

The Structure of Vincentian Studies and Animation

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The 1980 General Assembly had requested "*that each Province, or group of Provinces, should have an its own organisation for the promotion of basic studies and their propagation (St. Vincent, St. Louise, the History of the Congregation, etc.). An organisation on the international level will have as its objective the coordination of these efforts and the dissemination of the results.*" There is, at the moment, a great riches at this level in the Congregation, but it is rather poorly recognised and, frequently, each organisation works independently, without involvement in a sustained contact with the others.

In an effort to improve the situation, SIEV has contacted the various Visitors to find out and come to a better understanding of all the organisations of Vincentian Studies and animation in the Congregation. The structures referred to have been indicated to us in answer to a questionnaire prepared by us. In the following pages we give a brief presentation of each of these organisations concluding with SIEV itself, so that everybody can be informed of what is available at this level of study, and the existing possibilities.

We also hope that, once they have succeeded in becoming mutually better informed, all the organisations will, beyond the differences of language and culture, find a means of rich collaboration in the future. We hope, besides, that this exchange of information about the aims and realities of the groups will stimulate the creativity of each on in this field for a better service to the Congregation and to the whole Vincentian Family.

Herewith the structures researched and described in these pages.

1. CLAPVI. Latin American Conference of Vincentian Provinces .
2. CEVCO. Commission of Vincentian Studies of Colombia.
3. CAVI. Vincentian Animation Centre (Peru).
4. CAVIM. Vincentian Animation and Missionary Centre (Chile).
5. VSI. Vincentian Studies Institute (USA).
6. MEGVIS. Central European Vincentian Studies Group.
7. GRAV. Research and Vincentian Animation Group (France).
8. Gav. Vincentian Animation Group (Italy).
9. Vincentian Studies Week (Salamanca)
10. SIEV. International Secretariat for Vincentian Studies.

It should be understood that the list does not include the centres or sessions of ongoing formation such as "CIF" which, of course, provide an excellent work of formation, but are not quite what we are dealing with in the present instance. They might be the object of a future disquisition. We have, however, included the "Salamanca Study Weeks," mainly because of their importance as a source of bibliography.

I. CLAPVI

Latin American Conference of Vincentian Provinces.

- 1. Address.** Carrera 30A, No. 24-81; Barrio Gran America; Santafé de Bogotá; Colombia.
- 2. Description.** Founded on 24 September 1971, it offers a permanent service of orientation and coordination of Vincentian studies and activities. It provides for those affiliated to it solutions of their common problems, mutual help, and reinforcement of Vincentian unity and fraternity. CLAPVI is made up of provincials, vice-provincials and delegate members working in Latin America.
- 3. Objectives.** The general objective is to actualise the charism of St. Vincent in all our activities in the historic context of the present time in Latin America. The specific objectives leading to the above are:
 - a) interior renewal of all members,
 - b) bringing our apostolic activities into harmony with the ends of the Congregation as defined in our Constitutions and Statutes,
 - c) pursuit of common strands of formation and action,
 - d) exchange of experiences in the various sectors of our pastoral activity, vocational work and in our formation,
 - e) defining the common criteria governing the interpretation and application of the regulations of the Church and General Curia in the context of the Latin America situation,
 - f) creation of a communitarian consciousness of the Latin American scene,
 - g) developing inter-provincial collaboration,
 - h) promoting contacts between provinces, to which other Communities and Lay Associations could be invited.
- 4. Membership.** Full members are those incorporated members of provinces, vice-provinces and the "delegates" mentioned above. "Represented" members are the Visitors and Vice-Visitors of Latin American origin, plus the members of the Community who represent the delegates or their substitutes, as well as the Executive Secretary of the Conference; besides these, whenever the General Assembly of CLAPVI coincides with the General Assembly of the Congregation, the Latin

American Delegates of the latter, qualify as participants with the right to contribute and vote.

CLAPVI is administered, on the one hand, by its *own General Assembly*, which convenes ordinarily every three years, or when matters of great import so demand and, on the other hand, by the *Executive Council* which meets once in between the ordinary General Assembly.

