

The Congregation of the Mission Granted ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council of the UN) Status at the United Nations

Guillermo Campuzano, CM

After 20 years at the UN under the Department of Public Information (DPI), the Congregation of the Mission decided to apply for accreditation under the UN ECOSOC organization, which gives us the opportunity to be more influential in the development of social policy globally. Therefore, with the approval of the Superior General and his Council, we submitted the application in June 2016 to get ECOSOC status. Our application was reviewed in February 2017 and we recently received this good news from Marc-André Dorel, Officer-in-Charge of the NGO Branch for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the United Nations:

“I am pleased to inform you that the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), at its Coordination and Management meeting of **April 2017**, adopted the recommendation of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) **to grant special consultative status to your organization, the Congregation of the Mission**. On behalf of all staff of the Non-Governmental Organizations Branch/OESC/DESA, please accept our heartfelt congratulations. Consultative status for an organization enables it to engage actively with ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, as well as with the United Nations Secretariat, programmes, funds, and agencies in a number of ways. In order to better understand this relationship, we take this

opportunity to provide some critical information about the privileges that consultative status with ECOSOC confers on your organization, as well as the obligations that your organization will be required to meet under this relationship.”

The Economic and Social Council “is at the heart of the United Nations system to advance the **three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental**. It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits.” The UN Charter established ECOSOC in 1945 as one of the six main organs of the United Nations.

ECOSOC links a diverse family of UN entities dedicated to sustainable development, providing overall guidance and coordination. The entities include regional economic and social commissions, functional commissions facilitating intergovernmental discussions of major global issues, and specialized agencies, programs, and funds at work around the world to translate development commitments into real changes in people’s lives.

To be a part of this global family on behalf of civil society gives us more responsibility to rethink and strategize our global advocacy in a way that favors the lives of those “most abandoned” in our society. This new commitment with international advocacy is a good way to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of our Charism.

ECOSOC has a leading role in identifying emerging challenges, promoting innovation, and achieving a balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental. With the acceptance of our application, we are invited officially to be actively involved in this process. ECOSOC is a gateway for UN partnership and participation by the rest of the world. We need to find creative ways to involve ourselves at all levels, locally and nationally too. ECOSOC offers a unique

global meeting point for productive dialogues among policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, foundations, businesses, youth and 3,200+ registered non-governmental organizations. Each year, ECOSOC structures its work around an annual theme of global importance to sustainable development. This ensures focused attention among ECOSOC's array of partners and throughout the UN development system.

As many of you already know, the CM decided to create the VIN-JPIC our own **Vincentian International Network for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation**. This network will directly benefit from the ECOSOC status that was granted to us. As soon as all the delegates from the provinces are named, we will inform the Congregation of further steps in these initiatives.

Our work with those living on the margins of society has new challenges every day. We are trying to respond to these new challenges with a Vincentian heart, with the creativity of love that reaches to infinity. We are a Family dedicated to the service of establishing, here and now, a new humanity in which the dignity of all is undeniably respected. Thanks for your support!



Icon of the Charism

Luigi Mezzadri, CM

Divided by history, united by charity.

It has been 400 years since the days of Folleville and Châtillon. That long period has not wizened the Vincentian charism like the oak at the Berceau. It is as alive as a spring high in the mountains.

The Polish artist, Mariola Zajączkowska-Bicho, on a sketch by Father Luigi Mezzadri, CM, painted a folding triptych icon. It connects us to the beginnings of our charism, speaking to us not with difficult concepts, but essentially with images and colors, understandable to the wise and the ignorant, as in the noblest tradition of the Church. In fact, Jesus said, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike” (Matthew 11:25). We all know that, when we come before a picture of ancient or modern art, we need a thorough knowledge of art history. However, to understand the icon we need to pray.

The triptych icon appears closed with the following dimensions: 60cm x 40cm x 6cm. If we open the two panels, the 23.75-carat gold that makes-up the backdrop dazzles us. Gold is the divine light that surrounds Saint Vincent, who holds a Bible and a loaf of bread. These two symbols remind us of the events of Folleville (January 1617) and Châtillon-les-Dombes (August 1617), when a young priest had

the courage to commit to beginning the work of the missions and to organizing the laity in the “Charities” in order to make known a God who forgives and who invites us to solidarity. The divine light is the divine seal on the Vincentian charism.

The saint is not old, as in our iconographic tradition, in which we want him to appear “old as a young man” (*senex a puero*, as in the Litany of Saint Vincent), but he is young, because he shares in the fullness of God (Colossians 2:10). He has a white habit, as in the icons of the Transfiguration, because he lived transfiguring service into vision. He is wrapped in a blue cloak, a color that in times past was obtained from the fragmentation of lapis lazuli. Blue is the color of faith, which clothes us in immortality. In his hands, he has a book and a loaf of bread. The book is red like the work of the Holy Spirit, who, at Folleville, “opened his mouth,” as in the *Ephphatha* rite of Baptism, and inspired him to proclaim the wonders of the Lord. The bread is neither white nor honey-colored, like the bread of the rich, but very dark, like the bread of the poor.

An image of the Madonna of Pokrov is at the top. She displays a gesture of maternal protection toward all Saint Vincent’s works and refers to the entrustment of the Miraculous Medal in 1830.

Saint Vincent is on the left panel. He is a young man surrounded by young people, because everyone has the age of his or her own sins. In the back, there are two mountains. On that on the left, there is the tree of earthly paradise, from whose trunk will be extracted the wood of the cross, so that the action that would have destroyed us became the cause of salvation. On the right, the higher mountain is the messianic mountain: “The mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it” (Isaiah 2:2). This mountain, which exceeds every other, symbolizes the Christ.

The right panel presents that which sprung from Châtillon. The saint is not holding up the children as in classical iconography, because the care of the little ones was confided to the sisters and the

laity. The sister on the right is dressed in blue, the color of Christ's robe, of the Virgin's and the apostles' garments to signify that her action is a celebration of charity. The loaves are, in fact, in the sign of the Cross, because the greatest poverty is hunger for God. She does not look at the saint, because she is not coerced in her vocation, but looks forward into the future, like a figurehead on the bow of a ship.

The icon, if we contemplate it in prayer, has a magnetic force that attracts us to the Holy City, Jerusalem, the kingdom of God hidden within us to which goes the heart's desire, so that the entire Vincentian Family can be wrapped in the cloud of God's glory.