive the children. When this work was endangered in 1647, he saved it by making an eloquent appeal to the Ladies of Charity to regard the foundlings as their children.²⁵
- Beginning in 1639, Vincent began organizing campaigns for the relief of those suffering from war, plague, and famine. One of Vincent's assistants, Brother Mathieu Regnard, made 53 trips, crossing enemy lines in disguise, carrying large sums of money from Vincent for the relief of those in war zones.²⁶
- From 1643 to 1652, he served on the Council of Conscience, an elite administrative body that advised the king about the selection of bishops and other matters. At the same time, he was the friend and often the counsellor of many of the great spiritual leaders of the day.
- In 1652, as poverty enveloped Paris, Vincent, at the age of 72, organized massive relief programs, providing soup twice a day for thousands of poor people at Saint Lazare and feeding thousands of others at the houses of the Daughters of Charity. He organized collections, gathering each week five to six thousand pounds of meat, two to three thousand eggs, and provisions of clothing and utensils.²⁷

So striking were Vincent's activities that the preacher at his funeral, Henri de Maupas du Tour, stated, "He just about transformed the face of the Church."²⁸

Freedom and initiative are intimately linked. Freedom enables us to channel our lives and our energies creatively toward goals that take us outside ourselves in the service of others.

²⁵ CCD: XIIIb:423.

²⁶ Dodin, *op. cit.*, p. 45, states that Brother Mathieu carried 25 to 30 thousand *livres* a trip (equivalent to over a million US dollars each time)!

²⁷ For many interesting details on Saint Vincent's handling of money and his administration of charitable works, cf. René Wulfman *Charité Publique et Finances Privées : Monsieur Vincent, Gestionnaire et Saint* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, France: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1998). Cf. also, John Rybolt, "St. Vincent de Paul and Money," *Vincentian Heritage*, 26 (2005) 81-103; José María Román, "The Foundations of St. Vincent," *Vincentian Heritage*, 9 (1988) 134-161.

²⁸ "(Vincent de Paul) a presque changé la face de l'Église." The text of de Maupas' funeral discourse is available in a beautiful edition by Edward R. Udovic, CM, *Henri de Maupas du Tour: the Funeral Oration for Vincent de Paul* (Chicago: DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute, 2015), cf. 173.

3. Acting from neither fear nor favor

On 24 May 1931, a great jurist, Benjamin Cardozo, who soon afterwards became a Supreme Court Justice of the United States, addressed a group of graduating law-school students. He told them that the principled person – whether a lawyer, a judge, an astronomer, a religious – acts from neither fear nor favor.²⁹

Vincent is a striking witness to this. Numerous people sought his advice, especially in his later years. One of them was Queen Anne of Austria, who, after the death of her husband, served as regent for her infant son, who later reigned as Louis XIV. She invited Vincent to be a member of the Council of Conscience, a body that had great influence on decisions related to religious affairs, particularly the naming of bishops. There, he served under Cardinal Mazarin. Because of political intrigue on the Council, Vincent expressed his views carefully, but freely. As a result, he earned the enmity of Mazarin, who, in his secret diary, lists Vincent as his enemy and eventually maneuvered to have him removed from the Council.³⁰

Those who are “indifferent” to holding high positions can speak with freedom. The author of the *Imitation of Christ* offers this counsel: “Do not fawn upon the rich, and do not be fond of mingling with the great. Associate with the humble and the simple, with the devout and virtuous, and with them speak of edifying things.”³¹ Only the indifferent are capable of speaking prophetically in the root sense of the word: they say what God asks them to say.

A recent Vatican document describes contemporary forms of prophecy and the need for prophetic voices.³²

- *The prophecy of hospitality as openness and acceptance of the other, the stranger, the foreigner, the one from a different religion, race or culture.*

²⁹ Benjamin N. Cardozo, “Values: Commencement Address of The Choice of Tycho Brahe,” delivered at the exercises of the Jewish Institute of Religion on 24 May 1931. The full address can be found at:
<http://suffolkwomensbar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CardozoAddress.pdf>.

³⁰ CCD:XIIIa:154-155.

³¹ *Imitation of Christ*, Book I, chapter 8.

³² Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 4 October 2015, “Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church,” 37.

In an era when there are so many migrants and immigrants and where so much controversy surrounds their reception, are we prophetically welcoming? Today there are more than 250,000,000 international immigrants. Sixty million of them have fled war, persecution, and human rights violations. During the long years of internal strife within France, Vincent ministered to those who were displaced and did so effectively.

- *The prophecy of the meaning of life.*

In an era when human life is often “cheap,” do we prophetically proclaim a consistent ethic of life, standing courageously at the side of those on life’s edges, like the unborn and the dying, the handicapped, prisoners condemned to death, the innocent in war zones, and all those whose lives are undervalued? One of Vincent’s most dramatic appeals was for the foundlings who had been abandoned on the streets of Paris. He also knew how to stand at the side of those condemned to be galley slaves, since he served as their chaplain. For him, life was a seamless garment to be valued at all stages.

- *The prophecy of the affirmation of feminine values in the history of humanity.*

In an era when women continue to be high on the list of those who are discriminated against in society, do we stand with them, advocating for equal rights for women in the home, in the work place, in Church affairs. Recent Church documents have been eloquent in speaking about the dignity of women and the recognition of their rights. *Vita Consecrata* stated: “It is therefore urgently necessary to take concrete steps, beginning by providing room for women to participate in different fields and at all levels, including decision-making processes, above all in matters which concern women themselves.”³³ But, in Church matters, only tiny steps have been taken to put this into effect. Let me offer a very concrete instance. Seventy-two percent of the religious in the world are women. Worldwide, there are more than 3000 communities of women religious, with hundreds of thousands of members. But, almost exclusively, men make the top-level decisions about them. Vincent was prophetic about the role of women in the Church. On 6 December 1658, he said to the priests and brothers of the Congregation: “Didn’t He accept having women in His Company?”

³³ *Vita Consecrata*, 58.

Yes, He did. Didn't He guide them to holiness and to the assistance of the poor? Yes, He did. If, then, Our Lord did that, He who did everything for our instruction, shouldn't we think it's right to follow Him? ... in this way God was served equally by both sexes."³⁴

- *The prophecy of the care and protection of life, of the integrity of creation.*

In an era when Pope Francis has spoken so courageously against policies that threaten the human habitat and the effect of those policies on the lives of the poor, do we stand with him both in theory and in practice? Do we teach and preach about *Laudato Si'*, even while knowing that our words will arouse opposition?

- *The prophecy of the wise use of new technologies.*

In an era that has known unprecedented advances in technology, do we advocate for placing it at the service of worldwide communication, democratizing information so that it benefits the most disadvantaged and, at the same time, makes technology a useful instrument in evangelization? At a time when pornography is rife, do we instruct others, younger and older, on moderation and discernment in the use of the technology?

4. Giving missions and offering other services free of charge

“Free of charge” is a frequent phrase in Saint Vincent’s writings and talks.³⁵ He was eager for his Family to provide its services to the poor without asking anything in return. On 1 August 1628, petitioning Urban VIII for the approval of the Congregation of the Mission, he states clearly:³⁶

They shall go from village to village, preaching, catechizing, and exhorting them to unburden their consciences of the sins of their entire life, hearing general confessions of penitents, instructing children for the worthy reception of their first Holy Communion, and setting up the Confraternity of Charity for the relief of the sick poor, all this free of charge, receiving no gifts either directly or indirectly.

³⁴ CCD:XII:76-77.

³⁵ The phrase appears 21 times in the works of Saint Vincent.

³⁶ CCD:I:50.

When I look at various Vincentian Family projects today, I see clearly that the Family tries hard to be faithful to Vincent's directive. In Project DREAM, in which the Daughters of Charity and the Community of Sant'Egidio collaborate, more than a million people have been assisted. All receive care free of charge. In many hospitals of the Daughters of Charity, the poor pay nothing. In addition, the branches of the Family continue to set up endowment funds of different sorts, so that they can perform their works without asking payment in return.

But, in every era, the temptation is to look for recompense for our work. Sometimes we seek payment not just for expenses we have incurred, but also for ourselves. Or, sometimes we are so concerned about making the books balance that we seek to have security for all future eventualities.

5. Living peacefully and joyfully

At the top of Paul's list of freedoms is freedom from death. And, of course, central to the entire New Testament is the resurrection.

Are we free, as we grow older, not to "worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear" (Matthew 6:25), or about the length or shortness of life? As Shakespeare puts it, it is not the number of years we live that counts; rather, "Ripeness is all."³⁷

Saint Vincent spoke of the "theatre of patience" that he witnessed in sick and elderly members of his Family.³⁸ He reminds the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission: "We never see better what someone is than when he is in the infirmary. It's the surest proof we have for recognizing the most virtuous and those who are less so. This helps us to see how important it is for us to be firmly grounded in the proper way to behave during illness."³⁹

What a gift it is to the Vincentian Family when members grow old gracefully, living joyfully and peacefully, trusting in God's forgiveness for past failings, conformed to whatever God asks, and confident in freedom from death.

³⁷ King Lear, Act 5, Scene 2.

³⁸ CCD:XI:61.

³⁹ CCD:XI:60.

A final word

In the *Divine Comedy*, the first person whom Dante meets upon entering paradise is Piccarda Donati, whom he had known while she was living. She is now much more beautiful than he recalled. But he finds her in the lowest sphere of heaven. Dante asks her whether she ever longs for a higher place. She says *no* “with such gladness that she seemed to burn with the ... flame of love,” and then she describes for him how the wills of the blessed are in entire conformity with God’s:⁴⁰

“Brother, the power of love becalms our wills
And makes us wish for only what we have
And whets our thirst for nothing more than that.

“Were we to long for some more lofty height,
Then our desires would be discordant with
The will of Him who has assigned us here.

“Such strife, you see, has no place in these spheres
Since to exist in love is here required,
If you will truly ponder on love’s nature.

“No, it’s the essence of this blessed existence
To hold ourselves within the will of God
Through which our own wills are made one with His:

Throughout this kingdom gladdens the whole kingdom
And the King, too, who wills in us what He wills.

“For in His will is our peace.”

⁴⁰ Dante, *Divine Comedy*, Paradiso, Canto III, 70-85.

Vincentian Collaboration

An Outside Perspective¹

John C. Darley
Depaul International

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, Greetings to you all,

It is an immense privilege to be invited to speak to you today, and one which I approach with a sense of significant trepidation. For two reasons:

Firstly, I am asked to speak to the members of the Vincentian Family – men and women who have dedicated their whole lives to the glory of God in the service of the poor. What can I, with my part-time involvement for only the last few years in one small organisation bring to the knowledge and wisdom assembled in this gathering?

And secondly, I am invited to speak on collaboration, based on my life and career experiences. But, if I look around to find good examples of collaborative work, there are few instances that have stood the test of time better than those that are found in this room. Very few organisations can show over 350 years of working together to pursue consistent goals in the way that the Vincentian organisations have followed the goals laid out by Saint Vincent and Saint Louise all those years ago. And even fewer organisations will be able to show how the spiritual values – the Vincentian Values – have remained constant and enduring, how they enabled and inspired new organisations to add to the work, and how the Vincentian Family has grown in service and example over the centuries.

But perhaps this second reflection provides an important message:

¹ Vincentian Family Meeting, January 2016.

Firm Foundations for Collaboration

As a Vincentian Family seeking to renew the spirit of collaboration, we – you – begin from a position of great strength and firm foundations. So that our challenge becomes one of building on those foundations to work together even more effectively – to take advantage of the spirit of collaboration which has been working within the Family for hundreds of years and to shape a renewed spirit of collaboration as we go forward.