5. Activities. Between 1974 and 1979, six interprovincial sessions of spiritual renewal were organised, each of between four and six weeks duration. Since 1980, there were 22 interprovincial meetings lasting ten days, open in general to the whole Vincentian Family. These took place in different areas of Latin America. In all cases, there was a deepening of our appreciation of doctrine, while real brotherly contact was also the goal. In the meeting in Mexico (1994) there was an additional period of ten days devoted to missionary work in two parishes comprising 45 different locations. In these missions, 80 members of the Vincentian Family took part.

6. Publication. The periodical *CLAPVI* first launched in 1973, has reached its 99th edition. Its content is ecclesiastical, Vincentian, and Latin American, aiming at the unity of the Congregation among the Latin American Provinces. The editor of this publication is the Executive Secretary of CLAPVI, always working in harmony with the Executive Council and relying on the participation of the General Curia and the Latin American Provinces.

II. CEVCO

Commission of Vincentian Studies of Colombia

1. Address. Seminario Mayor Villa Paúl; Calle 15 No. 19A-96; Funza (Cundinamarca); Colombia.

2. Description. This organisation, which has had many different names and titles down through the years, was founded in 1977. It consists of a group of CM of Colombia, whose object is a deeper study of the personality, writings and spirituality of St. Vincent, with a view also of spreading information about their findings.

3. Objectives. It proposes:

- a) a study of St. Vincent and his historical influence in the light of the reality of the present era, and of the Magisterium of the Church, this being the appropriate manner of imbuing us with his spirit (cf., C 50),
- b) to help the promotion of our apostolic mission in the province on the basis of our charism and in union with the Visitors,
- c) pass on the results of our investigations to the Vincentian Family, and even beyond.

4. Membership. First the Visitor, the main source of animation in the province, secondly those members of the Province of Colombia who will have sought in writing to be accepted and wish to participate in the Commission. At the moment, there are 10 members.

5. Activities.

- a) work on projects (long- and short-term) geared towards the achievement of our objectives, b) a yearly meeting aimed at divulging the results of our labours,
- c) to publish the results of our studies and take responsibility for the addition of "Cuadernos Vicentinos," or in the collection called "CVI,"
- d) at stated times, to promote the work of Congresses and Meetings with the object of spreading the Vincentian charism.

A Congress is a gathering of representatives of the Vincentian Family to seek, together and in the light of St Vincent, those doctrinal criteria which promote the apostolate by means of our experiences and tightening of paternal links.

A Meeting is a gathering of confreres and Daughters of Charity for studying and deepening of views on specific subjects, especially those of common interest.

The organising of these gatherings takes place in a rotating fashion _ first year, study in CEVCO, second year, the Congress, and third year, the Meeting.

III. CAVI

Vincentian Animation Centre, Peru.

1. Address. Jr. Martir Olaya No. 280; Apartado 18-0466; Lima 18; Peru.

2. Description. CAVI was set up in 1988 by the Visitor of the Province of Peru and his council with a view to promoting Vincentian spirituality through a number of activities, both permanent and occasional.

3. Objectives.

- a) promote ongoing formation in the realm of Vincentian spirituality of the members of the province, as well as among other Vincentian movements and Congregations,
- b) to supply the above-mentioned with material for formation,
- c) to lay down criteria for Vincentian spirituality and the pastoral missionary sphere,
- d) to foster integration of the Vincentian Family.

4. Membership. All those belonging to Vincentian Congregations and Movements, all represented by a Commission called by the Visitors, plus two members of the Provincial Council, the Director and ex-Director of CAVI.

5. Activities.

- a) monthly days on Vincentian spirituality,
- b) annual week of Vincentian studies,
- c) retreats for Vincentian laity (four per year),
- d) annual meeting of members,
- f) annual days for Vincentian acolytes,
- g) the Vincentian Union of Peru, made up of delegates from the Vincentian Congregations and Organisations working in the country. They organise the Feast of St. Vincent each year.

6. Publications. Various occasional publications, also Liturgical Manual for the Acolyte Movement, AIC Volunteers for Peace, Witness of Jesus (leaflets for the Sacrament of Confirmation), Mary the Way, and Prayer, Peace Rosary, etc.

IV.CAVIM

Vincentian Animation and Missionary Centre.

1. Address. Casilla 14673; Correo 21; Alameda; Bernard O'Higgins 1632; Santiago; Chili.

2. Description. CAVIM was set up on 20 February 1998 by the Province of Chili. Its aim is to inspire coordination and to organise activity at the level of spirituality and missionary endeavour in the province noted for its work in rural and marginal conditions.

