

VINCENTIANA

61st YEAR

July-September 2017

N°3



The Vincentian Jubilee Year, 400 Years of the Charism

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
GENERAL CURIA

Introduction

Editor's Note

This is the third edition of *Vincentiana* for the year 2017 and corresponds to the months of July, August and September. The theme of this edition is: *The Vincentian Jubilee Year: 400 years since the origin of the charism.*

It is a joy to be able to present the message that Pope Francis addressed to all the members of the Vincentian Family during the time of this Jubilee Year, a message in which he referred to Vincent de Paul as one who *was always progressing, open to seeking God and himself.*

From the General Curia we present letters from the Superior General for the celebration of the feast of Saint Vincent. In this section, there are several letters from the Superior General related to the Symposium, the online catalogue.

In this issue, we also highlight the person of Frans Scraven, a Dutch confrere and missionary bishop in China, and his companions in martyrdom. They *opted to be burned alive rather than to betray those persons who had sought refuge with them.* In 1894 the bishop became a member of the French Province.

In the section *of current interest* we include a presentation of the global initiative of the Vincentian Family with regard to homelessness. This project is a challenge for all of us and here the reader will find concrete strategies for the next three years (2017-2020).

The theme of this issue is developed in six articles:

1. *Two Genes of the Four Hundred Year Old Charism* is written by a confrere from the Vice-province of Costa Rica. The author highlights the vocation that came to life in Folleville in 1617 where Vincent discovered Christ as the face of the merciful Father.

2. *On the journey of Vincent de Paul* written by Pedro Opeka, a missionary in Madagascar. This reflection was originally presented in Brussels during a presentation in which he gave witness to the spiritual power of the Vincentian charism during the past 400 years.
3. *The Value of Solidarity in today's world* was written by Andrés R.M. Motto (Province of Argentina and present director of CIF) who explains the manner in which this virtue should be lived in the twenty-first century.
4. *1617-2017, hopes for the Vincentian Family at the dawn of the Fifth Century* written by Father Robert Maloney; the author speaks about dreams that he hopes will become reality for the Congregation of the Mission and for the worldwide Vincentian Family.
5. *The 400th anniversary of the Vincentian Charism* is a reflection written by Joseph V. Agostino (Coordinator of the Vincentian Family Office). Beginning with Matthew 25:35, *I was a stranger and you welcomed me*, Father refers to the various celebrations that have taken place during the past year, highlighting the upcoming Symposium and audience with Pope Francis.
6. The last article was written by Father Paul C. Roche, a missionary in London who shares the experience of this local community as they minister on behalf of immigrants in that city.

At this time, it is also important to thank all those individuals who have made the publication of this issue of *Vincentiana* possible. It is hoped that this material will enable all of us to grow in that spirituality which we have inherited from Vincent de Paul.



Letter of the Holy Father Francis to the Vincentian Family for the Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul

Dear brothers and sisters,

On the occasion of the fourth centenary of the charism that gave birth to your Family, I would like to extend my words of gratitude and encouragement and to emphasize the value and relevance of Saint Vincent de Paul today.

He was always progressing, open to seeking God and himself. Grace worked to supplement this constant quest: as a shepherd, he encountered Jesus the Good Shepherd in a striking way in the person of the poor. This occurred in a very special way when he allowed himself to be touched by the eyes of a man thirsting for mercy and by the situation of family lacking everything. At that moment, he was deeply moved by Jesus looking at him, inviting him to no longer live for himself, but to serve Jesus wholeheartedly in persons who are poor, whom Vincent de Paul would later call “our lords and masters” (*Correspondence, Conferences, Documents XI, 349*). His life then became steadfast service, up to his last breath. A verse from Scripture showed him the meaning of his mission: “The Lord has sent me to bring the Good News to the poor” (cf. Lk 4:18).

Burning with the desire to make Jesus known to persons who are poor, Vincent passionately dedicated himself to His proclamation, particularly through popular missions and most especially by attending to the formation of priests. He quite naturally used a “little

method”: speaking first of all through his life and then with great simplicity, in a familiar and direct way. The Spirit used him as an instrument to raise up a generous impulse in the Church. Inspired by the first Christians who were of “one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32), Saint Vincent founded the Confraternities of Charity in order to care for those most in need. They lived in communion and joyfully offered their possessions, convinced that Jesus and persons who are poor are the most valuable treasures and that, as he liked to repeat, “When you go to the poor, you encounter Jesus.”

This “little mustard seed” sown in 1617 developed into the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity, branched out into other institutes and associations and became a great tree (cf. Mk 4:31-32), your Family. Everything, however, began with this little mustard seed. Saint Vincent never wanted to be a hero or a leader but a “little seed”. He was convinced that humility, gentleness and simplicity are the essential conditions for embodying the law of the seed that gives life by dying (cf. Jn 12:20-26). This law alone makes Christian life fruitful. According to this law, in giving we receive, in losing our lives we gain them and in remaining hidden we shine. He was also convinced that he could not do this alone but rather together, as Church and as the People of God. On this point, I enjoy recalling his prophetic insight of valuing the exceptional feminine qualities shown in Saint Louise de Marillac’s spiritual sensitivity and human understanding.

“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40), says the Lord. At the heart of the Vincentian Family is the search for “those who are the poorest and most abandoned” and a deep awareness of being “unworthy of rendering them our little services” (*Correspondence, Conferences, Documents* XI, 349). I hope that this year of thanksgiving to the Lord and of going more deeply into the charism might be an opportunity to quench your thirst at the source, to refresh yourselves at the fountain of the spirit of your origins. Do not forget that the sources of grace

from which you drink sprang from steadfast hearts firm in love, from “lasting models of charity” (Benedict XVI, Encyclical letter *Deus caritas est*, 40). You will contribute the same freshness only if you look toward the rock from which everything gushed forth. This rock is Jesus in His poverty, whom you should recognize in those who are poor and voiceless. For He is there. And you, when you meet fragile people broken by past difficulties, you in turn are called to be rocks: not to appear hard and unshakeable, nor insensitive to sufferings, but to become a secure support, firm in the face of the uncertainties of the times and resistant in adversity because you “look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the quarry from which you were taken” (Is 51:1). You are thus called to reach out to the peripheries of human existence to bring not your skills, but the Spirit of the Lord, the “Father of the Poor”. He scatters you throughout the world like seeds that sprout in arid land, like a balm of consolation for the wounded, like a fire of charity to warm so many hearts cooled by abandonment and hardened by rejection.

In truth, all of us are called to drink from the rock of the Lord and to quench the thirst of the world with the charity that comes from Him. Charity is at the heart of the Church; it is the reason for its action, the soul of its mission. “Charity is at the heart of the Church’s social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law” (Benedict XVI, Encyclical letter *Caritas in veritate*, 2). Following this path will make the Church ever more fully the mother and teacher of charity, with a love that increases and abounds for one another and for all (cf. 1 Thes 3:12): harmony and communion within the Church, openness and welcome toward those outside. The Church must have the courage to give up what might be an advantage in order to imitate in all things its Lord and to fully become itself, making the apparent weakness of charity its only reason to boast (cf. 2 Cor 12:9). The words of the Council, so relevant today, resonate in us: “Christ Jesus... ‘being rich, became poor’ for our sakes. Thus, the Church,

although it needs human resources to carry out its mission, is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, even by its own example, humility and self-sacrifice. Christ was sent by the Father ‘to bring good news to the poor’... Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder. It does all it can to relieve their need and in them it strives to serve Christ” (Ecumenical Council Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 8).

Saint Vincent did this all throughout his life and speaks still today to each one of us and to us as Church. His witness invites us to seek always, ready to let the Lord’s Word and His eyes upon us surprise us. He asks us for poverty of heart, total availability and obedient humility. He impels us to fraternal communion among ourselves and to courageous mission in the world. He calls us to free ourselves from complex language, self-centered rhetoric and attachment to material goods, which might appease us in the short term but do not give us God’s peace and are even often obstacles to mission. He encourages us to invest in the creativity of love with the authenticity of a “heart which sees” (cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical letter *Deus Caritas est*, 31). Charity, in fact, is not satisfied with good practices of the past but is able to transform the present. This is all the more necessary today with the ever-changing complexity of our globalized society where some forms of charity or assistance, although justified by generous intentions, risk supporting forms of exploitation and illegal activity and do not produce real and sustainable progress. For this reason, envisioning charity, organizing close relationships and investing in formation are timely lessons from Saint Vincent. His example, though, also encourages us to give time and space to persons who are poor, to those suffering from the new forms of poverty of our time, to the too many people living in poverty today and to make their thoughts and difficulties our own. A Christianity without contact with people who suffer becomes a disincarnated Christianity, unable to touch the flesh of Christ. Encounter persons

who are poor and give poor persons a voice so that our culture focused on the ephemeral does not reduce their presence to silence. I ardently hope that the celebration of the World Day of the Poor this November 19 will help us in our “call to follow Jesus in his own poverty,” becoming “an ever greater sign of Christ’s charity for the least and those most in need” and reacting “against a culture of discard and waste” (Message for the First World Day of the Poor, “Let us love, not with words but with deeds”, June 13, 2017).

I pray that you and the Church may be granted the grace of finding the Lord Jesus in your brother or sister who is hungry, thirsty, a stranger, stripped of his clothing and his dignity, sick and imprisoned but also doubting, ignorant, persistent in sin, afflicted, crude, ill-tempered and annoying. In the glorious wounds of Jesus, may you find the strength of charity, the happiness of the grain that gives life by dying, the fecundity of the rock from which water gushes forth, the joy of coming out of yourself in order to go out into the world, free from nostalgia for the past, confident in God and creative regarding the challenges of today and tomorrow because, as Saint Vincent said, “love is inventive to infinity”.

Memorial of St. Vincent de Paul

400th Prayer

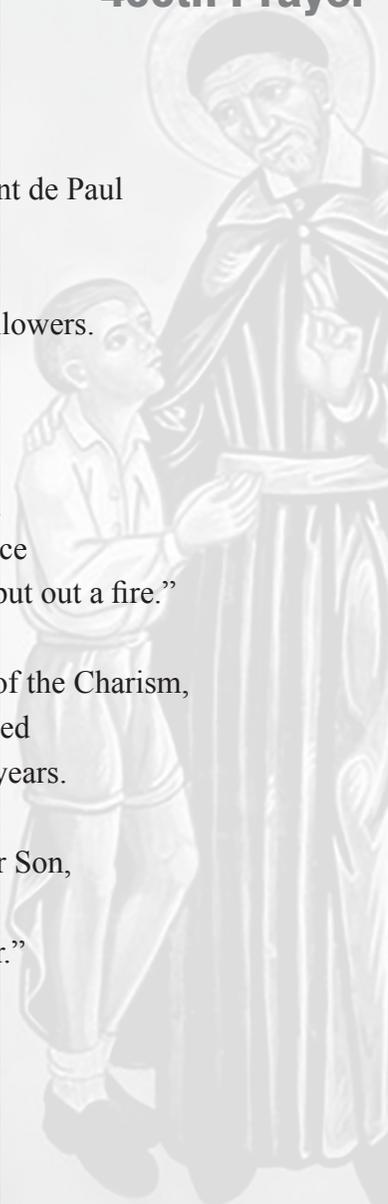
LORD, Merciful Father,
who instilled in Saint Vincent de Paul
a great concern for the
evangelization of the poor,
now fill the hearts of His followers
with that same spirit.

Today, as we hear the cry
of your abandoned children,
may we run to their assistance
“like someone who runs to put out a fire.”

Revive within us the flame of the Charism,
that flame which has animated
our missionary life for 400 years.

We pray in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ, our Lord,
“the Evangelizer of the Poor.”

AMEN



1

From the General Curia



Circular for the Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul

Rome, 20 September 2017

To all the confreres of the Congregation of the Mission

“TOWARD A RENEWED CULTURE OF VOCATIONS TO THE CONSECRATED LIFE”



My dear confreres,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be always with us!

In this Jubilee Year of the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, we have so much for which to be thankful!

One thing for which we need to thank Jesus is the gift of thousands upon thousands of confreres, throughout the 400-year history, who kept the charism alive up to the present day. It is thanks to them that, by the grace of God, the charism was passed on from generation to generation. Thousands of confreres achieved the state of sanctity, among whom some are recognized officially by the Church as Blessed or Saints. They are now in heaven from which they intercede for us and accompany us on the journey of life, on our own pilgrimage toward a total and eternal union with God.

As we approach the ministry of fostering vocations to the consecrated life and look to the future of the Congregation and its members, as well as that of the Vincentian Charism, the depth of our personal engagement, fire, and conviction is of utmost importance. Let one of the concrete fruits of the 400th Jubilee Year be “a renewed culture of vocations to the consecrated life.” By culture of vocations to the consecrated life, I mean an environment where vocations to the consecrated life will grow naturally, where to respond to Jesus’s invitation, “follow me,” will be accepted and not be seen as a strange or objectionable life choice. We want an environment where it will be “normal” and not “abnormal” for any young man to decide to follow Jesus, in our specific case, in the footsteps of Saint Vincent de Paul in the Congregation of the Mission as a lay brother or priest.

When I speak of a renewed culture of vocations to the consecrated life in general, I am very much aware that, in many parts of the world, such a culture of vocations is present. However, in other areas, society is not at all favorable to nurturing a culture of vocations to the consecrated life; it often is opposed to it, using diverse means to undermine such an environment.

In my letter of 25 January 2017, at the beginning of the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, I invited every member of the Vincentian Family to take one very concrete step; that is, every member is to bring one new candidate to one of the branches of the Vincentian Family. A little more than half a year has passed since then and, as we celebrate the Solemnity of our Founder, every one of us can reply individually to the following questions:

- How have I responded to this invitation so far?
- How active have I been in the first half of the jubilee year in this area?
- Did I encourage someone to become active in one of the branches of the Vincentian Family, either in one of the women’s or men’s Congregations of consecrated life or in one of the lay branches?

As we enter the second half of the jubilee year, I fervently renew this invitation to each confrere individually, this time concretely directed to the consecrated life, to put every effort possible into helping youth answer Jesus's call. I would like to highlight this goal very specifically as we celebrate the Solemnity of Saint Vincent de Paul on this 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism. I ask each confrere to be open and to do all he can to encourage by prayer, personal contact, and accompaniment, depending on one's possibilities, a young person to discern if you sense that Jesus is calling him or her to the consecrated life.

Many confreres are working tirelessly in the ministry of fostering vocations, and I am convinced that, during this jubilee year, we already have seen or will see concrete fruits through new candidates joining the consecrated life, more specifically the Congregation of the Mission, as well as other Congregations within the Vincentian Family. For this, I thank you from the bottom of my heart! Saint Vincent himself would concur:

I thank God for the special devotions you are planning in order to ask God, through the intercession of blessed Saint Joseph, for the spread of the Company.

I ask His Divine Goodness to accept them. For more than twenty years I have not dared to ask this of God, thinking that, since the Congregation is His work, its preservation and growth should be left to His Providence alone. Reflecting, however, on the recommendation given us in the Gospel to ask Him to send laborers into His harvest,¹ I have become convinced of the importance and usefulness of this devotion.²

¹ Cf. Luke 10:2.

² *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 V, p. 468-469; Letter 1956 to Étienne Blatiron, Superior in Genoa, 12 November 1655. Future references to this work will be indicated using the initials CCD, followed by the volume number, then the page number, for example, CCD V, 468-469.

Moving toward a renewed culture to the consecrated life, I would like to suggest focusing on the following three groups:

- **Members of the Congregation of the Mission**

In writing this point, I am very much aware that I am not saying anything new. The theme of consecrated life has been touched on and spoken about so much throughout the history of the Congregation of the Mission. Therefore, I simply would like to add my voice, as well as to launch a new appeal to all the members of the Congregation of the Mission to work tirelessly to renew the culture of vocations to the consecrated life.

I urge you to work at the ministry of fostering vocations with new or renewed initiatives, approaches, and ideas. It is a wonderful opportunity. If, for some reason, in a province, vice-province, region, or international mission, there is not a concrete, active pastoral plan for fostering vocations in place, or if the plan is not reviewed annually to see how well we are walking in a given situation or environment, then this must be done without delay in this jubilee year, so as to keep the fire alive year after year.

As members of the Congregation of the Mission, our priority must be to assume responsibility for vocation ministry and to keep building a culture of vocations to the consecrated life. Every single confrere should have this as a vivid and inseparable sign of love toward the charism we have inherited, toward the Congregation of the Mission of which we are members, toward the Church, toward the Kingdom.

- **Members of the lay branches of the Vincentian Family**

A few months ago, I was approached by an international leader of a lay branch of the Vincentian Family, who brought up a proposal to encourage all the lay branches of the Vincentian Family to become involved actively or continue participating in promoting the culture of vocations to the consecrated life in the Congregations within the

Vincentian Family. This lay member expressed this initiative with the following words, “You – sisters, lay brothers, and priests within the Vincentian Family – did and are doing so much for us laity. We would like to do something for you in return.” What wonderful encouragement, support, and initiative coming from a lay member of the Vincentian Family!

I would like to invite and encourage every individual member of a lay branch of the Vincentian Family to continue or to start being involved actively in building the culture of vocations to the consecrated life and also to be involved personally in vocation ministry, in a special way for the different Congregations of the Vincentian Family. This will be a clear sign that building a culture of vocations to the consecrated life is not something reserved exclusively for persons in consecrated life – sisters, lay brothers, and priests – but it is a ministry for all members of the Church, all members of the Vincentian Family, laity as well as those in consecrated life.

The approach, the ways of participating, may differ at times from one branch to another, but the goal remains the same: we, as Vincentian Family, all participate in building the culture of vocations to the consecrated life. How can a lay branch participate concretely in this undertaking?

- Pray regularly, individually or as a group, for new vocations to the consecrated life.
- Be attentive to the signs that Jesus may be calling a young man or woman to follow Him as a sister, lay brother, or priest and encourage him/her in that direction.
- Put forth the option, when speaking with youth, of the consecrated life as a very concrete choice. When speaking of marriage, we also should speak of consecrated life, so it is seen as a very normal choice, a normal call and response to one’s lifelong commitment.

This jubilee year is a wonderful opportunity to continue or start encouraging renewed or new initiatives. The lay branches of the Vincentian Family together can build an environment, a culture, which will be receptive to the call to consecrated life as a normal response to one's life mission. The lay branches carry on the same charism and spirituality. They are a natural environment where new vocations to the consecrated life are born.