So what might I usefully share from my own experiences, primarily in the oil and gas industry and more recently in the not-for-profit sector which might stimulate discussion and debate as we move through the workings of this conference?

The Forms of Collaboration

Collaboration in commerce and industry can take many forms: partnerships, joint ventures, consortium, service agreements, etc. Our legal friends can spend many hours, and generate substantial fees, in advising on the preferred arrangements – but these are not, I think, of prime interest to us today.

But what should be of interest, I would suggest, is the need to document – to write down in simple terms – the nature of any forms of cooperation or collaboration so that there is clarity between the parties as to the intention and form under which we might work together.

You will know better than I, of that famous quote from Saint Vincent which states “this is a wonderful charity, but it is badly organised.” A simple document to capture the essential elements of any collaborative arrangements will prove useful – both in its creation, and in its application.

Why Collaborate?

While the structure and form of a collaborative venture might need to be addressed, the more important question is why should we pursue this goal of working together anyway? What are the reasons and motivations to come together?

In my experience in the oil and gas sector, there are a number of drivers which prompt collaboration between companies. Three of the more significant ones will be:

A. Opportunity to gain access to oil and gas reserves

B. Sharing of risk

C. Benefits of sharing complementary skills / expertise / resources

Could any of these find application in our Vincentian Collaboration, and what might we learn from them?

A. The opportunity to collaborate as a means to find access to oil and gas reserves can take many forms: one might be the situation where a small company has discovered a huge reservoir of oil, but the company is too small to bring the resources to bear to successfully produce the oil. In that case, a collaborative arrangement might be made with a large company in which the larger one brings the necessary investment, in both money and expertise, and they share the rewards.

The treasures which our Vincentian Family might seek are not those of oil and gas, but rather of the poor and marginalised who need our support. Perhaps the parallel here is in those projects which have been initiated by one of the Daughters or confreres, who have identified the need and taken measures to begin the work, but then realise that the scope of the project is too large for them to manage alone, so that a collaboration with other members of the Family will be beneficial to all.

What can we learn about collaboration between smaller and larger entities? We will come back to that later in this talk

B. Collaboration to share risk is quite common in the hydrocarbon industry. In some parts of the world, the cost of drilling a single well to find out if there is any oil or gas present can exceed hundreds of millions of dollars. It can be quite attractive to share the risk of such investment; as long as we are also prepared to share the rewards, of course.

The immediate parallels with our Vincentian Family are not so clear in this case. But, we should always recognise that the creation of a collaborative undertaking will generate its own set of risks. The need to recognise and manage risks associated with our work is always present so that modern approaches to risk identification and mitigation may find application in our work.

All too often, we acknowledge, with the benefit of hindsight, that things have not worked out as we anticipated. Risk management techniques can serve to bring that hindsight into full view at an early stage.

Taking measured risks in the interest of finding solutions to alleviate poverty and distress are hallmarks of the Vincentian way. But there is a difference between taking measured and visible risks, and simply hoping for the best; although I have to admit, of course, that divine providence works in mysterious and unpredictable ways.

C. The third driver for collaboration – to share complementary strengths – speaks for itself. Individual companies may be recognised for their knowledge and expertise in certain aspects of the work, for example how to develop oil and gas fields in very deep seas, or how to transport liquefied natural gas between continents. Other companies may not have these skills but have others which can complement the success of the overall venture.

In my view, this motivation for collaboration – that of sharing skills and expertise – is probably the one which finds a ready home in the Vincentian Family. We have among us many different and complementary capabilities, which can be harnessed in the service of the poor. You will know what these are better than I, but our collective challenge is then to find ways to work together most effectively.

Successful Collaboration

So, if those are some of the drivers for collaboration, what are the secrets of success? To answer that question, I will simply provide my personal views:

- The first one will be the genuine sharing of goals between the parties in the collaboration: what does each party hope to achieve by working together? The overriding goals are usually clear – in commercial terms, to achieve an economically successful outcome for the venture – but underlying those goals may be differences of emphasis or focus. For example, one party may wish to apply new and revolutionary technologies with a longer

term goal in mind. Another may wish to generate revenue more quickly and minimise risk by using tried and tested techniques. To avoid conflicts, and ensure success, it is important that the goals are openly shared – and it does not always happen.

The same will apply, I think, in our Vincentian Collaboration. We will come together with the shared goal of alleviating the suffering of those most in need. But perhaps our approaches will differ. Some of us may wish to focus on raising funds to buy a building to support the poor, while others may give attention to mobilising support to provide immediate relief for the suffering. All such goals may be valid, of course, and successful collaboration will see them shared openly and discussed to reach an agreed way forward.

- The second key to success, and this is one which plays to the strengths of the Vincentian Family, is that of shared values among the participants in the collaboration. We have a huge advantage here. Our values speak for themselves among all members of the Family. That is clearly not the case in the commercial world, and many ventures will fail due to a lack of shared values between the players.
- A third important aspect to successful collaboration is that of mutual respect between the participants. And coupled to that will be a sense of humility and openness to hear the opinions and aspirations of others.

I have to admit that, in my experience, while a sense of mutual professional respect is often to be found among companies – based on recognition for professional competence and technical/commercial capability – humility and openness can be lacking! But I have seen strong collaborative working in evidence, particularly in the research arena, where a genuine sense of enquiry and readiness to learn from others can pay great dividends.

For ourselves in the Vincentian Family, humility and mutual respect will be our second nature, I am sure. But our egos can sometimes get in the way, and we might ask ourselves whether we are always genuinely open to hear and understand the opinions of others as we work in our collaborative environments.

Barriers to Successful Collaboration

If these are some of the keys to successful collaboration, what are the hurdles that we face? What gets in the way of effective working together when we share common goals and values, and are determined to work to a common cause?

- The first barrier might be a lack of genuine trust between the parties to the collaboration. We have spoken about the need to document the arrangements, and that is always necessary – but the real trust is not expressed on paper but in personal relationships between individuals and organisations. We will never achieve a successful collaborative model if we are constantly trying to second-guess the real motivation and intent of our partners, simply because we do not trust each other implicitly as well as explicitly. This is not always easy – and brings us back to that spirit of humility – but will be essential if we are to work together in harmony.
- A second barrier, perhaps related to the first, is that of how to exercise influence and direction to the collaborative venture. It will often be the case that one entity will become the “operator,” responsible for the delivery of the services and activities while others will take a more passive role. But each one, understandably and correctly, will wish to bring its own knowledge, experience, and expertise to the benefit of the collaboration. The operator will need to be open to this, and the ways in which all can contribute and influence direction will need to be agreed – ideally, before we begin!

One of the challenges to maintain a successful collaboration over the longer term is that of potential divergence in the goals and aims of either the individual players or the collaborative venture itself over time. The needs of the people whom we serve, and the societies in which they live, are subject to frequent change in focus and direction. It may be that our service, the collaborative venture, is no longer required – or is required to deliver a different priority and that this is no longer aligned with the expertise and capabilities of the partners. We should always be prepared to step aside, and to agree up-front how this will be done – an exit strategy – so that any changes in the collaboration are handled harmoniously, and with no repercussions for those in our care. An exit does not imply failure, but will always need to be carefully arranged.

Finally, that question of size difference in collaborative arrangements. In my professional career, this remained a constant challenge – how to work together with two entities of quite different size and capacity. And we have highlighted how this challenge may emerge in the Vincentian Family.

The key, to my mind, is to remain genuinely respectful and appreciative of all that each party brings to the venture: to recognise that, while a larger entity may have wide and broad expertise from around the world, an understanding of the local circumstances and situation will almost always be unique. And this will apply both to the understanding of oil and gas developments, as well as to the needs to those living on the margins of society.

Humility, and openness to learning local circumstances, will help to promote successful collaboration, where the capability of the larger organisation can be leveraged to the advantage of the locally identified needs.

Closing Thoughts on Collaboration

I would like to conclude my words to you today with one or two simple messages:

- Firstly, we should play to our strengths. We – you – have a very strong history of successful collaboration in the service of the poor. Your website shows great examples of activities and services from all around the world, where members of the Family come together to achieve great results for those in need. Let us continue to do that – to serve those at the margins by harnessing our collective talents from all sides.
- Secondly, and perhaps more challenging, can we extend our models of collaboration beyond the Vincentian Family and share our talents with other organisations, while perhaps benefitting in turn from new skills and capabilities. I have not spoken of this aspect and I am aware that many Vincentian groups work very effectively with government agencies and other not-for-profit entities. But are we sufficiently open to think about such collaborative working more frequently? Can it provide an opportunity to promote our Vincentian values and ethos to a wider society?

- Finally, let me once again express my humble appreciation for the opportunity to speak in this forum today. There is little that I can offer you, except for a sincere personal conviction that it is only by working in genuine collaboration with each other will we truly be able to promote the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. The examples are given to us by Saint Vincent and Saint Louise and they in turn are doing no more than to follow the message of Jesus Christ when he encouraged his disciples to go out two by two.

Can we, in our work of service to those most in need, do any less than work together – collaborate – in His name?

The Collaboration of the Congregation of the Mission in the Formation of the Clergy

Fenelón Castillo Arce, CM

To write about the collaboration of the Congregation of the Mission in the formation of priests is to refer to a reality that was present from the very beginning of our community and that pertains to its purpose. Such was the intention of our Founder. We run the risk of thinking that we are dealing with a secondary purpose, something that is derived from that which is primary and fundamental. Such a conclusion results from a superficial reading of Vincent's writings. What I am about to write should remove us from any such erroneous position and, furthermore, should lead us to the historical truth and the authentic objective.

1. The inspired vision of Vincent de Paul

Vincent de Paul first exercised his ministry as pastor in Clichy, a village near Paris with about 600 faithful. Today this village would not be referenced if it were not for the presence of this admirable Gascon who served as pastor there from 1612-1613.

In those early days of his pastoral service, there appears a flash of this ministry, which some have not noted sufficiently. Vincent was concerned about the formation of a group of some 12 young men who aspired to the priesthood. Among them, we find Antoine Portail (with his customary discretion). Portail would become one of the first missionaries, a faithful disciple of Vincent who would serve as the first "Director" of the Daughters of Charity. He died in 1660, a few months before his admired teacher. It should be noted that we are referring to events that took place in 1612, five years before the inspired insight that occurred in Folleville, where he preached his famous sermon on general confession and where the first popular mission was preached.

Many years later, in December 1658, we hear our Founder proclaim the following words: *In the beginning the Company was concerned only with itself and the poor ... God allowed that this was all*

*we seemed to be doing, but, in the fullness of time, He called us to assist in the formation of good priests, in providing good Pastors to parishes.*¹

We can see that what appeared as a blossoming idea in the apostolic mind of Vincent de Paul, at the time that he ministered in Clichy and before the establishment of the Congregation, was transmitted as a congregational charism and, in 1658, was explained as a reality that was developed *in the fullness of time*. The insight was present from the beginning and developed over the course of time.

It is interesting to note that Vincent, as he explains himself, enables us to realize that this insight was not just a matter of chronology but was a biblical-theological matter, one that was rooted in God's plan of revelation. That fact explains the words that he spoke later in the same conference: *We can say that coming to evangelize the poor doesn't simply mean to teach them the Mysteries necessary for their salvation, but also to do what was foretold and prefigured by the prophets to make the gospel effective* (CCD:XII:75). Vincent understood those words, *to make the gospel effective*, not in the way that we understand them, that is, not as some form of social promotion on behalf of the poor but rather as a demand to correct the faults that were so prevalent among the clergy (just as there were faults among the priests of the old covenant).