3. Objectives.

- a) inspire the missionary life and apostolate of our members, in keeping with the Provincial Plan,
- b) contribute to the organisation of activities aimed at deepening the spirituality and celebration of the Vincentian Family,
- c) help towards a progressive formation of lay people in our work,
- d) correlate and develop the missions, under the aegis of the provincial.

4. Membership. The centre is directed by a Commission of members of the province meeting every two months.

5. Activities.

- a) inspiration and motivation of members of the Province,
- b) organisation of the principal feasts of the family of St. Vincent,
- c) support of works of the province through the formation of lay missionaries,
- d) in the future, to work for and in coordination with the other members of the Vincentian Family.

6. **Publication.** For the moment, a simple leaflet in the Provincial Bulletin.

V. VSI

Vincentian Studies Institute, USA.

1. **Address.** 1123 North Kenmore Avenue; Chicago IL 60614-3594; USA.
2. **Description.** Founded 1979, its mission is to promote a living interest in our Vincentian heritage. Its co-patrons are the 10 Provincials of the CM and DC in the US
3. **Objectives.**
 - a) to encourage, support, and coordinate fundamental research into the level of Vincentian life, spirituality and history,
 - b) to participate in the fruits resulting from the regular publication of the magazine *Vincentian Heritage*, or similar types of publications; also by such means as seminars, workshops and weekends,
 - c) to promote a lively interest in the Vincentian heritage in the Vincentian Family, so as to develop and strengthen its integration into today's life, ministry and collaboration in the Community.
4. **Membership.** Composed of confreres, Daughters of Charity and one lay person who is responsible for the publications.
5. **Activities.**
 - a) Publish *Vincentian Heritage* as above; also annual pamphlets and other books,
 - b) Set up National symposia,
 - c) Through contact with our own DePaul University Library in Chicago, it maintains a department of Vincentian Heritage to provide books, cards, posters and other Vincentian objects of art.
6. **Publications.** Bi-annual publication of *Vincentian Heritage*.

VI. MEGVIS

Central European Vincentian Studies Group.

1. **Address.** Vinzenz 1; Von Paul Gymnasium; D-54591; Prüm;, Germany.
2. **Description.** It was set up by the Vincentian Provinces of the Low Countries and Germany in order to develop studies in the Vincentian area.
3. **Objectives**

- a) to study Vincentian activities, especially in Central Europe,
- b) study Vincentian ideas and their application in the German-speaking world,
- c) study the history and experience of our Communities in regions of former Communist domination.

4. Membership. It consists of CM confreres in the low Countries, Austria, Hungary and Slovakia; also DC's and members of the Federation of Sisters of Charity of the above countries, and Society of St. Vincent de Paul members (and those of AIC), in the same countries.

5. Activities. An annual two-day get-together, comprised of about 70 members of the Vincentian Family, held in the first week of Easter at Innsbruck, Salzburg, Augsburg, or Untermachtal.

6. Publications. The magazine *MEGVIS* and several other books.

VII. GRAV

Research and Vincentian Animation Group, France.

1. Address. 95 Rue de Sèvres; 75006 Paris; France.

2. Description. Founded in 1993 it has taken up the task of the Interprovincial Council of the Provinces of Paris and Toulouse. Composed of confreres and DC's, it is open to the other members of the Vincentian Family and meets twice yearly.

3. Objectives. The essential aim is to promote the Vincentian Spiritual experience in its well- springs, its literary expression, and its realisation in the French language. The following are its means of articulating its purpose:

- a) research to bring the work of St. Vincent and his heirs to bear in the domain of history, doctrine and spirituality,
- 1) to produce and spread Vincentian productions in the French language; to make known our publications, and to promote others which are in the pipeline. For this, modern methods are used (e.g., videos, discs, CD-ROM, etc.)

4. Membership. Fourteen permanent members, i.e., the Visitors of the two Provinces, plus 9 confreres and 3 DC's. In addition, the office is made up of three confreres and one DC.

5. Activities.

- a) mutual exchange of information as to the work in progress,
- b) welcoming proposed work of research (realisation, canonization of St. Perboyre, letters of Blessed Clet).

VIII. GAV

Vincentian Animation Group, Italy.