- **Persons outside the Vincentian Family**

The culture of vocations to the consecrated life is not limited just to the Vincentian Family, but is to be continued, renewed, or undertaken in society as a whole, making it a regular, normal, and logical choice, among other choices, to respond to Jesus's invitation to follow Him in one's life mission. On the level of the Congregation, one of the ways we are trying to engage and participate in the renewal of the culture of vocations to the consecrated life is by developing digital and social media, taking new or renewed initiatives and approaches to get the message out to the largest possible audience.

As we prepare to celebrate the Solemnity of Saint Vincent de Paul in this Jubilee Year of the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, let us continue to be engaged, to reengage, or begin engaging in building the culture of vocations to the consecrated life wherever we serve. We count on our own capabilities, but always with total commitment and inner fire, so that our love for pastoral ministry to foster new vocations always will be "affective and effective."

Let us give thanks to God for all the vocations to the consecrated life we are receiving from Jesus's merciful hands, because, in the end, it is His mercy toward the "Little Company" that makes this miracle a reality! As Saint Vincent reminded us,

O Monsieur, how very precious is a good Missionary! God must raise him up and fashion him; that is the work of His omnipotence and His great goodness. That is why Our Lord

has specifically recommended that we ask God to send good workers into His vineyard;³ for in fact there will be no good ones if God does not send them, and very few of these are needed to accomplish a great deal.⁴

May Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Saint Vincent de Paul and all the Blessed and Saints of the Vincentian Family intercede for us in this undertaking. Have a wonderful celebration! Let us keep praying for one another!

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

³ Cf. Matthew 9:31-38.

⁴ CCD VII, 626; Letter 2879 to Guillaume Desdames, Superior in Warsaw, 20 June 1659.



2 From the Superior General

All the Visitors in Europe

Rome, July 15, 2017

Dear Visitor:

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us!

I am writing this letter with regard to the immediate preparations for the Vincentian Symposium which will be celebrated in Rome (October 12-15, 2017). The focus of this event is the same as that of the Jubilee Year: Welcome the Stranger!

A few weeks ago, the International Office of the Vincentian Family, located in Philadelphia (USA) sent a letter to all the Visitors in Europe, requesting the collaboration of the National Advisors of the VMY in each province, that is, requesting that they become the liaison between the President of the Episcopal Conference of their respective countries and the International Office of the Vincentian Family (coordinated by Joseph Agostino, CM), thus extending an invitation to young men and women throughout Europe to participate in the Symposium which will be held in Rome.

Therefore, I am specifically requesting that the National Advisor of the VMY and another confrere from the Province visit the President of the Episcopal Conference of your country or region and encourage him to invite the young men and women of the different dioceses of the country to participate in the symposium that has been organized on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian charism.

The Prefect of the Dicastry for Laity, Family and Life has been notified about this event and has offered his support and blessing.

This event provides us with a wonderful opportunity to deepen our understanding of St. Vincent de Paul, who during the Jubilee Year of Mercy was proclaimed the Patron of Europe (this occurred during the celebration of World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland). I consider this event to be a privileged moment, a time of grace, especially since Pope Francis will join us in our celebration (Saturday, October 14th, 2017). At the same time, we will have the reliquary of Saint Vincent's heart in our midst during the days of that celebration.

With all my heart I thank the Visitors, the National Advisors of the VMY and the confreres who have engaged in this initiative ... I thank you for your service, your support and your collaboration. I understand that you have many responsibilities and commitments and therefore, forgive my boldness as I ask you to add this initiative to your ministry. I am convinced that the participation of young men and women from throughout Europe will produce much fruit for the benefit of the Vincentian Family and for our mission. Let us live this event with a spirit of gratitude and let us allow ourselves to be renewed in our missionary zeal.

During the time of the Symposium we will have special sessions for young men and women (Friday afternoon, October 13th, 2017). There will also be an encounter with Pope Francis (Saturday, October 14th, 2017), a prayer vigil (Saturday evening) and a closing celebration of the Eucharist in the Basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls. It is with much joy and hope that I am able to write to each one of you and I hope to have the joy of welcoming you and many young men and women from each one of the countries of Europe.

Let us continue to pray for one another!

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

Process:

- Find out the name of the President of the Episcopal Conference or the bishop or person responsible for Youth Ministry in your respective country or region.
- As the Visitor, National Advisor of the VMY or confrere delegated by the Visitor, request a personal meeting with the Bishop.
- At that meeting, be mindful of the following aspects:
- As members of the International Vincentian Family, and more especially as members of the VMY, we are taking advantage of this Jubilee Year (the 400th anniversary of the origin of the Vincentian charism) to participate in a Vincentian Symposium that is a follow-up to the previous celebration of World Youth Day.
- This is a wonderful opportunity to honor the Patron of Europe: Vincent de Paul was chosen by the young men and women through a virtual survey that was conducted prior to the celebration of World Youth Day in Krakow in 2016.
- Extend an invitation to all the young people in Europe to participate in the Symposium.
- Offer your assistance in organizing this event and do so in collaboration with the leaders of youth ministry so that the young men and women throughout Europe can participate in this Symposium in Rome.
- The coordinating commission of the symposium is preparing a budget for the young men and women, thus ensuring the participation of the greatest number of young people possible. The commission will be involved in the search for lodging for these young men and women.

- Follow-up: after the meeting with the Bishop or the individual responsible for Youth Ministry, it will be necessary to follow-up the meeting in order to insure that the process is moving forward. Since his support and accompaniment in the process is most important, another conversation should be held with that individual within 30 days of the first meeting.
- If you need some further explanation, help, support, and/or information, please do not hesitate to contact our Office: vfo@famvin.org
- We have sent an invitation to the President of the Episcopal Conference of your country and very soon we will be sending that person more information.

Schedule

Wednesday and Thursday, 11–12 October:

9:00 AM – 9:00 PM (21:00)

Registration at the Collegio Apostolico Leoniano
Via Pompeo Magno, 21



Thursday, 12 October:

6:00 PM - 7:00 PM (18:00 – 19:00)

Prayer Service in honor of Our Lady of
the Miraculous Medal at the Basilica of S.
Giovanni in Laterano
Piazza di S. Giovanni in Laterano, 4



Friday, 13 October:

9:00 AM: Conference & Dialogue: Vincentian Spirituality and its Prophetic
Challenge (given by Tjeu van Knippenberg, CM and Peter Reijers)

Break

Conference & Dialogue: Vincentian Formation & Communication in the
Information Age (given by Peggy O'Neil, SC)

12:00 PM: Lunch on your own

1:30 PM (13:30): Conference & Dialogue: Vincentian Ministries: From Here
to Where? (given by Dennis Holtschneider, CM)

3:00 PM (15:00): Celebration of the Eucharist (Presider: Gregory Gay, CM)

The languages groups will be meeting at the following locations:

Italian, Spanish, and English

at the PalaCavicchi
Via Ranuccio Bianchi
Bandinelli, 130



French

Parr. S. GREGORIO VII
Via Gregorio VII, 6



Polish

CASA MARIA IMMACOLATA
Via Ezio, 28



Portuguese

Collegio Apostolico LEONIANO
Via Pompeo Magno, 21



On Friday afternoon, the meetings with Consecrated Youth and Young Adults will be held at the PalaCavicchi; Via Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, 130

Consecrated Youth and Young Adults Schedule Friday afternoon

3:00 – 6:30 PM (15:00– 18:30) Session and Mass with Consecrated Youth:
“Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10,37)

6:30 PM (18:30) Break

7:30 PM (19:30) Session with Consecrated Youth and Young Adults:
“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25,40)

Saturday, 14 October:

Celebration of the Eucharist in private

8:00 AM: St. Peter’s Square security opens
Piazza San Pietro, 00120 Città del Vaticano

8:45 AM: Symposium Program begins

12:00 PM: Audience with Pope Francis

Afternoon Free



7:00 PM - 9:00 PM (19:00 - 21:00)

Prayer Vigil at the Basilica of St. Paul

Outside the Walls

Piazzale San Paolo, 1



Sunday, 15 October:

10:30 AM Celebration of the Eucharist at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls; Piazzale San Paolo, 1

Registration for the Symposium

Rome, 11 August 2017

To all the Visitors, Provincial Secretaries, and Superiors of the International Missions

Dear Confreres,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be always with us!

I am writing to you with regard to the Symposium that will take place in Rome (12-15 October). Every confrere, who wishes to participate in this event, should register or should be registered (by you or someone else) on the indicated website by 1 September 2017. If a letter of invitation is necessary in order to obtain a visa, those requests must also be sent by 1 September. NO EXCEPTIONS will be made with regard to this matter.

Please, as the one responsible for the province or the international mission, inform the confreres and the other members of the Vincentian Family, members of the Vincentian parishes, schools, and all those who might desire to participate in this event that they must register online by 1 September. If it is more convenient, one person, who is responsible for a specific group, can register all the members of said group. In that way, people who do not have access to the internet, but who wish to participate, can be registered.

With much joy, we hope to see you in October as we celebrate together the jubilee of the birth of our charism.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

Online Catalog

Rome, 5 September 2017

To all members of the Congregation of the Mission

My dear confreres,

On 21 November 2013, my predecessor, Gregory Gay, wrote to all members of the CM announcing the launch of the *Online Catalog* of the entire Congregation and provided instructions for its use.

Today, after four years, I realize that some confreres do not even know of the existence of this *Catalog* and that those who use it are less numerous than we would have hoped.

Therefore, I am now encouraging you to learn about and use this powerful tool that is designed for all of us. Our Secretary General wants to keep this *Catalog* up-to-date in real time. This, of course, depends on information that comes from the provinces.

To use the *Catalog*, go to the cmdb.cmglobal.org page, enter your User ID, which corresponds to your last name, followed by the first letter of your first name (for example, mine is mavrict) and then the password (which each confrere will choose personally by modifying the original one). In case you are having trouble or cannot remember your password, you can contact the Secretary General (secgen@cmglobal.org), who will assist you.

One last thing. Because the data in this *Catalog* is meant to be up-to-date and accurate, please communicate promptly to the General Secretariat all information about changes in ministries, new appointments, orders, deaths, etc.

For this reason, I ask each Visitor to entrust a person (who may be the provincial secretary or even a layperson or another confrere in his province) with the delicate and important task of helping those confreres who need assistance to access and use the *Catalog*, as well as sending regular updates and information from the province to the General Secretariat.

I thank everyone for his cooperation in the hope that we can all benefit from and be satisfied with this precious and useful tool.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, C.M.
Superior General

3

Special Interview

Msgr. Frans Schraven and His Companions

The Martyrdom of Seven Vincentians in China and Their Process of Beatification

Vincent Hermans

Secretary of the Msgr. Schraven Foundation The Netherlands



In Church history, China is also known for its many martyrs. Vincentians and Daughters of Charity are reminded of Saints John Gabriel Perboyre (1840) and Francis Regis Clet (1820), and of the Daughters of Charity who, in the city of Tientsin, were brutally murdered in 1870, accused of killing orphans and of making medicines from their eyes and hearts.

In the year 2000, 120 martyrs were canonized in Rome. However, not all martyrs are either canonized or beatified. In this article, I would like to put in the spotlight seven Vincentian martyrs, one Trappist, and one lay person, who, in 1937, were murdered in China: Msgr. Frans Schraven and his companions.

Why this special attention for them? In 2005, a little book appeared in China in which their deaths are remembered.

In the year of the 150th anniversary of the autonomy of the Chengtingfu Diocese (nowadays Zhengding) and the 25th year of his ordination as bishop, the underground bishop Msgr. Julius Jia, successor of Msgr. Schraven, ordered some research to document the passion and martyrdom of Msgr. Schraven and his companions and to make it known to the world. "It is a glorious page in the

history of our church, and an example for us shepherds ... Because we have received the Cross of our Faith from our ancestors, we have the responsibility to proclaim it, to keep it alive, and to pass it on to those who come after us.” In it, we read what knowledge people in Zhengding have of documentation and living memories about the martyrdom of Msgr. Schraven, the 8th Bishop of Zhengding, and his companions. It is a call to acknowledge the martyrs; without a trace of doubt, the motivations of the murder have been made known.

What happened?

In July 1937, China and Japan are at war. The Japanese move southward along the railway line. The Chinese dig trenches. Japanese planes make reconnaissance flights. Along the railway line, lays the Trappist monastery. The superior thinks that the city is safer because of it. The sick monks go there first. On 7 October, the city gates are closed for good because of the expected Japanese attack. The other Trappists can no longer come. That same day, the Japanese begin the attack. Heavy firing follows. The high old city walls (ten meters high) are bombed. At the residence of Msgr. Schraven, 3000 girls, women, children, and old people have sought refuge with the Daughters of Charity. Later, 814 shell hits are counted. Several buildings are partly destroyed and three people are killed instantly. On 8 October, the bombing continues. Again, many people flee to the residence, especially women. They now number 5000-10,000. All rooms and corridors are filled completely with people, packed like sardines in a tin box. The women’s section of the mission looks like a security zone.

On Saturday, 9 October, all is quiet. The Chinese army has left the city and the Japanese move in. A new flood of refugees, including non-Christians, climbs over the walls and the roofs into the residence and takes shelter around the cathedral. The Japanese high command surrenders the city for eight days to the discretion of the Japanese army: robbery, ransacking, destruction, rape, and murder of all men, because they could be soldiers dressed as civilians. It is the reward for their actions.

All day soldiers enter over the walls, the roofs, and through the gates to plunder the mission and to steal the possessions of the refugees. Japanese officers come to inspect and have notices posted everywhere with a prohibition, but without effect. In the afternoon, Japanese officers and appointed Chinese city officials come to inspect the whole mission and they behave correctly.

The abduction

At about 5 o'clock in the evening, a gang of about ten persons forces the gatekeeper to open the main gate to the residence for them. They want to go to the sisters of Saint Joseph and seem to be looking for European women. The French superior, Charny, and the French bursar, Bertrand, are warned, but, on the way there, they are imprisoned in the gatehouse by a few Japanese soldiers. At 7 o'clock, Msgr. Schraven and all the priests, brothers, and guests gather in the refectory for dinner. The gang forces its way into the refectory. Everybody must stand up and remain motionless. They handcuffed Msgr. Schraven and blindfolded him. The Slovak former navy officer, Biskupic, wants to protect the bishop, but is immediately caught. Then follow the other six European missionaries. The Chinese priests watch what happens as if paralyzed. They remain untouched. With a rope around the neck and between the legs, the prisoners are taken outside. The kidnappers ask where the European women can be found. Four men with a Chinese priest at gunpoint go to the gate of the Daughters of Charity and knock with quite a racket. The courageous sister at the gate refuses to open the gate even when threatened. Then the nine European prisoners are taken outside the mission where a truck is waiting for them. That same evening the Japanese army, according to custom, burns the bodies of all the killed Japanese soldiers not far from the centuries old Buddhist pagoda.

After the disappearance

The Japanese prevent, in every possible way, anyone who wants to let the world know what has happened. The Mission is in shock,

the sisters are terrified that they too will be taken. The care for the thousands of women keeps them going. Brave people warn others at their own risk in very dangerous circumstances and a few of them manage to reach Beijing. Two weeks later the disappearance has become world news. After a month, a one-eyed Chinese orphan finds the cap of Father Ceska. Other personal belongings are found in three places. Little by little, it has become clear to everybody what happened after the disappearance. Msgr. Schraven and his companions had been taken to the old pagoda and locked up there. At about 11 pm, they are taken outside. Hands and feet are bound with metal wire. Eventually, they are all doused with petroleum and set on fire. Msgr. is the last one. He cried out: "Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!"

At that point, the Japanese authorities can no longer plead ignorance and an investigation commission is put in place. The Japanese commander, Yokoyama, acknowledges that the responsibility for these murders rests with the Japanese army. However, he makes the French Vincentian, Father Chanet, who had come to Chengtingfu after the disappearance, promise to be slow in reporting the news and not to blame the Japanese army. Then the negotiations start about preventing such incidents, about compensation and apologies.

On 22 November, a memorial service is held on the local level at the request of Commander Yokoyama, in the presence of the Japanese high command. The cathedral is decorated with Japanese banners; a telegram of condolence from the commander-in-chief of the Japanese army is read out in Chinese. The huge number of people in the cathedral, both Christians and others, is surprised at this show of honour. The refugees come to express "their gratitude to the victims who had given their lives for them." A monument is paid and erected by the Japanese army as compensation for the massacre.

The negotiations reach an ever more political level, at which the relative interests of Japan, France, the Vatican, and Holland come into conflict. This leads to confused reporting in the press about who

are the culprits. The Japanese point to the Chinese. Japan wins the battle about the reporting. But this uncertainty hangs around, not so much in China as in Europe, more so because of the lack of clarity about the perpetrators, and, therefore, about the motive. For a long time the Trappists have tried their utmost to find out, little by little, what was “the course of events.” The decapitation of the vicariate, the fragmentation of the nationalities of the remaining Europeans, the Japanese censure (no mail with delicate questions in detail), the warlike situation in China with Japan, and, at the same time, their own civil war, lead to the loss of bits of information.

Also in Europe, war has begun. On both sides of the globe, everybody is trying to survive. For years, China is isolated, but the memorial monument for Msgr. Schraven and his companions, with a text in Latin and Chinese, survives the times in China in a wonderful way!

What was the motive?

The uncertainty about the culprits led to lots of speculation in European newspapers and magazines about the motives. We found 16 in lots of archives throughout Europe.

In the Dutch embassy in Beijing, a Swedish parson made a declaration. He said that on the day of the murder, Japanese soldiers asked for women at the mission. The answer they received was, “You can take what you want, but we will never hand over women.” The Austrian Brother Friederich wrote to Father Ceska’s brother that the Japanese, on seeing the memorial monument, said that if they had handed over 200 women, the Europeans would not have been murdered. In 1947, during the internment of European missionaries, a Chinese said that he was an interpreter in the Japanese army and witnessed the murder. They were murdered because Msgr. Schraven refused the request for women. He even said, “You can kill me if you want, but giving you what you want . . . that never!” The Japanese spoke threatening words and left in great anger.

Only in 2008, were we able to read a translation of the little Chinese book from 2005 about Msgr. Schraven, the predecessor of Msgr. Julius Jia. In China, there is no doubt about the motive. “The Japanese demanded 200 women to satisfy the lust of the soldiers. The bishop said categorically no. The Japanese army was irritated and committed this monstrous crime. Msgr. Schraven and his companion martyrs continued to protect the flock of sheep that had been entrusted to them. A good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. In our hearts, they will always be remembered as good shepherds.”

In the Secret Archive of the Pope in Rome, a letter was found, written by the Japanese Commander Yokoyama. He writes to the Apostolic Delegate in Beijing after the massacre: ‘They became martyrs of their missionary zeal’ and also: ‘They are true witnesses of Christian charity’. This commander was a Catholic himself and must have known the significance of the word ‘martyr’. Most probably this is all he could say about the motive because of political reasons.

