

VINCENTIANA

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January-March 2012



Theme Articles of Systemic Change

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
GENERAL CURIA

Editor's Note

In this first issue of 2012, our theme is *Systemic Change*, a major theme that emerged from the 2010 General Assembly. However, systemic change has been on the horizon in the Congregation of the Mission as well as throughout the Vincentian Family for number of years. In 2006, Fr. G. Gregory Gay, C.M. established a Commission for Systemic Change with the desire to promote an awareness of and participation in this developing direction in society, one quite consonant with the social doctrine of the Church. In fact, at the General Assembly in 2010, systemic change became one of the five main themes for implementation in the "Lines of Action" for the worldwide Vincentian community.

However, as this issue will show, systemic change is more than a commission, concept, or promulgation. In this issue, you will learn about some of its core concepts. The book "Seeds of Hope", written by various members of the Commission for Systemic Change, is discussed in detail in the first article. Called a primer, it gives an overview of the most salient strategies of systemic change, as well as a rationale for systemic change in Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, the rule of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and the 2005 organizational statement at a meeting of the AIC (International Association of Charity).

Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M., former Superior General and a tireless advocate for systemic change, makes a point by that the title of his article "Evangelization and Systemic Change", these two values are complimentary, not contradictory. He suggests specific strategies, giving a treasure trove of resources to help one to understand and adapt systemic change to our charism.

In her article, Mrs. Patricia Nava, former president of the AIC, discusses how to take an existing project and transform it, using the principles of systemic change. Mrs. Nava writes from experience and not from theory. As the former president of AIC and a founding member of the Commission for Systemic Change, she has travelled the world, actively advocating for the poor and teaching others ways to do so. She writes with an admirable wisdom borne from experience.

Blessed Frederick Ozanam is one of the great examples in the Church and the Vincentian Family of a man not only converted unto Christ and the poor, but who came to see the necessity of systemic change in 19th century France. Mentored by Daughter of Charity Rosalie Rendu,

he allowed himself to move beyond the safe circles of the Sorbonne and actively entered the world of the poor. Renowned British scholar Dr. Austin Fagan discusses the life and activities of Blessed Frederick Ozanam, giving us much to reflect upon as we consider the impact the founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society had in his day, and that the Society continues to hold today. He is among the first modern progenitors of systemic change in the Vincentian family.

Although this issue will reach you well into the 'New Year' of 2012, this issue also contains the annual statistical report of the Congregation of the Mission for the year 2011 for your review. This report is compiled through the participation of all provinces, vice provinces, and regions throughout the world, giving all readers a thumb nail sketch of the Congregation of the Mission in 2011. Compiling such a report is one of the more difficult tasks of the Secretariat of the General Curia, but such work is indispensable and serves as a valuable frame of reference.

One other matter albeit, a delicate one. Our readers have noticed a substantial increase in the subscription price for *Vincentiana*. This is due to the costs of paper, printing, and especially mailing which have risen substantially in the last few years. The subscription rate has remained quite stable for the past five years, veered between € 40 and under. However, in reaffirming the importance of this journal for not only the confreres and the Vincentian family, the General Curia believed that this increase was necessary to counter the growing deficit spending of the cost of producing this journal, and to ensure its continuance is a quality publication. Your patronage and readership is most appreciated, and every effort will be made, to contain costs in the future, and to provide you with the quality journal that reflects high standards of research and scholarship, with information on the charism of St. Vincent de Paul. We can do no less than strive to be the best for all members of the Vincentian family.

Sincerely in St. Vincent,

John T. Maher, C.M.

Editor, *Vincentiana*

GENERAL CURIA

The Season of Lent, 2012



A 'restavek' child seeking relief

"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (St. Augustine of Hippo).

To all members of the Vincentian Family

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

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

We live in a world filled with restlessness. Life's demands often come upon us at a fast and furious pace. Living with the realities of war, poverty, terrorism, political unrest, economic and ecological disasters, we are a people wearied by life. Our sentiments can be like the psalmist: *"How long, O Lord? How long will you hide your face from me?" (Ps. 13:1)*

In the midst of these challenges, the Church offers us a precious gift: the season of Lent. It is a sacred space, a time beckoning us to pause, draw back from life's daily grind, and drink more deeply of Jesus' story

of our salvation: his life, passion, and resurrection. Simply put, Lent is a time of sabbatical for the soul.

As a people claimed by Christ and committed to the charism of St. Vincent de Paul, this holy season can help us better live out our Catholic faith and the Vincentian way. Like Vincent, our identity is rooted in Christ. A reading of the first Sunday in Lent tells us Jesus *"suffered once for our sins, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God"* (**1 Pt. 3:18**). These forty days of Lent are not only a time for prayer, penance, and almsgiving, but also for reflection, connection, and action.

A Time for Reflection

The Sunday Gospels in Lent give us much food for thought as they reveal the person and power of Jesus. He is seen as a mystic emerging from the desert, a Messiah transfigured before the apostles, a prophet driven to decry injustice in the temple precinct, a wise teacher willing to dialogue with a Pharisee, and a suffering servant ready to glorify God by embracing his Passion. From these Gospels and in the daily Scriptures for the Eucharist during Lent, we find the stories of God's love and mercy to Israel, and Jesus' words and deeds in proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

By praying the Lenten Scriptures and partaking daily in the Eucharist, we open ourselves to the great mercy of God, manifested in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. It was Vincent de Paul's willingness to reflect deeply on Jesus' life and teachings, and his eagerness to integrate them into his life that made him a "mystic of charity". Vincent was imbued with a drive to serve the poor, and he motivated and empowered others to do the same. But what fed his restless soul were not ideas and accomplishments, but a mind and heart given to reflection and contemplation:

"We cannot better assure our eternal happiness than by living and dying in the service of the poor, in the arms of Providence, and with genuine renunciation of ourselves in order to follow Jesus Christ" (St. Vincent: CCD, Vol. 3, p. 384, Letter 1078, 4 December 1648).

Vincent's personal conversion in making the teachings of Jesus his own and his founding communities and organizations to serve the poor were the fruit of his life-long commitment to prayer and reflection. In making time for reflection, we are like the Greek elders who asked the apostle Philip: *"Sir, we would like to see Jesus"* (**Jn. 12:21**). And as Vincent's life teaches us, God never refuses an invitation to commune with us. Lent is the time for us to do so.

A Time for Connection

The fruit of time spent in reflection and prayer is a deeper connection with God, oneself, our neighbor, and the poor. In a restless world of discord and disconnection, Lent helps us to deepen our discipleship with Christ and better live our Vincentian charism. We can learn from Vincent, whose genius in connecting people to achieve the common good endures today. The Lenten Gospels portray Jesus as always fervently doing the Father's will. By his prayer and in his Passion, Jesus always remained connected to God.

Years ago, a popular advertisement in the USA used as its slogan "*We're all connected*". In today's digital age, this refrain is all the more relevant. Our faith and charism challenge us to connect Jesus' command to love God and serve our neighbor more profoundly. Lent calls us to examine more clearly the presence of the suffering Christ in the world so that we might understand their plight and be Christ to them.

As Superior General, I have the privilege of visiting the Vincentian family throughout the world and witnessing how our charism connects the poor to Christ. Allow me to share two such encounters. Both are ministries coordinated by the Daughters of Charity, serving vulnerable at-risk children who live in poverty.

On a trip to Haiti to view the progress of our Zafen Project, I visited a school started by Daughters of Charity begun in response to the plight of the *Restavek children*. It is truly tragic: between 175,000 to 300,000 of these children come from families unable to take care of them, and so are sent to work as 'indentured servants' for relatives, acquaintances, or other Haitian families. Called "*Restaveks*" (French-Creole for "rester- avec - to stay with"), their lives are not restful, nor do they belong 'with' the family they serve. Often mistreated and abused, *Restavek children* cannot attend school, and lack food, clothing, and health care. At the Daughters' school for *Restaveks*, they are fed, taught to read and write, and treated with a respect and dignity they have never known. To learn more about the *Restavek* children, go to: <http://www.restavekfreedom.org>.

In Ghana, as with many developing nations, the exploitation of children is ever present. In Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city, many homeless children live on the streets and survive by begging or day labor. Often beaten and abused, many become victims of human trafficking. The Daughters of Charity, with the Archdiocese of Kumasi, founded "Street Children Project", a drop-in center providing respite from the perils of the street. It offers them a place to rest, (basic, simple floor space), the use of bathrooms to shower and wash, clean clothes, literacy classes, day care, outreach, and alternatives for these

children. It is a quiet space amidst a harsh life of exploitation. To learn more about this work, go to: <http://www.streetchildrenprojectksi.org>.

I think you would agree that these two Vincentian works would be near and dear to the hearts of Sts. Vincent and Louise. They stand as wonderful example of “grass-root” efforts to respond to the cry of the poor and forgotten with the Good News of Jesus. Lent is a time not only to reflect on Jesus’ life, but to connect with God’s poor and act on their behalf.

A Time for Action

“What must be done?” This was the question Madam de Gondi posed to Vincent in 1617 as both witnessed the spiritual plight of peasants on her vast family estate. His answer to that question redounds in today’s world in the priests, brothers, sisters, and laity who are the living, organic heart of the Vincentian Family. Ours is a global reality with an outreach much greater than Vincent and Louise could ever have imagined.

But the Lenten season reminds us that the suffering Christ in his Passion is present in our world in countless ways. As disciples of Jesus, it is our task to act on their behalf. *“Whatever you did for the least of my brethren, you did to me”* (Mt. 25:40). It is our task, both individually and collectively as bearers of the Vincentian charism to respond in love and service. While there is always much to keep us busy, let me to suggest another type of action.

At our recent General Assembly, the Congregation of the Mission adopted a five-year strategic plan with yearly objectives to better live out our Vincentian vocation and the charism for the Vincentian Family. The objective we are focusing on this year is “Systemic Change”, which we define as working not only to alleviate the conditions of the poor, but to change the societal structures which engender poverty. To encourage our confreres to make systemic change part of their provinces and ministries, there are suggested strategies. While some are specific to the Vincentian Community, I will share with you several strategies I believe can be used by all branches of the Vincentian Family:

- *To favor works that promote systemic change in society, develop local self-government, formation of self-help groups and indigenous micro-credit programs;*
- *To provide legal assistance to defend the poor and promote justice;*
- *To create programs that counter human trafficking and promote life, access to universal health care, care for the environment, the dignity*

of women and children, the rights of migrants, and participation in civil society.

These strategies for ‘Systemic Change’ from the Congregation’s plan offer you with a rich diversity of ideas for action. Systemic change is an important goal for the Vincentian Family. I believe we can all find ways to adapt it to our works and educate others of its importance.

In Lent and throughout this year, we have the opportunity to grow in our faith by reflecting on God’s Word and partaking in the Eucharist which deepens our bonds of connection in service of the poor. It is a daunting task, but as members of the Vincentian Family, our “mystic of charity” inspires us to remember whom and why we serve:

“I beg Our Lord that we may be able to die to ourselves in order to rise with Him, that he may be the joy of your heart, the end and soul of your actions, and your glory in heaven. This will come to pass if we humble ourselves as He humbled Himself, if we renounce our own satisfaction to follow Him by carrying our little crosses, and if we give our lives willingly, as He gave His for our neighbor whom he loves and whom he wants us to love as ourselves” (St. Vincent: CCD, Vol. 3, p. 616, Letter 1202, 27 March, 1650).

Our restless world, along with the plight of the *Restavek* and *Kumasi children* can seem at times to be overwhelming. But our faith in Jesus and the Vincentian charism provide us with renewal, strength, and confidence to face the future with hope. Through the intercession of Mary, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, I pray this Lent will be a time when God’s grace and goodness may be more fully manifested in your life and the lives of all whom you serve.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "G. Gregory Gay, C.M.". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "G." at the start and "C.M." at the end.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

Highlights of March 2012 Tempo Forte Meeting

My dear confreres,

May the grace and peace of the Lord Jesus fill our hearts now and forever!

Our first Tempo Forte meeting of 2012 was held at the General Curia in Rome from March 5-9. I am happy to share with you the highlights of our discussions.