All of this is behind my use of the words *inspired vision*. The formation of the clergy is not some fortuitous derivation from the primary purpose. Rather we are speaking about the very center of Vincent's vocation, something that was there from the very beginning and that was developed *in the fullness of time*.

Another fact that should not be overlooked is that during his brief tenure as pastor in Châtillon-les-Dombes (1617), Vincent, through his example more than through his words, reformed the lax customs of the six "chaplains" who had lounged around town and had not provided pastoral services to the people who had been entrusted to them. We also know that two centuries later, in the neighboring town of Ars, a humble, zealous saint and admirer of Vincent de Paul would attract thousands of pilgrims.

¹ *Vincent de Paul, Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, translated and edited by Jaqueline Kilar, DC; and Marie Poole, DC; et al; annotated by John W. Carven, CM; New City Press, Brooklyn and Hyde Park, 1985-2014; volume XII, p. 74; future references to this work will be inserted into the text using the initials [CCD] followed by the volume number, then the page number, for example, CCD:XII:74.

2. The original implementation of the inspired vision

How did the initial inspiration become reality? We all know the story. At the invitation of the Bishop of Beauvais, Augustin Potier, Vincent preached a retreat to the ordinands and that event ignited a fire. This occurred in 1628, when the Congregation was still in its infancy, and when Vincent was still near the area where the community was established, namely, the de Gondi estate.

Given the sorry state of the clergy, some people might have viewed those retreats as an inadequate solution. Preaching a retreat to the ordinands of a specific diocese could be seen as prescribing a pill for a gangrenous wound. Nevertheless, those retreats provided the spark for a fire. Those retreats were followed by other retreats in other dioceses throughout France and then in Rome itself. Then there were retreats for priests already ordained. There were gatherings of priests in Saint-Lazare, Paris that were called the *Tuesday Conferences*. Then, in response to the concern that was expressed during the Council of Trent, seminaries, which were called *conciariae*, were established. All of this resulted from the inventiveness of Vincent and the fidelity of his Missionaries.

It should be noted that *the fullness of time* came about little by little, almost imperceptibly following the initial inspiration. Therefore, in accord with the Vincentian tradition and in light of an increased awareness on the part of a Congregation that had just come into existence, *the gospel was made effective*. Those words, *to make the gospel effective*, should not be cited out of their context. They were intended to highlight the fact that Vincent wanted to provide the poor country people with evangelizers, with the pastors that they needed. This was not an exclusive task of the disciples of Vincent de Paul and, in fact, there were many other individuals, who were concerned about the situation of the Church in the 17th century. Nevertheless, despite Vincent's characteristic humility, he not only understood what he was doing, but also understood the role he was asked to play with regard to the reform of the clergy. *The secular clergy are receiving a great deal from God at present. They say that our wretched Company has made a great contribution to them by means of the ordinands and the gathering of priests in Paris. There are many people of rank embracing this state right now* (CCD:II:37).

3. The growth of the seed

When speaking about “growth” I refer to the spread of the “Vincentian method” to other places in France and to the multiplication of requests that the Congregation received. At the same time, I also refer to the fact that the places and the systems for collaboration with regard to the formation of the clergy became more diversified with the passing of time. The retreats for ordinands began in France and then spread to Italy and, later, to Poland, and then wherever the Congregation became established.

At a very early stage in our history, the motherhouse (Bons Enfants) was not only a residence for the missionaries, but also was a place where we see collaboration in the ministry of the formation of the clergy. During the last 25 years of Vincent’s life, a series of experiments (many of which were disappointing) took place there. This was quite normal during this era in which the norms from the Council of Trent were being implemented. The disappointment was very noticeable in those institutions (minor seminaries) where young adolescents were being educated for the priesthood. From the beginning, Vincent realized that these institutions would not produce much fruit and it was the lack of positive result that prompted the French bishops to move very slowly with regard to the establishment of seminaries as decreed by Trent.

It could be stated that the experiments could be classified according to three models:

- formation house/parish: for example, Bourdoise, where the candidates lived in a rectory because these candidates were viewed as collaborators with the pastor who was ministering in the parish;
- seminaries/convictorio²: a place where the candidates went to receive some formation courses in the area of liturgy and morals; nevertheless, their philosophical and theological studies were taken at various university centers;

² This is an extremely difficult phrase to translate in a way that makes sense in English; there is no one word that adequately translates this phrase which according to the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* was used by the Jesuits to designate that section of the building which housed the students who were studying for the priesthood.

- seminary college: in these places the candidates received an integral education that included spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation.

We must state here that at the beginning the majority of the seminaries that the Congregation administered were of the “convictorio” type and always undertaken at the request of some bishop. The request was followed by drawing up a contract and it is interesting to note some of the conditions that the Congregation established. For example, the community should have control of the administration of the seminary; and the missionaries involved in formation would also be involved in the preaching of popular missions, a ministry proper to the Congregation (that condition was easy to accept because many of the bishops throughout France wanted popular missions preached in their dioceses). The contract was intended to provide stability to this ministry lest a bishop, at a given moment, decide he no longer wanted the services of the missionaries.

The formation team was composed of priests, sometimes clerics, and brothers. The presence of brothers should not surprise us; first, they were active collaborators in the popular missions. It should also be recalled that the duties in the seminary offices and kitchens were not entrusted to women and that the brothers were well trained in technical matters. The team was directed by the superior, a person with intellectual ability who was often called upon to give conferences in the area liturgy and morals. We remind our readers that the office of superior was not limited to six years (as occurs now). There were superiors who held that office for 40 years.

The employees were not simple salaried workers, but were viewed as house personnel, who received instruction in order to live a good Christian life. At the same time, it should be remembered that they were not contracted for a whole year, since the seminarians were at the institution for different time periods throughout the year. Also, remember all the employees were men.

Something more should be said about the physical condition of the building in which these young men resided. We should not think about some new institutions grandly constructed (as occurs at the present time). In fact, the places that became known as seminaries were former convents and rectories. Thus there was a chapel and an adequate place for conferences, as well as rooms for the formators and

for those who were being formed. It can be stated here that the needs of such individuals in the 17th and 18th centuries were not as great as the needs of later individuals. Even in the palaces of that era, the toilets and washing facilities were quite rudimentary.

4. The stature of the seminarian

In our present day educational institutions, where future priests are formed, besides the Basic Norms from Rome (Ratio), with their equivalent from the episcopal conferences, we can also speak about community plans, statutes, educational directives. Yet when we speak about the era between the 17th and 20th centuries, there were rules and customs and enough material to enable us to understand what these institutions hoped to achieve.

With regard to the manner of administering the houses entrusted to our Community, there is an entity that does legislate for our diocesan seminaries throughout the world. Here I refer to the General Assemblies of the Congregation. Its decrees are a source of information that no longer serves us today, because that is no longer the competent authority. Sometimes, however, we do have recourse to them, as well as to the Superior General of the Community, in order to discern the validity of certain regulations and how to act in situations of doubt.³

4.1 Objectives

We have already pointed out above that the primordial objective was not to prepare young aspirants to the priesthood philosophically and theologically. For that there were – when one looked for them – colleges and universities in Paris, Rome, or Saragossa. What was sought, above all, was to instruct in the practice of virtues and teach the indispensable skills for the exercise of ministry, like the celebration of the sacraments. Recall the disorder Saint Vincent saw in one church: seven priests “saying” the mass at the same time on side altars with each one doing it in a different way; and what was worse, cases of crass ignorance like the one Madame de Gondi came across in a priest she approached for confession and who gabbled in home-cooked Latin a formula for sacramental absolution which he did not know. There were no seminaries or places for diaconal or priestly formation.

³ A source of much information in this regard is the work of Father F. Contassot, CM, *Documents sur les seminaries confiés à la Congrégation de la Mission* (Paris, 1960).

And so we understand better what could be proposed in a seminary of the 17th or 18th century. Certainly the objectives were frequently formulated in a very Vincentian manner: “to honor the priesthood of Our Lord and to form ecclesiastics in virtue and knowledge” (this formulation is the one used in Bons Enfants).

4.2. Demands

Let us look at what was demanded of someone who wished to be admitted to one of our seminaries, e.g. Bons Enfants: a) to be admitted by a bishop; b) to bring a surplice, biretta, breviary, bible, the book of Kempis (as the *Imitation of Christ* was called), a theology book like Abelly’s; c) to follow the following schedule:

5:00 a.m.	Rise
5:30 a.m.	Meditation
6:00	Angelus, Litany of the Holy Name, reading of a chapter of the New Testament
8:00	Mass in community
8:30	Breakfast
9:00	Class or lecture in Theology
10:30	Review of the lesson that was explained
11:00	Particular examen, lunch, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, free time
13:00	Singing class
14:00	Praying the breviary
16:00	Moral conference
17:15	Praying the breviary
18:30	Particular examen, dinner, Angelus, free time
20:15	General examen
21:00	Go to bed

The maintenance of the seminaries demanded expenses. Therefore, the seminarians normally paid a fee, although there was the possibility of some kind of scholarship. But cases were known of debtors who were brought before civil courts to oblige them to pay their debts.

4.3. The Dimensions of formation

Spiritual Dimension

One can already see in the schedule transcribed above something of what was sought. In the morning the seminarians went to chapel, usually after certain acts of personal piety such as prayers of adoration, thanksgiving, morning offering. In chapel, common prayers were prayed, as was the so-called “meditation” according to a method very similar to the one we seminarians from before Vatican II knew, with its steps for the purgative and illuminative life and some so-called ecclesiastical virtues. Above all on Sunday, the Vincentian repetition of prayer was done. There were some classic meditation books, which were read aloud as a guide.

Anyone who reads the rules and customs will discover fairly easily that the steps for meditation are very similar to those Saint Vincent pointed out: to place oneself in the presence of God, ask for the grace to pray well, bring to mind the subject (or object) of the meditation, reflections, affective acts with regard to the subject, resolutions, thanksgiving. At times one feels tempted to make some comparisons to the present day steps of *Lectio Divina*.

There was a custom of making retreats, for example, a one-day retreat, upon entering the seminary. But what is most striking is the similarity of the schedule with that of our Community in an earlier period with its examens, general and particular; the Angelus. And what about confession and communion?

Communion was regarded as “frequent” when it was received once a week, generally on Sunday in the Mass known precisely as the “communion Mass.” Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, at different moments, were highly recommended. Sacramental confession (and for the priests as well) was made at least once a week, always with the priests of the seminary and only rarely with others from outside.

And spiritual direction? It was known as “interior communication” and was done with a director, normally every month, or two, with an outline similar to this: duties towards God, relationships with the neighbor (close and distant), temptations, bad habits, and most habitual faults.

I say all this to end with a somewhat surprising reflection; the direction was to contribute to illustrating a new theme (sic), that of the *vocation*. At that time, vocation was a theme for monks or religious, but it was not a theme for priesthood. To see the priesthood as a vocation? The seminaries contributed to that; it was about studying oneself within a call, which was made by God and demanded a responsible answer.

Academic Dimension

We must not forget the existence of centers for specialized studies. A seminary was a resource not conceived as especially for that. In any case, there were lessons or conferences on moral (theology) or sacred scripture. Scripture was taught by way of Sunday conferences based on some passage, and never in a methodical way.

What was taught academically in the seminaries directed by the Congregation followed the indications of the Founder: to follow a text or manual. This did not sit well with all the professors who liked to lecture from their own notes, but it had the advantage of giving a certain security to the teaching, which could otherwise stray from orthodox doctrine.

There was another thing: the studies in the seminary had a control: the examination at the end of each tract: the Saturday session, i.e., weekly questions or expositions to detect knowledge. Sometimes public theses were presented by the students at the end of a course. It never failed that one of them wandered a bit from sound doctrine to the point of provoking the annoyance, for example, of the Superior General, when the news reached him.