Beatification

In the little book of Msgr. Julius Jia, an appeal is made three times to have the martyrs beatified. His request to raise Schraven and his companions to beatification has awakened us. During our visit to China, they asked us, “Why has that not happened yet?” The present situation in China does not allow them to undertake such an initiative. Most of the information too is only to be found in Europe. In 2013, the preparation for this declaration of beatification was set in motion by the Province of the Dutch Vincentians. On behalf of the Chinese bishop Msgr. Julius Jia, the Dutch Bishop of Roermond opened the Diocesan Tribunal in March 2013 and closed it in January 2014. A file of 1860 pages has been sent to Rome.

Msgr. Schraven and companions, who were they?

“Msgr. Schraven and his companions are my example,” says Msgr. Jia. A motive not to give up. Who were those missionaries

who made such an impression, that they are a source of inspiration not to give up?

- 1) *Msgr. Frans Schraven*, 64, a Dutchman who joined the French Province of the Vincentians in Paris in 1894. After his ordination in 1899 and arrival in China, he was appointed to the Vicariate of Chengtingfu, which was entrusted to the international community of Vincentians, 260 km. south of Beijing. After 5 years of missionary work, he sadly had to take on office duties. Between 1908 and 1920, he was appointed to the procures in Shanghai, Tientsin, and again Shanghai. He returned to Chengtingfu. He was ordained bishop in April 1921 by his own cousin, Msgr. Frans Geurts, CM.
- 2) *Thomas Ceska*, 65, entered the Congregation in Graz, Austria and arrived in Chengtingfu a year ahead of Schraven. He was director of the mission, pastor of the region around Chengtingfu, substitute of the superior in the bishop's house.
- 3) *Lucien Charny*, 55, French, born in Melun, superior and pastor of the cathedral.
- 4) *Eugène Bertrand*, 32, French, born in Aurillac, procurator.
- 5) *Gerard Wouters*, 28, Dutch. Teacher of Greek, Latin, and music at the minor seminary, 5 km outside of Chengtingfu.
- 6) *Antoon Geerts*, 62, Dutch, lay brother. He belonged to the Vicariate of Yungpingfu/Lulong. Msgr. Schraven had asked him to paint the inside of the cathedral. The cathedral had just been finished.
- 7) *Ladislaus Prinz*, 28, Polish lay brother. He went to the Vicariate of Shuntefu, separated from the Vicariate of Msgr. Schraven and entrusted to the Polish Vincentians. Brother Prinz lived in Chengtingfu in order to learn the trade of wine grower.

- 8) *Emmanuel Robial*, 52, French, monk of the nearby Trappist monastery, Notre Dame de Liesse, for which Msgr. Schraven had donated land in 1925 and helped in preparing the foundation.
- 9) *Antoon Biskupic*, 51, Slovak layman. By trade, he was a mechanic and an organ repairman. Born in Bratislava, he had come to China as a non-commissioned officer of the Austrian fleet, which was defeated by the Japanese fleet. After that, he stayed to live in China.

What is the harvest of the blood of martyrs ?

After the murder of the European leadership the mission of Msgr. Schraven was rudderless. The plunder continued. There was nobody to whom a complaint could be addressed. The Japanese soldiers could have taken all the women they wanted. It was a wonder that this did not happen. Not one of the women was touched.

After the massacre in 1937 in Zhending a flood of conversions followed.

The deaths of these martyrs had been influential in the course of events in the war in China. Quite a large political row ensued between Japan and the countries of the victims. France demanded from Japan that no more westerners would be murdered. Japan took the necessary measures. General Tani, responsible for the bloodbath in Zhengding, is transferred with his troops to Nanjing, the then capital of China. The following December the Japanese troops conquered the capital Nanjing. Twenty westerners tried to protect the poor Chinese in an unrecognized safety zone against 200,000 soldiers who behaved like beasts. The Chinese guess the number of victims to be 300,000. The westerners often asked themselves: why do they not shoot us? The westerners saw the guns of soliders committing rape pointed at them, because they had bothered these soldiers. All members of the Japanese army had previously been strictly ordered not to kill westerners anymore.

The now deceased patriotic successor of Msgr. Schraven, Msgr. Jia, said in 2009 that the faithful pray at the tomb of the martyrs, at the memorial monument, and at the place where these martyrs had been murdered. The bishop spoke of plans of building a new cathedral in the city of Shijiazhuang. Included in that plan is a new monument in memory of the nine martyrs. In China the sisters are still saying that they had died for them, the women. The Chinese successor Msgr. Jia made the choice to take Msgr. Schraven as an example, when he adopted, against the official regulations, about one hundred handicapped female babies, even if that would lead to complications. It was his deep conviction that: 'We too ought to give our lives for our brothers and sisters'.

The example of the martyrs inspires people even now. 'Bishop Schraven is alive even after his death' is a remark recently heard from people. The example of these martyrs continues to give a deep impression also in our own time. The martyrs are praised for their standing choice to protect people in danger. They did it inspired by their belief, even if suffering or the loss of their own life was at risk. Witnesses in China emphasize their example during their own persecution: 'We were persecuted, but we did not lose our faith, because we received our faith from these martyrs. They encourage us to keep our faith and to hold on'.

People emphasize the fact that these martyrs stood up for women and guarded women from sexual abuse. The behavior of these martyrs was a great help for those women who came to the Daughters of Charity seeking protection. The life of these martyrs in Jesus Christ is manifested in their behavior and witness and becomes a signpost in our time. Their story has a healing outcome for people. These martyrs are an inspiration for all who often face despair with courage in the fight for the dignity of women and also stand up against criminal exploitation of asylum seekers and migrant workers. During their visit to the Vatican one of the Dutch bishops pleaded at the Congregation for the Saints in Rome to make Msgr. Schraven and companions 'patron saints' for people protecting women and girls against sexual abuse.

Someone from China says: ‘These martyrs will continue their mission after the beatification: these men are heroes and protectors of the Chinese people and are not imperialists and exploiters of the Chinese people, as the Chinese government still teaches us. These martyrs force China to revise its history of the Catholic Church in the past and may influence the contact between the Vatican and China in a positive way. Msgr. Schraven and companions were not killed by Chinese but Japanese soldiers. When China hears of this wonderful story, also non-Catholics will get to know Christ and will praise these martyrs. Their beatification will be an enormous impetus for the missionary activity in China’.

How the witness of these martyrs touches the heart of people is shown by activities in Europe and China.

In 2017 a Foundation was established with the aim of continuing the purpose for which Msgr. Schraven and his companions died; namely, the prevention of sexual abuse. The foundation has received a first request to enable the development of a course project to make women independent in China.

A second initiative in this field is the memorial chapel in the village of Broekhuizen vorst where Msgr. Schraven grew up. Victims of sexual abuse too need a place for their sorrow, anger, a place for complaint, consolation, and perhaps encouragement.

The Foundation has its own website in various languages. Every quarter, a newsletter appears. Several persons research archives in a number of countries. A comic book has been made about the life of Msgr. Schraven and his companions in China, and about the story of their deaths. It has appeared in various languages. Each year, on the day of their deaths, 9 October, a memorial activity is organized.

In this way, Bishop Schraven and his companions will live in memory in both Europe and China and are a source of inspiration for people nowadays.

For more information see: www.mgrschraven.nl

4

Of Current Interest

Vincentian Family Global Initiative on Homelessness



Mark McGreevy

Group Chief Executive of Depaul International

May 2017

Introduction

The year 2017 marks the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism. In particular, we refer to the story of the poor and ailing family in the parish of Châtillon and Vincent's realization that for charity to be effective for this family, and for others, it must be properly organized - "it is not enough to do good, we must do it well."

At the time of writing, Vincent would have had no idea how such a simple idea would grow into an international movement incorporating many different religious and lay organizations who claim Vincent as their founder and the organization of charity as their mission. Nor would Vincent have guessed at the size and scale of the works of charity currently being undertaken by the Vincentian Family globally, serving millions of the world's "poorest of the poor." Of those served by the Vincentian Family, many fall into the broader definition of being homeless – whether physically living on the streets or in shelters, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, or those living in temporary settlements such as slums or favelas. In its most recent report on the issue, the UN Settlements Agency estimates that over 1.2 billion of the 7 billion people on this

planet are homeless in one form or other and that this will grow as a result of conflict, natural disaster, and urbanization.

The attached proposed project plan was commissioned by the Heads of the Vincentian Family at their annual gathering in January 2017. It proposes that Depaul International will manage, on behalf of the global Vincentian Family, a joint project focusing on addressing “homelessness in its many guises” as the worldwide, unifying theme to celebrate our shared 400th Anniversary. In summary, the aim of this initiative would be:

- to make a real and sustainable difference to the lives of thousands of homeless people globally
- to build a strong network between Vincentian groups working across the broad spectrum of homelessness
- to support and develop existing and emerging leaders
- to share best practice across agencies
- to encourage the growth of new services and, reflecting on our collective Vincentian experiences,
- to lobby for structural change in support of homeless people at a national, regional, and global level
- to develop and make available formation materials in support of this initiative with respect to Vincentian spirituality.

Background

With some (notable) exceptions, the different branches of the Vincentian Family have often planned and managed their charitable activities in isolation from each other, along the lines of either their own particular specialisms (e.g., education, health, social work, advocacy), or their more generic mission to serve the poor (SVP), or because of their geographical or political isolation. To date, this has been an effective and pragmatic approach to the Vincentian emphasis on “action rather than words” and the need for accountable management and local ownership. However, as the world has become smaller and more connected, the Vincentian world is changing. In

particular, over the last 20 years, we have seen the evolution of two concepts within the Vincentian Family – Collaboration and Systemic Change.

Collaboration within the Vincentian Family is not an entirely new concept. It was the default management model from the very birth of the charism. The close partnership between the CMs, Daughters of Charity, and Ladies of Charity clearly allowed the early Vincentian movement to maximize the impact it had collectively for the poor at a local, national, and international level. Today, collaboration is fueled in part by the growing pace of globalization in all sectors and by technological advances that make the communication of ideas and ideologies much simpler and straightforward. Likeminded people are grouping together everywhere. In part, this coming together of the Vincentian Family is also being encouraged by a conscious or sub-conscious realization of the critical need to plan for a new future, given patterns of growth and decline of the Family in different parts of the world. More recently, academics at Stanford University have called this the ability of movements, such as the Vincentian Family, to have a collective impact.

Systemic change is at the heart of what Frédéric Ozanam hoped the Vincentian Family might deliver: the ability not just to provide charity to those most in need, but also to advocate for justice by analyzing why people need our help and working with them to change the systems that trap them in poverty. This process implies the direct involvement of people living in poverty for a better understanding and solution to the problems. This collaboration with the poor will be central to the working of this new initiative. The programs instituted by the Vincentian Family Commission on Systemic Change have built great capacity and understanding in this area.

The outstanding issue for the Vincentian Family is, having encouraged this appetite and capacity for collaboration and having

invested in training on systemic change, how will we use it? How will we manage it? How can we balance the subsidiarity of our own branch or our organizational needs and mission with the solidarity that comes with being part of the Vincentian Family?

Project Proposal

The Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH), as a Vincentian Partnership between DePaul University and Depaul International, recently worked with experts from the worlds of academia, service delivery, policy, and advocacy to develop the first-ever global definition of homelessness, which has been acknowledged by the UN. It defines homelessness under three broad headings:

- (1) People without accommodation; e.g., street sleepers.
- (2) People living in temporary accommodation; e.g., refugee camps or internally displaced people.
- (3) People living in inadequate/insecure accommodation; e.g., slums and favelas, bed and breakfast, hostels.

Whilst we have no collective statistics to verify the level of Vincentian engagement in these areas of homelessness, anecdotally the Vincentian Family is known to be one of the biggest global providers of services to these differing groups, who represent some of the poorest and most disenfranchised people in the world.

As was said in the introduction, this paper proposes that the Vincentian Family might focus on addressing “homelessness in its many guises” as the global, unifying theme to celebrate our shared 400th Anniversary. In summary, the aim of this initiative would be: to build a strong network among Vincentian groups working across the broad area of homelessness; to support and develop existing and emerging leaders; to share best practice across agencies; to encourage the growth of new services; and, reflecting on our collective Vincentian experiences, to lobby for structural change in support of homeless people at a national, regional, and global level. This thematic flows naturally out of the 2017 agreed goal of

the Vincentian Family to collaborate around the idea of “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” It is envisaged that this three-year pilot would extend into a commitment up until 2030 in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in which the European Union is playing a leading role.

Project Plan

The attached project plan covers seven areas:

- Using Measurement and Data
- Planning Together
- Building Global Capacity
- Institute of Global Homelessness
- Encouraging Structural Change
- Communicating Progress
- Formation.

Budget

The budget cost for this project is USD \$550,000. It is a little over our initial estimate of \$500,000, but, having dropped into the detail, we believe this will deliver the project to the quality desired. It is envisaged that part of the core money will come from the Global Vincentian Family itself and part will come from other donations. Separate fundraising will be required for new works resulting from this initiative.

Other Issues to Consider

At the meeting of the Heads of the Vincentian Family, I was asked to address the following questions and concerns.

What is the envisaged length of time for this project? Three-five years or until 2030?

The proposed project plan is for three years at which time a review will take place by the Heads of the Vincentian Family. However, for an initiative of this kind to be effective it must take a long-term view as has been proven by the example of the Jesuit Refugee Service. With that in mind, it is recommended that the project (if the pilot proves successful) run until 2030, at the earliest, in sync with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The project must be faith based and Vincentian Values must be evident.

The central pillar of Vincentian collaboration is our shared spirituality and values. This will permeate every strategy but section seven of the project plan deals specifically with Formation. We will develop and make available spiritual-formation materials linked to this initiative.

Section 4.3 of the project plan talks about the Symposium on Street Homelessness and Catholic Social Teaching to be held at the Vatican, 30 November – 1 December, at which Pope Francis will present some thoughts on this area. The resulting Catholic Social Teaching will provide a useful framework for a faith response to homelessness in its many forms.

It must have a direct impact on the poor.

Clearly, the initiative will have failed if it does not increase the capacity of the Vincentian Family in addressing homelessness. The plan outlines a process leading to significant change for thousands of homeless people globally through careful mapping, planning, and then action. By the end of 2018, we should be in a position to specify particular output, outcome, and impact measures allowing heads of the Vincentian Family to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative.

Governance? What is the role of the VFEC? What is the relationship of this project to other commissions within VFEC? What is the relationship to Depaul International?

The project will be managed by Depaul International and, like any other externally funded project, it will be subject to scrutiny through quarterly reports to the Depaul International Board. However, it will also be accountable to a separate commission of VFEC (the Famvin Homeless Alliance Commission) made up of members from across the Vincentian Family nominated according to their experience in ministry with one or two independent specialists. This Commission will meet four times a year – twice face to face and twice virtually. As well as reviewing progress, the commission will also help with ongoing planning and tackling any issues as they arise. The commission will report through VFEC directly to the Heads of the Vincentian Family at their annual meeting. Any changes to the agreed strategy or budget would need to be approved by both the commission and the VFEC.

With regard to the relationship of the Famvin Homeless Alliance Commission to other commissions within VFEC, we intend to work closely and ensure integrated work plans where appropriate – this is particularly the case with the Systemic Change Commission. Shared objectives and specific actions will be defined as dialogue develops.

What are the fundraising expectations?

As Depaul International is being commissioned by the Vincentian Family to manage this project, it will have no responsibility to raise the \$550,000 core funding for this project. However, it will assist groups with developing fundraising strategies for particular projects that might stem from this initiative. For example, funding for the Symposium on Street Homelessness and Catholic Social Teaching at the Vatican already has been covered entirely by the IGH as part of DePaul University alongside the other Vincentian Universities in the USA plus one global foundation.

Next Steps

After discussion and amendments, the project plan and budget were approved by the Vincentian Family Executive Committee in May 2017.

At the beginning of June, the papers will be circulated to the heads of the Vincentian Family and the Vincentian Family in general. A formal announcement of this initiative will be made at the EU Parliament event on 28 June 2017 and the launch date itself will be 14 October, during the Vincentian Family Symposium in Rome.

Homeless Alliance

Rome, 1 June 2017

Dear Heads of the Branches of the Vincentian Family

May the grace and peace of Jesus be always with us!

As announced in previous communications, the Vincentian Family Executive Committee is inviting all branches and members of the Vincentian Family to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the Charism with multiple initiatives under the theme “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Beyond this year 2017, we are called to address the cry of the people facing homelessness by working more efficiently towards ending homelessness in the world and this includes caring for refugees, migrants, street people, displaced persons, slum dwellers, etc. For this reason, on 28 June 2017, the Worldwide Vincentian Family will formally announce this Global Initiative on Homelessness at the European Union Parliament.

You will find attached the Cover Paper and the Project Plan of the FamVin Homeless Alliance. We kindly ask you to share these documents with your leadership and all your members.

As we begin this project, please let us know (if you have not done so already) if your congregation/association would like to work with us on it. It would also be very helpful to know what you may be doing already in this area. Please send your information to homeless@famvin.org.

If you have any questions regarding the FamVin Homeless Alliance, you can contact Mark McGreevy, Depaul International GCEO, directly at mark.mcgreevy@depaulinternational.org. To join the FamVin Homeless Alliance mailing list, send an email to homeless@famvin.org.

As you will see by reading the attached documents, the FamVin Homeless Alliance is a unique opportunity for the Vincentian Family to address this issue from a global perspective, in collaboration with many stakeholders within and beyond the Family, and to contribute in many ways to the end of homelessness. May the Lord bless us as we continue to live out our charism in the 21st century.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

Vincentian Family Global Initiative on Homelessness Project Plan

Our vision: is that everyone has a place to call home and a stake in their community.

Our Project Aims

- To make a real and sustainable difference to the lives of thousands of homeless people;
- To connect Vincentians working across the broad spectrum of homelessness;
- To support and develop existing and emerging leaders;
- To share best practice and research;
- To encourage and support the growth of new and innovative services;
- To support lobbying at a local, regional and global level in support of homelessness;
- To develop and make available formation materials in support of this initiative with respect to spirituality.

