

May 20, 2002

To the members of the Vincentian Family

Dear brothers and sisters,

May the grace and peace of God, Our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

Each year, about this time, we write to ask the members of our Vincentian Family to begin to prepare for the day of common prayer that we celebrate annually around September 27. Last year we invited all our branches to focus, for the first time in our history, on a common theme: "The Globalization of Charity: The Fight Against Hunger." The response has been enormous. On all the continents our members have designed creative projects to fight against hunger. Descriptions of hundreds of such projects have been sent to us. With you, I thank God today for all your labors in this regard. As an incentive to those who wish to begin further projects, we have published, in the bulletins of the various branches of our Family, outlines of a number of projects that have already been undertaken. Further descriptions can be found on our web site (www.famvin.org).

This year, while continuing the Campaign Against Hunger, we have decided to undertake a new, parallel initiative; namely, we are sending you a prayer which we hope will come to be used frequently, perhaps even daily, in all the branches of our Vincentian Family. At the annual meeting of those responsible for many of the principal branches of our Family, we worked at composing this prayer together, using some preexisting models, and we also chose a graphic that would be on the front side of the prayer card that we urge all the branches of the Family to publish. For your convenience, I am enclosing a copy of the prayer card, which we hope will be printed in each country and distributed on or around September 27. On our web site you will find the prayer in five languages, along with the graphic. These can be downloaded for your use (<http://www.famvin.org/oratio/>).

As you can imagine, the number of prayer cards to be printed and distributed in some countries will be enormous. In order that this might be done at a reasonable cost, we suggest that the heads of the various branches of the Family in each country (or, if it seems feasible, groups of countries) work out together a way in which the

prayer card can be printed and distributed, with the costs being shared. We recommend that, when the members of the Family come together for the annual day of prayer on September 27, the prayer card would be distributed, with some explanation, and that the prayer be used together for the first time, while suggesting that it be prayed frequently, even daily, in the future by the members of our Family, whether as individuals at home, or in common during meetings, etc.

In order to facilitate the organization of the annual day of prayer, we are attaching a page of guidelines, as usual.

Few things were more important to St. Vincent than prayer. It is a “fountain of youth,” he told us (SV IX, 217), by which we are invigorated. It is refreshment in the midst of daily work in the service of the poor (SV IX, 416). It is a gentle dew that refreshes the soul every morning (SV IX, 402). Today, with you, we ask the Lord to make us deeply prayerful, gospel-centered servants of the poor.

Patricia Palacios de Nava
President, AIC (founded in 1617)

Yvon Laroche, rsv
Superior General, Religious of
St. Vincent de Paul (founded in 1845)

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General, Congregation of the
Mission (founded in 1625)

Gladys Abi-Saïd
President, Vincentian
Marian Youth (founded in 1847)

Sr. Juana Elizondo, D.C.
Superior General, Daughters of
Charity (founded in 1633)

Charles Shelby, C.M.
International Coordinator of the
Miraculous Medal Association
(founded in 1909)

José Ramón Díaz Torremocha
President, St. Vincent de Paul
Society (founded in 1833)

Eva Villar
President, MISEVI
(founded in 1999)

GUIDELINES FOR SEPTEMBER 27, 2002

1. The heads of the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, AIC, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, JMV, MISEVI, the Miraculous Medal Association, and the Religious of St. Vincent de Paul in each city or area should meet as soon as possible in order to begin to plan the prayer celebration. After receiving this letter, would you please contact one another by phone or other suitable means as soon as possible. To facilitate this matter, we ask the superior of the Congregation of the Mission in each area to initiate these contacts. If there are no members of the Congregation of the Mission in the area, then we ask the superior of the Daughters of Charity to be the initiator.
2. Please invite the other branches of the Vincentian Family in your area to join in this celebration (e.g., other groups of laity, sisters, brothers, or priests living in the Vincentian spirit). It is especially important that the young feel at home at our celebrations. Our gathering can be an opportune moment for them to know men and women who share St. Vincent's vision.
3. We encourage you too to provide for the participation of the poor, who evangelize us by their presence.
4. The day of prayer could include a common celebration of the Eucharist or some other communal service, according to the circumstances in each area. If a Mass is not possible, one might envision a celebration of the word, with readings, hymns, prayers, sharing of thoughts, etc. In other contexts, one could envision a "Holy Hour," with the usual liturgical actions (processions, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, readings, etc.).
5. During this year's celebration, the new prayer card could be distributed and explained. Then the prayer could be said together. All could be encouraged to use the prayer frequently in the future, even daily.
6. One could also organize, depending on the circumstances, a moment for ongoing formation and/or for relaxed social contact.
7. The celebration should be organized on or around September 27, in accord with what date would best promote the participation of the various members of our family. It is important that the celebration be truly *communal*, with the active participation of members of the various branches. A wise distribution of roles will guarantee that all groups take part.
8. The readings suggested for the Mass of St. Vincent should be used (Is 52:7-10; 1 Cor 1:26-31, 2:1-2; Mt 5:1-12a), along with, if you judge it helpful, other appropriate selections from St. Vincent's writings. Much will depend on the

kind of celebration that is organized in each area. A prayer of the faithful should be prepared with intentions contributed by members of the various branches of the Vincentian Family.

9. In order to raise consciousness about our annual day of prayer, about our campaign against hunger, and about the new prayer card to be used in our Family, we suggest the following:
 - a. the use of various media to publicize them: articles in the press, announcements on the radio, television, etc.
 - b. the use of our international, national, and local web pages to publicize them.
10. We hope that, around September 27, our Family in each country, might evaluate the projects that have been organized for the Campaign Against Hunger, and, if it seems opportune, initiate others.