ONGOING FORMATION

Our ongoing formation session for this Tempo Forte was dedicated to a two and one-half hour discussion with the members of the Commission for the Promotion of Systemic Change. We dialogued with them to discern next steps to promote and raise consciousness regarding systemic change in the Congregation of the Mission and in the Vincentian family.

UPDATES

- *EVALUATIONS OF THE NEW VISITORS MEETING*: We discussed the New Visitors meeting held in Rome in January. With the help of participant evaluations, we decided that in the next session in 2014, we will focus on these key aspects; first, the question of authority, obedience and leadership in the Congregation; how Visitors should go about their work of animating their province; and highlighting specific, central aspects of our manual for Visitors, *Practical Guide for the Visitors*.
- *2013 INTERNATIONAL VISITORS MEETING IN NEW YORK*: We met with the Preparatory Commission for the 2013 International Visitors Meeting at the start of the week and twice later in the week to firm up the program. It will be held July 1-14, 2013 at St. John's University, Queens, NY, USA. The theme will be "*Lines of Action in Action*" from 2010 General Assembly. The Council thanks the Province of Philadelphia (Eastern, USA);

its Visitor, Fr. Michael J. Carroll; and President of St. John's University, Fr. Donald J. Harrington, for not only hosting this meeting, but for graciously covering all expenses associated with it. The Curia will assume pre-preparation costs. Visitors attending will be responsible for their own transportation.

- *CONFRERES IN DIFFICULTY*: We reviewed a proposal by our confrere Abdo Eid, which we will discuss at the International Visitors Meeting in 2013.
- *NEW FOUNDATION*: Fr. Giuseppe Turati, Secretary General, Fr. Alfredo Baccera, Archivist, and Fr. Giuseppe Carulli, house Superior presented us with a proposal to create a foundation working in tandem with the Vincentian Solidarity Office to fund raise in Europe for International Missions and other social, charitable projects.
- *ON-LINE CATALOGUE*: We were able to view an on-line presentation of the new catalogue, still in development, and we made suggestions for its improvement.
- *PORTABLE TRANSLATION SYSTEM*: We studied the possibility of purchasing a portable simultaneous translation system. For now, we will rent rather than purchase such a system for international gatherings.
- *CM HISTORY PROJECT*: We reviewed a report we had received from Fr. John Rybolt on the status of the project he has undertaken to write a history of the Congregation. The process has been slowed down due to some research obstacles, but Fr. Rybolt continues to make progress toward the goal of eventual publication and distribution of this much-needed work to the world-wide Congregation.

GENERAL CURIA

1. *OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS REPORT*: We received a detailed report from Fr. John Maher the Director of Communications. Based on that report, we made the following decision: due to the rising cost of paper, printing and postage, we have reluctantly decided to raise the cost of a subscription to *Vincentiana* to 55 Euro in order to reduce deficits. With regard to the web page www.cmglobal.org, we had the good news of Fr. Cesar Chavez from the Province of Peru will be working with Fr. John Freund, our web master, to provide an up to date version of this web site for Spanish speaking confreres. We're hoping to do the same with the help of a French-speaking confrere, and we hope to have an announcement soon. We did an evaluation of the recent S.I.E.V. colloquium held at All Hallows in Dublin February 6-10

on the relationship between an academic study of spirituality and Vincentian spirituality. The Superior General and Council noted with dismay the low number of confreres who participated. A full evaluation and discussion of this colloquium will be forthcoming.

2. *NGO: UN REPORT*: With regard to the report we received from Fr. Joseph Foley, our NGO representative at the United Nations, we decided in the name of the Congregation to sign onto a social protection motion promoting a new article in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to guarantee Social Security for all people.

3. *CIF REPORT*: After twenty years of existence, we see the need to make an in-depth evaluation of the C.I.F. Our hope is that as a result of this evaluation, we might be able to increase the number of seminars we offer at C.I.F. and not only for the CM, but also for other members of the Vincentian Family.

4. *VSO REPORT*: We reviewed the Vincentian Solidarity Office report from Fr. Miles Heinen, Director. Be sure to read the VSO March bulletin, which can be found on-line at: <http://cmglobal.org/vso-en/>.

5. *ECONOME GENERAL REPORT*: Prior to Tempo Forte, Fr. Geders hosted the Finance Committee for a joint meeting with the Council. A decision made was that prior to the canonical visits, the Assistants General will request the provinces fund the cost of travel to help contain expenses incurred in the operation of the General Curia.

6. *INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS*: We discussed reports received regarding the various international missions of the Congregation.

- For the mission in **Bolivia**, in both El Alto and Cochabamba, Assistant General Fr. Ellie Chaves will be doing a canonical visit to these two places in March. One aspect of his visit with the confreres will be to solidify our contracts with the Bishops of both regions.
- In the mission of **Papua New Guinea**, we reviewed the report given by the Superior General after his visit to PNG. Justin Eke (Nigeria) will be taking a sabbatical in order to further his studies. We also studied our contract and the Diocese of Alotau, whose bishop is our confrere Rolly Santos. We are extending the mission in PNG, and are in dialogue with confreres who could possibly be assigned to the above diocese.
- In the mission of the **Solomon Islands**, we also reviewed the report given by the Superior General after his canonical visit. Our hope is to reinforce both this mission, as well as all international missions with new volunteers from other provinces. We have designated Fr. Joseph Mangaly, a confrere from the Province of Northern India to this mission.

- The two missionaries assigned to our mission in **Angola** have arrived: Fr. Jose Maria Nieto, from the Province of Madrid, and Fr. M. Jose Ramirez, from the Province of Mexico. Fr. Henry Kristen will be assigned there after he finishes as assistant director of the internal seminary in Santo Domingo. Also, we have received economic support for this mission from two provinces in the Congregation; that assistance will be matched by a donor.
- In the mission of **Tunis**, we reviewed their contract, as it is near the end of its one-year term. We will be seeking a new missionary to assist Fr. Firmin Mbala, as Br. Henry Escurel will return to his Province of the Philippines. I take this opportunity to thank Br. Henry for the service he has rendered for this mission. We are now in discussion of a possible replacement for him.
- We discussed the mission in **Chad**, staffed by confreres from COVIAM. The pastoral team there is now complete and the superior is Fr. R. Alexander Ramilijaona, who recently arrived. Fr. Albert Atchingkitkil is the pastor and is assisted by the other two confreres. The community treasurer is Fr. Sunday Ugwu O., a confrere from Nigeria. The overall coordinator for this mission is Fr. Guillaume Leukeumo, President of COVIAM, who reports directly to the Superior General and the Council.
- We have received an offer from a confrere responding to my mission appeal letter in October to assist the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal, who have a mission in Benin. That matter is currently under discussion with his Visitor.

7. **MISSION DISTRIBUTION FUND:** We received a report from Fr. Varghese Thottamkara, Assistant General, who coordinates the mission distribution fund. Included in this list for the current year will be the Province of Portugal and the new Vice-Province of Vietnam. Bishop Rolly Santos, as a part of the list of Vincentian appointed bishops, will receive an offering from the Congregation.

8. **MISSION REQUEST FROM RWANDA-BURUNDI:** We studied a request from a group of Sisters from Rwanda-Burundi who are founding an institute of religious brothers for their congregation. They requested help from our Congregation to assist in the formation of these new members. The name of the community is **Abizermarija**.

9. **VINCENTIAN FAMILY REPORT:**

- We received a report on the Vincentian Family from Fr. Eli Chaves, Assistant General liaison.
- We will soon be looking to name a new National Director and Sub-Director for the International Association of the Miraculous Medal to replace Fr. Enrique Rivas, who has served faithfully as National Director and Sub-Director. We offer sincere thanks to

Fr. Enrique for his generous leadership in promoting devotion to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

- We received a request from the Secretariat of the Vincentian Marian Youth for a contribution of their annual budget for the International Secretariat.
- We received a report from Fr. Jean-Pierre Mangulu, delegate of the Superior General for the Vincentian Family in Haiti. We encouraged him to actively promote the *Zafen* project for the well-being of the people of Haiti.

10. *CONFERENCES OF VISITORS & PROVINCES:*

- Fr. Eli Chaves spoke of the program for formation most recently held in Columbia sponsored by *CLAPVI*.
- Fr. Varghese Thottamkara recently participated in the yearly assembly of *APVC*. In February, a number of Visitors from Asian provinces were present when the region of Vietnam was raised to a Vice-Province.
- Fr. Javier Alvarez and Fr. Stanislav Zontac reported on the upcoming meeting of the Conference of Visitors from Europe (*CEVIM*). The theme of their next assembly in April will be "New Evangelization".
- The next meeting of Visitors and regional superiors in Africa (*COVIAM*) will be held in Tanzania.

CALENDARS

We discussed our schedules for the next few months until the June Tempo Forte meeting. The Superior general will be in the USA with the Hispanic community in South Carolina for Holy Week. He will spend Easter week in Canada at a gathering of the Vincentian Family, and then he will head to Brazil for a meeting of the entire Vincentian Family of Latin America.

Following that trip, he will begin a trip from April 25 - May 13 through all the missions of the confreres and Daughters of Charity in Central America and Panama as their provinces celebrate 150th years of service. In May, the Superior General will participate in the meeting of the Visitatrixes of the Daughters of Charity, and at the end of May, he will attend the meeting of the Union of Superiors General in Rome.

In June, after Tempo Forte, he will visit the mission of the Slovenian Sisters of the Miraculous Medal in Benin and a community of Daughters of Charity in Guinea Equatorial. At the end of June, he will visit Lebanon with the Commission for Vincentian Family leaders.

I hope this letter gives you a fuller picture of the goings-on here in Rome at the General Curia. Please keep the work of the General Curia in your prayers!

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M.". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

Strategic Plan for Communications

A Framework to Organize, Communicate, and Infuse the GA Lines of Action: 2012-2016

John T. Maher, C.M.

Office of Communications and Publications

“Creative Fidelity to our Mission”, the final document of the 2010 General Assembly, set a series of goals for the world-wide Congregation to achieve yearly through 2016. To insure these goals are communicated and integrated into the Congregation of the Mission at all levels, this document proposes they be organized and infused into an overall planning strategy with yearly objectives. It also proposes a way to communicate as to how these strategies can be implemented. It is a two-part process comprised of a framework and a method.

I - PART ONE: FRAMEWORK

1. The “overarching theme” to unify and articulate implementation of the plan comes from the lead statement, ***“Creative fidelity to our Mission and Ministries in following Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor calls us to...”*** as a way of guiding each yearly objective.

2. The “yearly objectives” highlight specific aspirations articulated by the 2010 General Assembly. They are arranged this way to focus attention on how they can be attained.

3. Additionally, to provide ideas for specific strategies by regions, provinces, and confreres, excerpts from the GA “Lines of Action” document are listed in the appropriate objective.

II - PART TWO: METHOD

This section proposes strategies for communicating the yearly objectives of the plan for the General Curia, Office of Communications and Publications, National Conferences of Visitors, Provinces, and individual confreres. It is hoped these strategies will infuse the GA “Lines of Action” into all levels of the Congregation and make them more accessible to all members.

What follows is a list of the overall framework; yearly objectives with relevant excerpts from the “Lines of Action”; and recommended “methods” for communication at all levels of the Congregation. This paper

has been prepared by General Curia's *Office of Communications and Publications* to provide a framework to organize these goals, and methods to communicate them in a consistent, comprehensive way to all confreres of the Congregation.

I - FRAMEWORK

Overarching goal (theme) for 2012-2016: "Creative fidelity to our Mission and Ministries to follow Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor calls us to...".

Yearly Objectives

- The yearly objectives in their order of implementation are:
 1. DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR (Valuable for every years of the whole plan),
 2. SYSTEMIC CHANGE,
 3. RECONFIGURATION AS A PATHWAY TO CREATIVITY IN OUR MINISTRIES,
 4. INITIAL AND ONGOING FORMATION,
 5. DIALOGUE WITH THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY,
 6. EVALUATION OF THE PLAN AND PREPARATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2016

2011-2016: DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR... Enable and assist confreres to listen to the voices of the poor in all ministries, and to make practical and ongoing efforts to participate in their lives.