Our Strategies

	2017	2018	2019
<p>(1) Using Measurement & Data</p> <p>(1.1) Create a global map and database of existing Vincentian projects working in homelessness in order to analyze current investment in this area and to plan future outcome and impact measurements for the initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning April 1st, we will work in collaboration with the VFO (Vincentian Family Office) in Philadelphia to proactively survey and map existing Vincentian projects in the larger organizations/religious orders working in the area of homelessness. Building on the existing database of the VF Office, add information relating to homelessness and build in a functionality to deliver reports around key performance indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In January, presentation of preliminary map to Heads of Vincentian Family at their Annual Meeting. Extend mapping survey to smaller organizations/ religious orders within the Vincentian Family. Continue to update database. Using the baseline information from mapping and the database produce first proposal on outcome and impact measurement for the Initiative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve outcome and impact measurements at January Annual Heads of Vincentian Family meeting. Complete mapping and database exercise and continue to update changes as appropriate. Map and updates to be reported annually to the Heads of Vincentian Family. Develop presentational materials for Heads of the Vincentian Family with key statistics.
<p>(1.2) Develop and update a global contacts list</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with the VFO in Philadelphia, develop a contact list of key stakeholders in homelessness within the Vincentian Family for ongoing communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and update the contact list. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and update the contact list.

	2017	2018	2019
<p>(2) Planning together</p> <p>(2.1) Host an International conference for Vincentians working in homelessness to build networks, share best practice and consult them in developing a work plan in the areas of street homelessness, refugees and slum dwellers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In consultation with existing providers of homeless services in the Vincentian Family, draft a proposed conference program. • Draw up a preliminary guest list. • Investigate venues and timing for the conference and on outline budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present conference proposal to the Heads of the Vincentian Family at January meeting for amendment and approval. • Hold the conference in the second half of 2018. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of conference and proposed work plans in areas of street homelessness, refugees and slum dwellers presented to the heads of Vincentian Family at their January meeting.
<p>((2.2) Select a Commission of thought leaders in homelessness from the Vincentian Family to oversee and advise on the project reporting to the Annual Heads of Vincentian Family meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In consultation with the VF Office and the Heads of the Vincentian Family, agree to appoint Vincentian Family members to Commission. • Develop terms of reference for the Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a visual diagram and a list of shared objectives that indicate the relationships among the different stakeholders within the VF. • Submit quarterly report for comments and challenge and coordinate the Commission's virtual meetings. • Arrange two meetings annually with papers in advance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit quarterly report for comments and challenge and coordinate the Commission's virtual meetings. • Arrange two meetings annually with papers in advance. • Review membership and make changes as appropriate.

(3) Build Global Capacity	2017	2018	2019
<p>(3.1) Appoint Project Development Manager to oversee this initiative within DePaul International and realign existing roles in support of this project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yasmine Cajuste will be appointed on a three-year consultancy contract from 1st April 2017. • Develop a new organizational structure for DePaul International in order to deliver this project effective 28 June 2017 (see appendix attached to this document). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint Communications Manager and agree on work plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review structure and make changes as appropriate.
<p>(3.2) Produce a short film in multiple translation showcasing best practice of the Vincentian Family in the different areas of homelessness linked to an online toolkit and consultancy service encouraging groups to develop new services at an international, regional, national or local level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on proposal with DePaul Film School to produce and direct the film. • Agree on storyboard with the Commission • Develop a proposal for the online toolkit and consultancy services in support of the film upon release. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take forward the proposals on the film, toolkit and consultancy services to the Annual Heads of the Vincentian Family meeting in January for comment and approval. • Film Completed by June 2018 and launched at the planned conference (see 2.1). • Initial toolkit for practitioners available online at a link to both DPI and VF websites by September 2018. • Consultancy services beginning to be delivered in last quarter of 2018. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review effectiveness of the film. • Continue to add to the online toolkit. • Consider and respond to requests for consultancy.

	2017	2018	2019
<p>(3) Build Global Capacity</p> <p>(3.3) Organize and host a series of strategic planning conferences regionally and nationally and assist local family members to develop their own local plan to respond to homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategic planning model for a two-day workshop with regional/national gatherings of the Vincentian Family. • Agree on potential countries where the workshop might be piloted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on strategic planning model and one pilot country at Annual Meeting of the Heads of the Vincentian Family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review pilot and refine model. • With agreement of Vincentian Family, agree 3-5 Strategic planning conferences annually.
<p>(3.4) In consultation with leaders of the Global Vincentian Family, agree on a protocol and delivery mechanism as to how the Vincentian Family might respond to global humanitarian crises with a particular focus on the provision of shelter and primary services such as health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft a protocol on how the Vincentian Family might respond to humanitarian crisis in a coordinated manner globally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the protocol at the Annual Meeting of the heads of the Vincentian Family for comment and decision. • If approved, develop a work plan for more integrated approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to work plan and deliver on the actions agreed.

	2017	2018	2019
<p>(4) Institute of Global Homelessness</p> <p>(4.1) Align the resources of the Institute of Global Homelessness to serve this Vincentian Family initiative in providing training for emerging and existing leaders, giving access to the planned Online Homelessness Hub (of research and best practice), and invitations to issue based (e.g. advocacy or fundraising) and/or geographically focused symposiums.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend an invitation to emerging leaders within the Vincentian Family to attend the emerging leaders program held annually at DePaul University. Invite established leaders in homelessness within the Vincentian Family to the IGH bi-annual conference sharing best practice and ideas. Invitations to Vincentian Family members to locally based events in countries where the IGH is working. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the IGH Online Homelessness Hub sharing up to date research and best practice translated into the principal world languages. See previous column. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See previous columns.
<p>(4.2) Invite the Vincentian Family members in cities which are part of the IGH 150 cities campaign to play their part in ending homelessness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with the Vincentian Family in the initial 10 pilot cities (e.g. Adelaide) to discuss what part they might play in helping to end homelessness in their cities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help to develop an action plan for the VF in those cities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the involvement of the VF in advance of the next 25 cities being announced.

<p>(4) Institute of Global Homelessness</p> <p>(4.3) Plan and deliver a Symposium on Street Homelessness and Catholic Social Teaching at the Vatican to promote debate and action within faith groups and beyond.</p>	<p>2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In November, the IGH along with DePaul University and the other Vincentian Universities globally will host and finance a Symposium on "Street Homelessness and Catholic Social Teaching" at the Vatican. This is being highlighted as a celebration of the 400th Year of the Charism and as one of the launching pads for the initiative. Members of the Vincentian Family will contribute papers as will Pope Francis. 	<p>2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish the papers from the conference with potential for either an encyclical or a world peace day message. Disseminate the key conclusions through a media campaign both to church institutions and a wider audience e.g. UN, EU. 	<p>2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to follow through to ensure action results e.g. conferences, keynote speeches at events.
---	--	---	--

	2017	2018	2019
<p>(5) Encouraging Structural Change</p> <p>(5.1) Assist in the hosting of an event at the EU to officially announce the homeless initiative and begin to develop lobbying and funding capacity in this forum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in announcing the initiative at an event for the Vincentian family at EU Parliament on 28th June. Establish ongoing contacts with the European Union Parliament/Commission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to meet and lobby at the EU on behalf of homelessness and in particular for more resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See previous column.
<p>(5.2) In consultation with the existing Vincentian Family delegations at the UN, agree to a work plan in the area of global homelessness linked to concrete outcomes (e.g. a measurement of street homelessness as part of the Sustainable Development Goals)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary meeting with the Vincentian Family delegations at the UN in New York in early June agree to a protocol to work together. Produce a work plan for agreement by the Heads of Vincentian Family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate plan for approval to Heads of Vincentian Family at their Annual Meeting. Put the plan into action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to deliver action plan. Review the collaboration agreement.

(6) Communicating Progress	2017	2018	2019
(6.1) Appoint a Communications Manager and develop a strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop role for a Communications Manager. • Agree on a draft strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint Fill the position. • Fine tune the strategy. • Deliver action plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to deliver action plan.
(6.2) Create a portal within Depaul International and FamVin website as the focal point for the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult as to best way to display webpages in translation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve plan at Heads of Vincentian Family annual meeting. • Develop site and populate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop and review.
(6.3) Produce a twice-yearly newsletter and annual report for leaders of the Vincentian Family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to launch materials for 400th Anniversary Vincentian gathering in Rome at end of October. • Agree on format and content for a Christmas newsletter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish twice-yearly newsletter drawing stories from across the Vincentian Family. • Publish annual report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See previous column.
(6.4) Produce publicity materials for members of the Vincentian Family to promote initiative within their forums.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce initial launch materials (see 6.3 above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a short annual power point presentation with supporting text for Vincentian Family leaders to download and inform members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See previous column.

(7) Formation	2017	2018	2019
(7.1) Develop and make available spiritual formation materials in support of this initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a work plan for discussion by the Vincentian Family Commission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and circulate formation materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and adapt as necessary.
(7.2) Develop and circulate project training materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a work plan for discussion by the Vincentian Family Commission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and circulate training materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue circulation of training materials and review feedback and adapt.

5

Theme: The Vincentian Jubilee Year, 400 Years of the Charism

Two Genes of the Four-Hundred Year Old Charism

By: Rolando Gutiérrez, CM
Vice-Province of Costa Rica

Luigi Mezzadri, CM, begins his biography of Vincent de Paul with the following affirmation: *[Vincent] did not invent charity, but he discovered it within the Church and placed it at the top of the list of the world's concerns.*¹ In reality, we cannot understand the Vincentian charism apart from its roots in the Church and, therefore, apart from the spirituality that brought about its birth in the 17th century and that has enriched its development during the past four centuries. As we have become further removed from those historical events, we run the risk of making subjective interpretations about the Vincentian charism² (with some more or less clear ideas), but nonetheless, always with the potential danger of utilizing superficial knowledge to speak about that which identifies us as Vincentian missionaries and that which makes us distinct with regard to other charisms that might appear to be similar to our own. Therefore, during this time of jubilee, it would be good for us to take the time to reflect on a hermeneutical approach that would enable us to focus

¹ Luigi Mezzadri, *Vincenzo de' Paoli. Il Santo della Carità*, Roma 2009, p. 7.

² *With some commendable exceptions, they [researchers] sometimes demonstrate great neglect for the hermeneutic problem. Is this the result of carelessness, ignorance, or fraudulent concealment, given the difficulties in determining the exact criteria for interpretation?* cf. Père Giuseppe Toscani, *La Mystique des Pauvres*. Versailles, 1998.

on the DNA of the charism³ and the vocation that originated in Folleville and that, four hundred years later, continues to be vital to the life of the Church.

With no pretension of being a profound study of the first chapter of our history, we will attempt to draw closer to the DNA of the *mystic of action* through identifying the *two genes* that have their origin in the manner in which Vincent approached the mysteries of faith, mysteries that led him to embrace the mission that God called him to undertake, a mission in which his followers participate.

The first gene: the soteriological emphasis of Vincentian Christology

From the time of 1618, Vincent began to distance himself from Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629) and at the same time established a closer relationship with his new spiritual teacher, André Duval, a professor at the Sorbonne. The element that distinguished Vincent's thinking from the abstract theology of Bérulle was his Christological perspective. Bérulle, one of the leaders of the French School of spirituality, was grounded in the mystical tradition that sought perfection through contemplation of the mysteries of the faith. Vincent de Paul was not afraid of contemplation, quite the contrary. Here we recall Vincent's desire to see his followers as authentic *apostles* when outside the house and, at the same time, Carthusians *who work most earnestly at their interior holiness* (CCD:XII:384).⁴

³ The six hermeneutical criteria proposed by Father Toscani continue to challenge all Vincentian researchers/scholars, criteria such as the following: unity in the whole, rigorous attention to the concepts that Vincent utilized, defining the context, study of the Company, study of Vincent's love for the poor, study of Vincent's mystical inspiration; cf. Toscani, *ibid.*, p. 35-41.

⁴ CCD:XII:384 refers to: *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 XII, p. 384; future references to this work will be inserted into the text using the initials [CCD] followed by the volume number, then the page number.

There is no doubt that Vincent offered a new perspective and did not feel bound by the vision and concepts of his former teacher. *Vincent viewed the Bérullian language as “quite artificial” and could not comprehend how one could work with purity of intention by simply being attentive to the gaze of God. Vincent viewed purity of intention as intimately related to doing God’s will and to obedience. Because of his own physiological make-up and his peasant roots, Vincent mistrusted “desires” and “gazes” that were not translated into action.*⁵

It was this new understanding that gave origin to the Christ-centered spirituality of Vincent de Paul. The unique Christ, the face of the Father’s mercy (*Misericordiae Vultus*, #1), had been the focus of various spiritual masters. In Vincent’s case, the emphasis was placed on the missionary Christ,⁶ the one sent by the Father to fulfill his will: *My food is to do the will of the one who sent me* (John 4:34).

Vincent de Paul discovered Christ by listening to the same voice that knocked Saul,⁷ the persecutor of Christians, from his horse, that caused him to become blind, and that ultimately transformed him into Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. Vincent also had a plan that he

⁵ Antonio Orcajo and Miguel Pérez Flores, *San Vicente de Paul II: Espiritualidad y Selección de Escritos* [Vincent de Paul II: Spirituality and Selected Writings], Madrid, 1984, p.101-102.

⁶ The threefold mission of the Missionary Christ: creative, salvific, and glorifying; cf. Orcajo and Pérez Flores, *ibid.*, 96-164.

⁷ Vincent was devoted to the patron of the Gentiles: *[Vincent] loved and venerated Saint Paul, the master and teacher of the Gentiles, who had worked harder than anyone else. Since he bore his name, he also strove to imitate his virtues*; cf. Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God, Vincent de Paul: Founder and First Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission*, 3 vols., edited by John E. Rybolt, CM, translated by William Quinn, FSC, notes by Edward R. Udovic, CM, and John E. Rybolt, CM, introduction by Stafford Poole, CM, New City Press, New Rochelle, New York, 1993, III:94. Future references to this work will be inserted into the text, for example Abelly, III:94.

pursued⁸ and he had to confront situations of calumny (Abelly I:50-51) and captivity (CCD:I:1-11). Furthermore, Vincent experienced those “dark nights of the soul” during which he had no understanding of God’s will for him (CCD:XI:26-27). But there came a time when Vincent clearly heard the call that Christ, the missionary, was extending to him and his followers, a call to participate in Christ’s own mission, namely, the mission *to evangelize the poor* (CCD:XI:162-164).

We should not be surprised, then, by the words that Vincent chose as the motto for the Congregation of the Mission: *The Lord has sent me to bring Good News to the poor* (Luke 4:18). Jesus’ words, which were spoken in the synagogue in Galilee, were intended as a public explanation of his salvific mission, which was expressed in a series of signs that revealed the fact that salvation and the kingdom of God were being proclaimed to the poor.⁹

The saving mystery of Christ in which the Son is sent forth by the Father and the apostles are sent forth by the Son captivated Vincent de Paul and led him to dedicate his life to Christ, the evangelizer of the poor. It is that perspective that enables us to understand the various works that Vincent undertook: the popular missions that concluded with the establishment of a Confraternity of Charity, the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity, the “little method,” retreats for ordinands, seminary ministry, political involvement, and, finally, concern about what he should do as he advanced in years.

⁸ Vincent sought a benefice, *the means of an honorable retirement* (CCD:I:15).

⁹ Translator’s note: The footnote in Spanish refers us to page 336-337 of the Spanish edition of the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*. When I checked the Spanish edition, page 336-337 should correspond to pages 272-274 in the English edition. The text, however, in the English edition that I have appears to be different from the text in the Spanish edition.

We can say that an authentic gene in the DNA of the Congregation of the Mission is this lived Christology, this Christology that is expressed in a soteriological proposal on behalf of the poor. Therefore, even though one might place the initials “CM” after one’s name and even though one’s name might appear in the *Catalogue of the Congregation of the Mission*, if a community or a province or an individual missionary has not opted for the commitment of evangelizing the poor, then one cannot call oneself a Vincentian.

Four hundred years after the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission, the words of Vincent de Paul continue to resound: *I do know well, however, what was done at the beginning of the Company, and that it was exact about the practice of letting no opportunity pass to instruct a poor person, which the men did if they saw that the person needed it; priests, seminarians, and our Coadjutor Brothers all did this, as they came and went. If they met some poor person – a boy or some good man – they’d speak to him to see if he knew the Mysteries necessary for salvation; and if they noted that he didn’t, they’d teach them to him. I don’t know if we’re still as careful today to observe this holy practice; I’m talking about the men who go into the rural areas and stay at inns along the way. If that’s the case, fine! They should thank God for it and ask him for perseverance for the same Company; if not – and if there has been any relaxation in this – they should ask for the grace to correct themselves* (CCD:XI:343).

Second gene: the path of a spirituality, *mystics of action*

*Few missionaries know how to be mystics like Vincent de Paul and few mystics are as active as the prophet of charity and the mission.*¹⁰ Those words were written by our Brazilian confrere as

¹⁰ Vincius Teixeira, *San Vicente de Paúl, a mystic of charity*, published on 3 January 2017 on www.cmglobal.com.

he commented on the theme, *mysticism of action*, a theme that was presented by Father Tomaž Mavrič at the very beginning of his term of office as Superior General.¹¹

If we use the definition of mysticism that is found in paragraph #2014 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we discover that the element of *union with God* is pivotal with regard to identifying the mystical experience: *Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called “mystical” because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments – “the holy mysteries” – and, in him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God calls us all to this intimate union with him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.*

Viewed from that perspective we can avoid the discussion of previous eras that debated whether Vincent could be classified as a mystic in accord with classical theological treatises. Indeed, it is clear that Vincent de Paul exemplifies that which the spiritual theologian, Giovanni Moiola, wrote about what he stated: *if men and women feel called to be mystics, they must continue to understand that they are first and foremost called to be authentic Christians, that is, called to know God according to the new covenant.*¹²

Vincent de Paul, is in fact, the father of a school of spirituality that is intimately related to the mystery of the One and Triune God.

¹¹ Cf. Tomaž Mavrič, First Homily as Superior General (given during the XLII General Assembly and found at <https://cmglobal.org/en/2016/07/07/day-10-july-6-solidarity/>) and his letter dated 19 September 2016 (on the occasion of the celebration of the Solemnity of Saint Vincent de Paul in *Vincentiana*, 60th Year, #4, October-December, p. 445-452).

¹² Giovanni Moiola in *Diccionario de Espiritualidad*, Spain, 1983 (this work has been translated into English, but, as translator of this article, I was unable to obtain a copy of this book in English.)

As a result of his integrity and his commitment to those individuals most in need, Vincent is most deserving of the title, *mystic of action*. Vincent's inventive love flowed from that mysticism and generated the following elements that must be held together in tension: contemplation and action; charity and mission; community life and the apostolate; fervent prayer and generous service; organization/planning and surrender to the dictates of Providence.