The way to examine the knowledge of moral publicly was normally through the so-called “cases of conscience,” which allowed for interesting debates in front of all the directors.

The liturgy was perhaps the principal concern of the seminaries, for the reasons we have already seen. They had to do exercises in ceremonies and rubrics. In the time of Father Alméras, the second

Superior General, a manual of ceremonies was prepared, which had to be followed in our seminaries. One could look in a pejorative way upon this kind of concern; that would be the product of the excellence of the means we have today in our specialized Institutes for Liturgy. But it was only at the beginning of the 20th century that we had a Pius X and the liturgical movement which prepared the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Previous eras already had sufficient admiration for Pius V to dedicate the breviary and the missal to him. They were the fruit of Trent and were truly beneficial.

One must say, without any kind of complex, that our Congregation, from Saint-Lazare and Bons Enfants (after Saint-Fermin), was much appreciated for its liturgical splendor, which later gave us such well-known figures as Bugnini or Braga.

There is no liturgy without a concern for singing. The style of our seminaries was Gregorian chant; there was no room for elaborate music or other musical instruments aside from the pipe organ.

Pastoral Dimension

The liturgy and song have already introduced us to the theme. The clear objective of our seminaries was to form good pastors. Today this might be an obvious truth; but it was not that way in previous centuries.

The years spent in the conciliar institution with its rules, prayers, and retreats had to contribute to that.

4.4. A judgment about Vincentian collaboration

Now to finish this work I allow myself to invite you to reflect upon two historic facts, which contributed to evaluating the collaboration of the Congregation of the Mission in the formation of priests throughout the world. I will pass over the critical judgment the Jansenists made at one time about the mentality of the Lazarist formators; it is the same one they made about the founder and which managed – so they say – to hold up his beatification for a few years. That judgment was very negative and, up to a certain point and for the same reason, honors the Vincentian formators.

The first fact I allude to is the great number of seminaries that were entrusted to the Congregation of the Mission, especially in France. Even in those formative years, bishops like Blessed Alain de

Solminihac recognized the quality of what was beginning to be offered. In his Diocese of Cahors, the bishop himself got involved in the work. It was with good reason that he became close to Saint Vincent and became his rival in holiness. If in the early days – those of our founder – there were not many houses of formation – about five – by the end of the 17th century they had multiplied: 32 in France, six in Poland and two in Italy. The 32 in France constituted 42% of the seminaries in France (almost half!); that was a sign of the great confidence in the quality of what the Vincentian missionaries were offering.

But the most convincing fact was the quality the graduates of these seminaries showed. For example, the bishops formed there; but, above all, the solidity of their faith and their fidelity to the Church. It is said that the great majority of the priests formed by the Lazarists in France avoided the persecution, first of the Gallicans, and later of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy promoted by the French Revolution. “By their fruits you will know them.”

Saint Vincent, in his conference to the missionaries on 5 August 1659, can respond to some of the curiosities about the way seminaries ought to be directed. As always, “one must go to the practical” and start from experiences. For example, what happened to Father de la Salle: *I was giving a mission with M. de la Salle, a great Missioner. The late Bishop of Beauvais used to say about him that he had never met a man better at reasoning. When that good Father was in Villiers-le-Bel, he met a woman who asked him to hear her confession, but first she asked him to solve a problem she was having – I think it concerned the reality of the Blessed Sacrament or Communion under both species. Since he had studied only a little philosophy and something else, he found it very difficult. When this was brought to our attention, we gave some conferences on these topics, and God granted us the grace to provide an answer to all the problems that might be proposed to us. That good Father had received grace from God to convince people of anything he wished. If His Divine Goodness were pleased to grant us this grace, Messieurs, how happy we'd be! It's one thing to give conferences on preaching and catechizing, but what's most important is practice, which we'll be doing, with the help of God* (CCD:XII:238-239).

Turning the page

In the times of Father Etienne and of Father Fiat, the Congregation flourished with new foundations. In America, beginning with the

Southern Cone, our land was sown with seminaries directed by the Vincentians. Truly they made us fail against modesty with the praises that were made about the formation received in them and the multiplication and quality of the priests formed in them.

If we approach the *Catalogue* of Provinces, Houses, and Personnel 2014-2016 of the Congregation of the Mission we find data such as these:

Provinces: 46 Vice-provinces: 4 Regions: 6 Houses: 512
Incorporated confreres: 3,202
Admitted confreres: 586

So then, we will see in this list not just that there is an almost tragic diminution in the number of missionaries from 50 years ago, but there has been a notable change in the adoption of works: in various provinces, seminaries have been changed for parishes and mission works for schools and sanctuaries. Although it is true that the diminution in numbers frequently coincides with what has happened in other communities, we can look around to see if the drop in numbers also corresponds with a change in works in certain provinces. In this there may be a matter of true identity.

Translated: Joseph V. Cummins, CM and Charles T. Plock, CM

Collaboration for Mission: a Tanzania Experience

George Kannamkulath, CM

Introduction

On 12 October 2016, during the Provincial Assembly Convocation of the South India Province, Father Mathew Kallammakal, Assistant General, formally announced the elevation of the Tanzania Mission to the status of a Region in the Congregation of the Mission. It was a joyful movement for the Congregation of the Mission in general and in particular for those of us who have worked and are still working in Tanzania. It was a declaration of the growth of the mission and a sign that the mission is fitting itself into the scheme of things in the Congregation of the Mission. As the Tanzania Mission attains this canonical status in the Congregation, it is also time to remember the contributions of our confreres from different parts of the world and the collaboration of different provinces for the beginning and development of the mission. This article aims to shed light on the Tanzania Mission, its history, current status, and areas of collaboration with the South India Province, as well as various agencies and groups with whom we are engaged in our efforts to make Christ's message clear to the people of God.

1. A Short History of the Tanzania Mission

Sister Gabriella Winter, the Superior of the Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent De Paul, working in the Diocese of Mbinga, Tanzania, had requested, through Bishop Leo Dobbelaar, CM (+), a Vincentian Priest to be their Spiritual Director in Tanzania. But the immediate beginning of the Tanzania Mission could be traced back to the General Resolution of the 1992 General Assembly to open up more Vincentian missions in the world for the purpose of effective evangelization of the poor. As a result, two missionaries, one from the Eastern USA Province and the other from the Indian Province arrived in the southern part of Tanzania in September 1993, to work in the Diocese of Mbinga. Father Richard Kehoe was assigned to be the Spiritual

Director of the Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent De Paul, Mbinga, Tanzania. Father Chacko Panathara was asked to form a community. Within a year of their stay in Mbinga, they encountered difficulties that prompted the Superior General to make a decision to close the mission. But the plan of God prevailed and after prayerful reflection it was decided to continue with the missionary activities in Tanzania. In 1994, the Tanzania Mission had its first parish in Mpepai, a remote village in the southern part of Tanzania, near the Mozambique boarder. During the initial years, the Tanzania Mission was blessed with the presence of confreres from Ireland, USA, Spain, Puerto Rico, and India. In 2001, the Tanzania Mission was entrusted to the administration of the South India Province. Father Jose Aikara, who was Visitor of the South India Province at that time, took up the mission and sent more missionaries to work in the mission. Father Mathew Onatt was appointed the second superior of the Tanzania Mission. It was during that time that the mission took up initiatives to strengthen, systematize, and stabilize vocation promotion and formation programs, as well as to find means and construct structures for financial security. All the superiors who succeeded him did their best to strengthen the mission with the support and effective coordination of provincial superiors who assumed office subsequently.

2. The Present Status of the Mission

Vincentians are present in six dioceses in Tanzania. Among the 21 confreres working in Tanzania, one is from Kenya, 11 are from Tanzania, and nine from India. The Tanzania Mission has, at the moment, ten communities grouped in three canonical houses. The ministries currently undertaken are parish ministry, schools, hostels, and direct help to the poor children and their families. The mission has seven parishes in five dioceses, two primary schools, three secondary schools, two kindergarten schools, a daycare center, and five hostels for school children. There is also a social work organization for helping the poor. The mission provides direct help to 1600 children, especially in areas of education and medical care with the help of a Canadian NGO called Chalice. The mission administration consists of the mission superior and four councilors. For all major decisions, we seek the approval of the Visitor of the South India Province. The mission's administrative office is located in Songea, in the region of Ruvuma.

3. The Mission Context

Tanzania is an East African country with an estimated population of 50 million. Though there are approximately 125 dialects spoken the official language is Kiswahili, which is also spoken in other East African countries like Kenya, Congo, Uganda, and Burundi. Christianity and Islam are two major religions in Tanzania and they live in unity and peace. Tanzania has a democratically elected government and follows a strict constitutional framework regarding the election and terms of office of the president, prime minister, and ministers. People are welcoming and happy to receive the services of missionaries. The majority of our centers are in the southern part of Tanzania, divided among three dioceses. At this time, we have better connectivity with good roads at least between district headquarters, but the scenario was different and difficult a few years ago. But some of our centers are still in the remotest areas, the farthest being 1152 kilometers away from the nearest international airport and difficult to access, especially in the rainy season.

As recent reports suggest that the Church is moving from the Northern Hemisphere to the South, Tanzania is a place where the Vincentian charism and culture can find its best expression. It is a suitable context to experience the joy of evangelizing the poor. The Catholic faith is in a flourishing state in this part of the world. For the members of our Congregation, it is an apt situation for putting our hands together for a cause.

4. Our Mission Strategy

Committed to our call as evangelizers of the poor, the missionaries of the Tanzania Mission have followed a clear strategy for strengthening this call. They try to share the common life of the people, but, at the same time, help them to uplift themselves from their spiritual and material miseries. Most of our centers have a parish for pastoral and spiritual care, an organized social-work program for the children with provision for educational, medical, and economic welfare measures. The mission has started/will start a school in each of the centers for the education of the young ones and also as means for financial support for the community and the Congregation in the long run. So the mission has a threefold strategy for the development of each of its centers, that is: a parish, a school, and a social-work

organization for an integral and holistic development of the area and mission. In this context it may be appropriate to recall the words of Saint Vincent:

If there are any among us who think they're in the Mission 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 and by others ... To do that is to preach the Gospel by words and by works (CCD:XII:77-78).

People need not only words of comfort, but also deeds of comfort. To this end, the mission has tried to establish a network of programs in our centers and to collaborate with various groups, agencies, and likeminded people in the mission. It is our awareness that there are many other factors and agencies working together for the same cause as ours that brings in the idea of collaboration.

5. The Idea of Collaboration

The very idea of collaboration for mission has its origin in Christ himself. Jesus called the 12 as collaborators for the preaching of the Good News. Jesus' ministry was and continues to be a collaborative one. Jesus called his disciples from different walks of life and we find Jesus calling many of them while they were at their work. The disciples were called to collaborate with Jesus in his ministry. Jesus was the uniting factor for all of them at all times. As we carry on the mission of Christ, our role is clearly defined as collaborators. We are called to work together as one community for forming a bigger community of the people of God.

Saint Vincent knew that effective evangelization and service to the poor require organization. He established various lay groups and religious groups so that the members can collaborate within the group and also with other groups. We learn from our history that Saint Vincent sent missionaries to Rome (1642), to Madagascar (1646), to Poland (1651) in his lifetime. It was definitely a collaborative effort. These events in history reveal the mind of Saint Vincent and our presence in any of these countries and others is due to such initiatives by the Founder himself. So this adventure into new territories where our services are most needed is clearly a priority for the CM. If we

work, today, in different parts of the world, that is because, at some time in history, there was a collaborative attempt to venture into a new territory and live out the purpose of the CM.