2012: SYSTEMIC CHANGE... Educate and equip confreres in the means and methods to promoting systemic change in their provinces and apostolates, **and DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR;**

2013: RECONFIGURATION: A PATHWAY TO CREATIVITY IN OUR MINISTRIES... Examine the necessity of regional and provincial re-configuration, and with Conferences of Visitors, provincial councils, and input from confreres, to act decisively, **and DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR;**

2014: INITIAL & ONGOING FORMATION... Regional and provincial evaluation of the resources available and quality of initial and ongoing formation in the Vincentian charism of the CM, **and DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR;**

2015: VINCENTIAN FAMILY DIALOGUE... Encourage confreres to have serious, strategic dialogue with Vincentian Family members in

order to foster collaboration in provinces and apostolates, *and* **DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR;**

2016: ASSESSMENT YEAR AND PREPARATION FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY... We will assess our attainment of the previous yearly objectives (systemic change, collaboration with the Vincentian family, reconfiguration as a pathway to creativity in our ministries, and initial and ongoing formation), and to prepare for the General Assembly of 2016.

Specific Strategies in Yearly Objectives

At the 2010 General Assembly, the “Lines of Action” which specified strategies to achieve each objective were proposed and accepted. What follows is a detailed description of each yearly objective, utilizing the contents of the General Assembly’s “Creative Fidelity for Mission” to provide specific ways to achieve these objectives each year of the plan.

2011-2016: DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR... Enable and assist confreres to listen to the voices of the poor in all ministries, and to make practical and ongoing efforts to participate in their lives.

NB: This strategy is an objective that runs throughout the length of the plan, so it appears in each year and is considered an essential part of the overarching theme of **“Creative fidelity to our Mission and Ministries in following Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor”**.

Applicable strategy from the Lines of Action

- To make an effort to share with the poor the dynamics that will enable them to become subjects of their history, protagonists of their destiny and agents of their freedom.

2012: SYSTEMIC CHANGE... Educate and equip confreres in the means and methods to promoting systemic change in their provinces and apostolates, *and* ways that we may **DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR; ...to help confreres listen to the voices of the poor and enter into their lives.**

Applicable strategies on systemic change from the Lines of Action

- To favor works that promote systemic change in society, develop local self-government, formation of self-help groups and indigenous micro-credit programs;

- *To support at the provincial level challenging works, favoring teamwork and networking;*
- *To form missionaries with a methodology & spirituality that favor personal, conversion, pastoral, and structural change;*
- *To provide legal assistance for the defense of the poor and the promotion of justice;*
- *To create programs that counter human trafficking and assure the promotion of life, access to universal health care, care for the environment, the dignity of women and children, the rights of migrants, and participation in civil society.*

2013: RECONFIGURATION: A PATHWAY TO CREATIVITY IN OUR MINISTRIES... Examine the necessity of regional and provincial re-configuration, and with Conferences of Visitors, provincial councils, and input from confreres, to act decisively; and way that we may **DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR... help confreres listen to the voices of the poor and enter into their lives.**

Applicable strategies on reconfiguration from the Lines of Action

- To explore locally, province-wide, and Visitors' conferences reconfiguration both as an "intra" and "inter" provincial sense, and its importance for the future of the CM;
- To cultivate a vital and concrete sense of belonging to the Congregation that goes beyond the local and provincial communities; to create spaces for inter-provincial collaboration administratively, and to share human and financial resources;
- To foster personal availability and mobility to participate in new missionary projects;
- To review our ministries and the structures of our community life to enhance their missionary dimension;
- To go to the most distant (Ad Gentes) and to draw near to the most withdrawn.

2014: INITIAL & ONGOING FORMATION... Regional and provincial evaluation of the resources available and quality of initial and ongoing formation in the Vincentian charism of the CM, and **DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR... help confreres listen to the voices of the poor and enter into their lives.**

Applicable strategies on initial and going formation from the Lines of Action

- To study, disseminate, and implement the revised *Rationis Formationis*;
- In utilizing the *Rationis Formationis* and the 'best practices' of provinces, to create formation programs that strengthen our fidelity to the vocation and our response to the needs of the 21st century;
- To assume ongoing formation as our daily commitment, embracing prayer, reflection, on our experiences in living out our ministry;
- To foster openness to opportunity offered by new languages and techniques of the digital world in view of the Mission;
- To foster interchange of formation experiences with conferences of visitors and all CM's;
- To foster in the congregation reflection on the vocation of the Vincentian brother;
- To support pastoral practices centered on the Word of God, attention to the signs of the times, and a central role for the laity.

2015: VINCENTIAN FAMILY DIALOGUE... Encourage confreres to have serious, strategic dialogue with Vincentian Family members to foster collaboration in provinces and apostolates, **DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR... help confreres listen to the voices of the poor and enter into their lives.**

Applicable strategies on Vincentian Family Dialogue from the Lines of Action

- To raise awareness of resources and programs provided by the Vincentian Family Office at the General Curia;
- To raise awareness of the existence and activities of the Vincentian Family Leadership Commission and highlight formation programs they provide;
- To foster theological reflection on challenges and good arising from lay collaboration;
- To intensify collaboration with the Vincentian Family in formation; esp. in Vincentian spirituality, social doctrine of the Church, and lay leadership to assure their transforming presence on behalf of the poor;
- To commit ourselves to evangelize the poor with members of the Vincentian family and other ecclesial groups, and to participate in defense & promotion of the poor;

- With assistance from the Vincentian Family, to undertake new works of evangelization in the area of new emerging cultures, ecumenical, and religious dialogue.

2016: ASSESSMENT / PREPARATION FOR GA... Assess our attainment of the previous yearly objectives (dialogue with the poor, systemic change, reconfiguration as a pathway to creativity in our ministries, initial and ongoing formation, and collaboration with the Vincentian family), and to prepare for the 2016 General Assembly.

- **How have the yearly objectives and “Lines of Action” outlined in this plan enabled the Visitors’ Conferences, provinces, apostolates, local communities, and confreres to exercise “Creative Fidelity to our Mission and Ministries” over the last five years?**
- **What remains undone or incomplete in incorporating the yearly objectives with the Lines of Action in a Conference of Visitors or a province?**
- **What “next steps” will be needed for the 2016 General Assembly to more fully incorporate these objectives into all levels of the Congregation of the Mission?**

II - METHOD

The following is suggested as ways to reinforce the overall theme of “Creative Fidelity to our Mission and Ministries” and to attain the specific yearly goals of the “Lines of Action” through providing consistent methods of communication, information, and opportunities for dialogue and feedback from provinces and members throughout the world-wide Congregation.

Superior General and Curia

- The Superior General will highlight each yearly theme through circular letters, talks, homilies, as well as videos on “CM Global” & “FamVin” websites.
- Assistants General will reflect, write, and speak on how these yearly objectives can be lived out, especially in their visitations to provinces. Their ideas and insights will be posted in NUNTIA, and on “CMGlobal” & “FamVin” websites.
- The Superior General, in consultation with the Curia, will provide an annual “citation of excellence” for projects that demonstrate “Creative Fidelity to Mission and Ministry” in each yearly theme. This award/citation will be publicized in print and digital media.

Office of Communications and Publications

- Will dedicate one issue of VINCENTIANA each year through use of articles and essays to highlight overall theme and yearly objectives;
- Will use monthly NUNTIA newsletter to highlight ways various provinces demonstrate “Creative Fidelity for Mission” in implementing yearly objectives of the plan;
- In the revised “CMGlobal” web site, “Creative Fidelity for Mission” (AKA *Strategic Plan*) will be highlighted in a special section, using video, “discussion forums”, and a blog. This will provide input on how yearly objectives are being implemented in various provinces.

Conferences of Visitors and/or Provinces

- The Conferences of Visitors will meet and discuss the yearly objectives, and provinces will be encouraged to do the same. From these meetings, they will develop strategies for their conferences and provinces that are specific and measurable.

Provinces

- Provinces will work in concert from both the General Curia and the Conferences of Visitors to formulate strategies applicable to the confreres and works of their provinces;
- Provinces and regions will be encouraged to consult and collaborate with Vincentian Family members to gain ideas and strategies to attain yearly objectives.

Confreres

- Individual confreres will be encouraged by Visitors to take provide valued input to the plan by offering ideas and strategies that can be implemented in their apostolates;
- Individual confreres will be encouraged to consult and collaborate with Vincentian Family members to gain ideas and strategies to attain yearly objectives.

Announcement of 2013 International Visitors Meeting

Rome, 12 March 2012

Dear Visitors of the Congregation:

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

During this week's *Tempo Forte*, the Council met with the members of the Preparatory Commission for the 2013 Visitors Meeting. The members of the Commission are: Silviano Calderon (Mexico), Iyolo Iyombe Dominique (Congo), Simon Kaipuram (North India), Josef Lucyszyn (Poland), and Joseph Agostino, coordinator (USA East).

The theme of our Meeting will be "The Lines of Action in Action". We will be engaged in an evaluation process of the implementation of GA 2010 Lines of Action as we reach the half-way mark. We will also be discerning the new directions we are called to take as we continue to deepen our understanding of our Vincentian charism in the evangelization of the poor today.

The Visitors Meeting will take place at St. John's University, New York, USA from July 1 to July 13, 2013. You are asked to travel through JFK International Airport and arrive sometime on June 30th. The meeting will formally end with the mid-day meal on July 13th. Please do not plan to leave the University before 2:00 PM on that Saturday.

At different times over the course of this coming year, you will be asked to complete some tasks and send them to the Curia in preparation for our meeting. Please cooperate in the completion of them and respect the established timelines for them.

You will be hearing from the Preparatory Commission over the next few months with the details for our gathering. We will also be contacting you shortly regarding Visa information, etc.

I look forward to being with all of you in New York in July 2013.

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide our Congregation and our work in preparation for this meeting.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." in a cursive script.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

Application for Systemic Change Grant, 2012

Rome, 30 April 2012

To all the Visitors and Vice-Visitors of the CM

My dear Confreres:

May the grace and peace of the Risen Lord be with us forever!

I write to introduce and enclose the annual letter from Fr. Robert P. Maloney, C.M., on behalf of the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change announcing grants totalling \$100,000 (USD). These funds, made possible for the fifth consecutive year through a generous grant from a foundation, are earmarked for members of the Vincentian Family who are interested in starting or directing projects with the poor that promote systemic change.

One of the main outcomes from the 2010 General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission was the decision to promote Systemic Change as a viable strategy for our apostolic endeavors. This goal is one we confreres willingly share with all members of the Vincentian Family so we can continue to be “good news” for the poor. Please study the criteria, procedures, and format for submitting a project proposal, and consider taking part in this worthwhile project.

As you know, I often travel to countries and continents to meet with confreres, Daughters of Charity, and members of the Vincentian Family to experience how they live out the charism of St. Vincent de Paul. Thus far in 2012, I have been to Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Canada, the USA, and Latin and Central America. I am continually edified and energized by the wonderful work done by Vincentian Family members to promote our charism. The grants offered by the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change provide another opportunity to serve the poor in a lasting and significant way. Please join me in continuing to

entrust our efforts to Jesus, the Evangelizer of the Poor, and his Mother Mary, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M.". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

Rome, 25 March 2012

*To those responsible for various branches
of the Vincentian Family*

Laurence de la Brosse, President, AIC (1617)

Fr. G. Gregory Gay, Superior General, Congregation of the Mission (1625)

Sr. Evelyne Franc, Superioress General, Daughters of Charity (1633)

Michael Thio, President, Society of St. Vincent de Paul (1833)

Fr. Philippe Mura, Superior General, Religious of St. Vincent de Paul (1845)

Yasmine Cajuste, President, Vincentian Marian Youth (1847)

Fr. Juan Bautista Iborra, International Coordinator, Association of the Miraculous Medal (1909)

Rosa Momesso de Castro, President, MISEVI (1999)

My very dear sisters and brothers,

May the peace of the Lord be with you in this Lenten time!