The second gene: mysticism of action

The second gene of the Vincentian DNA is the *mysticism of action*,¹³ a theme that has gained prominence in the Vincentian Family, thanks to the various interventions of the present Superior General. In this regard, however, there is also a danger; namely, that we will use that element as a theme for our reflection rather than a hermeneutical principle that enables us to understand and live the Vincentian Charism in such a way that we clothe ourselves anew in the spirit of Jesus, the evangelizer of the poor. It was no coincidence that Vincent gave a hierarchical order to the purposes of the Congregation and, therefore, before referring to the various apostolates, stated: *the whole purpose of the Congregation is: 1° to have a genuine commitment to grow in holiness, patterning ourselves, as far as possible, on the virtues which the great Master himself graciously taught us in what he said and did* (Common Rules I:1).

¹³ *A sixth criterion, and the most important, which must be insisted upon, places emphasis on the mystical inspiration (spirituality), the attraction of divine Love, which illuminates the intuitions and dictates the choices of Saint Vincent. Of all the distortions of spirituality, the worst is always the lack of recognition of a fundamental and natural mystical dimension of the Love of God that exhausts itself in authentic Charity. Any research that failed to take account of the basic tendency would cut itself off from all possibility of "adherence," cf. Toscani, op.cit., p.38.*

In that which is most essential with regard to the Vincentian charism, one discovers the *mystical* strength that springs forth from the spirit that has called the missionaries to live as poor, chaste and obedient men; to cultivate the five characteristic virtues; and to do all these things from the time of their initial option until the time of their encounter with the mystery of the heavenly mission¹⁴ (a mystery that was contemplated in a limited manner when they ministered here on earth). For a Vincentian, the ascent to Mount Carmel is found in the cultivation of the virtues of simplicity, humility, gentleness, mortification, and zeal.

It is in the characteristic Vincentian virtues and the evangelical counsels that the missionaries have been called to embrace, as well as in acts of surrender to the designs of Divine Providence (CCD:I:59; II:517-518; VIII:452; XI:340-342), and of contemplating the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity¹⁵ that we find the insights that enable us to live as mystics of action in the 21st century. Furthermore, all of those elements (that is, the evangelical counsels, the characteristic virtues, surrender to Divine Providence, and contemplation of the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity) enable Vincentians to clothe themselves in a radical manner in the sentiments of Jesus Christ.

¹⁴ Vincent had great interest in this concept of the *heavenly mission* and he spoke about this in an exhortation to a dying brother: *what consolation you must have to be chosen from the first to go on mission – but to that eternal mission where all the exercises are to love God* (CCD:XI:129). Thus, we find in the Vincentian eschatology another expression of the mysticism of action, one that, from the perspective of Vincent, perfectly harmonizes being (love) with doing (mission). This perfect harmony, however, is a characteristic of the Church triumphant, a characteristic of those who, like the dying brother, contemplated that same mystery through means of their total commitment to the poor.

¹⁵ Cf. CCD:I:140-144; XIIIa:296-304; Common Rules X:2 which states: *According to the Bull which established our Congregation, we are bound to honor in a special way the Most Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, mysteries beyond words. We should therefore try to carry this out most faithfully and, if possible, in every way.*

In accord with the criteria that Father Tomaž Mavrič has set forth from the beginning of his term of office, we cite here the words of Karl Rahner: *The devout Christian of the future will either be a mystic, one who has experienced something, or he will cease to be anything at all. For devout Christian living as practiced in the future will no longer be sustained and helped by the unanimous, manifest and public convictions and religious customs of all, summoning one from the outset to a personal experience and a personal decision.*¹⁶

Today's Vincentians will either live as mystics of action or else they will have nothing to say to the world. They might be tireless ministers but they will not be Vincentian ministers; they might have the best vocational recruitment literature, but they will not make people question their lives. Unless Vincentian are mystics of action, everything will remain pleasant and appealing but, in reality, everything will be nothing more than good theatre.

Conclusion

Four centuries separate us from the time of the origin of the Vincentian charism. Nevertheless, the DNA of that mystical experience is alive and continues to challenge us at this time when there is an ever greater urgency to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, the Evangelizer of the poor. This urgency arises from the fact of prevailing relativism, an increase in violence, and the number of people living in situations of poverty.

The genetic formation of the charism makes us feel the need for working in collaboration, working as members of one charismatic family, working together in projects that promote systemic change

¹⁶ Karl Rahner, "Christian Living, Formerly and Today" in *Theological Investigations: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life*, Translated by David Bourke, London: Dorton, Longman and Todd; New York: Herder and Herder, 1971, volume 7, Page 15.

(for example, the FamVin Homeless Alliance).¹⁷ We must do all of this without neglecting those projects which, at the provincial level, continue to give life to our charism, a life that is manifested by a commitment to the salvific announcement of Christ to the neediest.

The mystic of action, who knew how to conform his life to that of Jesus Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor, continues to challenge us to share the joy of the Gospel, to be inventive unto infinity while at the same time remaining faithful to our missionary calling. If we live in this manner, we will see our Little Company grow, for as Pope Francis has stated, *it is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but by attraction*” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, #15).

Translated: Charles T. Plock, CM
Eastern Province, USA

¹⁷ Cf., the letter of the Superior General (June 1, 2017) addressed to the leaders of the Vincentian Family: https://famvin.org/en/files/2017/06/ENGLISH-Letter-to-Heads-VF-on-Homeless-Alliance_1June2017.pdf

In the Footsteps of Vincent de Paul

Pedro Opeka, CM

In this prestigious place that today is the European Union, we would like to give witness to the spiritual strength of Saint Vincent de Paul and his unique charism. His commitment, his ideas and loving actions in service of the poorest have long since crossed the borders of France to spread to all parts of the world in more than 100 countries. Saint Vincent is an idea that has been transformed into action in the service of humanity. He also deserves a hearing in this place for international dialogue among nations.

With great joy we are celebrating the 400th anniversary of when Saint Vincent de Paul first decided to provide effective charity towards our neighbors. At Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne, in 1617, just at the moment of celebrating the Eucharist, Vincent was faced with the dramatic case of a family where all members were sick. He understood at that moment that he could not celebrate Mass without going first to those poor people who were waiting for immediate help.

What did he do? He asked those ladies who were around him at that moment to bring help to this family while he was celebrating Mass.

Thus was born his first work of charity, one could say his first social work. This was achieved thanks to the acceptance of those ladies of good will, willing to accept their responsibility to be human and Christian.

Saint Vincent de Paul, like all great saints, was a man like everyone else. He had to make a choice at one point in his life, a categorical choice to live and act in accord with the faith that he was preaching to others.

Thus, this charism began in Châtillon. There the grain was planted, and it would continue to grow in the most beautiful way throughout Vincent's life.

We know what happened: Monsieur Vincent, as he is called, would by this incredible charism, help to produce the vocation of numerous lay men and women, ready to go to the aid of the poor. All the poor without distinction: those he found in his journey and those who were sent to him. After this mission with the laity, the task was not finished; and it would never be! He then began to gather priests, those who want to follow in this venture, the most beautiful and noble that ever existed: approaching the poor, with a gentle hand, lifting them up, loving them. I will not dwell on the long list of accomplishments of St. Vincent's life. Those little flowers, we know them. Their story is well known from the moment biographers and scholars have lifted all the many veils from that life! I would like, as far as I am concerned, having been a Vincentian missionary in Madagascar since 1970, to evoke this charism of St. Vincent de Paul, which we have, whether we are Vincentian missionaries or from other congregations, wanting to live with the poorest of our brothers and sisters in Madagascar. Many other missionaries around the world could also tell their story, rich in teachings for all of us. As for me, I've no other testimony than to speak of the commitment of Vincentian priests and Daughters of Charity, and of all those of the Vincentian family in Madagascar.

St. Vincent de Paul, throughout his life, had dreamed of sending his first missionaries to Madagascar. Beyond having dreamed it, he actually realized it when the first heroic missionaries Father Nacquart and Father Gondrée, arrived in 1648 at Fort Dauphin, to the south of the great island.

This mission that St. Vincent carried in his heart, we know how difficult it was, because of the climate and malaria that decimated the missionaries during those 25 years of that mission in the seventeenth

century. Truly, we need to pay homage to these first Vincentian missionaries who left knowing that they would be making a journey with no hope of returning. But they left their country just the same because they carried the Gospel of Jesus in their hearts. They wanted to share this Gospel with the poorest of Madagascar and they wanted to live out St Vincent de Paul's charism with unlimited love for the poorest, with the deepest respect, imbued with a humble and simple approachability, so that it would be God's love and grace being shown to them first of all.

We are today the heirs of that mission begun in 1648. Afterwards, the presence of missionaries of St. Vincent de Paul was interrupted for more than two centuries (1675-1895).

The return in 1896 of the priests, brothers and Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul was a new challenge that was taken on with much courage and faith. The southern part of Madagascar had been entrusted to the congregation of St. Vincent de Paul for spiritual animation and to create several dioceses: Fort Dauphin, Farafangana, Ihosy, Tulear and Merobe.

The missionary priests and the Daughters of Charity worked there with love, self-denial and faith. They lived alongside the people, experiencing all the ills suffered by the Malagasy men and women, malaria, schistosomiasis, parasitosis, and tuberculosis. They also lived with a modest diet and with few possessions, just like the people to whom they consecrated their lives.

This presence of missionaries of St. Vincent de Paul was of decisive importance for the development of southern Madagascar, even as this region remained the most underdeveloped, brought on by periodic famines due to the hostility of its climate, lack of rain and drinking water and even basic infrastructure. For example, no asphalt roads ever created any access to the south, and so the south has always lived in isolation, split from the center of the island, which even to our time has always been more fortunate.

With their good will, and from all points of view, the missionary priests and the Daughters of Charity did everything anyone could do in this hostile region.

One of their great difficulties turned out to be how to approach the tribes of this region. It became necessary to help these tribes to understand that a new era was beginning, that they needed to respond to the needs of their infants, and to those of all their young people, to make them aware that some of their ancestral superstitions and customs were paralyzing their own development.

Of course, over all these years, the missionaries willingly immersed themselves, body and soul, into this rich Malagasy culture of solidarity and care for each other, but they also dared to tell their Malagasy brothers that any tribe, any people, should be open to a better future. One of the many challenges of the suffering in this area and throughout the south of Madagascar was premature death, not only of infants, but also of mothers and fathers.

In 1970, when I arrived in Madagascar, the inhabitants' median age was 42 years. This was due to a mismanaged response to fundamental health problems, due to the fact that many of their children had never been vaccinated; as a result, they were being decimated by disease. In addition there were epidemics caused by drinking contaminated water.

Today, I would like to pay tribute to all those missionaries who, although they had access only to the limited means of their time, but, motivated by their faith and love, went there to help their Malagasy brothers and sisters and to sing along with them the praises of the loving God. Unfortunately they were less "armed" when it came to doing something for them, to dealing with problems of malnutrition, chronic diseases such as diarrhea, tuberculosis or malaria.

Those elder missionaries, our forerunners, visited the villages in the jungle most of the time on foot, like everyone else, or in a

dugout canoe. It brought them closer to the people, helped them to be heard, to understand the people and to love them. These people, our brothers and sisters, came to see in these priests and religious, even if they were of foreign origin, the announcement of progress, of an evolution, of a form of brotherhood that they had not known until then.

The missionaries, after having just arrived in their hamlet, were asked to teach them how to pray, to take care of themselves, and to instruct their children, for these Malagasy brothers and sisters nurtured a deep and sometimes secret desire to have nurseries run by nuns and a school to teach their children how to read and write.

The Experience of Akamasoa

After paying tribute to all these courageous missionaries, I would like to mention the experience we started 27 years ago in Antananarivo. When I was appointed by my congregation to be the director of the Scholasticate of St Vincent de Paul in Soavimbahoka, I had the responsibility of accompanying and training some fifteen young postulants for priesthood for our congregation in Madagascar. The poverty I saw at Tana upset me. I could not believe my eyes.

And it was then that I sincerely proposed to our future priests of St Vincent de Paul to begin to live without any further delay, during the next 10 years of formation, the charism of St. Vincent de Paul, to see in every poor person the face of Christ. We could not have learned this in books nor in philosophy courses by the faculty, but only with real and concrete contact with the poor who surrounded us.

One day, to my horror, I discovered the dump where so many children and poor families were trying to survive by sorting garbage and rubbish from the city. In the same way, it was unbearable to see them survive in these makeshift shelters in which they were piled with their children. It was unbearable to accept the tragedy of all

these forgotten and excluded families. It was from this electroshock that I wanted to respond with concrete action to help these families get out of this misery.

I talked with some young lay people I knew in Madagascar, with whom I gathered regularly, and who were studying at the university. I also asked our seminarians to attend their meetings on Saturdays and Sundays and to visit with us those people who were suffering right under our noses: those poorest of the poor, those forgotten people, excluded from any society, the ragpickers who lived along the railways in the city center, the families who survived around the landfill at Andralanitra.

Without money, with no logistical support of any kind, nor international aid, but with passion and the conviction that poverty is not inevitable, we began step by step to build our plan on how to fight against this extreme poverty with extreme simplicity, which obviously surprised more than one of the famous experts of integral development.

We began this experience with no money, without any means, but with only the faith and conviction that God does not forget his children and the poorest families.

As a priest of the Congregation of St. Vincent de Paul, it was my simple human and spiritual duty and the call of my faith to reach out to those people who were excluded, who were from the streets and the dumps, to improve their lives and offer them a little hope and friendship. This is where we started this service, one that eventually became integral development, since integral development was necessary to meet the different needs of their lives.

We started with one home dedicated for the homeless. Secondly, we constructed some dwellings a bit more worthy than the fragile hovels where they once lived in the street, a kind of first aid for an already very fragile population, and then we guaranteed a minimum

grant of one daily meal for the children. We also began to create jobs for parents, since from the beginning we had been clear about this community venture, saying that we would never be reduced to depending on charity (handouts), but that we would get up and start a more dignified life through work, school and internal rules of conduct, a sort of community discipline to learn to live together without violence.

We opened a granite quarry where hundreds of workers began to tackle the mountain. For children, we built classrooms so that we could begin to educate them.

At the same time, we tackled the development of our land by constructing new housing, as it was the most urgent need, along with a health center and a dispensary. Also, we started to drill wells and began a drinking water distribution network by building fountain posts (spigots), which are valuable guarantees for good health. We have also started sanitation work through the creation of access roads, gutters for sewage and rainwater, and the construction of hundreds of latrines to improve hygiene and sanitation.

Meanwhile, along with our school children, we started planting trees on a deserted hill.

We immediately sensitized children towards respect of the environment, to the love of trees and flowers.

In a city where insecurity had increased yearly, we were also obliged to form our own security groups to keep watch over the extent of all our villages. We were attacked three times with weapons of war.

Today, for our 13,500 schoolchildren, uprooted from the streets and from a landfill, we have been led to build sports facilities that also benefit many children in state schools and private schools in the area.

We have also created places of prayer and recollection. At these sites we sponsor recollection for groups of young people or for whole parishes who ask us, especially for the periods before Christmas and Easter, to use these beautiful places which are in the heights of Akamasoa.

That's not all. Our dead have not been forgotten. We have built four cemeteries because death is very present among this poor and fragile population. Burying the poor with love, with respect and according to the culture of their ancestors, has nourished confidence in this venture to get out of misery .

All these projects were accomplished at the same time. Is it possible to separate the life of a person into small pieces? The human body and the spirit that inhabits it are one. Thus, in the process of taking care of their bodies, they were more receptive to the human, spiritual and ancestral wisdom that we shared with them.

In Madagascar there is this proverb both deep and very strong: "The spirit makes the person." This proverb is written in granite stone in the courtyard where I live, very close to the chapel where prayer takes place every evening in the company of many children.

Never have we forgotten either the body or the mind. About all these works and these efforts, there are many books that can speak with more precision. But today I would like to ask you and all our Vincentian family around the world, "What are the challenges that we have yet to face today, where must we learn to listen to the poorest, to discover the new faces, to identify the new poor in each of the countries where we live?"

Perhaps we all should start by looking at the situation of the injustices that throw millions into poverty.

Then, we should seek to understand the causes of these injustices in order to clearly identify which solutions need to be implemented. And finally, we should decide to act to change the structures and

systems that have produced this misery. This is where our Community has made a major contribution with its Commission on Systemic Change.

We also need to think about the challenge that the millions of children forgotten on the streets of big cities around the world are facing.

We must also choose to reflect on the lack of respect and dignity towards women in many countries in our world. Women are always exploited and oppressed, yet it is often the woman who is the first force in the family to educate, to change their way of thinking and to get them out of poverty.

We must also humanize these places of suffering where people have lost their spirit, since drugs, prostitution and alcohol, are pitiless prisons that murder the soul. Humanizing these places of despair is proving so difficult and we feel so often disarmed, and helpless. But as Christians, as members of the family of St. Vincent de Paul, with the Gospel in our hand, we should never give in to panic, despair or helplessness. The spirit of Christ who lived in St Vincent de Paul will speak to us and will always awaken us to our responsibilities.

These are the new orientations and suggestions provided by the last General Assembly in July 2016 in Chicago with the election of our new Superior General, who from the outset has invited us to follow the charism of St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac.

Creating oases of hope is perhaps the first approach to a global solution to misery and despair because you will never be able to change everything right away on the scale of a large city or for any society. But we can create these little oases where people can find dignity, joy in truth, justice and brotherhood.

Because of this cultural upheaval and the unprecedented speed of scientific and technological progress that jostle and sometimes disorient us, we must unite, respond together as a family, the

Vincentian family, seeking first meaning in our own lives, identifying concrete objectives, then carrying out the initiatives and actions that immediately can serve the poor and also the youth of our time. To do this, we must draw from the Gospel and from spirituality and from concrete actions of St Vincent de Paul. Today we have much more knowledge in every field than did our predecessors. We also have more freedom of action than in the past and many more ways of approaching, listening and helping those who are outside the wider human community like drug addicts, prostitutes, terrorists from all sides, all the living wounded people, and some who have lost everything.

In the face of this enormous challenge, we must certainly think together, that is to say, to unite, while avoiding falling into the impasse of “endless meetings”, which hamper the commitment and the concrete decisions and effectiveness for those who need us in order to help them get out of their extreme poverty. As for me, I can say without error: my office is the street! Wherever I meet a poor person, I can and I must find the right solution on the spot.

Every action decided upon in common must immediately be followed by an effect which is translated into real life. How is it possible that so many well-ordered reports, presented in a perfectly accepted vocabulary, end up in a drawer? The truth is that, despite what some dare to affirm, poverty does not retreat; on the contrary, it is advancing as well in the towns as in the countryside. We know the enormous waves of poverty ravaging the entire planet: sick, hungry and uneducated children; parents completely disoriented and unemployed, without the least security to ensure the lives of their children; the abandoned old expect only one thing: a death that delivers them.