Many of our provinces and missions exist because of the sacrifices and hard work of other provinces and their missionaries. Before our resources (human and material) diminish, we should more emphatically foster the spirit for new missions, for the poor and more abandoned. As we step into the threshold of a great year, it is a fitting time to rekindle the missionary spirit and give it a practical articulation as we did in the 90s.

a. The Collaborators

The beginning of the works of Charity and the CM is connected with Saint Vincent's Châtillon experience, where he collaborated with the people of God and made them collaborate with each other in providing service to the poor-sick family. The real collaborators for us are the 'poor' and the people for whom we are at work. The 1980 General Assembly, when it was stating this purpose, in view of the signs of the times and the realities of our day, did not repeat what Saint Vincent said in the Common Rules: "To preach the good news of salvation to poor people, especially in rural areas," but rather chose the words: "Work at evangelizing the poor, especially the more abandoned." So the real or the primary collaborators always are the people for whom we are working. It can be the 'poor,' the 'more abandoned,' or the marginalized. We are called to implant our mission in a new territory and not import it as ready-made thing. For this end, there is a need to share, in some way or another, the ordinary lives of the people. The confreres working in the Tanzania Mission are successful to a great extent in sharing the lives of the people. We grow sharing the struggles and difficulties of the people. A common aspect of Christ's living, preaching, and teaching was that it was basically human, meaning that it shared in some way or another the language and style of the people. Jesus wanted his disciples to follow this pattern. We may call it 'inculturation,' or contextualization. This is an experience of 'incarnation' – the descent of God – to be one among us, an experience which Jesus wanted the disciples to have at the time of sending them on mission. This experience helps us in our program of vocational promotion and in the area of formation in the mission. One of the signs of the fructification of this collaboration with people of

God is the local priest. The Tanzania Mission has 11 incorporated members and many more in formation. Hence, it could be appropriate to conclude that our collaboration with the people of God is successful to a great extent, but at the same time, with the full realization that there is much more to be done for establishing a strong bond with the people.

b. Tanzania Mission and South India Province

The Tanzania Mission was entrusted to the South India Province in 2001. But even before this formal entrustment of the Tanzania Mission to the South India Province, the undivided Indian Province cooperated generously with the General Curia by sending missionaries to the mission. At the time of taking over the Tanzania Mission, the South India Province, as a young province with just four years of existence, had only human resources with no financial backing. So the province relied on its strength and sent more missionaries to Tanzania. The missionaries had to witness the hardships of the people of God, which helped them find ways and means to strengthen the mission from the grassroots.

The growth of the Tanzania Mission and the South India Province was a parallel event as both were at their nascent stage. But the province was generous enough to help the mission financially, even when it was seeking partners for attaining its own financial stability. Even today, the major area of collaboration remains its human resources. The South India Province finds ways and means to help the mission in achieving its developmental goals. Different provincial administrations of the South India Province followed a similar strategy as mentioned earlier in the development of the mission. So it shows there was continuity in planning, even though there was no written document.

c. Collaboration with Other Religious

From the beginning, the mission has collaborated with other religious congregations. Our association with the Vincentian Sisters of Mercy, Mbinga, has played a pivotal role in the establishment and expansion of the mission. The mission realized that “the harvest is plentiful, but laborers are few” and hence we have invited other religious orders to come and collaborate with us in our institutions and have helped them to establish themselves to live their religious call

for the service of God and people. There are at least seven religious congregations who have come to Tanzania as a response to our invitation and have established themselves to share and live their charism for evangelizing the poor. Many are still collaborating with us in our various institutions and ministries.

d. Collaboration with Bishops and Diocesan Clergy

The Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission state “*members should be urged to share in the universal and local Church’s promotional work for the missions*” (S. 5, 4°). The former Bishop of the diocese of Mbinga, Emmanuel Mapunda, generously facilitated the establishment of the Tanzania Mission. He requested Vincentians to open a center in his diocese and made available his own guesthouse in Mbinga for missionary activities. In turn, we continue to respond adequately to the needs of the local Church by taking up new stations where pastoral care is diminishing. Our service was made available to the diocesan major seminary for many years when we had qualified personnel. Formation of the local clergy continues as we offer our services in the philosophical and theological institutes. So our task to “*help the clergy and laity in their formation and lead them to a fuller participation in the evangelizing of the poor*” (Constitution 1, 3°) is also performed to some extent.

e. The Challenges of Collaboration

As we have seen, our ministry is always a collaborative one. We share our ministry with various partners: with members of the community-province, with members of other provinces, with the people of God, with members of other religious congregations, with diocesan clergy, and with other agencies and benefactors. It is an expression of the collaborative dimension of our work. In this line, any missionary act is a collaborative act, and any challenge that we face is also a challenge to our ministry in its collaborative dimension. Acknowledging that there are many other challenges encountered by missionaries and priests in Tanzania, I intend to propose four challenges that are immediately related to our purpose as the CM and that are applicable to the Congregation in general and the Tanzania Mission in particular.

The Congregation has stated its purpose at the present time in the following way:

“The purpose of the Congregation of the Mission is to follow Christ evangelizing the poor. This purpose is achieved when, faithful to Saint Vincent, the members individually and collectively:

- 1° make every effort to put on the spirit of Christ himself (CR I, 3) in order to acquire a holiness appropriate to their vocation (CR XII, 13);*
- 2° work at evangelizing the poor, especially the more abandoned;*
- 3° help the clergy and laity in their formation and lead them to a fuller participation in the evangelizing of the poor” (Constitutions, Article 1).*

The challenges are:

1. The Challenge of Revitalizing Missionary Spirituality

Our Constitutions and Common Rules define our primary task as “evangelization of the poor/abandoned.” The first challenge is to inculcate the spirit of this instruction in our hearts (formation) individually and collectively so that our every effort and daily work will be directed to this goal. Sometimes, our vision is blurred and, at other times, we remain distracted and away from the real goal. The primary job of the missionaries of the Congregation the Mission is preaching the word of God to poor country people. It is to be noted that Saint Vincent forbade his men to occupy the pulpits of the principal churches or even to accept a ministry with the diocesan curia, so that they may not be tempted to act as a parish priest. He feared that his men might be tempted to frequent the company of persons who did not belong to the poor and socially inferior classes. That is the spirit of the mission that Vincent tried to inculcate. Our challenge, as members of CM, is to see if we are still with the poor and, for the Tanzania Mission, how we can organize effectively our works to achieve these goals. All our ministries should ultimately be focused on the poor, the abandoned. Hence, there is a need for revitalizing missionary spirituality.

2. *The Challenge of Mobility of the Missioners*

The youthful vigor of the Tanzania Mission has to find its expression in its willingness to go to new missions, at least for a limited period of time. The Tanzania Mission has grown, but it will be mature only when the young members, with passion and zeal for souls, express their willingness to go to new missions. It is also a question of our willingness to collaborate with other peoples and cultures.

In 1658, in an address to the Daughters of Charity (CCD:X:408-409) Vincent said:

“For that’s how the Church began. All the apostles were poor men, they knew nothing, went barefoot and didn’t wear linen. Nevertheless, what did they not do with the grace Our Lord gave them! They converted the whole world. What a grace, Sisters, that, in forming your Company God willed to use the same fabric He used to save the whole world! Hold yourselves in readiness to do whatever He wants you to do. But make no claims, either to be in this house, that parish, or in the country, and don’t be afraid to go wherever you’re sent. Remember that God will take care of you everywhere.”

3. *The Challenge of Collaboration with the Vincentian Family*

To realize his mission, Saint Vincent associated himself with many: rich and poor, young and old, men and women, priests and laity, kings and subjects. These binaries show the all-inclusiveness of his mission strategy. The Tanzania Mission may have to associate more enthusiastically with other members of the Vincentian Family and organize effectively Vincentian-Family groups for achieving our goals. Members of the Vincentian Family are those who share the charism and spirit of Saint Vincent and, therefore, they can easily and immediately associate with our works with the same conviction as ours. They have the holiness appropriate to their vocation as Vincentians and are oriented to help the poor and more abandoned and, thus, they can be better partners in our mission.

4. *The Challenge of “Suitability” to a Situation*

The situation is the mission context and “suitability” means making ourselves fit for the situation. In this fast developing world, where technology changes our situations and context now faster than

any time before, it is a necessity that we make ourselves fit to encounter these changing times. We should be equipped with adequate knowledge and better tools if we want to help the laity and clergy in their formation and lead them to fuller participation in evangelization of the poor. Perhaps, this may be the right place to recall the words of former Superior General Robert Maloney to the Visitors and delegates at the end of the 38th General Assembly:

“As leaders in your provinces, be sure that the service of the confreres is competent. If they need to learn a language to serve the poor, let them learn it well. If they need to learn the use of computers to do their work, let them learn it well. If they need to update theology, liturgy, or preaching, let them update them well. Do not hesitate to give confreres sufficient time for ongoing formation. It is worth it. A few months spent learning, training, assimilating new thoughts, or a new spirit, can produce years of labor by revitalized men. A seed sown now can produce a mighty oak tree later. Let the renewed formation of our confreres be a real priority. Help them be competent” (Vincentiana, Vol. 36, no. 4-5, 1992, p. 357).

Conclusion

The Tanzania Mission had its struggles and its struggles will continue, without them there is no growth. It could be moments of a great witnessing for the young missionaries working in Tanzania, because there is no growth unless the seed falls and loses itself. The losing of self is important. The disciples had to lose their securities and attain a sense of dependence on their Master and on one another. For us, this indicates the relevance and importance of community as a place where we can find the best collaborators for our mission, upon whom we can depend. Our identity is, as members of the Congregation of the Mission, a missionary identity. Our missionary identity should prevail over our racial, national, regional, and tribal identities, which are multiple. The history of the mission shows that it is the plan of God, otherwise, who else could have saved the mission from the brink of closing down in 1994. The task at hand is to cooperate with the plan of God and keep our missionary identity.

The year 2017 will be yet another memorable event for the Congregation of the Mission, as we celebrate 400 years from the birth of our charism. On 25 January 1617, Vincent preached what we call “the first sermon of the mission.” As we prepare to celebrate this event

once again, it would be the right time to recall the words of Saint Vincent: *“Let’s try to imagine that He’s saying to us, ‘Set out, you Missioners, set out! Quoi! You’re still here, and there are poor souls waiting for you, whose salvation depends perhaps on your preaching and catechizing!’”* (CCD:XI:121).

A Retrospect on the Year of Vincentian Collaboration

Joseph V. Agostino, CM

A. Introduction

In December 2013, the Vincentian Family Collaboration Commission (VFCC) began to request that 2015 be named the International Year of Vincentian Collaboration. There were two reasons behind this proposal:

To communicate to the Vincentian Family, on multiple levels, the effects of good collaboration in the service of those living in poverty; and

To begin remote preparation for 2017 which will mark the 400th anniversary of the Vincentian charism.

The Vincentian Family Executive Committee (VFEC), during its January 2014 meeting, invited the VFCC to draft a detailed proposal for this special year. That proposal was accepted by the VFEC in January 2015 and paved the way for the celebration we have just completed.

B. Major Components of the Year

On 15 March 2015, Father Gregory Gay, CM announced to the Vincentian Family the details for the Year of Vincentian Collaboration, as well as the theme which would guide it: *Together in Christ we Vincentians make a difference*. On Pentecost Sunday, 24 May 2015, in a video filmed in Saint Peter's Square in Rome, Father Gregory officially opened the year.

The Year of Vincentian Collaboration was planned around three components.