I am writing today to announce the offer of the 2012 start-up grants for systemic change projects. This is the fifth consecutive year in which a foundation is offering us \$100,000 to help begin systemic change projects. The foundation has asked the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change to work out the details about how the grants will be awarded. I am attaching a list of the criteria that the Commission will use for deciding which projects will receive the grants, as well as the procedure and calendar to be followed as members of the various branches apply.

Please feel free to communicate the attached information about this year's offer to your members in any way that you judge appropriate. As you see in #5 of the procedures described below, members should not apply directly to the Commission. Rather, the international head of each branch will receive the applications from the members of his or her branch, will evaluate them, and will select up to three applications. We ask that the head of each branch then send these applications, by email, to the following address: startupgrants@gmail.com. It is important that they be sent by email by September 1st. I will then forward them, for evaluation, to the members of the Commission, who, as you know, are Rev. Norberto Carcellar, CM, Sr. Ellen Flynn, DC,

Rev. Joseph Foley, CM, Mrs. Patricia Nava, AIC, Rev. Pedro Opeka, CM, Rev. Mr. Gene Smith, SSVP, and I. With you, I pray that the Lord will bless the poor through this offer which the foundation has so generously made.

Your brother in St Vincent,

ROBERT P. MALONEY, C.M.

*Commission to Promote
Systemic Change*

START UP GRANTS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE PROJECTS

Criteria for Giving the Start-Up Grants

1. The grants will be given to projects that:
 - a) **Involve the poor** themselves, including the young and women, at all stages: the identification of needs, planning, implementation, evaluation and revision.
 - b) **Have holistic vision, addressing** a series of basic human needs – individual and social, spiritual and physical – especially needs like jobs, health care, housing, education, and spiritual growth.
 - c) **Place particular emphasis on self-help and self-sustaining** programs that have a special view toward addressing the root causes of poverty.
 - d) **Foster transparency**, inviting participation in preparing budgets and in commenting on financial reports, while promoting good money management and maintaining careful controls over the use of assets.
 - e) **Construct a shared vision with diverse stakeholders**: poor communities, interested individuals, donors, churches, governments, NGOs, the private sector, unions, the media, international organizations and networks, etc.
 - f) **Are new or introduce a new, systemic change approach** into an already-existing project.
2. Collaborative projects involving several branches of the Vincentian Family will be viewed favorably when evaluating the proposals submitted.
3. The grants will *not* be given for:
 - b) Projects that focus only on the relief of immediate needs (good though such projects may be).
 - c) The ongoing costs of already existing projects.
 - d) Applications which do not address a number of the criteria above.

PROCEDURE AND CALENDAR TO BE FOLLOWED IN APPLYING FOR START-UP GRANTS

1. Today, March 25, 2012, the members of the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change are sending out a letter to the *international heads* of various branches of the Vincentian Family, announcing that, once again, a foundation is willing to offer start-up grants for systemic change projects.

2. Attached to this letter are the criteria for judging who will receive these grants. Information about the procedure to be used in applying for the grants is also attached to this letter, as well as a calendar.
3. These grants will be for up to \$100,000.
4. Proposals will be received from the following branches of the Family anywhere in the world: AIC, the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, AMM, JMV, MISEVI, and the Religious of St. Vincent de Paul.
5. Each of the international heads of the family will inform the members of his or her branch about the funds and will send them the information about how to apply. Subsequently, the head of each branch will receive applications from the members of that branch, will evaluate them, and will select up to three applications. **Individual members should not send applications directly to the Commission.** Rather, they should send their applications to the international head of each branch, who will select up to three applications and will forward them, by email, to the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change.
6. Joint proposals that are submitted by various branches of the Vincentian Family which are working together will also be welcomed. In that case, they should be sent to Fr. Joseph Agostino, CM (agostinojv@gmail.com). He will submit them to the Vincentian Leadership Commission, which will choose up to 3 projects and will forward them to the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change.
7. The Commission should receive the applications from the heads of the branches of the Family no later than September 1, 2012. Though the applications submitted to the heads of the family may be written in a variety of languages, we ask that the (up to) three applications which the heads of the Family send to the Commission be translated into English.
8. After that, the Commission will meet and will make a decision about which proposal(s) will receive the start-up grants. It will also decide how many grants will be given in 2012; for example, one grant for \$100,000, or two grants for \$50,000 each, or four grants (\$25,000), etc.
9. The announcement about which proposal(s) will receive the grants will be made in the latter part of October 2012. At that time, the recipient(s) will be asked to supply further details about how the money might best be transferred.

10. After their systemic change project has been functioning for six months, the grant recipients will submit an interim evaluation of the project, explaining how the grant has been used until that time. After the project has been functioning for a year, the recipients will submit a final evaluation, explaining how the grant has been used. A form for these evaluations will be provided when the grant is awarded.

FORMAT FOR SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL ASKING FOR A START-UP GRANT

Please submit no more than 7 pages, plus the budget, as follows:

PAGE ONE – Contact Details [one page]

Please include:

- Name of applicant
- Branch of the Vincentian Family to which the applicant belongs
- Position in the Organization (e.g., president of local SSVP conference)
- Address
- Telephone
- E-mail
- Name given to the Project (e.g., “Clean Water for Palo Alto”)

PAGE TWO – Summary [half page]

Summary of the proposal

PAGE THREE – Needs analysis [one page]

Statement of need; why is this project necessary?

PAGE FOUR – Project Plan [one page]

Project Description; how will the project be implemented?

PAGE FIVE – Finance [one page summary, plus budget]

- What will the start-up costs be?
- In terms of money and personnel, how will the project continue in the future?
- What other funding sources are there for the project?
- How will the grant, if received, be used?
- Is there a time-line for the use of the money? When will it be needed?
- Please attach the overall budget.

PAGE SIX –:**Evaluation [half page]**

How, when, and by whom will the project be evaluated?

Governance [half page]

Please describe the Governing Structure of the project.

PAGE SEVEN – Systemic Change Criteria [one page]

How does the project meet the criteria given above (under the heading “Criteria for Giving the Start-Up Grants”)?

FEATURE

Theme Articles on Systemic Change

A Primer on the Purpose and Principles for Systemic Change

John T. Maher, C.M.

Introduction

The concept of “Systemic Change” as a strategy both for evangelization and in service of the poor has been on the horizon of the Congregation of the Mission and of the worldwide Vincentian Family for a number of years. Through articles, discussions, a commission created by the Superior General, special projects, and dialogue between Conferences of Visitors and among confreres, the quest to understand and integrate Systemic Change as a way to live the Vincentian charism has been ongoing. These multiple efforts culminated in its adaptation by the 2010 General Assembly “Lines of Action” as part of the plan to guide the Congregation through 2016.

This contents of this article are taken from “*Seeds of Hope: Stories of Systemic Change*”, a book authored by members of the Commission for Systemic Change. To provide the reader with the main tenets of Systemic Change, this article is intended as a “primer”, a resource to assist in attaining an overview of this direction undertaken by the 2010 General Assembly.

Below are listed ten strategies essential to understanding Systemic Change, each with a brief explanation. These strategies are then followed by statements from members authoritative sources within of the Vincentian Family which affirm Systemic Change as a viable way of living out the Vincentian charism. The statements are “official”, as they are taken from constitutions, rules, and resolutions of organizational meetings. As one sees, they call for Systemic Change.

Ten Strategies for Systemic Change

Strategy 1:

Consider poverty not merely as the inevitable result of circumstances, but also as the product of unjust situations that can be changed, and focus on actions that will break the cycle of poverty.

It is essential that individuals and groups work together for change. Poverty can be eradicated only by building just social structures in which the poor have equal access to education, employment, housing, health care, and other basic human needs. In a 2005 address to “Make Poverty History”, Nelson Mandela said: “Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is a human creation and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity – it is an act of justice”.

Fredrick Ozanam, the principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, made precisely the same point 150 years earlier: “Charity is not sufficient. It treats the wounds but does not stop the blows that cause them.... Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveler who has been attacked. It is Justice’s role to prevent the attacks”.

Strategy 2:

Design projects, creative strategies, policies and guidelines that flow from our Christian and Vincentian values and mission.

This strategy is rooted in a clear assertion of St. Vincent, “I am for God and the poor”. It is a simple expression of his commitment to respecting the dignity of the person. Vincent believed that needs must be identified and prioritized, and people must be involved in planning and implementing solutions to those needs. They must “own” their project.

Under Vincent’s guidance, projects started out small, were carefully planned, and designed in a way to develop and last. Vincent knew effective planning required sufficient financial and human resources to insure that initiatives be self-sustainable. The fact that St. Vincent’s original foundations – AIC, the Congregation of the Mission, and the Daughters of Charity – have lasted more than 380 years is evidence of the staying power that he built into these organizations.

Strategy 3:

Finding a community voice: a strategy for systemic change.

This follows Vincent’s path. In Châtillon-les-Dombes, he wrote many documents about translating the gospel into organized action. Consistently he asked his followers to aim for concrete results: effective change.

In the ensuing centuries, members of the Vincentian Family have taken up the call and gather together and empower a community in need. The following story provides a wonderful contemporary example.

When less than one per cent of people own the land on which they farm, there is bound to be poverty and great misery. Dreadful living conditions cannot improve, due to very limited access to education and healthcare. Community itself falls apart, as people retreat into private misery. How can one change such a dismal situation?

The Daughters of Charity in the Philippines realized these and many problems had become entrenched for the poor of San José in Occidental Mindoro, Philippines. The “band-aid” approach would bring no lasting change. Their strategy: to analyze the local scene and develop programs to reflect the reality. Their strategy translated into uniting a community to speak with one voice and work together to transform those working and living conditions.

Strategy 4:

Have a holistic vision to address basic human needs – individual, social, spiritual, physical, jobs, health care, housing, and education with an integral approach toward prevention and sustainable development.

Poverty is a complex reality, operating at multiple levels. At its core, poverty always has a human face. Any strategy for systemic change should include people-driven initiatives to address identified needs and aspirations, willing support groups from their sector, and resources to assist from private, public, technical, and legal spheres. All these form the basis to promote a holistic vision as a strategy for systemic change. Such holistic vision captures the four groupings of the strategies of the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change of the Vincentian Family:

- *Mission-oriented strategies (to provide motivation and direction);*
- *Task-oriented strategies (to encourage organization);*
- *People-oriented strategies (focus on the poor as capable of changing their situation);*
- *Strategies on co-responsibility, networking and political action (to promote ongoing participation and solidarity).*

Strategy 5:

Implement coherent strategies, start modestly, delegate tasks and responsibilities, and provide quality services respectful of human dignity.

Practical, concrete and effective services are the hallmark of the Vincentian charism, faithful to our core conviction that each person is

made in the image and likeness of God. This reality calls us to meet both the corporal and spiritual needs, in ways well thought out that achieve lasting results. In St. Vincent's work, one sees the outlines of systemic change:

- Defining a local, specific need;
- Responding in a practical, immediate, and modest way;
- Building awareness of the problem and the solution;
- Enlisting and empowering an organized, multi-faceted response.

Strategy 6:

Listen carefully to understand the needs and aspirations of the poor to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and to foster self-esteem. Involve the poor at all stages: need identification, planning, implementation, evaluation and revision.

The personal and communal involvement of the poor in all stages is a key element of systemic change. This requires collaboration in the process by both those living in poverty and those seeking to assist them. Those seeking to help the poor must be willing to enter into dialogue and take on the same risks with the poor. This demands willingness on the part of all involved to roll up their sleeves, immerse themselves, and learn with the poor, moving away from their comfort zones. Such a shift reflects a move from mere delivery of a service or fulfilling a specific need into a dynamic process of interaction and interpersonal growth.

Sts. Vincent and Louise, and later Bl. Frederick Ozanam wanted service to be carried out with competence, skill, and adequate resources. The service offered must provide a foundation of gentleness, respect and attention to those in need. In reflecting on the impact of the life and works of Frederick Ozanam, Fr. Robert Maloney, in his book *Faces of Holiness*, envisions what the founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul might say to us today:

"What does this face of Ozanam say to us? It says, 'Do not be afraid of new beginnings. Be creative. Be inventive. Organize new works of love in the service of the poor. You who have energy; who have enthusiasm; who want to do something of value for the future; be inventive, launch out; do not wait'."