Let's take stock and face reality. There is a huge gulf between people struggling on the ground against poverty and those watching it all in their offices... from afar. This gap is the gap between those

who, day by day, are working with the poor on the ground and those in their offices compiling figures and providing guidance and direction. Can this abyss ever be filled? With all my strength and with all my soul, I want to believe it but I also know that it will be very difficult. I am certain about one thing: this chasm can never be filled if we, Vincentian priests and brothers, Daughters of Charity and the Vincentian Family, do not take the initiative to upset the ideas, the lines and the concepts of the bureaucrats and the technocrats.

Yes, I say that now we, with the greatest strength of mind, heart and spirit, must shake up those old beautiful ideas about poverty and development.

We do not pretend to eliminate this sickly inertia. Yet, we, the Vincentian family, drawing from the message and deeds of such a pragmatic, realistic and effective Saint, are the first to be able to do more, as St. Vincent de Paul said. We are led to proclaim the Gospel to the poorest and in an effective way. This is perhaps the new evangelization of which we speak so much. The gospel is not the property of the baptized. There are people of goodwill, believers and unbelievers all over the world, and there are also so many eminent personalities from other religions in the world who struggle and share these values for the defense of human dignity. We all need to work together.

As a Vincentian family, in the name of Christ and our particular charism, according to the talents of each of our branches and of each one of us, we have a duty to interfere in the spheres that affect the lives of the poor, either in economic policy or in the most basic social problems. We have no right to remain silent. We would be accomplices. We must also question the reasons for the persistence and worsening of poverty in most of our continents. We should with all our might oppose the resignation of every poor man, because such giving up is the most insidious temptation to which a poor person succumbs, caused by the lack of human, friendly and fraternal

contact. This is how he sinks deeper into misery. We all have in our memories the recommendations of Pope Francis who invites us to get involved in the margins of our societies.

Dear brothers and sisters, I believe that it is urgent that we have words and constructive actions that go beyond our respective missions on the ground in order to bring the good news to the attention of economic, social and political leaders who, by their indifference, inaction and slowness, threaten our time with enormous human catastrophes.

In conclusion, to work together we must be imbued with the brotherly love of Christ who desired that we all be brothers and sisters and that our love, humility, and fraternal friendship speak out to the world. After all, we do belong to the same human and spiritual family: that of St Vincent de Paul.

This saint, now 400 years old, was already in his own time a revolutionary pioneer for justice; he did it through work and prayer.

Translated: Dan Paul Borlik CM

The Value of Solidarity in the Congregation of the Mission¹

Andres R. M. Motto, CM

During this year when we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the origin of the Vincentian Charism, we want to respond to two questions about solidarity: [1] what are the components of this virtue of solidarity (a theme that for many years has been developed in various universities), [2] how is this virtue practiced and lived in the Vincentian world (this is the fruit of sharing with hundreds of confreres).

¹ Cf. Palme, Olof. *El valor de la Solidaridad [The Value of Solidarity]*, Zaragoza, Libros Del Innombrable, 2009; Vidal, Marciano. “Ética de la solidaridad” [“Ethics of Solidarity”] in *Moralia* 55-56 (1992) 347-362; Braun, Rafael. “la solidaridad en la sociedad libre” [“Solidarity in the Free Society”] in *Criterio* 2205/6 (1997) 568-572; Carraud, V. “Solidarité ou les traditions de l’idéologie” [Solidarity or the Traditions of Ideology”] in *Communio* 14 (1989) 195-198; Parent, Remi. “Teología de la praxis de solidaridad” [“Theology of the Praxis of Solidarity”] in *Moralia* 55-56 (1992) 321-346; Nitsch, T. “Social Catholicism: Birth and Tradition of Solidarism” in *International Journal of Social Economics* 15/9 (1988) 3-38; Vidal, M. “La solidaridad: nueva frontera de la teología moral” [“Solidarity: A New Frontier of Moral Theology”] in *Studia Moralia* 23 (1985) 99-126; Cortina, A. “Más allá del colectivismo y el individualismo: autonomía y solidaridad” [“Beyond Collectivism and Individualism: Autonomy and Solidarity”] in *Sistema* 96 (1990) 3-17; González Amuchastegui, J. “Notas para la elaboración de un concepto de solidaridad como principio político” [“Notes for the Elaboration of a Concept of Solidarity as a Political Principle”] in *Sistema* 101 (1991) 123-135; Fernández, Celestino. *Vicente de Paúl un corazón sin medida. De la memoria al compromiso. [Vicent de Paul a Heart without Measure. From Memory to Commitment.]*, Madrid, La Milagrosa, 2014.

The etymology of solidarity

The word, *solidarity*, is rooted in the Latin word, *solidus*, which means solid, compact, whole. In the beginning, this word was utilized in the realm of construction. In other words, something is solid because all its parts are combined in the best possible manner. As often occurs in the evolution of language, later this word was utilized in a more symbolic manner. It was used in the area of jurisprudence, that is, *soliditus* referred to the unity of law. Laws were compact and secure as a result of the fact that they were interconnected, thus providing a balance to law (a truly marvelous concept). Still later, the word solidarity was applied to the ethical-political sphere. In this sense, the word was intended to convey the idea that a group was truly united because of the interdependence of its members. The concept of solidarity was developed in a very significant manner by the members of the Solidarist Movement. Leon Bourgeois, one of the foremost thinkers of this movement, witnessed the evils that were caused by unbridled liberal economics and offered an alternative: social interdependence. That concept was grounded on a principle that affirmed rights as well as obligations: the principle of solidarity. The members of this movement also believed that in order for solidarity to be effective, organizational planning was necessary – solidarity could not be left to the spontaneity of good feelings.

The appearance of the concept of solidarity in the Christian world

We can ask: how did the concept of solidarity enter into the Christian world? Theologians involved in the development of the concept of solidarity shared a common concern: how to recover the social dimension of charity so that it would no longer be viewed as some private activity. In this way, from the perspective of Christian responsibility, a powerful social transformation could occur. Obviously, all of this is in harmony with our charism. In fact, we could say that the entrance of the word *solidarity* into Church

discourse is due to the influence of the theologian Lebreton, who pointed out the fact that the problem of development in the world gives greater significance to the concept of solidarity. Therefore, Lebreton proposed an economic model grounded on *a civilization of solidarity between peoples and between classes*.

With regard to official Church documents, the word *solidarity* appears in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.² John Paul II popularized this word when he referred to solidarity as a key to resolving the social question. In fact, we could say that the word “solidarity” summarizes the social teaching of his pontificate. The social discourses of John Paul II contain numerous references to solidarity and this was due, in part, to his dependence on Polish theology with regard to the concept of solidarity and, in part, to his concern for the social question. I believe that in this area of moral theology, the Pope was progressive and prophetic. The same could not be said of him in other moral issues. Be that as it may, the Pope came to see that the concept of political charity,³ valid and noble in itself, was devalued because in many cases it was linked with actions that never resulted in any social transformation.

In his first social encyclical, *Laborem exercens*, John Paul II encouraged the liberating struggle of workers as he appealed to the important ethical value of solidarity, as well as an appeal to common action (cf. *Laborem exercens*, # 8). He also encouraged *new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers* (*Laborem exercens*, # 8), stating that such solidarity ought to lead to dialogue and collaboration with others. In other words, workers

² See, for example, “The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity”: *Among the signs of our times, the irresistibly increasing sense of the solidarity of all peoples is especially noteworthy* (# 14).

³ Translator’s Note: The Spanish phrase, *caridad social*, has been debated and widely discussed. In English, however, the use of the phrases “social charity” or “political charity” does not exist. I use the phrase “social charity,” but I have to admit that such a phrase is meaningless.

should focus on the common good and not just sectorial interests. The manner in which John Paul II applied the concept of solidarity to the sphere of work led some sectors to express certain doubts about the Christian nature of solidarity. Questions were raised about the relationship between charity and solidarity. We should recall that the philosophical world that utilized this word during the 19th century was quite hostile to the Christian world. The Pope responded to all of these concerns in his encyclical, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), where he referred to solidarity as *undoubtedly a Christian virtue* (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, # 38-40).

Solidarity and its relationship to communion

Solidarity implies social beings. Here we recall the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that states, *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood [and sisterhood]*. Thus, the human person, as an ethical being, ought to be an individual who lives in solidarity with others; that is, one who treats others as brothers and sisters. One way of expressing this solidarity on a social level is to recognize the fact that all people have certain rights and obligations – and today that reality takes on great significance with regard to living together with dignity.

A Christian praxis of solidarity must manifest itself in an openness to the world, an openness to all people. No selfishness is so impenetrable that it cannot be touched and changed by that spirit of communion, which Jesus has given to us. Thus, openness to the other ought to be lived from the perspective that such openness is a fundamental characteristic of solidarity. For a Vincentian, solidarity implies being a servant of the poor, a servant who demands that the poor be treated in a dignified manner. It implies a preferential option on behalf of the poor.

In order for solidarity to be truly effective, it should be bound up with subsidiarity. In other words, one should know how to delegate, because solidarity involves the establishment of the common good. Space must be given to others so that they might organize with autonomy. Solidarity ought to encourage others to act. Such solidarity originates in freedom and patience and implies overcoming the practice in which power is vested in one single person. When any group (civil or religious) feels itself as all-powerful, then generally the common good is weakened. The common good requires a coming together of divergent points of view. Solidarity implies a theology of communion that then involves participation in the decision-making process, a sharing of material resources, and participation in the governing process. As can be seen, solidarity is not an easy virtue to practice in a sustained and profound manner. It demands ongoing conversion.

Solidarity as a virtue

In his encyclical, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, Pope John Paul II pointed out that there is an increasing interdependence among individuals, social groups, and nations and, as such, human regulation is necessary. Such interdependence can be [1] inappropriate and depraved when it is used to take advantage of the weakest members of society through perverse mechanisms of power and structures that make it easy for those who have to obtain even more. Such interdependence, however, is [2] appropriate and virtuous when interdependent relationships function on behalf of the good of all people, especially the most vulnerable members of society. Therefore, we can further define solidarity as *a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all* (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, # 38).

This moral attitude is a Christian virtue that is related to charity, because in the practice of solidarity we find certain gospel options: a commitment on behalf of the neighbor and a willingness to serve

others rather than exploit and oppress them (cf. Mark 12:42-45, Luke 22:25-27). Because solidarity has various points of reference to charity, it becomes clear that solidarity is a distinctive characteristic of Jesus' disciples (cf. John 13:35; *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, # 40).

Solidarity is also related to the virtue of justice. Let us reflect on the following example. At a given time, the other (as a people or as an individual) was plundered and exploited. Then, as time passed, this group of persons was assisted and aid was viewed, in part, as restitution. This was a theme about which Vincent de Paul was most concerned.⁴ Through a lived solidarity, one is beginning to balance things and this is better than if one had had recourse to the law or to the judicial system (look, for example, at the conversion of Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10). Solidarity is related to justice in as much as we understand the fact that we are guided by the law of empathy and cooperation. Empathy is the human foundation of solidarity and, at its best, demands a willingness to share. Disposable goods should be shared and distributed in a manner that excludes no one, in a

⁴ Vincent de Paul stated: *God will grant you the grace ... of softening our hearts toward the wretched creatures and of realizing that in helping them we are doing an act of justice and not of mercy* (CCD:VII:115). Unfortunately, there was an era during which Vincent de Paul was seen as a man who had a great ability to ask for funds from the rich in order to redistribute them among the poor. This view, not very prophetic and also not true, ignored the fact that Vincent was quite critical of the social order and was very harsh when speaking about selfish Christians who had little or no sense of the common good. It should be remembered that Vincent spoke against the ambition and corruption that he saw in some government officials. Vincent did not remain on the mere surface of the various social problems of his day, but looked for the root of such problems in order to resolve them. [The reference in this footnote to CCD:VII:115 refers to: *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 VII, p. 115; 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:VII:115.

manner that discriminates against no one, and in a manner in which “the few” do not take for themselves that which by right belongs to “the many.”

Solidarity will never become a reality unless one is willing to place oneself in the position of “the other” (those who suffer), unless one is willing to change societal relationships so that they are more equal. Such a decision is nothing more than taking an option on behalf of those persons who are poor. Thus, solidarity can be viewed as that virtue that supports and sustains the dynamics of justice as well as the transformative power of charity.

Solidarity as a principle

Even though this theme (solidarity as a principle) might appear to be a very uninteresting and dry theme, let us, nevertheless, take a few moments to explore this idea. Besides being a virtue, solidarity is also a principle that demands the transformation of the social reality. Virtue and principle do not exclude one another but rather constitute a twofold dimension that expresses the depth of the concept of solidarity.

In his encyclical, *Centesimus annus*, the Pope referred to solidarity as a key principle: *what we nowadays call the principle of solidarity ... is clearly seen to be one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization (Centesimus annus, # 10)*. As such, it has multiple applications to the social life: it is the principle of political organization; it is a criterion for economic relationships, as well as for relationships between management and labor; and, finally, it is a demand if there is to be some form of order in the judicial system. All of these applications are rooted in and find their origin in the ethical understanding of solidarity.

Solidarity, as an ethical principle, gives rise to the ideal of humanity as one large community and becomes one of the basic ethical principles of social life. The principle of solidarity is

concretized when individual men and women, through norms of social institutions and structures, collaborate with one another in order to satisfy the interests of all concerned. In other words, solidarity becomes a reality to the degree that marginalized persons become the focus of our attention. Therefore, there is an urgency to act in such a manner that inequality becomes a reality of yesterday. In light of all of this, it becomes clear that members of the Vincentian Family should know and practice solidarity in order to be faithful in the 21st century to our charism which originated in the 17th century.

Solidarity in the Vincentian world

I paused to prepare myself a cup of coffee and, as I did so, I gazed at the beautiful garden at the Motherhouse in Paris, a garden which becomes especially beautiful during the spring. I then returned to my computer. I believe that since Vatican II we have become better in the practice of solidarity. Indeed, we have entered into greater solidarity with one another as a result of a better understanding of the prophetic role that flows from our baptismal commitment and as a result of our critical social analysis. As we attempt to respond to the needs of those who are poor, there is a greater urgency to understand the economic, financial, social, and political structures that produce marginalization and exclusion. We must struggle against those structures of sin and those perverse mechanisms that enslave and enchain so many people in situations of poverty and exploitation. It is for this reason that the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission request that the members be attentive *to the realities of present-day society, especially to the factors that cause an unequal distribution of the world's goods* (Constitution 12, 2°). During the 42nd General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission, the delegates exhorted all its members to work for *the globalization of solidarity in favor of the poor* (Final Document, # 3.2). We also refer the reader to the example of the primitive community (Acts 2:44-45), which inspired Thomas More to write his famous work, *Utopia*.

How do the various provinces of the Congregation of the Mission live this virtue of solidarity? This is a very complex question since some provinces have various works that reveal an understanding of solidarity and in other provinces that is not so.⁵ Some provinces are still wedded to the concept of charity as a “handout” and have opted for conservative social positions. Other provinces are focused more clearly on social promotion and quite open with regard to taking progressive social-political positions. It seems to me that if two or three houses in a province are involved in such activities, this should not be used to excuse other houses in the province from doing the same. It is not enough to have only one individual work that is used to manifest a province’s position with regard to solidarity. Rather, the whole Congregation must opt for the poor, must opt for solidarity; the whole Vincentian Family must also opt for the poor and for solidarity. My hope here is based on the fact that, as a whole, the Congregation has taken many steps forward in this area (the General Curia has promoted such movement). Still, however, there is much to do. The recent General Assembly of the Congregation

⁵ Here we could make reference to hundreds of various publications, as well as hundreds of different ministry projects, but I limit myself to the following: Father Pedro Guillén Goñi introduced me to the work entitled, *Tierra Prometida* (Promised Land, a book written by Father Otilio Monedero). That work refers to the people who were driven from their land in 1998, as a result of the floods that were caused by “El Niño” (during that same time, other people had to flee their land because of terrorism). Little by little, in a seemingly deserted place, new homes were built, electricity and running water were made available to the people, a chapel and a school were constructed, a town square established, and a stable and dignified life replaced a former situation of poverty. I would also mention here the Integral Promotion Center of Villa Paul in Keiko Sofia, where, in addition to a soup kitchen, one will also find a school, a bakery cooperative, a center for single mothers, catechesis, and other forms of pastoral ministry. When I was giving a course in Puerto Rico, I became aware of the tremendous work of Father Gregorio Alegría. People who were living in deplorable conditions became part of a new model neighborhood, which was called *Nueva Barquita*.

of the Mission highlighted several lines of action: greater sharing among the provinces; a renewal of its option for the poorest of the poor; strengthening missionary structures; making systemic change a part of its process of evangelization, and, more recently, this year the Vincentian Family has initiated a worldwide project to eliminate homelessness on planet earth.

If we engage in the practice of solidarity on the level of the worldwide Vincentian Family, it becomes clearer and clearer that we are indeed a Family in which the virtue and the principle of solidarity reign supreme.⁶ This also means that there is greater collaboration among the many branches of the Family. I believe that we are maturing in our approach toward the poor. Yes, we are more and more involved with ministry on behalf of those who are poor and excluded. They are loved and served. All of this means that we are willing to continue to engage in the struggle against those structures that produce and perpetuate injustice. So then, may our love for the poor be ever more concretized in our promotion of justice and charity, virtues that revitalize solidarity.

Translated: Charles T. Plock, CM

⁶ We could speak about many different works, but here I will mention only one, the Barbara Ford Peace Center. This organization is based in Santa Cruz del Quiché (Guatemala) and promotes responsible citizenship among the citizens of this country. This center is directed of the Sisters of Charity of New York.

1617 – 2017 Some Hopes for the Vincentian Family at the Dawn of its Fifth Century

Robert P. Maloney, CM

I love these lines from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:¹

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves
Or lose our ventures.*

The tide on which our Family is sailing has been steadily rising. We have become a huge international faith-based group. Even as early as 1645, Saint Vincent could hardly believe how his Family had grown.² Now, as our fifth century dawns, over a million people identify themselves as Vincent's followers. They live and labor among the marginalized in more than 150 countries. In the last 25 years, our Family has become more and more conscious of being a worldwide organization. We have developed a seminal administrative structure, the Vincentian Family Executive Committee, and initiated common projects, like the Vincentian Family Haiti Initiative. In 2015, we established a new International Vincentian Family Office, to which a number of Commissions report.

¹ *Julius Caesar*, Act 4, Scene 3.

² CCD:IX:165-166. 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 IX, pp. 165-166. On occasion, to fit the context, I have changed the translation slightly, in light of the original text.