I. Celebrate

The Vincentian Family (VF), on local, regional, and national levels, was invited to gather in prayerful celebration three times during the year:

On Pentecost 2015 to begin the year together by thanking God for the gifts of one another given in service to those most in need;

On 27 September 2015, to celebrate a world day of prayer and to reflect on the present reality of the VF, being mindful of the emerging needs of those living in poverty in a particular region; and

On Pentecost 2016, to close the year by asking the Holy Spirit to help the local VF move further into action in response to the most pressing needs of others.

II. Connect and Learn

There are approximately 225 branches which make up the international Vincentian Family. Unfortunately, many of us are like strangers to one another. Based on the conviction that you cannot collaborate with those whom you do not know, the VFCC decided to highlight one branch of the VF each week during the year.

We also looked internationally for models of collaboration, which could be replicated in other places by the Vincentian Family. Once a month we highlighted such works with the hope of stimulating more common projects on behalf of those living in poverty.

III. Serve

The VFCC also invited members of the Vincentian Family to share with one another their service experiences. They were invited to do so by video or by written word.

The Year of Vincentian Collaboration ran from Pentecost 2015 to Pentecost 2016. But what was its impact on the Vincentian Family or, more importantly, on those whom all of us have been called to serve?

C. Significant Moments

I would like to begin by offering an initial impression of how the three components of the year seemed to work. We are now in the

process of asking national councils and international leaders to offer more formal evaluations. Once they are received, we will be in a better position to access impact. I offer here my initial thoughts.

I. Celebrate

During the course of the Year, we asked VF groups to send us pictures and write ups of their three celebrations. We got some at the beginning, less for the second, and none for the third. Yet, in speaking with Vincentians from around the world, they said they did gather to celebrate and reflect. Unfortunately, they were also being true to an unwritten dynamic of our Vincentian charism – silence!

I will return to this point later in this reflection.

II. Connect and Learn

Over the course of the year, through the FamVin website, we highlighted approximately 50 branches of the Vincentian Family. In addition, we received testimonies from the VF National Councils of Ecuador, India, and Venezuela. Rounding out this aspect of the year, VF leaders offered their reflections on the significance of collaboration within the Family.

In addition, we highlighted the joint efforts of the VF through special projects, which are currently underway in Lebanon, Brazil, Paraguay, Madagascar, the USA, South Sudan, Croatia, the Philippines, Slovakia, and Great Britain. Each of these reflects creative approaches to the challenges of poverty, which can only be met effectively when we work together as a Family.

Until we receive feedback from the Vincentian Family we will not know its true impact. How many people actually read what was posted? Were any inspired to action by what they read? Did any of the articles about the branches of the Vincentian Family lead to the forging of new relationships on the local or national levels? All of these questions remain to be answered.

III. Serve

Some individual testimonies were offered at the start of the year. Currently, Vincentians are being “challenged” to offer on *Facebook* their reflections explaining what the year has meant to them.

All in all, the VFCC achieved what it set out to do. It was an aggressive agenda which demanded great sacrifice from many members of the Commission. But it was undertaken with zeal and fervor for the sake of the Family and those we serve, whom they love.

In hindsight, there are a number of considerations that we might keep in mind for any future efforts of this kind:

a. During the lead-up to the Year of Vincentian Collaboration, as we looked to contact the branches of the Family or the leaders of national VF Councils, we came to realize:

- The database on which we were relying was incomplete and out of date;
- Many branches of the VF have either no or little “presence” on the web; and
- Our information about national groups was limited or non-existent.

The newly created Vincentian Family Office (VFO) will be a great help in overcoming these difficulties. Since it began operation in Philadelphia in 2015, it has already updated the database and begun to establish contact with each of the national councils of the Vincentian Family. In addition, with the help of the newly created Vincentian Family Office Advisory Committee, composed of national council presidents, we will be better able to keep abreast of the successes and challenges being faced by the Vincentian Family on the local and regional levels.

b. As we received information during the year, I was personally moved by the energy and zeal of the VF, as well as its collaborative efforts in so many places around the world. Our lay Vincentians seem to have instinctively grasped the significance of this year. By stark contrast, many vowed Vincentians seemed to feel that they have had enough of the year of (*whatever*) and were not quite as enthusiastic. Yet it is obvious that in many places we are living the charism exactly where Vincent would want us to be – on the peripheries of society where those who struggle against poverty reside.

c. Communication remains a major concern of mine. With all of the publicity on the web, in social media, and through personal email contact, there were still those who seemed to have heard nothing about this past year. This was true on many local levels. Sadly it was also true on some national levels, where there was barely a reference made to the year we were celebrating as a Vincentian Family.

As I look back on these realities, I can only hope that we can continue to build on what has already been done and not allow what was lacking to prevent us from seeking creative means to continue to work together with and for our brothers and sisters living in poverty.

D. Lessons for the Vincentian Family

Living this Year of Vincentian Collaboration has deepened in me the conviction that **ONLY** together in Christ can we Vincentians make a difference. The days of working in silos, uninterested and / or disconnected from others – and especially the other branches of the Vincentian Family – are over. The challenges of poverty, the complexities of the systems that perpetuate poverty, the demands of funding, and the utilization of other available resources to fight poverty, as well as our reality as Vincentians, demand a new way of approaching our ministries from their very inception.

These new means are both individual and corporate. I personally have to decide to work with others; we have to decide to work together corporately. Both aspects go hand in hand.

At the same time, we as a Vincentian Family also need to put into place structures that will make such joint actions more the rule than the exception. Based on the experience of this past year, as well as on what we have encountered during the first year that the VFO has been in operation, I would like to propose that the following elements are essential for the continued growth of the Vincentian charism in today's world.

a. The support of good formation

Our Mission is to proclaim Jesus, the evangelizer and servant of those living in poverty. As human beings, we Vincentians need to be nourished and supported so that we may remain faithful to what the

Lord has asked of us. Ongoing formation for the mission is essential, not only to our personal spiritual growth, but also to the effectiveness of our fight against poverty.

Various groups of the Vincentian Family have developed tools for this – the Vincentian Family Collaborative Action Program (VFCAP), the Systemic Change Workshop, the Wise Asset Management Workshop, and the Missionary Cenacle Family Spiritual Exercises are but a few examples. Hopefully more and more individual Vincentians, as well as national entities, will make use of these resources, which are available to them.

b. The support and/or development of national Vincentian Family Councils

The VF is incarnated in the regions encompassed by the national councils. The strength of national councils greatly determines the vitality of the VF's outreach to those in poverty. Every effort must be made to support their efforts and to encourage their growth.

Many national councils struggle to develop a common or shared project to alleviate poverty. To remain credible and viable, they feel the need to move beyond simply celebrating feast days and formation experiences together. National councils are also challenged by stability. All too often the effectiveness of a council or in some cases even the existence of a council, depends upon the vowed members (most often CMs or DCs), who are assigned to a particular region. The VF, as a whole, needs to be freed from this cycle of dependency if it is ever going to embrace the fullness of its calling to the evangelization and service of those in poverty.

c. The willingness to risk creativity and forgiveness

All our efforts to work together entail some kind of risk. Vincent and Louise knew this all too well as they helped each other to listen to the voice of Divine Providence and to act boldly on behalf of their Lords and Masters.

No new effort in the fight against poverty is without risk. And no human relationship in any collaborative effort can be sustained without the willingness to forgive. So much more can be said about these, but I would simply like to mention them here.

E. Lessons for the Congregation of the Mission

Reflecting for a moment on how the Year of Vincentian Collaboration may have impacted the Congregation, I would like to offer the following observations.

- *The Vincentian Family is an integral part of who we are as the sons of Saint Vincent.* We have been blessed over these past 12 years by the leadership and example of Father Gregory Gay in this regard. Where our confreres live this conviction, many wonderful things are happening – and those living in poverty are better served because of it. Unfortunately, at times we can still hear confreres negating this aspect of our Vincentian vocation. There is still work to be done in this area of our community lives.
- *Do we really believe in working together?* We are not going to embrace the Vincentian Family if we do not embrace one another! While most confreres affirm the principal of a common approach to ministry, our lived experience is quite different in too many instances. This observation comes not from me, but from the Provincial Assembly reports sent to the Preparatory Commission for GA2016. Confreres are calling us to a change in our situation and perspective with regard to the manner in which we work together. Such a change will reap much fruit not only in the Congregation, but also throughout the Vincentian Family.
- *The need to encourage not control, to animate not manipulate.* Many Vincentians look to the Congregation for leadership and formation. Those leadership and formational skills are special gifts that we bring to the Vincentian Family, and especially to its lay members. The formation of the laity is a core ministry of the Congregation. There is no better place for us to exercise this ministry than within our own Family.

F. Conclusion

Previously I stated that I would mention anew the “vow” most Vincentians seem to take – that of silence!

Without a doubt, Vincent teaches us to be humble in our journey with Jesus. He teaches us not to place importance on what we do, but

on what God does through us. But humility and silence are not the same!

All too often, we do not know what each other is doing. That can even be true of confreres living in the same house. It is certainly true from one house to another in the same province. And so the circle of silence widens as we move to the provincial and international levels of the Congregation.

The same dynamic is evident in the Vincentian Family. We do not know what Vincentians from other branches are doing in our own neighborhoods and cities, let alone countries. We are always too busy to write about it and share that information, be it on FamVin, cmglobal, *Facebook*, or other means of communication.

And we all are diminished because of this. We miss out on opportunities to support one another, to learn from one another, and ultimately to serve more effectively. Unless we understand that sharing our stories is not an “additional” activity but part of the very fabric of what we do, this dynamic will not change among us. The gifts we have been given are meant to be shared, so that all may rejoice in what God is doing among us.

As we prepare for the 2017 celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the Charism, my hope is that the Vincentian Family, as well as our Little Company, will continue to tell the story of how the Lord has blessed us with a special vocation and sent us to serve those who are dearest to his heart, our Lords and Masters.

Collaboration in the Heart of the Vincentian Charism

Guillermo Campuzano, CM
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of the Mission at the UN*

1. Introductory Remarks

From the time that I arrived at this global forum of the United Nations in October 2015, I became aware of the tension that exists between the paradigms, the various world views, and the different ideas with regard to the world in which we want to live. This paradigmatic struggle is the context in which we place the option that the Vincentian Family has made with regard to collaboration as a relational style, as a theological/spiritual dynamic, and as a way of fulfilling our mission.

We live in the midst of a society in which separation, fragmentation, and disconnectedness prevail as a way of thinking and seeing, as a way of being and acting.¹ The conviction that things and people are separate islands is characteristic of this dominant paradigm. Yet from an anthropological, ecological, and theological perspective, said paradigm is destructive. We soon recognize, however, that the elements of collaboration, networking, communion, encounter, and dialogue are imperatives for our Vincentian vocation and are also cries that rise up from every place in which we minister. Today, the concepts of “encounter” and “relationship” present us with the possibility of becoming a part of one of the best prophetic lines, that is, a line of

¹ Here I present an analysis that was done by Navdanya Internacional. In order to deepen one’s understanding of this paradigm and its consequences for humankind and for the earth, I would suggest reading the pamphlet that it published, *The living earth: our soil, our common goods, our future* (Tierra viva: nuestro suelo, nuestro bienes comunes, nuestro futuro). This document is the result of the work of an international group of experts in various disciplines that met in Florence in 2015. The Spanish edition of this work can be found at: <http://seedfreedom.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Terra-Viva-Español.pdf> [Translator’s Note: I was unable to find an online edition of this publication in English].

prophecy that heralds a new way of being, and that denounces this paradigm of separation as the destruction of the very possibility of human existence and, therefore, a threat to the existence of all life.