Strategy 7:

Make the project self-sustaining by insuring it will have the human and economic resources needed to last. Be transparent; seek participation in budget preparation, feedback on financial reports, and careful control over money management.

Whether a project begins and just as importantly, survives depends on its having permanent human and economic resources. That is a challenging aspect of working for systemic change. But it can be done. The systemic change is sustainable when the critical human and economic resources are in place. This strategy depends on a holistic vision, making a compelling case for the project, gaining the commitment of a core group, and developing a plan to show the project is realizable and sustainable. It depends on both a demonstration of a clear need and the right resources and timing to obtain funding. When these are in place, a project can attract initial seed money to begin.

But the human and financial costs of bringing a project to completion and sustenance must also be part of the calculus of planning. If not, it may end up in that graveyard of great projects that started out well but were never completed. Jesus' parable in Luke's Gospel tells us as much when it cautions: if you want to build a tower, will you not first calculate the outlay for fear of starting the work and not being able to complete it? (*Luke 14:28*).

Flowing from good initial planning is the need for financial transparency. Both in planning and implementing a budget, it is absolutely necessary to have skilled assistance at all phases of the project. For St. Vincent, transparency was equivalent to simplicity. Transparency instills a spirit of trust, ownership and accountability. Ways of fostering transparency include having open meetings, offering complete financial disclosure, and making audits and reports available to all.

Strategy 8:

Systematize, institutionalize and evaluate the project and its procedures, describing measurable indicators and results.

In this strategy, three verbs are important: *systematize, institutionalize, and evaluate*.

First, *systematize*. Focus not just on the individual aspects of the problem, but on the system as a whole. See how the "pieces of life" fit together into an operative system. For example: having a job produces wages. Wages enable the purchase of food and decent housing. Good nourishment and sanitary living conditions foster health. Education assists in getting a job that produces wages. One of the keys to systemic change is to discern where to attempt to break into the cycle of poverty, so that the project will treat not just one problem, providing a short-term solution, but will confront various problems step by step.

Second, *institutionalize*. Like buildings, projects last only if they are well-structured. For a project to be sustainable it must be "institutionalized"; structures must be created for planning, governing, financing, modifying and continuing the project as time goes on.

Third, *evaluate*. Evaluation is an indispensable follow-up to action. A periodic review of a project provides the opportunity to assess its positive and negative aspects and, as problems arise or circumstances change, to adjust its goals, methods and means.

Strategy 9:

Educate, train and offer spiritual formation to all participants in the project.

Systemic Change must be built on firm foundations of commonly held knowledge, values and beliefs for it to be truly transformative. Often these foundations have to be addressed in themselves before change can begin and people can recognize their common ground. This can take time but without it our work will falter and our careful constructions be short lived. The core foundation of service that Sts. Vincent and Louise promoted was the need to provide spiritual nourishment for those they served, not only for their material needs. To truly empower all to live out the Vincentian charism in a systemic change project, spiritual formation is essential.

Strategy 10:

Promote learning processes where members of the group, especially the poor speak with one another about successes and failures, share insights and talents, and form effective servant-leaders in the local community in the tradition of St. Vincent de Paul.

Forming people for leadership roles is fundamental for bringing about long-lasting change. But experience teaches that a vertical style of leadership is rarely effective in systemic change projects. Servant leaders are needed, people who listen, help the group to formulate projects, involve it in implementing them, and engage it in evaluating and re-structuring them.

Of course, the concept of “servant leadership” jumps off the pages of the New Testament, and is found in many other religious traditions. In a sense, servant leaders assume the role of followers, listening to others and empowering them to reach their goals. They realize that, when they listen well, their followers accomplish more. Searching for ways to emerge from poverty is a risky enterprise. Servant leadership encourages the community to take the risks that are needed.

The Response of the Vincentian Family

Below can be seen the “rationale” for Systemic Change through various official documents of members of the Vincentian Family.

The Congregation of the Mission

Constitutions 18: “Following St. Vincent, who, like the Good Samaritan of the gospel parable (**Lk 10:30-37**), gave effective help to the abandoned, provinces and members should earnestly strive to serve those rejected by society and those who are victims of disasters and injustices of every kind.”

Final Document, General Assembly 1998, II, 4: “In our work of prophetic evangelization, we should keep these characteristics in mind: attention to the reality of human society, above all to the causes of the unequal distribution of the goods in the world; participation in the life and conditions of the poor; cooperation with associations established to defend human rights and to promote justice and peace.”

The Company of the Daughters of Charity

Constitutions 24e: “Saint Vincent reminds the Sisters that love embraces justice (SV VII, 115). The Daughters of Charity are constantly solicitous for the development of every person in all the aspects of their being.... They commit themselves to work for social transformation to change the unjust structures that cause poverty.”

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Rule 7.1: “The Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying the unjust structures that cause it. It is, therefore, committed to identifying the root causes of poverty and to contributing to their elimination. In all its charitable actions there should be a search for justice; in its struggle for justice, the Society must keep in mind the demands of charity.”

7.6: “Where injustice, inequality, poverty or exclusion are due to unjust economic, political or social structures or to inadequate or unjust legislation, the Society should speak out clearly against the situation, always with charity, with the aim of contributing to and demanding improvements.”

The International Association of Charity (AIC)

From the AIC Assembly held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, February 6-10, 2005: “The mission of AIC is to bring an effective contribution to eradicating poverty. Its objective is to “act together against the different types of poverty, against the inequalities and unfair conditions under which a large percentage of humanity suffers: the poor. Moreover, AIC wishes:

- To be a transformative force in society and fight against different types of poverty;

- to commit itself primarily to stand with women throughout the world;
- to reinforce the participation of the poor;
- to encourage collaboration and networking.

Because it is aware of the co-responsibility of all involved, AIC wants to participate in programs of public politics.

Evangelization and Systemic Change

Some Reflections

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

On two occasions recently, I gave presentations describing the notion of systemic change and offering examples of successful projects in various countries. I then threw the floor open for questions. The first question on both occasions went like this: “The systemic change projects you described are admirable, but what do they have to do with the main goal of the Congregation: to preach the good news to the poor?”.

Actually, in each instance I was not sure if the questioner was posing an objection that lay deep in his heart or if he was simply offering me the opportunity to say more about a theme that is extremely important in the Vincentian Family: the relationship between evangelization and works of justice and charity (or, given the focus of the Vincentian Family today, the relationship between evangelization and systemic change projects).

This article addresses that basic theme. I will proceed in four steps: 1) the teaching of St. Vincent about the relationship of evangelization and works of charity and justice; 2) the teaching of recent popes about the same relationship; 3) the importance of systemic change today; and 4) the challenge to design creative evangelization projects inside and outside the Congregation of the Mission.

This topic is of considerable importance today – so much so that at the closing of the 2010 General Assembly, the Superior General, Fr. Gregory Gay, tackled it directly: “Fears have been expressed, saying that, with such a focus on systemic change, we might become like another NGO. Such is not the case when we have clear what it is and Who it is that motivates us to do what we do”¹. Following Fr. Greg’s lead, the Assembly itself, in its concluding documents, repeatedly encouraged Vincentians throughout the world to engage in both creative evangelization and systemic change².

¹ *Vincentiana* LIV (July-September 2010), 207.

² *Ibid.*, 404ff.

I. ST. VINCENT'S TEACHING: the unbreakable bond between doing and preaching

The teaching of St. Vincent in regard to this question is unambiguous: evangelization and works of charity and justice are inextricably linked; one must not dichotomize them. He states his view as a sharp rebuttal addressed to those who, apparently, were voicing contrary opinions. On December 6, 1658, speaking forcefully about the purpose of the Congregation of the Mission, he minced no words³:

If there are any among us who think they are in the Congregation of the Mission to preach the gospel to the poor but not to comfort them, to supply their spiritual but not their temporal wants, I reply that we ought to assist them and have them assisted in every way, by ourselves and by others.... To do this is to preach the gospel by words and by works.

Within that context, let me highlight four critical distinctions that play a significant role in describing evangelization in the Vincentian tradition:

a) we evangelize "by words and works"

As is evident in the citation above, St. Vincent was deeply convinced of the link between what we say and what we do. Again and again he spoke of evangelization by "words and works".

Consistent with his emphasis on simplicity as the first virtue of a missionary, he insisted that what the evangelizer does and says must reinforce one another. First, do. Then, teach. That is St. Vincent's rule for "effective" evangelization. In other words, he sees preaching, teaching, personal witness and human promotion as complementary to one another, and as integral to the evangelization process. Today, the unity between evangelization and human promotion, so much a part of St. Vincent's spirit, is one of the main emphases in the Church's social teaching⁴.

³SV XII, 87-88.

⁴Cf. Synod of Bishops, 1971, *Justice in the World*, in AAS LXIII (1971) 924: "...action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world are integral elements in the preaching of the gospel". Cf. also, *Centesimus Annus*, 5.

b) *we serve “spiritually and corporally”*

The second phrase is that we minister to the poor “*spiritually and corporally*”⁵. St. Vincent uses this phrase in speaking to all the groups he founded: the Confraternities of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, and the Daughters of Charity. He says to the Daughters of Charity that they should tend not only to bodily needs, but also share their faith by their witness and their words⁶. Conversely, he warns the members of the Congregation of the Mission that they should not think of their mission in exclusively spiritual terms⁷. Rather, they too should care for the sick, the foundlings, the insane, and the most abandoned⁸.

c) *our love is to be both “affective and effective”*⁹

St. Vincent repeated this theme over and over again. He says, for example, “*The love of a Daughter of Charity is not only tender; it is effective, because they serve the poor concretely*”¹⁰.

The theme of effective love is central to Vincentian spirituality. “*Let us love God*”, he tells the members of the Congregation of the Mission, “*let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and with the sweat of our brows. So very often many acts of love of God, of complacency, of benevolence, and such interior affection and practices, although very good and very desirable, are nevertheless to be suspected if they do not reach the practice of effective love*”¹¹. To this day, worldwide, St. Vincent is known for a love that is practical, concrete, well-organized and effective.

d) *our evangelization can be direct/indirect*

The life and works of St. Vincent and the history of the Congregation make it clear that evangelization of the poor can take multiple forms. St. Vincent clearly recognized that not all could serve the poor directly, but that the service of some would necessarily be indirect. He handled

⁵SV IX, 59, 593; XI, 364.

⁶SV IX, 59; IX, 593; XI, 364; XI, 592.

⁷SV XII, 87.

⁸SV XI, 393.

⁹SV IX, 475, 592, 599; XI, 40.

¹⁰SV IX, 593.

¹¹SV XI, 40.

a dispute over the question in his own lifetime¹². As examples of indirect service of the poor, he cites seminary teachers and directors of the Daughters of Charity. He saw their role as necessary if the poor were to be served well. History demonstrates that there will always be cases like that.

There is a need for caution in using the direct/indirect distinction. It must be evoked with great moderation. Unless many of our members are involved in direct evangelization, we will hardly merit, as a Congregation, the name “missionaries”.

Those are four key phrases in the Vincentian tradition. Today they are moving us more and more, in our various branches, not only to assist the poor in their immediate needs by providing food, clothing and shelter, but also to assist them to change the social system within which they live, so that they might emerge from poverty. In light of these phrases, so fundamental in our family’s spirituality, the Congregation is attempting to respond concretely to the appeal that Pope John Paul II addressed to the General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission in 1986: ***“Search out more than ever, with boldness, humility and skill, the causes of poverty and encourage short and long-term solutions – adaptable and effective concrete solutions. By doing so you will work for the credibility of the gospel and of the Church”***¹³.