One of Vincent's great gifts was that his vision crossed boundaries. His charism, and all the groups he founded, spread quickly to other countries. Wherever they went, he was eager for the Confraternities of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, and the Daughters of Charity to work together. In fact, while each had its own structure and its own identity, he saw them all as having common roots, common goals, and even a common year of birth. He regarded them as the offspring of two experiences he had in 1617.³ After Vincent's death, hundreds of other branches sprouted on the Family Tree.⁴ Some, like the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, have flourished all over the world.

As the fifth century of our history begins, I ask myself how Vincent might direct his Family in responding to today's global challenges: systemic poverty; frequent economic and political failures in dealing with it; widespread religious indifference, but at times fanatical sectarian violence; immense waves of migration; urbanization coupled with homelessness; chronic diseases, some of which are quite preventable; and environmental havoc.

Vincent would surely promote local responses to these problems, initiatives based on charity and justice, but I suspect that, in this era of globalization, he would also focus his worldwide Family's energies on the larger issues of the day and the need for systemic change.

With over a million active members, the Family has the capacity to make a significant difference at a global level. To do that, we need accurate information about where we are, what we

³ José-María Román, "El año 1617 en la biografía de San Vicente de Paúl," *Vincentiana*, XXVIII, 1984, pp. 443-456.

⁴ Cf. Sister Betty Ann McNeil, *The Vincentian Family Tree: A Genealogical Study* (Vincentian Studies Institute, 1996).

are currently doing, and what those living in poverty are asking of us. Precise information will enable us to speak on the global stage with the authority that truth bestows and to plan about issues, like homelessness, health, and education, in which we are very much involved.

Decisive action also requires a supple structure, like the newly established International Vincentian Family Office, that will enable us to reflect on our experience and then recommend to the Executive Committee what issues to promote, what goals to set, and how to implement them. A well-functioning, collaborative, decision-making structure will allow us to integrate our efforts and have collective impact: listening to those whom society has marginalized, gathering data, bringing experts together, developing plans, organizing campaigns, influencing debate at a global level, working toward systemic change, and launching innovative projects.

With our Family's potential in mind, I offer these hopes as 2017 comes upon us.

MY HOPES FOR THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY AS ITS 5TH CENTURY DAWNS

I express these hopes as someone who loves his Family and yearns to see it flourish. Most of the hopes apply to the Family as a whole, but, as the reader will soon see, some inevitably relate more to one branch than to another.

As this new era dawns:

- 1. I hope that we will continue to develop an organizational structure that will enable us to focus more effectively on the worldwide needs of those living in poverty.**

Over the last five years, a significant body of collective impact literature has developed.⁵ Workshops on the topic abound, suggesting not just an abstract methodology for working together, but using successful collective impact projects to show what can happen if groups actually collaborate.

The methodology that emerges has five components:

- 1) a common agenda
- 2) shared measurement systems
- 3) mutually reinforcing activities
- 4) continuous communication
- 5) a backbone support organization

Over the last several years, our Vincentian Family has been developing a seminal collective impact structure through the meetings of its Executive Committee and the establishment of its International Office. My hope is that this organizational structure will continue to develop, so that the further hopes described below might come to fulfillment.

2. I hope that we will soon map our worldwide membership in detail, so that, knowing who we are and where we are, we can plan as a Family more effectively.

In recent years, in some parts of the world, branches that formerly had many members have diminished, as the number of sisters, brothers, and priests in those places has decreased. Other branches, like the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian Marian Youth, have continued to grow and spread to new countries.

⁵ John Kania and Mark Kramer, "Collective Impact," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Winter 2011), 36-41. Interestingly, the Collective Impact Forum announced on 21 July 2016, that it is shifting its goals so that its collective impact literature will focus more on systemic change. As is evident, this coincides with an increasingly important focus of the Vincentian Family.

But even those branches that have suffered numerical diminishment have undertaken some very positive initiatives. Over the last two decades, the Family has opened new works among the poor in El Alto in Bolivia, Punta Arenas in Chile, Albania, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Benin, Chad, Angola, the Central African Republic, Ghana, Libya, Tunisia, Sudan, continental China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Alaska in the United States, and other places.

At present, the International Vincentian Family Office is engaged in “mapping” the worldwide Family by putting together a database that identifies who we are, where we are, and what we are doing, so that we can readily link with one another.

My hope is that, as the database develops, we will create a satellite map of the whole Family, so that we can connect with global information systems that will enable us to make informed decisions. Hundreds of information systems are already available online which can interface with a digital map of our Vincentian Family, enabling us to have detailed concrete information about where pockets of poverty exist all over the world and what factors exacerbate the situation. Comparing already existing databases with our own Family map, we will be able to see graphically where the poor are concentrated as well as related factors like educational level, employment, age, crime, disease, environmental conditions, etc.

3. I hope that we will soon engage in a megaproject as a Family.

Our Family has been focusing on systemic change since 2005. The International Commission for Promoting Systemic Change has offered numerous workshops throughout the world. It continues to work toward disseminating a systemic-change mentality, so that, more and more, it will reach down to the grassroots.

My hope is that, together as a Family, we will now launch a megaproject. The Executive Committee, after dialogue with the branches, would determine what that project might be. The list of possibilities is long:

- 1) Homelessness
- 2) Malaria
- 3) HIV/AIDS
- 4) Clean water
- 5) Other environmental issues
- 6) Migrants
- 7) Prison reform
- 8) ...

Here, let me offer an example of the resources that we already have for addressing just one of the topics listed above: homelessness (an enormous problem worldwide). Most of our branches touch the lives of the homeless in some way. One of the newest branches of the Family, Depaul International, which has rapidly spread from England to Ireland, Slovakia, Ukraine, the United States, and France, has homelessness as its specific focus. In collaboration with Depaul International and Community Solutions (another large program for confronting homelessness), DePaul University in Chicago has established an Institute of Global Homelessness, which is gathering the latest information on the topic and is bringing together experts to address it.

Could our Family set ambitious goals for eradicating homelessness? That is just one example. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* offers many other possibilities.

4. I hope that we will educate and form our members well.

Over the years, I have heard no request more frequently than the appeal for help in forming members of the various branches of our Family.

How important it is today to have well-educated members. The level of education in most societies is rising steadily. People long for a good education.

Happily, all our branches recognize that it is crucial for their members to have a well-grounded formation in the heritage of our Family. I suggest that many formation materials could be developed in common, while others pertaining to the particular charism of each group should be developed separately. Common materials might include:

- 1) brief, inspiring biographies of Saint Vincent, Saint Louise de Marillac, Frédéric Ozanam, and other key figures.
- 2) the key elements in Vincentian spirituality
- 3) the social teaching of the Catholic Church
- 4) systemic-change methodology
- 5) collaboration and collective impact
- 6) ...
- 7) ...

Each branch will then determine what particular formation needs it has at this time in its history. For example, my own branch, the Congregation of the Mission, might focus on:

- 1) ministry to new forms of poverty (e.g., migrants)
- 2) methods of preaching and teaching well
- 3) learning languages
- 4) new formulae and new methodologies for forming the clergy and lay people to be servants of those living in poverty.

Might the Congregation of the Mission “re-invent” its role in helping the diocesan clergy in its formation? Can we make a comeback in that regard? There are positive signs already in Poland, Colombia, Rwanda, Kenya, India, Indonesia, the Solomon Islands, and Papua

New Guinea. Sometimes a few vital centers of priestly formation can have an enormous impact, as is the case with the Sulpicians, who are very small in number (fewer than 300 worldwide), but who have a significant influence in the formation of the diocesan clergy.

5. I hope that we will develop ways of speaking with a united voice on key issues at the United Nations.

As a Family, do we speak with one voice? The Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, the Charity Federation, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and AIC are all present at the United Nations in New York and Geneva. Might their efforts be more fully coordinated? In conjunction with the international leaders of the Family, could they agree to focus on several common themes, in addition to particular themes that might interest each branch? At the UN, we have the opportunity to serve as advocates for those living in poverty throughout the world, raising our voice in a united cry on their behalf.

As a faith-based organization with well over a million members, we are considerably larger than many NGOs and other groups represented at the United Nations. Our representatives at the United Nations in New York and Geneva are experienced, articulate people. Our potential as a “peaceful army” in the service of the poor is enormous.

Do we use our voice effectively? Does our worldwide membership know about the issues we focus on globally as a Family? Does each country or region or province have liaison persons and/or Commissions of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation that communicate back and forth with the UN representatives, sending information to New York and Geneva and channeling information from the UN to local members of the various branches? What are the key issues that we want to speak about at the UN, with and for the poor?

6. I hope that the Family will continue to develop a vibrant communal spirituality.

Each branch has its own accents in spirituality. This has been evident from the beginning of the Family's history and is clear today as one reads the Constitutions or Rules of each branch. This diversity is healthy and enriching.

But we also share in common a rich spirituality. Here, let me accent five of its elements. It is a spirituality:

1) that blends prayer and action

Writing to a priest of the Congregation of the Mission in 1657, Saint Vincent held up as central what he called "*two virtues of Jesus, his filial relationship with the Father and his charity toward the neighbor.*"⁶ He regarded a combination of prayer and action as indispensable.

Over the years, I have known many members of the Family who, as individuals, combined prayer and action in a wonderful way. At the same time, I have often wished that our prayer together as a Family were more consistently beautiful. Beauty attracts those of all ages and conditions: younger and older, richer and poorer, men and women, clergy, religious and lay. Do people say of us: "Wow! When the Vincentian Family prays, its prayer is really beautiful!"

2) that is wholly Christocentric

Repeatedly, Vincent emphasized the centrality of Christ. In writing rules for the groups he founded, he urged them to see the face of Christ in the face of the poor. He asks them to

⁶ CCD:VI:413; cf. (French text) SV VI, 393: « les deux grandes vertus de Jésus-Christ, c'est à savoir la religion vers son Père et la charité vers les hommes. »

imitate the virtues of Jesus, especially his simplicity, humility, and love for the impoverished and for sinners. He encourages them to meditate on the “mysteries” of Jesus: the events of his life, death, and resurrection. He told his longtime friend, Father Portail: *“Remember, we live in Jesus Christ through the death of Jesus Christ, and we die in Jesus Christ through the life of Jesus Christ. Our life must be hidden in Jesus Christ and filled with Jesus Christ. In order to die as Jesus Christ, we must live as Jesus Christ.”*⁷

3) that makes simplicity central

Vincent stated explicitly that simplicity is *“my gospel.”*⁸ He called it *“the virtue I love most.”*⁹ He emphasized two aspects of simplicity especially: simplicity in lifestyle and simplicity in speech. He urged all his initial foundations – the Confraternities of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, and the Daughters of Charity – to make simplicity a central value in their lives.

4) that is grounded in humility

There is no virtue about which Saint Vincent spoke so eloquently as he did about humility. He stated that it is *“the foundation of all evangelical perfection, the core of the spiritual life.”*¹⁰ He wanted us to regard the impoverished as *“our Lords and Masters.”*¹¹ He emphasized listening *“to the least of my brothers and sisters”*¹² and collaboration with one another.

⁷ CCD:I:276.

⁸ CCD:IX:476.

⁹ CCD:I:264.

¹⁰ Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission II, 7.

¹¹ CCD:XI:349.

¹² Matthew 25:40.

5) that expresses itself in creative charity

One of the most cited sayings of Vincent is “*Love is creative, even to infinity.*”¹³

The context for this statement is different from what we usually imagine. When Vincent used this phrase, he was speaking of Jesus’ creativity in instituting the Eucharist.

Still, the phrase is readily applicable to Vincent himself and to his followers. In response to events, Vincent showed a remarkable freedom. He devised new solutions and created new institutions to deal with the ongoing problems of the marginalized and abandoned.

Vincent identified all five elements above as essential to a healthy spirituality. He was deeply convinced of their importance. In fact, he stated that, without them, we would cease to exist as a Family.¹⁴

7. I hope that we will establish national and international advancement offices.

Where are benefactors like Madame de Gondi today? Where is Queen Anne of Austria? Where are the stagecoach routes that provided Vincent with consistent revenues?

Some branches and, within them, parts of branches, have developed sources of revenue that assure the sustainability of their works. But, if the international Family is to pursue common goals, some common sources of funding will be necessary. Funding agencies, too, will respond more readily to proposals for collaborative projects submitted jointly by several branches than to proposals made by

¹³ CCD:XI:131.

¹⁴ Cf. Robert P. Maloney, “The Company Will Cease to Exist Unless ...,” *Vincentiana* 59, # 1 (2015), 43-57.

separate branches. Could advancement offices be established by the Vincentian Family both nationally and internationally?

The Western Province of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States has set a good example here. In 2004, it established a development office,¹⁵ under Ms. Teresa R. Manna, that functions efficiently and effectively. It raises a considerable amount of money each year to support the province's mission in Kenya, the formation of its candidates, the care of its aging confreres, and its works among migrants and others living in poverty in the United States.

8. I hope that we will develop the enormous potential of the International Miraculous Medal Association.

Over the course of its history, the Miraculous Medal Association has played a very significant role in our Family's growth. The visions of Saint Catherine Labouré, and the medal and youth groups that flowed from Mary's message to her were a powerful force in revivifying the Family after its dispersion and diminution during the French Revolution.

In recent decades, the Miraculous Medal Association has written international statutes that clearly define its mission. The revised statutes, approved by the Holy See in 2010, describe the purpose of the Association as follows:

- 1) To follow Jesus Christ with the strength of the Holy Spirit and after the example of Mary, the disciple and model of the Christian life.
- 2) To honor and encourage devotion and commitment to the Virgin of the Miraculous Medal.

¹⁵ The terminology used to describe such an office varies considerably from one culture to another: development office, advancement office, fund-raising office, etc.

- 3) To spread Marian devotion through the message of the Miraculous Medal.
- 4) To encourage the sanctification of its members through union with each other, the spiritual life and the apostolate.
- 5) To evangelize and serve: the ways of exercising the apostolate are multiple.

Traditionally, the Miraculous Medal Association in many countries has carried out its apostolate with the family, for example, visiting homes or spreading the message through magazines, popular publications, personal contact, or mailed material. The service of charity is exercised by means of projects undertaken on behalf of those who live in poverty and carried out with other branches of the Vincentian Family or by themselves. Each National Miraculous Medal Association engages in both evangelization and service according to the ways that appear to them to be most effective.¹⁶

The Association is huge and very loosely structured. One can only guess at its total membership, which seems to be somewhere between one and two million devoted Catholics. Has the Association fully realized its potential? In some countries, its members are active in carrying out the fifth aspect of its purpose, evangelization and service in collaboration with other branches. But in other countries, this aspect of the Association lies largely dormant. I sense that the International Association of the Miraculous Medal is a sleeping giant. I hope that it can soon be awakened.

¹⁶ General Statutes of the Miraculous Medal Association (2010), 7.1 - 7.5.

CONCLUSION

In “The Phaedrus,” Plato describes how the winged soul soars. Flying higher and higher, it defies the laws of gravity that weigh us all down. From new heights, it sees beyond the daily boundaries that usually hem us in. It comprehends the unity of created reality. It penetrates to the depth of things, viewing them in a broader context that gives them new meaning. It loves with a love that is no longer restricted to one’s own small world, but that transcends a particular time and space, and that is free. It reaches out toward universal beauty, goodness, and wisdom, and seeks to recreate it.

Plato concludes: *And, therefore, the mind of the reflective person alone has wings; and this is just, for he or she is always, according to the measure of his or her abilities, clinging in recollection to those things in which God abides, and, in beholding which, He is what He is. And someone who employs aright these memories is ever being initiated into perfect mysteries and alone becomes truly perfect.*¹⁷

Saint Vincent was surely a winged soul. In the century ahead, will we too, as a Family, fly as he did?

¹⁷ Plato’s dialogue, “The Phaedrus,” can be found online at: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html>

The 400th Anniversary of the Birth of the Vincentian Charism: Celebrations, Projects, and Dreams

Joseph V. Agostino, CM
Coordinator, Vincentian Family Office

When a dream captures the imagination of people, it develops wings and soars to unimagined heights. This has been the experience of the Vincentian Family during this Jubilee Year. Almost anywhere you go in the Vincentian world, you see the symbol of the Anniversary. Most publications you read from a Vincentian source feature it, or some creative variation of it, which speaks to a particular locale. Articles have been written which have invited both a thankful glance back and a hope-filled vision of the future. The Family has gathered to celebrate this once-in-a-lifetime moment, in some places more than once! Most importantly, Vincentians have examined how they serve the poor and have developed new ways to “welcome the stranger” in their midst.

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). These words have resounded throughout the 150 countries in which the Vincentian Family is found. They are a counter-cultural call to focus again our Vincentian mission on the most abandoned in every society on the planet, in the spirit of our Founder. As Saint Vincent said to his confreres, we are “to run to the spiritual needs of our neighbor as if we were running to a fire.”¹

¹ *Vincent de Paul, Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, translated and edited by Jacqueline Kilar, DC; and Marie Poole, DC; et al; annotated by John W. Carven, CM; New City Press, Brooklyn and Hyde Park, 1985-2014; volume XI, p. 25.

This is a year of renewal for our ministries. As members of the Vincentian Family, we witness to the heritage that has been entrusted to over 100 branches of our Family to collaborate for Systemic Change on behalf of those affected by poverty. This is a time of blessing for the whole Vincentian Family. It provides us with the opportunity to renew our missionary zeal and to become more mindful of the social context and the urgent needs of those who are poor, as well as our own ability to respond to those needs as a Vincentian Family.

There are some outstanding examples of the impact of this celebration thus far. The Vincentian Family in Brazil wrote an open letter condemning the corruption that is currently destroying the social fabric of its country. The Vincentian Family in India has decided to build homes for the homeless in every region of its country. The Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill in South Korea have begun new ministries focused on supporting North Korean refugees. In Haiti, the Vincentian Family's Haiti Initiative has been joined by the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity (STs), who have initially committed two priests to this collaborative effort. Thus, the Family continues to respond to the call of the Charism in our own time.

To mark this occasion on an international level, the Vincentian Family has begun four initiatives that will shape the direction in which we will grow for many years to come.

A Pilgrimage with the Heart of Saint Vincent inaugurated our celebration of this Jubilee Year.

The heart of Saint Vincent de Paul was removed from his body immediately after his death. For many years, it could be venerated at an altar in his honor in the Chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity on Rue du Bac, Paris, France.

On 25 January 2017, Saint Vincent's heart traveled from there, in a newly forged Reliquary, to Folleville, where the Anniversary was inaugurated officially. From there, it is traveling throughout France until January 2018.