The direction that the United Nations has sketched out for humanity for the next 15 years (the 2030 Agenda)² is grounded on 17 objectives of sustainable development. In light of the reality that the problems which we confront are global and systemic in nature, so then the solutions must also be global and systemic. Therefore, there is a need to create an evermore interconnected network of collaboration on every level. Without collaboration among cultures, races, religions, nations, and people, there can be no new humanity, no sustainable development. Our option for *ad intra* and *ad extra* collaboration is our commitment to the 2030 agenda of the United Nations for a new and sustainable humankind. We make that commitment aware of our global citizenship. As a Vincentian Family, we do not want to, nor are we able to exclude ourselves from participation in the various social-political, academic, inter-ecclesial forums that are pointing the way that leads to our future.

In order to contrast the dominant paradigm in the culture of separation and fragmentation, I will use the paradigm proposed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*, the paradigm of eco-humanity which is also a paradigm of encounter, collaboration, relationship, and interdependence and, therefore, a paradigm of solidarity, compassion, and mercy.

Collaboration is a concrete manner of incarnating the Triune God. To say “God” and “collaboration” in the same breath is redundant. Incarnating collaboration is a necessity for the Vincentian Family (on both an individual level, as well as on a community level), especially if we ever wish to be present in the midst of history in any significant manner (and not, therefore, present as an isolated force³) and if, as a

² This document can be found at:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>.

³ Joan Chittister, OSB, in her book, *The Fire in These Ashes: A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life* (1996) affirms that *religious life was never intended to be simply a workforce in the Church; its true intention was to be an intense presence, a paradigm of seeking, a sign of the human soul, and a catalyst for society's conscience from which freedom emerges* [Translator's Note: This is my translation of the passage, no page reference was given in the original article and it would be difficult to search the book for one sentence.]

result of our presence, we are able to have an impact on the hopes of people, providing signs to men and women that something new is possible: *Behold, I make all things new* (Revelation 21:5).

2. Challenges of Collaboration in the Context of the Paradigm of Separation

*Upon this handful of soil our survival depends. Husband it and it will grow our food, our fuel, and our shelter and surround us with beauty. Abuse it and the soil will collapse and die, taking humanity with it.*⁴

For the first time in the history of the human race, we find ourselves in a situation in which our future as a species is not guaranteed. The recurrent ecological, financial, and political crises have placed humankind in an alarming situation. Climatic catastrophes, hunger, poverty, unemployment, crime, conflicts, and wars seem to be moving us toward final collapse: *all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now* (Romans 8:22). Some people have begun to ask themselves if these groans and pains that continue to multiply are a proclamation of life or an announcement of approaching death.

In his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis highlights some of the consequences of the paradigm of separation. There are many similarities between the prophetic vision of the Pope and the warnings that experts have been presenting to us as alarming consequences that should not leave us indifferent:

- ✓ The disintegration of the natural world as a result of not accepting the limits of our planet;
- ✓ The exponential growth of the ecological footprint;
- ✓ The disintegration of the world and the breakdown of the social fabric, which have resulted in crisis with regard to coexistence and an anthropological crisis that has had devastating consequences, which are becoming more and more obvious;
- ✓ The disappearance of democracy, the multiplication of failed states, resulting in a political crisis and an institutional vacuum;
- ✓ The primacy of the individual good over the common good, resulting in a lack of respect with regard to human rights and human life itself;
- ✓ An increase in individual, structural, and national inequality;

⁴ From Vedas Sanskrit Scripture – 1500 BC.

- ✓ The emergence of new conflicts and new forms of violence;
- ✓ The proliferation of famines and wars, the catastrophic effects of climate change that make millions of men, women, and children live as refugees and immigrants, people in search of a place where they can survive;
- ✓ Trafficking in human beings, arms, and drugs, the emergence of new slaveries.⁵

We know that the others (the poor, the laity, women, civil society, minorities) do not allow themselves to be eliminated. They persist and resist and survive. The Vincentian Family has a special protagonist role in resisting the elimination of “the other,” the elimination of those who are different, the least among us, the apparently insignificant ones. Indeed, as a result of its origins and vocation the Vincentian Family is called to be prophetic and to cry out against uniformity and exclusion.⁶

Saint Vincent resisted the established order and effectively began an ecclesial revolution that has not yet reached its peak: the revolution of collaboration which involves, the laity, the poor, and women.

In this context, the Vincentian Family has a specific mission, namely, to be a point of reference with regard to the meaning of a spiritual awakening and to be a behavioral and relational sign – in

⁵ Translator’s Note: in the Spanish text of this article this paragraph is followed by these words: *En esta cosmovisión, “lo otro no existe: tal es la fe racional, la incurable creencia de la razón humana”⁶. Mi identidad es igual a la realidad total, “como si todo hubiera de ser; absoluta y necesariamente, uno y lo mismo: Yo.”* It has been very difficult to translate these words in some sensible manner and so I have simply omitted them from the text but what follows here is my attempt (a very poor attempt I admit) to translate those sentences: *In this world vision, the other does not exist: such is rational faith and the incurable belief in human reason* (Octavio Paz cites Antonio Machado in the introduction of his book, *La Liberinto de la Sociedad*, Penguin Books, 1997). *An individual’s identity is the same as the total reality, as if everything were being, absolutely and necessarily one and the same: “I”.*

⁶ Translator’s Note: I have omitted the following words from the English text, words that are found in the Spanish text, but which were very difficult to translate in a sensible manner that would enhance the text: *“El otro es la esencial, heterogeneidad del ser”. La otredad es una incurable enfermedad que padece lo uno, lo otro, el otro, la otra; es como una enfermedad gozosa. La crisis estructural de las religiones, incluida la Iglesia Católica, es también una consecuencia de todo lo anterior.* [My very poor translation of those words is: “The other is the essential heterogeneity of being.” Otherness is an incurable disease that afflicts one and the other; it is like a joyful disease. The structural crisis of religions, including the Catholic religion, is also a consequence of the above].

permanent collaboration – that enables the mission to be fulfilled. As members of the Vincentian Family we are to give witness to a new way of being in history and to demonstrate to others that it is possible to believe in and relate to others and to act in a different manner. Is the Vincentian Family a sign of this newness? In what ways is collaboration essential to this newness that we desire?

The Vincentian Family has been, is, and will always be at the crossroads of history, because it is “pro-cultural.” The Vincentian Family promotes and defends the culture of life, peace, justice, solidarity, and collaboration. The Vincentian Family wants to be seed, yeast, and ferment of a new culture in which life is possible, where no one calls into question the dignity of another, but rather promotes the dignity and the rights of all people. As a charismatic family we are on the side of life because we are on the side of a merciful God, the source of life itself.

The Vincentian Family knows that, in every form of groaning, God is communicating a message and, therefore, no cry is foreign to us and that includes the cries of the new forms of human slavery.⁷ As we share in the sufferings of our brothers and sisters, we cry out to God whom we believe loves all people and is present in the midst of those people, who continually ask the question: Where is God? God responds to impoverished humanity (God’s other passion) by standing beside people and assuring them of the fact that God has not abandoned the work of his hands.⁸

Faced with the “impotence” of God, the Vincentian Family is confronted with an opportunity to shoulder the human task of embracing the pain of God in the world, the pain of humanity, and the pain of the earth, the two places of our common home. That is a genuine prophecy, an experience of collaboration and co-responsibility that ought to arise from within us and then move outward to all our relationships and the various communities where we develop spirituality, brotherhood/sisterhood, and mission. Such collaboration

⁷ The Meeting of the Daughters of Charity regarding the new forms of slavery, Mexico (2016).

⁸ In this regard, see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (293-314): *For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned. And how could a thing remain, unless you will it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you? But you spare all things, because they are yours, O Lord and lover of souls* (Wisdom 12:24-26).

should be an integral part of our daily lives. It should be so natural to us that we do not have to put into our schedules the times that we will take in order to walk beside humankind as it journeys toward liberation.

Today we also perceive unmistakable signs of a paradigmatic crisis within our Family. Pope Francis has been very clear in speaking about these signs. The words that the Pope addressed to the religious in Morelia (Mexico), should echo in all our hearts: *Lead us not into the temptation of resignation*. We cannot be an ecclesial community that has given into the temptation of resignation, a family that has ceased to journey forward and to look for something better than that which is offered by a paradigm of life that leaves no room for the gospel and that sacrifices the human person to the tyranny of narcissism and isolation. The Pope affirms that *the great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades (Evangelii Gaudium, #2)*. The opportunity for collaboration (a relational experience) becomes diminished and we need to be *liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption (Evangelii Gaudium, #8)*.

These, then, are some of the signs of the paradigm of separation and they are also the groans and cries that arise from within, from our identity and mission. To incarnate the call to collaboration in all that we are and in all that we do means that we know how to listen to our own groans:

- ✓ Self-absorption – worldliness;
- ✓ Isolation: toxic loneliness, double lifestyle;
- ✓ Fundamental disconnect with reality;
- ✓ Relational, spiritual, and missionary monotony: ritualism;
- ✓ Emptiness in life that produces existential anguish and vocational confusion;
- ✓ Community disintegration: the community becomes the place where all one's personal problems become accentuated;
- ✓ Lack of passion and zeal for the charism and for building up the Kingdom;

- ✓ Deification of structures, compulsive activism. It is becoming very typical that people are concerned about the chronological length of life and not as concerned about a life lived with integrity⁹;
- ✓ A lack of a sense of belonging; an inability to give meaning and direction to our life and an inability to do this together; more and more members of the Vincentian Family do not feel at home among us.

As the Triune God places us in the midst of this paradigm of separation and fragmentation, we become aware of the fact that the creativity/newness in the experience of the Triune God (described in Sacred Scripture) is rooted in God's relationship with reality. Reality is one of the ways in which God communicates with us. God goes out to the encounter with the human person and does so through reality. Our ability to renew and to recreate ourselves is weakened when we distance ourselves and ignore the reality in which we live.¹⁰

When history is grounded on the paradigm of separation, we find ourselves obliged to look anew toward the Trinity and, from the perspective of the theology of encounter and collaboration, we are challenged to rethink and to give new meaning to our identity and our mission. To highlight this year as a time of Vincentian collaboration is, in fact, a theological response to the urgency of our common vocation. In that context, collaboration (which can harmonize/theologize our relationships, mission, and community life) continually calls us toward a germinal future.

3. Collaboration is a Proper/Original Element of the Charism

If we accept the fact that God has given us a responsibility to care for humanity and to care for the planet earth (both of which are threatened by the paradigm of life that has resulted from a lifestyle that

⁹ Saint James reminds us that life is like a cloud that appears in the morning and then fades away in the afternoon; cf. James 4:14.

¹⁰ Jesus warned the people of his era about their inability to understand the situation in which they lived and he told them: *When you see (a) cloud rising in the west you say immediately that it is going to rain – and so it does; and when you notice that the wind is blowing from the south you say that it is going to be hot – and so it is. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time?* (Luke 12:54-56).

human beings have decided to adopt), then we must necessarily engage in a process of cultural and paradigmatic conversion. In his encyclical and his apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis speaks about a twofold conversion: a pastoral conversion: a conversion of “doing” (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, #25-35) and an ecological conversion: a conversion of “being” (cf. *Laudato Si'*, #1-16). This twofold conversion has a common denominator, namely, a conversion to communion and to the establishment of relationships. Collaboration is a concrete manner that can bring about said conversion.