The question of the relationship between evangelization and works of charity and justice seems to be a perennial one. It has emerged once again in the Congregation of the Mission for a variety of reasons. For example, since 2006 the Congregation, with the help of the Franz Foundation, has been giving, in alternate years, a Systemic Change Award (to those beginning well-designed systemic change projects) and a Mission Award (to those launching creative evangelization projects). In applying for those awards, some confreres requested greater precision about what the distinction between them was. In response, the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change was asked to help clarify the two awards so that the Congregation might give sharper attention to both evangelization and systemic change.

Some of the ideas that the Commission suggested were these:

a) It felt that the first distinction employed by St. Vincent, described above, is very useful in differentiating the two awards: i.e., we preach the good news “by words and works”¹⁴:

¹²SV XII, 87-96.

¹³Cf. Address of John Paul II to the delegates of the General Assembly of 1986, which can be found in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, August 2, 1986, p. 12; cf. *Vincentiana* (1986) 417.

¹⁴SV XII, 88.

- Words = proclaiming the gospel explicitly
- Works = performing works of charity, justice, peace, systemic change

b) It recognized that, in integral evangelization programs, these two forms of proclaiming the good news should go hand in hand. Programs like that of Fr. Pedro Opeka at Akamasoa in Madagascar, for instance, strikingly combine explicit evangelization and comprehensive works among those living in dire poverty.

c) Still, at times it is useful to distinguish these two aspects of evangelization, so that we can focus on creative ways of preaching and teaching the good news, as well as on creative systemic change projects among the poor.

d) There are many well-designed systemic change projects in the Vincentian Family. The book *Seeds of Hope: Stories of Systemic Change* describes some of them. Others have been presented at systemic change workshops on the various continents.

e) As we look for creative ways to preach and teach the gospel explicitly in today's context, it is important to use traditional *fora* well (e.g., by preaching and teaching relevantly from the pulpit, in the classroom and in other usual contexts) and to create new *fora*. Examples of new *fora* might be: the use of media like television in evangelizing; the use of internet in communicating the good news; the use of new places for preaching or teaching, such as “theology on tap”, which has now become popular in some places (the Archbishop of New York, for instance, spoke recently at a pub in Manhattan). The final section of this article will treat such *fora*.

f) Programs created for explicit evangelization should be programs of *integral* evangelization, avoiding the individualistic-type of evangelization programs that are sometimes popular among fundamentalist groups.

g) Since the concept of “systemic change” is a contemporary one, it was unknown in St. Vincent's time. But St. Vincent himself expressed many related ideas. For example, he emphasized organized works. Right from the start, when he gathered the first group of women to form a “Confraternity of Charity” at Chatillon-les-Dombes in November 1617, he stated, in the Rule he composed for them¹⁵, that the poor sometimes suffer more from lack of “order” than from lack of charitable persons. As noted above, he also continually urged the members of his Family to love the poor “spiritually and corporally” and “affectively and effectively”. He encouraged his followers to examine various elements in the lives of the poor to see what their most important needs

¹⁵ SV XIII, 423.

were: nourishment, health care, education, work, spiritual care, etc. We might call these ideas and practices “Seeds of Systemic Change in the Life and Works of St. Vincent”.

h) Today we are conscious that the poor live within a social system where some or many of these elements are lacking, a system that, if changed, can help a person emerge from poverty.

II. THE TEACHING OF RECENT POPES: Integral evangelization is the heart of the Church’s mission

Beginning in 1891 with Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum*¹⁶, a remarkable series of papal documents, over the past 120 years, has outlined and explicitly developed Catholic social teaching¹⁷. On various anniversaries of *Rerum Novarum*, this teaching took significant steps forward; e.g., **Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo Anno*** (1931), **John XXIII’s *Mater et Magistra*** (1961), and **John Paul II’s *Centesimus Annus*** (1991). Other conciliar and papal writings deepened the numerous themes found in these landmark documents. One of those themes is the relationship between evangelization and action on behalf of justice.

The writings of Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI emphasize that evangelization has multiple facets, all of which play a crucial role in the Church’s mission.

¹⁶ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, May 15, 1891.

¹⁷ Many have pointed out that Frederic Ozanam’s social thought foreshadowed *Rerum Novarum*, which was published 40 years later. In a letter of November 5, 1836, for example, he wrote: “The question which divides the people of today is no longer one about political structures, but a social question. It is to find out which will win, the spirit of egoism or the spirit of sacrifice. Is society to be just a huge exploitation for the profit of the strongest, or a dedication of each person to the benefit of all, and especially to the protection of the weak? There are many people who have too much, and who want still more. There are very many more who do not have sufficient, who have nothing and who want to take if people will not give. A struggle is starting between these two types of people. This struggle threatens to be a terrible one. On one side is the power of gold, on the other the power of despair. We must jump in between these opposing armies, if not to prevent at least to soften the encounter. And the fact that we are young middle-class people makes it easier for us to fulfill the role of mediator, to which our title of Christian obliges us. That is why our Society of St. Vincent de Paul is useful”. Engaged as he was in practical charity, Ozanam realized that this was not enough. He wrote on April 30, 1848: “Charity is not sufficient. It treats wounds, but it does not stop the blows that cause them... There is an immense poor class which does not want alms, but institutions”. Similarly, he wrote on November 13, 1836: “Societal order rests on two virtues: justice and charity. But justice already presupposes much love, because one must deeply love the human person in order to respect his rights, which limit our rights and his liberty, which impinges on our liberty”.

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI offered a description of evangelization¹⁸ which has had a profound influence on the worldwide Church and on the Congregation of the Mission:

Evangelization is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative. These elements may appear to be contradictory, indeed mutually exclusive. In fact they are complementary and mutually enriching. Each one must always be seen in relationship with the others.

The Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission refer explicitly to *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on several occasions¹⁹, as, even more frequently, does the *Ratio Missionum* of the Congregation²⁰.

Even earlier in the pontificate of Paul VI, the post-synodal document of 1971, *Justice in the World*, stated: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation"²¹.

Pope John Paul II gave a new turn to this theme. He made the expression "new evangelization" part of the contemporary Catholic vocabulary. Few topics received more attention in the Church during the years of his pontificate. He speaks of an evangelization that is new in its ardor, in its methods and in its expression²².

A fundamental question about the new evangelization is, obviously: "What is new?"

Pope John Paul speaks²³ of an evangelization that is new in its:

¹⁸ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 24. This document describes the content of evangelization very clearly in paragraphs 25-39. Interestingly, especially for members of the Vincentian Family, paragraphs 41 and 42 mirror St. Vincent's rule for effective evangelization: first, do; then, teach.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10, 11, 16.

²⁰ *Ratio Missionum Congregationis Missionis*, cf. especially chapter 2, where *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is cited repeatedly.

²¹ *Justice in the World* (1971), 6.

²² Discourse at the 19th Ordinary Assembly of CELAM, Haiti, March 9, 1983; also, in the Dominican Republic, October 12, 1984.

²³ Discourse given in Santo Domingo, October 12, 1984.

a) *ardor*

Here the emphasis is on the conversion of the evangelizer. Only someone who knows the Lord and loves him deeply can proclaim the word of God with joy, enthusiasm, conviction.

There are many ways of conversion. The focus in new evangelization is not on any particular path, like the charismatic movement, the neo-catechumenate, or one of the new forms of community springing up in the Church. Even though many, in fact, are converted in and through such new communities, the new evangelization is much broader. Within any of many possible vocational paths, each of us – woman or man, clergy or lay, younger or older, richer or poorer – must be continually converted. Finding the proper path is the challenge.

In this light, the new evangelization raises a series of questions for us. Have I really found a way of ongoing conversion myself? Has the Congregation as a whole been genuinely converted? Has live contact with the poor been for us, as it was for St. Vincent, the path to conversion? Have the poor revealed to us how God sees the world's priorities?

b) *methods*

There are many new means at hand. They too pose enormously challenging questions to us.

Do many in the Church, or the Congregation, really use the mass media (TV, radio, the press, movies, online resources) as means for evangelizing? Are there many provinces that have trained even one person in the use of the media and have organized one good media project? Do many in the Congregation use computer and cell phone contacts to full advantage in pastoral activities, especially among the young? I will take up these questions again in the final part of this article.

In our pastoral methodology, do we work not only *for* the poor, but *with* them? Do we regard base communities as a peculiarly Third World thing, or do we work at forming Christian communities wherever we evangelize?

c) *expression*

Every era and every place has its own language and its own culture, or its own languages and cultures. Today, differences in culture pose an increasing challenge, since we live in an information society, where rapid communication brings us into contact with the global commu-

nity. Large cities on all continents teem with people of diverse languages and cultures. Sunday Mass, for example, is celebrated in more than 30 languages in the Archdiocese of New York. Something similar is surely true in many large metropolitan cities.

On the different continents, there is a strong emphasis on the need for the inculturation of theology. In the Church everywhere, we live in an ecumenical era, which makes demands on the language we use in preaching and teaching.

Contemporary papal documents, often recalling the preaching of the Fathers of the Church, remind us continually of the importance of the social teaching of the Church. Pope John Paul II wrote in *Centesimus Annus*: "To teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message"²⁴. He adds: "The 'new evangelization'... must include among its elements a proclamation of the Church's social doctrine"²⁵.

Pope Benedict XVI carries this theme forward in *Caritas in Veritate*, speaking of the "new demands of evangelization"²⁶, frequently citing the writings of Paul VI and John Paul II and repeating that the social teaching of the Church is an essential element in evangelization²⁷.

In fact, in contemporary Church documents, there are many expressions that are quite new. I do not mean that the underlying concepts are completely new. Actually, we can find almost all of them, at least in some form, in the Fathers of the Church. But as the Church interfaces with contemporary societies and contemporary cultures, there is a new emphasis, often expressed in new language, on:

- the preferential option for the poor
- the effects of sin on social structures
- the systemic aspects of justice and injustice
- life issues (war, peace-making, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment)
- the erosion of family structures and sexual morality
- integral liberation
- ecology²⁸.

²⁴*Centesimus Annus* 5.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶*Caritas in Veritate*, 12.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 15.

²⁸Pope Benedict XVI focused on ecology during the World Day of Peace on January 1, 2010, entitling his message: "If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation".

Beyond these new emphases in Church documents and contemporary theology, one can also discern in our 1984 Constitutions and in the official documents of the Congregation of the Mission in recent years a number of significantly new accents:

- on Christ as the Evangelizer of the Poor
- on the link between evangelization and action for justice
- on searching out the causes of poverty and concrete solutions
- on specializing in the Church's social teaching
- on investigating the new forms of poverty
- on being evangelized by the poor
- on the poor as not merely the object of evangelization, but its subject
- on forming basic Christian communities
- on a global world-view.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE

In an address given in 1979, Pope John Paul II stated: "Social thinking and social practice inspired by the Gospel must always be marked by a special sensitivity towards those who are most in distress, those who are extremely poor, those suffering... from hunger, neglect, unemployment and despair. You will also want to seek out the structural reasons which foster or cause the different forms of poverty in the world and in your own country, so that you can apply the appropriate remedies".

Structural thinking does not come easily to us, but the worldwide Vincentian Family is attempting to respond energetically to the challenge above. The structural way of thinking that Pope John Paul II describes requires an informed understanding of the real circumstances of the poor, patient analysis, and a disciplined search for solutions. Beyond that, the implementation of structural change demands dialogue, collaborative action, and perseverance. But without structural thinking and structural change, the root causes of poverty remain embedded in society, even if programs that we set up are successful in dealing with some symptoms.

Conscious of this, in recent years the Vincentian Family has been focusing on systemic change. Of course, in a Family like ours, providing immediate service and working for systemic change are not an "either/or" option. They are a "both/and" imperative. It is important for us, on the one hand, to work to meet the immediate needs of the poor. On the other hand, it is crucial that we also help in promoting long-term change. Since 2006, some important steps forward have been made in that regard.

1. BACKGROUND

In 2006, with the encouragement and support of the Franz Foundation, the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, Fr. Gregory Gay, named a Commission for Promoting Systemic Change and gave it the following mandate: *To help bring about systemic change through the apostolates of the members of the Vincentian Family, especially those ministering to the oppressed poor.*

The following year, at their annual meeting, the international leaders of the Family, gathered in Rome, invited the members of the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change to make a presentation. At the end of the meeting, “Systemic Change” was chosen as the Family’s focus for at least two years (2007-2009). The theme is still an ongoing priority for the Family today.