There have been many powerful testimonies arising from this pilgrimage experience. The presence of the heart of Saint Vincent has moved hearts to confide, to share, and to rediscover faith. Young and old, those actively serving the poor and those being served, the faithful and even those who have been alienated from God or the Church, have had their lives changed. These miracle stories can be read on the FamVin website.

Over the next four years, Saint Vincent's heart is scheduled to travel throughout the rest of Europe. After that, it will be on pilgrimage throughout the world. Priority will be given to the peripheries, those areas closest to the heart of Vincent in his lifetime. Special preference will be given to those places where poverty is rampant.

A new Vincentian Family Project for the Jubilee Year: the Homeless Alliance is the second project we are undertaking.

On 28 June 2017, at the European Parliament in Brussels, we announced this Alliance on behalf of the homeless. This project coincides with the Sustainable Development Objectives of the United Nations. It is a project in which all of the branches of the Vincentian Family, as well as every individual in it, can participate.

The project encompasses:

- a) People who are homeless (e.g., indigent individuals and/or people who sleep on the streets),
- b) People who have temporary housing (e.g., refugee centers and people who have been displaced from their homes and have no place to live), and

- c) People who are in inadequate living conditions (e.g., marginalized neighborhoods, favelas, hostels, etc.).

The most recent reports on this topic from the United Nations suggest that, of the seven billion people on this planet, more than 1.2 billion fall within this three-tiered definition of global homelessness. It is one of the great social ills of our time. The Alliance will involve both immediate holistic care for those suffering homelessness and a campaign for systemic change in the way that homelessness is tackled at a local, regional, and global level.

The formal beginning of the Alliance is scheduled for Saturday, 14 October 2017, at the next major initiative planned for this year, the *Vincentian Family Symposium*.

This will take place in Rome, Italy, on 12-15 October 2017. Over the course of those days, many events are scheduled:

- a) Prayer Service in honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, on Thursday night, 12 October, at the church in which Mary appeared to Alphonse Ratisbonne, the Basilica of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte. This service is being organized by the International Association of the Miraculous Medal.
- b) On Friday, 13 October, conferences will be offered in six languages in churches around the Vatican. They are designed to help us further develop the essential elements of the Charism for the immediate future. We will have conversations around spirituality, formation, and the changing face of our services in response to the cries of those in poverty in today's world.

On Friday afternoon, there will be a special program offered for consecrated youth. It will be a unique opportunity for all young men and women in formation processes in all the branches of the Vincentian Family to meet one another and grow in their appreciation of the richness and depth of our shared charism.

On Friday evening, all the youth participating in the Symposium are invited to a special evening designed just for them. This celebration will continue what was begun at World Youth Day in Krakow, as they gather to honor Saint Vincent de Paul, Patron of Europe, and to be animated in their own Vincentian vocation.

Friday's special gatherings for youth touch upon another major theme of this Jubilee Year: vocations to the Vincentian Family. Father Tomaž Mavrič, CM, in his letter of 25 January 2017, set before the Vincentian Family one concrete goal: "to pray, be attentive, look for, encourage, and invite one new candidate to the consecrated life for one of the Congregations within the Vincentian Family or to join one of its lay branches as a member. Is this unrealistic? Is this a fantasy? With Jesus all is possible!"

- c) On Saturday morning, 14 October, we will gather in the Paul VI Audience Hall in the Vatican. There we will witness the formal beginning of the Vincentian Family Homeless Alliance. The upcoming Vincentian Family Film Festival will also be announced.

The highlight of the morning will be an audience with Pope Francis. The relic of the heart of Saint Vincent, which has begun its worldwide pilgrimage, will also be present with us.

- d) On Saturday evening, we will celebrate a Prayer Service in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls. This service is being organized by the International Secretariat of the Vincentian Marian Youth.
- e) Our Symposium comes to an end on Sunday morning, 15 October, with a closing Eucharist in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls. Father Tomaž Mavrič, CM, the 24th successor of Saint Vincent de Paul will be our celebrant and preacher.

The final initiative of this Jubilee Year, which is being announced at the Symposium, is a *Vincentian Family Film Festival*.

This international film festival, “*FindingVince400*” focuses on the life of Saint Vincent de Paul and highlights his love of those in poverty. It will include a call for both scripts and short films that emphasize his vision for the globalization of charity. The schedule for each stage of the process will be announced in Rome. All are invited to participate: universities, young men and women, adults, people from every continent.

This initiative will culminate with a film festival exposition scheduled for 18-20 October 2018 in Mariapolis at Castle Gandolfo, outside of Rome, Italy.

As I write this, we are barely half-way through the celebration of our Jubilee Year. So much has happened; so much is yet to come. Can we say that there are some things which we have already learned? I would like to offer some reflections.

The enthusiasm with which the Symposium has been received (over 9,000 people registered as of 10 September 2017) is a sign of the influence that the Vincentian Charism has on us to this day. The energy shown, especially by lay members of the Family, whether or not they belong to an official Vincentian Family Branch, is indicative of its ability to enflame the hearts of people with zeal for service on behalf of those most in need.

This reality underscores our need to do as Vincent did – to make sure this spirit is organized in the most effective way possible for the sake of those whom we serve. Collaboration for Systemic Change remains a great challenge for all of us, but it is the only way in which we will effectively see a true globalization of charity.

This reality also highlights the need for good formation in the Charism across all the Branches of the Vincentian Family. We need to know why we do what we do, as well as how to do it effectively. Most importantly, we need to be grounded in the Gospel of Jesus, as was Vincent, so that all our actions are led by the Spirit and bear fruit in the lives of our Lords and Masters.

Finally, we need to communicate even better. God is blessing us! When we see and hear of all the wonderful things that are happening in our Family, there can be no doubt that the Spirit is at work among us. Blessings are given to be shared. We need to praise God for these blessings by not keeping them a secret! We owe it to one another, as members of one Body and one Family, to communicate what is happening in our lives of service to those living on the peripheries. Such communication is also a sign of our appreciation for the gifts we have been given. May we be grateful disciples of the Lord and followers of Vincent.

The celebration of our Jubilee Year has only just begun. The directions in which we are embarking will have great influence in the years that lie ahead. That is the beautiful thing about our Charism. As we keep our eyes fixed on the Lord and his poor, we are called to be creative in our response, ever listening to the Spirit and the signs of the time, and free to respond as true missionaries, always moving to the peripheries to which we are beckoned.

International Community in London

Paul C. Roche, CM

London, for centuries the centre of a worldwide empire, is today a very racially mixed city. Everywhere you go you walk through areas and along streets that are almost like visiting country after country and you meet people with an endless variety of languages and cultures. These are not tourists, but people who wish to make Britain their home and that of their children. Primary schools can commonly have 50 or more first languages among their pupils and for some English remains a poor second language, which is not used at home or outside of school. Parishes have much the same reality as the schools, and so there is a great pastoral need to be answered among these non-British born residents. Many are settled and working normally, but faced with the very high cost of living – London is among the most expensive places in world. Many others of these immigrants are asylum seekers who are not allowed to work as they await a decision on their request for residency permits, something which can take several years. Others again are without legal recognition, and so are excluded from all social welfare, and who find it increasingly difficult to find accommodation and work. All this is not confined to London. It is a reality of all the urban areas of the United Kingdom, but is most pronounced in the capital city. People want to feel at home here, to feel that they belong, and church communities and the outreach from such communities offers social, as well as spiritual support.

Many of the Evangelical Churches, which are strong in their countries of origin, provide the immigrant population with a real sense of being welcome here, of being understood and belonging, and offer support and help in all sorts of ways. The Catholic Church

was not left behind, and now Ethnic Chaplaincies are well organised for about 50 different ethnic communities, some very large with a whole team of ministers, others are small and are cared for by just one Chaplain. These Ethnic Chaplains are registered with the Diocese of Westminster for immigration purposes, and receive a monthly stipend, closely equivalent to that of a diocesan priest.

The Spanish confreres have the longest tradition in this ministry here. Since the 1960s they have had very active centres here, one of which, based in Potter's Bar in North London, is now a Diocesan property; the other in Palace Court is where our little community has been based since 2011. Until 2011, this was a missionary outreach of the Salamanca Province and had little contact with the Irish Province. For more than 40 years it was the home of confreres from the Salamanca Province providing terrific support to the huge Spanish-speaking population of London, those from Latin America as well as those from Spain. Pastorally the confreres worked with families, preparing children for the sacraments, and for marriages and funerals. Sunday Eucharist was celebrated in many parishes around the city. Associated with these Sunday Eucharists, there was always a very real social dimension, where all sorts of difficulties about accommodation, work, and school places were sorted out. Father Ernesto Atanes, CM, widely known and greatly loved has been in this ministry almost since his ordination in 1970. He has established very practical cooperation with the Spanish Embassy and for years has been able to offer hospitality and short-term accommodation to people in difficulty who turned to their embassy for help and were directed to Father Ernesto.

Since 2009, Father Ernesto had been alone in this work, until the Irish Province under its Provincial, the late Father Brian Moore, suggested that it become an international community instead of just a Spanish one.

The International Community begins

In 2005, the Irish Province began an International Community. This was based in the house purchased from the French confreres in Osterley, West London, not far from Heathrow Airport. In the beginning, there were three foreign confreres, one each from Nigeria and the Philippines and later joined by one from Ethiopia. None of them joined the Irish Province, but they got the work going with their respective national populations. The location in Osterley, while a good residence, was not a good pastoral base, and the move to Palace Court in Central London was a great boost in September 2011. For almost 50 years this had been the home of the Spanish Catholic Chaplaincy. Here there is a Chapel for about 70 people, and two halls of a similar size, which are used for a variety of meetings.

With its long history, the Spanish Chaplaincy has much of its work based in the centre. Monday to Friday there is a constant stream of people coming to the office – arranging baptism and formation for First Holy Communion. Others come for marriage preparation. Many of these weddings take place in Spain, and, not infrequently, Father Ernesto will be invited to Spain to be the celebrant. Home visits, hospital visits, funerals, and cremations take the Chaplains all over the city. Weekends are very busy with three Masses in Spanish in three different locations and each one also providing catechetical training.

The other members of the community have Sunday Eucharists in various parishes around the city, generally once a month in each place, an afternoon time, and followed by a social/community meeting. Somewhat different from Father Ernesto, they tend to go out to the areas where their people live, and their mobile phones become their offices.

For many of the different ethnic minorities to which our confreres minister, religion is of the greatest importance, and they bring life to their local parishes, taking part with joy and enthusiasm in

pilgrimages, retreat, and special church events. Without them, many of the London parishes would look very tired and lacking in life.

When Father Cirino Potrido, CM (Father Inno) began his work with the Filipino community in London and beyond, he was really building on the work begun by the Columban Missionaries who had returned after many years in the Philippines, and wished to continue with the huge scattered Filipino population here in London. Over the years, it has become one of the biggest and liveliest of the ethnic communities and it has brought a great measure of celebration, joy, and deep faith to the Church of Britain.

Likewise, when the Bishops Conference of Ethiopia decided to send a confrere to London to care for its people here, Father Petros, and his successor Father Ufayissa, readily joined with the little international community and both gave it life, and got strength from it. They have been ministering to their nationals and this includes some people who are not church-going but are looking for help. Together with Father Cirino, they have been visiting the homes of their members in different locations all over London for a long time. Some Filipino and Ethiopian families made their home in the Grenfell Tower, so tragically in the news recently, and sadly some of their members are now numbered among the dead and injured from that disastrous fire.

Special pastoral needs

The immigrant ethnic-minority population is in many ways disadvantaged compared to the British-born population. Many have resorted to “people traffickers” to get here. It has cost a great deal, but they hope it opens a new and better life for them. These traffickers are not regarded as criminals, but as people who helped them to achieve what they could not have done otherwise. On arrival, the first struggle is to find accommodation, but, even with as many as three jobs a day, many find it very difficult to keep home and family

together. Things are all so expensive here – I found costs in London about six-times greater than I had known in the Ural Region of Russia before moving here in 2011. Jobs can be found, and they seem to pay well, until it comes to the cost of renting an apartment or even a room. The result is that many sublet their space to others of their community for a partial payment of the rent. Of course, this results in overcrowding, with stress and tensions. Stress related illnesses and, sadly, also suicides are part of the world in which our Confreere Ethnic Chaplains work. Who can say how many undocumented people live in Britain (the government has no accurate idea), and many of these individuals become part of a separated family – with husband or wife and children left far overseas. The immigration laws, which are constantly being made more demanding, perpetuate these sad situations and it is not infrequent that the family breaks up, and new relationships begin here and probably also in the country of origin. This is a whole world of suffering and frustration, people in a new relationship here, but doing everything they can to send money home to support their partner or children there. Very sadly, too, there are people here who have been trafficked by criminals, some for the sex trade, some for slave-like poorly paid work. They also can be part of the ministry of the Ethnic Chaplains, usually in partnership with specialised groups (some church-based, some not), who work in the world of contemporary slavery.

International community life

For those who have not experienced it, living in an international community appears to be very challenging. But in reality it is not. In London, our style of community living is rather open and free. We all take part in community prayer at 7.00 am and generally in the Eucharist that follows. We take turns in leading this. Sometimes few, or maybe no one, will be present for the Mass, because they will have Eucharist later in the day in other places. Once a week on Thursday evenings at 7.00 pm we have a community evening – it is a mixture of prayer, discussion, and a little agape. It has virtually never

been missed over the years, and can continue to 9.30 or later. A lot of issues from the different ministries are discussed, and attention given to Vincentian affairs. The members take part in Vincentian days of recollection and retreats, though often the diocese arranges specific retreats for the Ethnic Chaplains and it is good for them to take part in these. Language differences are not usually a problem, but, of course, they hide a different way of thinking and seeing the same reality. That is something to be respected, and it also shows itself in differing senses of humour! Different food-tastes also exist, but I have found this not to be a real difficulty. As in most communities, apart from the Altar, the dining table is the heart of the community. We have an Ethiopian lady from one of our parishes in Ethiopia who cooks lunch for us Monday to Friday. It is sort of neutral and not really the dish of one or other but acceptable to all. On weekends, we prepare for ourselves, when at home. Basically, we have a happy and supportive community life, and each year the confreres get home for a month's holiday.

The future.

What is the future for this International Community? The need is great and will continue through Brexit and beyond. However, at a practical level, immigration laws are making it very difficult to get visas for confreres from outside Europe – which are the places from which we most wish to have them.

A further issue that needs to be addressed – the confreres we have had in this ministry for more than 12 years have not belonged to the Irish Province. The example of the Vice-Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Eastern Europe shows this is the way to go. Confreres have been changed from our community by their Visitor, which is completely his right to do, but with little reference to us and our plans, and they may be replaced or not. This leads to an inherent instability, and deprives our work and the Irish Province of great life and freshness of thought – which is much needed. It could be so easily addressed by the two Visitors agreeing to a simple contract,

perhaps for one year initially, and then, if all are happy, extending it to three or five years. A longer period in this work here, also offers the possibility of further studies on a part-time basis, which could lead to a good qualification and be a real enrichment to the Province of Origin when the confrere would eventually return home. An exciting aspect of this mission is the possibility of vocations to the Congregation. Presently there are two seminarians training for the Irish Province, and others showing interest, all this more than 25 years after our last priestly ordination. Neither of these seminarians is British or Irish-born, but seem destined for an international Vincentian mission in this part of the world.

The future of this mission involves a small number of confreres from different nationalities and provinces. It will not just happen. It must be promoted actively and planned inter-provincially. This has not been happening. Unless it happens, the whole thing may simply wither away, and an opportunity will be lost and a great need will go unanswered.

In thinking of the future, it will be good to think more widely than previously. There is a possibility, for example, of making a future International Community a Vincentian Family Community – or at least a joint one with the Daughters of Charity. The immigrant issue is likely to continue, and, even without a flood of newcomers, there are so many here already. The Vincentian Charism can enrich their lives and their faith, and we can collaborate at this level.

Note:

All the above was written before the death of Father Ernesto Atanes Payo, CM, on 4 July 2017. I took part in his funeral in his home place. The attendance there of up to 2,000 people, who came to pay their respects, and also the huge congregation, which gathered in the Church of the Holy Apostles, Pimlico, London on 5 July, testify to the great worth of his ministry in London since 1971 – “*By their fruits you shall know them*” (Matthew 7:16).

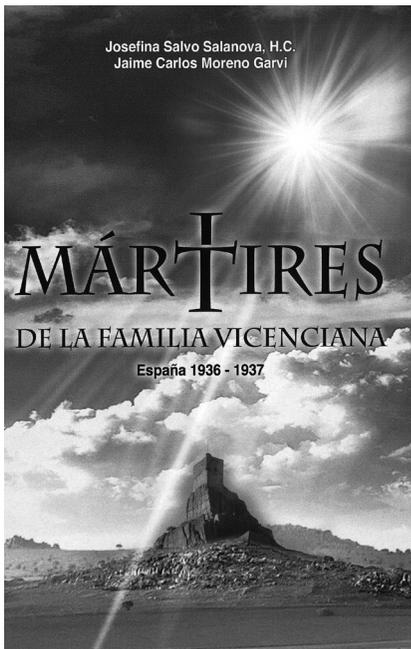
6

Vincentian Bibliography

Martyrs of the Vincentian Family

Spain 1936-1937

By: Josefina Salvo Salanova, DC and Jaime Carlos Moreno Garvi



In this book one will find a summary of the life and martyrdom of the 33 priests and the 16 brothers of the Congregation of the Mission, the 2 Daughters of Charity, the 5 diocesan priests and the 13 lay persons who are to be beatified. Some of those lay persons were members of the Miraculous Medal Association and the first members to undergo martyrdom and now the first to be beatified. The life and martyrdom of these individuals reflect the apostolic outreach and the values of the Vincentian vocation as well as

the contributions that the Vincentian Family made to the church in Spain during the first half of the twentieth century.

This work is intended to serve as a reference for future research, be that in the form of individual biographies or more profound theological and/or pastoral studies. Even though one finds here brief narrations, nevertheless, the footnotes open the door to more critical research.

The primary source for this book is the documentation that was utilized during the process of canonization and the *Positio* that was written by the same authors: one, a Daughter of Charity and the vice-postulator of the Cause, and the other, a historian and a grandson of one of the martyrs. The authors were rigorous in their search for the truth ... the historical truth and, as far as possible, the transcendental truth (the mystery of the relationship between the individual believer and his/her ever-faithful God). We also find here some theological reflections on martyrdom (written by Father Nieto) and a letter written by Father Santos to his confreres telling them that they should be comforted by the fact that it was God who chose him and animated him and strengthened him to forgive his persecutors, to cry out long live Christ, the King ... words that express the reason for his unjust death, yet a death that was not in vain.