The Vincentian Family has to be converted to the realities of communion/collaboration that flow from the Trinity. The Good News of God, Trinitarian communion (relationship) can only be proclaimed by us when we promote human experiences in the Vincentian Family and in the Church, experiences rooted in the principle that it is possible to relate to and to act in communion with everything that exists. Communion challenges us to give witness to the possibility that such communion is possible. We know that when communion is ruptured, reconciliation is a possibility. Furthermore, we also know that internal and external community conflicts need not rupture communion/collaboration but can, in fact, be an opportunity to provide a new dynamic to communion/collaboration. What destroys communion/collaboration is resentment, passive-aggressive behavior, isolation, hopelessness/helplessness, and vengeance that often arise as a consequence of community conflicts. It is, then, that we become incapable of cooperating in a mission and incapable of promoting a lifestyle that concretizes and makes visible everything that we believe about communion.

Our charism originated from various forms of significant collaboration. The collaborative relationship between Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul, between the first three branches of the Vincentian Family (the Confraternities, the Missionaries, and the Daughters of Charity), collaboration with the Royal Court, as well as with the political, financial, and religious powers of 17th century France, all these forms of collaboration were quite natural to Vincent as he engaged in the progressive development of the charism that had been received from the Spirit.

Our charism is characterized by this collaboration which is one of the dynamics of this spiritual and missionary association. It is an affective and effective dynamic. This dynamic has fostered the building

up of the Vincentian Family and today impels us to form local, national, continental, and global networks that connect us with a vast number of people and organizations of good will. The intrinsic purpose of this collaboration is service on behalf of a common mission: *go and proclaim to the poor that the Kingdom of God is near*. Today, as we engage in that same process of proclamation, we give witness to the reality that another world is possible. Collaboration on behalf of and with the poor is one of the signs that continues to give hope to the excluded members of society.

As a Family, we are called to be a living gospel: Good News! The words that Jesus spoke to his apostles are also addressed to us as members of the Vincentian Family: *So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me ... so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me and that you loved them even as you love me* (John 17:21-23). Collaboration is at the service of communion, and living and ministering in a spirit of communion is the best way to fulfill the mission that was entrusted to Vincent de Paul and that is now entrusted to us.

Four hundred years ago, at the time that our charism was established, collaboration was a central element that connected the community with multiple forms of networks and did that on various levels. Our charism gave life to a new and very natural dynamic, a dynamic that invited other people to join together and to participate in building a more just and equitable society in which there is room for everyone. This element is proper to us and is part of our legacy, a unique legacy that is transformed in a creative manner, especially during this new global era.

As we pause and reflect on the reality of collaboration in our Vincentian Family, we immediately recognize the importance of formation. Indeed, from an historical perspective, collaboration in the Vincentian Family must involve the formation of all its members so that the Family can continue to be sustained. We must continue to provide formation to the lay members of our Family. In this sense, then, it is equally important to promote community life among the laity, because that is an indispensable support for animating and sustaining Vincentian life among the laity. We must offer the laity formation programs that will provide them with the tools that will

enable them to develop collaborative relationships and collaborative methods with regard to their ministry. We must recognize the importance of lay formation and integrate that formation into the various processes of service on behalf of our common mission.

4. Foundational Elements

Collaboration in a common mission (*Missio Dei*) is rooted in the Trinity: God-Collaboration-Mission. In reality the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit constitute a unity that is in permanent collaboration. In the *ad extra* work of God's creative and saving love, there is a constant collaboration among the members of the Trinity, a collaboration that flows from a continual "yes": *my Father is at work until now, so I am at work* (John 5:17). This God-Collaboration-Mission calls us and invites us to work as God works. God is present in the uncertainties of a life dedicated to making all things new. God needs collaborators who are willing to engage in this endeavor: *you, too, go into my vineyard* (Matthew 20:1-16). God invites us to engage in a process of collaboration that is like a river of life-giving water and all people are invited to submerge themselves in that dynamic. All people, in as much as created beings, collaborate in the creative and redemptive work of God. The whole world is fertile ground for collaboration and all people are to be agents of this collaborative dynamic.

From a Christian theological perspective, the dynamic of collaboration is rooted in baptism. The Second Vatican Council highlighted that reality when it referred to the common mission of all the people of God. All people are collaborators in the mission of Jesus Christ. This theological reality was also reaffirmed by the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean when it stated that all baptized men and women are missionary-disciples in a Church of communion and participation. In view of that baptismal perspective, collaboration must extend beyond the Church's visible borders and must reach out to other Christians, to believers of other religions, and to all people of good will. We experience ourselves as called to collaborate in a way that urges us go beyond the limits of our "small little world," in a manner that brings us into harmony with humankind and with the earth which is *our common home* (a reality that Pope Francis highlighted in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*).

Without any hesitation we can affirm that the grace of collaboration is being poured out in an evermore abundant manner upon the Vincentian Family. As Christian-Vincentians we seek to integrate, in a creative manner, our shared charism into every aspect of our lives. Vincentian identity is determined by three essential elements that are rooted in the very origin of our charism: first, a personal experience of Jesus Christ and of the kingdom; second, belonging to and participating in an ecclesial community through membership in some branch of the Vincentian Family; third, orienting one's life toward service on behalf of the poor, service which might involve direct contact with the poor, the service of charity, development of systematic change projects, and/or direct participation in the formulation of public policy that defends and promotes the rights of those individuals excluded from participation in society. Christian-Vincentians are sent forth to love those whom God loves. Thus, the poor are the absolute and original subject of our charism and we minister to/with the poor as we follow Jesus. We do all of this in community and through the dynamic of collaboration.

The laity, feminine protagonists, collaboration *ad intra* and *ad extra*, new forms of consecration, new significance and meaning with regard to vows, ecclesial reform, etc., all these are new horizons for the multiple charisms present in today's Church. That, however, is not so for us. The Vincentian charism came into existence in 1617 with the establishment of a group of laywomen that became known as the Confraternity of Charity. That was not some accidental event, but an occurrence that speaks loudly about what we are called to be and to do in this complex era in which we live.

5. Collaboration in the Midst of Diversity

As the body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

By its nature the Vincentian charism is diverse. Men and women of every culture, race, age, gender, people who live as Christians in multiple various manners, all these countless individuals have shared in our charism. When the Church, and consequently the Vincentian Family, forgets its origins (the communion of the Three Persons), then

unity becomes uniformity and one group of the faithful takes on the responsibilities of all the other groups and also places obstacles in the path of the participation of other groups (clericalism). Such neglect creates a situation in which the interests of the Kingdom become subordinated to the denominational/confessional interests (ethnocentrism) and also a situation in which the crystal clear waters become a pool of stagnant water (pastoral and theological inertia). In order to recover the diversity and the communion that create a dynamic unity and that lead to participation and collaboration, we must imitate the life of the Trinity.¹¹

In light of an ever-increasing pluralism in the world, collaboration presents us with an opportunity to eliminate clericalism in the Church, which in turn enables us to clothe ourselves in Christian humility. Such an attitude provides a new dynamism to the ecclesial body, to the life and the mission of all Christians, who for so long have been forced to live in a state of baptismal anonymity.

Today the faithful are more sensitive to the reality of diversity, communion, and participation in the Church. For example, today when we speak about the collaboration of the laity, we are referring to something quite different from that which we previously envisioned and practiced. The laity today are aware of the reality that they, like consecrated men and women, and as a result of their baptism, have been called to holiness, called to perfection, called to participate in the apostolate, and to take on a more active and responsible role in the church and in society, a role that the Latin American Episcopal Conference (gathered together in Santo Domingo) referred to when they spoke about the laity as protagonists of a new era.

In any collaborative process that strengthens communion and fosters participation, respect for the identity of each group, each individual, and every vocation is essential. Thus, our starting point is the reality that all the members of the Vincentian Family, regardless of their lifestyle within the Church and regardless of any other element that might set them apart from others, share the same vocation and mission in the Church and in the world. True, there might be differences in the manner in which people live out and engage in this

¹¹ This paragraph has been taken from Leonardo Boff's book, *La Trinidad es la mayor comunidad* and has been adapted to be read from the perspective of the Vincentian Family and collaboration.

common mission and vocation, but there are no superior or inferior members. All share one common inspiration that unites us; all share one diversity that enriches us.

Therefore, at the present time, there are too many situations in which collaboration is not reciprocal, but rather in which we find ourselves traveling along a one-way street. In other words, there are too many situations in which the laity, who collaborate with consecrated men and/or women within the Vincentian Family, find themselves in a subordinate position or in a situation in which they are “collaborating” in projects which are the property and the responsibility of those consecrated individuals. While the relationship might be respectful, it is often a relationship of employer-employee. In the various ministries of the Congregation, the members are more accustomed to “giving” and “teaching” than to “receiving” and “learning.” Reciprocity and subsidiarity among equals is far from being the common practice in the Vincentian Family and it is clear that we have a long way to go in this matter. Such obsolete forms tend to create in the members of the Family a manner of thinking and acting, attitudes and behavior that have to be overcome so that collaboration among clerics, consecrated men and women, and the laity (all the members of the Vincentian Family) might be developed on a new foundation, on a basis of subsidiarity, mutuality, and reciprocity. All of those elements can be found in the Trinity and therefore, our collaboration must be done *in the image of God*.

True collaboration must be grounded on our attempts to give meaning to our lives and to do this from perspective of diversity and communion, from a perspective that leads us to overcome our anxiety with the concept of “otherness,” which for so long we have confused with the negation of the other, with rejection, oppression, war, and discrimination.

6. By Way of Conclusion

In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), must not become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity

¹² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* accessed at:
https://selforganizedseminar.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/freire_pedagogy_oppressed1.pdf

*of both. This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well.*¹²

Let us put aside working “for the poor” and let us instead begin to work “with them,” which in turn implies that we will allow them to evangelize us, to humanize us, and to free us. The problem of poverty-exclusion is not simply a structural problem, rather it is a conflict that involves a lack of sensitivity and a lack of vision on the part of many people, including those who, through vocation or a personal option, proclaim a solidarity with those who are poor. Such exclusion becomes even more problematic when the poor are excluded from the process of decision-making, from the process of collaboration, and from the process of participating in those activities that effect their integral liberation and the building up of a more just and equitable global society.

We have the option of responding to the problem of exclusion in a new manner, in a manner that involves those individuals who are marginalized in the process of discernment, decision-making, execution, and collaboration on every level that pertains to their reality and to their aspirations for a new world. Let us be bold as we collaborate with those men and women who live in the midst of poverty. Let us make collaboration a sign of conversion for a society that continues to exclude so many people on every level.

Throughout my life I have participated in many forums in which the poor and poverty were the central themes. My 33 years as a member of the Congregation of the Mission have provided me with the opportunity (the grace) to discern, to decide, and to act (in one way or another) on behalf of the poor of this world. I would say that that has been my life and yet I do not claim to be an expert in this matter. Today I am challenged by this ministry that places me in the midst of the United Nations as the representative of the Congregation, as one who collaborates with the other branches of the Vincentian Family that minister within this institution either in Geneva or in New York.

In light of everything that I have stated, I am convinced that collaboration is an urgent need. We have been given a responsibility and we desire to contribute in some manner to the building up of a new, peaceful, free, just, and equitable society. I believe that this will only be possible when the poor are invited to sit around the global

table, around the national table, and around our own table (the table of the Church and the table of the Vincentian Family). When the excluded members of society experience themselves as one with us, then we will become aware of their real needs and aspirations, then we will discover the paths that will enable them and us to move beyond the present situation, paths that will also enable humanity to move beyond its present situation. The poor have the extraordinary potential to show us those paths before it becomes too late. Therefore, to walk and to be by their side through a process of ongoing collaboration means that we are faithful to the inspiration of the Spirit that enflamed the hearts of our founders and foundresses.

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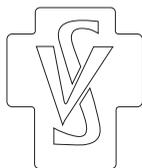
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