2. THE GOALS OF THE COMMISSION AND THE WORK DONE SO FAR

a) *Goals*

When Fr. Greg named the members of the Commission, he asked them to:

- study available material concerning Systemic Change,
- discuss the members’ own involvement in Systemic Change,
- formulate a series of effective strategies for promoting systemic change (called “best practices” in some cultures) which would subsequently be shared with the members of the Vincentian Family,
- propose how the effective strategies might best be disseminated among the members of the Family throughout the world.

b) *What has been done so far?*

To respond to its mandate, the Commission started to reflect about Systemic Change and about how eventually to share the results of its work. At the beginning of the process, each of the members of the Commission wrote a story based on his or her own experience, describing a project in which Systemic Change had been implemented. In the stories presented, the Commission identified strategies that were effective in working toward Systemic Change. The importance of self-help and self-sustaining programs soon became evident. The Commission recognized that it was crucial that the poor themselves be active par-

ticipants in the planning and realization of the projects envisioned. As its work proceeded, the Commission underlined the spirituality that lies behind a systemic-change approach in the Vincentian Family.

The Commission gradually developed a series of means for communicating to the various branches of the Family what it was doing:

- A book, entitled *Seeds of Hope: Stories of Systemic Change*, has been published in many languages and distributed throughout the world
- A tool kit (a 2 gigabyte flash drive) was developed, containing brochures, short documents, DVDs, films, PowerPoint presentations, suggestions for workshops, etc.
- Continental workshops have been given on systemic change (these have now been held in Mexico, Brazil, Cameroon, Thailand, and the USA; upcoming workshops will take place in Haiti and at three locations in Europe)
- Numerous courses, seminars and workshops for leaders and multiplying agents have been given by individual members of the Commission
- FAMVIN has offered its services generously as a resource library and a hub for sharing ideas about systemic change
- Programs for promoting wise money management for the sake of the mission are being sponsored within the Family.

c) Some clarifications about the notion of Systemic Change

Systemic Change aims not only to serve the immediate needs of the poor (by providing food, clothing, etc.), but also to assist the poor to develop strategies by which they can emerge from poverty. The notion of “systemic change” should not be confused with “systematic change” (that is, planned, step-by-step change); “systematic change” can produce very positive results within a particular situation, but “systemic change” goes further. It aims at changing a whole series of structures that form the social system within which we live.

Today, we are more and more conscious that sin affects not just individuals; it deeply affects social structures too. It becomes embodied in unjust laws, power-based economic relationships, inequitable treaties, artificial boundaries, oppressive governments, and numerous other subtle obstacles to harmonious societal relationships. Some of these unjust societal structures keep the poor poor. Systemic-change projects aim at addressing such structures.

Many good projects address urgent, immediate needs, but do not go beyond that. Different from these, a systemic-change project has, among others, the following characteristics:

1) Long-range social impact

This is the most basic characteristic of systemic change; that is, the project helps change the overall life-situation of those who benefit from it.

2) Sustainability

The project helps create the social structures that are needed for a permanent change in the lives of the poor, like employment, education, housing, the availability of clean water and sufficient food, ongoing local leadership, etc.

3) Replicability

The project can be adapted to solve similar problems in other places. The philosophy or spirituality that grounds the project, the strategies it employs and the techniques that it uses can be applied in a variety of circumstances.

4) Scope

Concretely, this means that the project actually has spread beyond its initial context and has been used successfully in other settings in the country where it began, or internationally, either by those who initiated it, or by others who have adapted elements of it.

5) Innovation

The project has brought about significant social change by transforming traditional practice. Transformation has been achieved through the development of a pattern-changing idea and its successful implementation.

A system functions as a whole through the interaction of its various parts. Its elements affect each other constantly as they interact, either for better or for worse. Unemployment or low wages, poor housing, an unhealthy diet, deficient healthcare, and low-quality education are usually not separate problems; rather, they are ordinarily intimately linked with one another. “Systemic change” aims at transforming an entire series of interacting elements, rather than just one or two of them. This frequently requires a change in attitudes. A systemic-change approach offers tools to interpret our experience and focuses on how the system’s elements interact. It devises means for promoting structural change within a whole system. Basically, systemic-change thinking helps us, in the words attributed to Albert Einstein, “**to learn to see the world anew**”.

d) *Are we just another NGO?*

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, from time to time members of the Family ask questions like these: in focusing so sharply on systemic change, is the Vincentian Family becoming just another NGO? are there differences between our systemic change projects and those of highly motivated NGOs which currently emphasize systemic change?²⁹.

Much could be said in response to those questions. Here, in addition to what is stated above about St. Vincent's teaching on this matter and about contemporary papal teaching, I offer only a few brief concrete considerations for the reader's reflection.

1. As Fr. Greg pointed out during his remarks at the 2010 General Assembly, there are often significant differences in the motivation that moves an NGO to act and the motivation that drives members of the Family. Fr. Greg stated that we do what we do because we are following Christ the Evangelizer and Servant of the Poor, who "went about doing good"³⁰ by word and work. Hopefully, this colors all our actions. Creative fidelity³¹ to the following of Christ demands that our mission manifest the compassionate love of God, that it flow from prayerful union with the Creator and Redeemer, that it unite us with others in a community of service, and that it be renewed continually in every age, adapting itself to new challenges (like new forms of poverty) and new means (like systemic change methodology).

²⁹This type of question is perennial in the history of the Catholic Church, arising in diverse forms in different eras and in different countries: why should we run hospitals when the State runs some extraordinary ones? why should we run private Catholic schools, when the State offers public education free of charge? As noted above, St. Vincent faced such questions in his own time. In some ways these questions, while often asked, are in themselves problematic, since they often remain in the abstract and seek to identify, abstractly, the specific difference between two realities which are very different in the concrete. Ironically, for example, many who are not Catholic are eager to send their children to Catholic schools because they regard them as better, for concrete reasons. In the history of Catholic moral theology, the same question arises under another guise: is there a specifically Catholic moral code? While many may spontaneously answer that question in the affirmative and may even state that an affirmative response is obvious (e.g., in regard to birth control, abortion, etc.), others point out that Catholic moral teaching is consistently supported in the writings of theologians and in papal documents by natural law reasoning, which, by definition, is available to all persons, whether Catholic or not.

³⁰Acts 10:38.

³¹This was the theme of the 41st General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission, held in Paris in 2010.

2. Concretely, we bring to our systemic change projects a distinctive spirituality. In the footsteps of St. Vincent, St. Louise, Frederic Ozanam and countless others, we emphasize virtues like simplicity, humility, gentleness, mortification and zeal. Of course, these virtues too must be renewed in every era with creative fidelity. Today, one hopes that Vincentian Family systemic change projects will be characterized by transparency (simplicity), listening to the poor and being evangelized by them (humility), warmth and respect (gentleness), perseverance in the face of obstacles (mortification) and life-long dedication (zeal).

3. One would also hope that, in our projects, effective works will be accompanied, as St. Vincent often recommended, by a life that witnesses to Christ and by words of faith and encouragement³².

4. Of course, if a particular NGO provides services that promote integral human development better than we, their example should stimulate us to ongoing conversion and renewal, and we should rejoice humbly in the good being done by others, acknowledging that “all that matters is that in any and every way... Christ is being proclaimed”³³, even if he is being proclaimed anonymously.

IV. CREATIVE PREACHING: A challenge for contemporary evangelizers

Preaching the good news lies at the heart of the Congregation's charism. Our motto, taken from Luke 4:18, states our identity clearly: “To preach the good news to the poor He has sent me”. The challenge for Vincentians in every era, then, is to preach well. That involves preparation, a deep understanding of the scriptures meditated upon in prayer, an informed awareness of the contemporary world in which we apply the word of God, the development of good communication skills, and the use of media that facilitate communication.

As in other eras within the Congregation's history, today there are many good examples of creative evangelization programs; often, these are linked with creative “works” for the poor.

Here, because of space limitations, I will offer a brief description of only some of these, to whet the reader's appetite. Much more could be said about each of the examples that I will present below, and many more examples could be given.

³²SV IX, 59; IX, 593; XI, 364; XI, 592.

³³Philippians 1:18.

1. Akamasoa

Fr. Pedro Opeka is best known for the extraordinary systemic change project that he initiated at Akamasoa in Madagascar. It provides jobs, housing, health care and education for more than 17,000 people. But visitors to Akamasoa are also immediately struck by the vibrant faith community they find there. On Sundays, 6,000 people gather to celebrate the Eucharist, praying and singing God's praises. On feasts like Easter, Pentecost and Christmas 10,000 may join in the celebration, giving thanks to God for his gifts. In the evenings, many gather for quiet prayer. Akamasoa's schools provide religious education for 9,000 young people.

What is the key to the building up of this faith community? Fr. Pedro puts it this way:

Material progress never completely satisfies the longing in people's hearts. Our spirits are restless as we seek a sense of purpose in life. The spark of God resides in all and moves the human heart to go beyond our limited daily horizons. In Akamasoa, we recognize that we must help people to experience life's surprises. When we explore the mystery of the covenant between God and humanity, when we develop the gifts of compassion, mercy, and sharing, we move beyond the limits of human justice and begin to spread a charity that has no bounds. In this way, we live in joy and peace because we love deeply. To that end, we attempt to return continually to the source of the Good News and open our hearts to it. If we do that faithfully, then, in the footsteps of Christ, we ourselves will be Good News.

The most recent annual report of Akamasoa puts it this way: "**Spiritual animation** has likewise played a very important role in helping the residents face the future courageously and in raising their consciousness in regard to their responsibilities toward their families and toward society. The Sunday Eucharist has taken on a hugely important dimension, with massive participation of the children, young people and adults. It has also become international, since many foreigners come in order to experience a powerful, unforgettable moment in the life of the community and to pray with it".

2. The truck drivers apostolate in Brazil

Brazil is huge, extending over more than 8,000,000 square kilometers. A vast network of roads and highways crosses the country in all directions. Ninety percent of all transportation is provided by trucks on the highways. There are over one million registered truckers, who

often travel day and night without stopping – tired and hot, working inhumane hours with low pay, on dangerous roads, under the threat of being robbed, separated from their families for weeks and sometimes even months at a time. About 50,000 people die each year on the road. Within this framework, a Highway Pastoral Apostolate has now been functioning for thirty-five years.

The priests accompany the truckers on their travels over the highways of Brazil. They bring the solace of the Word of God, the sacraments, the opportunity for peaceful prayer, the presence of the Church, and friendship. The main focus of the work at the end of each day is the Highway Mass. This Mass is usually celebrated at service stations, although sometimes the celebration takes place in restaurants or garages. Basically, the apostolate provides Roman Catholic religious services for the Highway Community (truckers, bus drivers, cab drivers, their passengers, also the personnel at service stations, automotive repair shops, restaurants, etc...).

The Highway Pastoral Apostolate began in 1976 in the state of Parana, with the authorization of Msgr. Geraldo M. Pellanda, Archbishop of Ponta Grossa. Father Marian Litewka, C.M. shouldered the work at the start. Until 1981, it was limited to the state of Parana. Then in October 1981, it was extended to Santa Catarina and Rio Grande, two states in the south. In 1982, a team began serving the states of Mato Grosso, Goias, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Espirito Santo, and Bahia. Since 1985, sisters from the community of Our Lady of Sorrows have assisted in the Highway Pastoral Apostolate.

In 1988, Father José Carlos Chacorowski, C.M. (named a bishop in 2010) joined the project and expanded it further. He began religious services along the highways of Northeastern states and the states of Tocantins, Maranhao, and Para. In 1993, Father Miguel Staron, C.M., launched the mission in the state of Rondonia. In 1996, Father Germano Nalepa became a team member, replacing Fr. José Carlos.