- 1. Address.** At present, it is that of the President, Fr. Biagio Falco; Ex Convento Cappuccini; 85025 Melfi (Potenza); Italy.
- 2. Description.** Founded in 1974, it is the Italian Foundation for Vincentian Animation and Studies. It consists of the three CM Provinces, the five DC Provinces, the Sisters of Charity of St. Jeanne Antide Thouret, the AIC and the Marian Youth of that country.
- 3. Objectives.** Its idea is to inspire the Italian communities and provinces through meetings, colloques pertaining to the Vincentian "School" by means of studies, books, articles, and "special issues" of magazines, and information about initiatives and publications of a historic character in the Vincentian field.
- 4. Membership.** Made up of the various representatives of the groups mentioned above.
- 5. Activities.**
 - a) conferences or study days on Vincentian history and spirituality, open to all the Vincentian Family,
 - b) Vincentian Family retreats,
 - c) Vincentian "Journeys," i.e., meetings covering four or five days, devoted to study, prayer and living together fraternally,
 - d) preparation of material useful for formation and propaganda (booklets, pictures, tapes, etc.).
- 6. Publications.** Of special issues of magazines, such as *Annali della Missione*, and *Missione Vincentiana*.

IX.

Vincentian Studies Week, Salamanca, Spain.

- 1. Address.** PP Paúles; Carretera de Madrid 14; 7900 Santa María de Tormes; Spain.
- 2. Description.** The Vincentian Studies of Salamanca Weeks started in 1972. They are not, strictly speaking, an organisation. They are rather annual week-long formation activities. However, given their important contribution to the reflection and animation of the Community and the many books edited as a result, they are entitled to their place here.

The "Weeks" are organised by the C.M. Province of Salamanca, with the participation of all the provinces of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters

of Charity of Spain which support the as a means of ongoing formation for their members.

3. Objectives.

- a) distribution and deepening of Vincentian studies,
- b) ongoing formation of confreres, Daughters of Charity and Vincentian laity,

4. Membership. A confrere is the organiser of the "Weeks," together with a delegate of the Provincial of the Daughters of Charity. The Weeks are opened to all CM's, DC's and Spanish Vincentian laity.

5. Activities. Since 1972, with the exception of two years, they have been held regularly.

6. Publications. The conferences and discussions are published by CEME, the publication house of our confreres of Salamanca. This has provided a total of 23 books on the subject of our spirituality and charism.

X. SIEV

International Secretariat for Vincentian Studies.

1. Address. Curia Generalizia CM; Via dei Capasso, 30; 00164 Roma; Italy.

2. Description. SIEV is an international organization of Vincentian studies and animation, under the patronage of the General Curia. It was founded after the General Assembly of 1980, which had suggested the setting up of an international body to coordinate interprovincial and provincial bodies working on the above subject, so as to propagate their research. It holds an annual meeting.

3. Objectives. To animate, inform and promote all that is involved in Vincentian Studies. It is conjoined with all Vincentian and DC organisations.

In earlier years, it aimed at promoting St. Vincent on a theoretic level, whereas more recently a more pastoral dimension has been added, with emphasis on the practical application of our charism. In this connection, we refer to the setting up of a "Vincentian Month" dealing with popular missions.

4. Membership. SIEV is made up of 6 CM personnel, guaranteeing a fair representation of all language groups. An executive secretary is the driving force. The members are nominated by the Superior General for a six-year period, renewable for a further three years. One of the members is the Delegate of the General Curia.

There are also correspondents in various provinces, or groups of provinces, who form a link between SIEV and the individual provinces, informing them of what is happening on the level of Vincentian studies in the local or regional sphere.

5. Activities.

- a) concentrates on Vincentian studies existing at present, and promotes new ones,
- b) provides practical materials for Vincentian formation, i.e., a Vincentian library of French, English and Spanish language materials for the development of our students,
- c) organises colloques or sessions of formation in the Vincentian mould at an international level, like the "Vincentian Months" or the forthcoming "Session on Islam,"
- d) sponsors the publication of a Vincentian Bibliography as complete as possible, part of which is about to be published in our CD Rom and Internet in all languages,
- e) sponsors the publication of Vincentian texts as above,
- f) sets up archives of Vincentian pictures, etc.,
- g) collects documents of the Holy See in relation to the Vincentian Family from the year 1876 up to our time.

6. Publications. It publishes articles or gives its patronage to special issues of *Vincentiana*.

(Translated by Andrew Spelman, CM)