The missionaries travel on all the highways in Brazil except for those in the states of Amapa, Roraima, Amazonas, and Acre. Along the way, they stop each year in about 7,000 service stations and other roadside establishments. They are on the road 220-250 days a year, and celebrate Mass at over 1,400 service stations across the country.

They have selected the Virgin Mary, with the title of Our Lady of the Road, as the patron of their pastoral work. The original portrait for Our Lady of the Road, painted by an unknown artist around 800 years ago, is in the Gesù Church in Rome, Italy. Since 1976 the team has distributed, after every mass, images of Our Lady of the Road on posters and flyers, placing more than 300,000 copies of the image in the hands of the people.

The team's vision is broad: "For our part, we would like to see the Highway Pastoral in Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile. In Brazil, we help many truck drivers from neighboring countries; we also know that thousands of Brazilian truck drivers travel on the highways of neighboring countries. It is important that the truck drivers in all Latin America, at least those in South America, feel the friendly and comforting presence of the Church in their lives, work, and on their journeys".

In the opinion of the missionaries themselves, the Highway Apostolate would be viable in other countries if adapted to the individual characteristics of each country. One of them mused: "When I visit Paris and travel on the metro, seeing the crowd of dehumanized people, I think: what a great missionary assignment it would be to walk among travelers as a friend or a brother, distributing flyers with the gospel message, giving my undivided attention to whoever needs it. It would require an enormous amount of humility, patience, and hope, but it would be worth it".

3. A publication ministry in Brazil

Fr. Mizael Poggioli has had an enormous influence on the Vincentian Family in Brazil not only by his preaching, but also by his publications, which hundreds of thousands of people have read. He has written many of these books himself; he has had others translated. All of them have served as important tools in the formation of the large Vincentian Family in Brazil. Fr. Mizael serves as spiritual advisor to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, whose membership in Brazil has reached 300,000.

The books treat current ecclesial and Vincentian topics clearly, simply and briefly. Here is a list of the titles presently available at: <http://mizaelpoggioli.blogspot.com/search/label/Livros>

TITLE / AUTHOR	# OF PP.
The Spiritual Experience of St. Vincent de Paul and our Own <i>Various</i>	78
St. Vincent de Paul – A Saint for Today <i>Alfonso M. Tamayo and Alvaro Panqueva</i>	122
The Humanism of Vincent de Paul <i>André Dodin</i>	322
St. Vincent de Paul and Charity <i>André Dodin</i>	206

TITLE / AUTHOR	# OF PP.
Week of Vincentian Studies <i>Various</i>	334
Frederic Antoine Ozanam <i>Benedito Rosa Miranda and Messias G. Teixeira</i>	71
Saint Catherine Labouré <i>Guilherme Vaessen</i>	197
St. Vincent de Paul <i>Guilherme Vaessen</i>	156
Instruction on Vows in the CM <i>Document</i>	122
My Hero, Vincent de Paul <i>Aloísio D. Goch</i>	318
The Way of Vincent de Paul <i>Robert Maloney</i>	240
Frederic Ozanam – The Mobilization of the Laity <i>Various</i>	148
Manual of Vincentian Spirituality <i>Various</i>	176
Francis Regis Clet <i>Lourenço Biernaski</i>	120
Pilgrims in Prayer – Pilgrims in Charity <i>Robert Maloney</i>	157
The Vincentian Family – Brazil <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	176
Vincent de Paul and the Charism of Charity <i>Luigi Mezzadri</i>	134
The Service of Advisor – The Vincentian Family <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	68
Vincentian Ethics <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	59
Vincent de Paul – Father of the Poor <i>Nélio Pita</i>	181
Jesus Christ is in the Poor <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	62
The Dignity of the Poor <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	118
Overcome with the Poor I <i>Various</i>	75

TITLE / AUTHOR	# OF PP.
Overcome with the Poor II <i>Various</i>	94
Promoting Systemic Change <i>Various</i>	60
The Vincentian Conferences <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	100
Charity as a Force in Evangelization <i>Various</i>	144
The Cry of the Poor <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	76
The Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Church <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	125
Foundations of the Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	86
Foundations of the Spirituality of Frederic Ozanam <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	80
Seeds of Hope <i>Various</i>	301
The Vincentian Conferences – Texts for Reflection <i>Roque Gelatti</i>	144
Charity – Mission <i>Various</i>	136
Other Vincentian Chronicles <i>Renato Lima</i>	140
Basic Foundations of AIC – Brasil <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	176
In Charity- Face to Face with the Poor <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	78
Mary in Vincentian Spirituality <i>Mizaél Donizetti Poggioli</i>	103
Praying with Frederic Ozanam <i>Ronald Ramson, C.M.</i>	152
Turn Everything to Love <i>Robert Maloney</i>	102
Lives that Endure... <i>J. Assis Pacheco</i>	142
Fifteen Days of Prayer with Louise de Marillac <i>Elizabeth Charpy</i>	135

TITLE / AUTHOR	# OF PP.
DVD – St. Vincent de Paul – Chaplain of the Gallery Slaves – Dubbed in Portuguese	
DVD – Society of St. Vincent de Paul – Institutional	
DVD – The Dignity of the Poor	

4. Ministry among the nomadic population in Mexico

Fr. Benjamin Romo has spent the last two and a half years in the mountain region of Tarahumara in the parish of Chinatu. “My experience with the people”, says Benjamin, “has been a fascinating one, filled with difficulties, challenges, and a good bit of ‘the cross’”.

Three Vincentian missionaries cover this enormous parish, which consists of 105 communities. The distances are huge and travel is difficult, especially during the winter snows and in the rainy season. To travel from one end of the parish to the other takes eight hours by land rover. Municipal and State authorities have done little to improve the paths and roads, so the missionaries themselves fix them from time to time, with the help of the people and with some donations.

The social problems are daunting, since the planting and trafficking of drugs are rampant in these communities. Kidnappings are frequent. People confront death and threats of death daily.

The missionaries aim at creating an environment in which the communities can gather to listen to the Word of God and celebrate traditional festivals, something that will be lost if leaders and teachers do not help them conserve the values of their culture. The priests’ work involves a lot of accompaniment and empowerment. After just two and a half years, change in the communities is visible, and the members, little by little, are discovering the riches they possess as they unite to work together. In one community, a large chapel was built in a year, thanks to the labor of the community itself, along with financial support and meals that the missionaries provided. The people are often hungry and weak; therefore, it is necessary to provide them both spiritual and material nourishment.

Many are coming to realize that they can change their life conditions, if they are united. This realization has transformed their mentality, so that now they are capable of thinking about small projects for community development. Much remains to be done in the areas of health care, education, and culture.

For the missionaries, the center of their evangelization work is Jesus Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor. Their resources are very limited in

every sense. They lack the personnel to cover the great expanse of the parish. They rely on seven members of the JMV who collaborate with them, but this is insufficient. They also need financial resources to move projects forward, to sustain the members of the JMV who are assisting them. But in the end, Fr. Romo states confidently, “We are walking where God is showing us the way day to day, and every day brings its own joys and its own surprises”.

5. Online ministries

In recent years, a number of confreres have developed creative online ministries. Frs. John Freund, Julio Suescun and Claude Lautissier have labored energetically to make www.famvin.org a valuable formation and communication resource for the entire Vincentian Family. Other branches of the Vincentian Family, as well as a number of individuals within those branches, have created important websites.

One of the most valuable sources for Vincentian research is *Via Sapientiae*, a website sponsored by DePaul University. Frs. Ed Udovic and John Rybolt have contributed very significantly to its birth and development.

Among personal evangelization efforts aimed at communicating the gospel message effectively (while also developing a number of specifically Vincentian themes), let me mention Fr. Dandy Labitag’s work especially. He has produced numerous films and PowerPoint presentations, some of which are listed below:

N.	NAME	HYPERLINK
1.	Video Campaign Against Child Labor (Long Version)	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnV5EH9ER30
2.	Video Campaign Against Child Labor (Short Version)	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6j5Yg5UFhuY&feature=related
3.	2010 Convocation – Western Province: A Glimpse	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnykdTV1Owg&feature=mfu_in_order&list=UL
4.	Anyway	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsVSfn7PH-8&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=12
5.	Prayer of the Vincentian Family	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sNZjInnI9E&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=13
6.	Mother’s Prayer	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ee_t83QjIo&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=14
7.	FACE	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDMpe8iSSf0&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=15

N.	NAME	HYPERLINK
8.	Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvNNXJ_T6vE&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=16
9.	Vincentian Saints, Blesseds and Venerables	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuz98oBPqLM&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=17
10.	Needful Hands	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uo664Xx12k&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=18
11.	350 Images of Poverty	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWAeh5tor2Q&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=20
12.	350 Images of SVP	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_ByXVOH6yw&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=21
13.	St. Louise de Marillac: A Woman in Love	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1S9lx0oC6w&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=22
14.	CIF: Rooting, Renewing and Risking	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6882DMWc6xw&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=1
15.	Superior Generals of the Congregation of the Mission	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nn9TV0piT4s&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=2
16.	I am Your Angel – Celine Dion	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8W44Ndo0mm4&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=3
17.	Ave Maria – Celine Dion	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePDMzIVGR4w&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=4
18.	Help Me Lord – Johnny Cash	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yL1LrFtx2w&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=5
19.	Smile! – Josh Grobin	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHlvNJUc7I&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=6
20.	Tears of An Angel	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYid6MTgIO0&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=7
21.	The Voice	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu6go8NhqeQ&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=8
22.	Away in the Manger: A Modern Christmas	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yI8yMTHBPQ&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=9
23.	The Blessing	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ajUwV83IEU&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=10
24.	Miracle	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOx2tumeqZo&feature=BF&list=ULcEgzRxvmATY&index=11
25.	REMEMBER – A Tribute to St. Vincent de Paul	http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=J1F9BCNU
26.	PANIS ANGELICUS - Music Videos	http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=JM01JMNU
27.	DO NOT GIVE UP! You are Loved	http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=JEFJBMNU

N.	NAME	HYPERLINK
28.	What Matters Most	http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=DY67KPNX
29.	Over the Rainbow	http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=DYK7YG NX
30.	God's Voice	http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=D76PWWNX
31.	I am the Voice – Celtic Woman	http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=D7DLZW NX

These days creative online ministries abound. A few months ago, Deacon Steve Politte's website, www.openmyeyeslord.net, recorded the millionth hit on its homepage. One of the site's videos, "Ultimate Freedom", has had more than 12 million hits. The creators of the site state that it is "probably the video that got our website going".

Steve Politte, a deacon in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, is disabled from a back injury and no longer able to preach or minister at Mass. Instead, he has created a ministry to spread the good news via the Internet, forming a community of prayer around the world.

"Whispers in the Loggia", a very popular news website created by Rocco Palmo of Philadelphia, has already recorded 18,521,673 hits as I write this article!

6. An interesting example of the use of a new forum is "Theology on Tap"

Theology on Tap is a program of lectures given, usually, by well-known spiritual leaders and teachers, who address current topics in religion and theology. The issues treated are often controversial. The venue is normally a bar or a restaurant. The use of this forum has become common among Catholics and other Christian denominations, particularly Episcopalians, Lutherans, and some Presbyterian and Methodist churches.

Theology on Tap was cofounded in June 1981 in Arlington Heights, Illinois, by Father John Cusick, director of the archdiocese's Young Adult Minister and Father Jack Wall. It came into being as the result of comments made by a recent college graduate who was "concerned about his personal identity and finding meaning in life".

Lecture topics have included the **sacrament of reconciliation**, faith and work, relationship issues, **Christian** values, small faith communities, decision making or discernment, embryonic stem-cell research, **religious fundamentalism**, the relevance of the church in the modern world and to public policy, and women's role in the church.

Since its inception, the program has spread to many parishes in the USA and to at least six other countries, including **Canada, Italy, Tai-**

wan, the **Philippines, Ireland, Australia and Hong Kong**. More than 29 USA dioceses have local Theology on Tap groups.

Cardinals **Justin Rigali, Francis George, Sean Patrick O'Malley**, Donald Wuerl and Archbishops Timothy Dolan and **George Niederauer** have addressed program gatherings.

7. Other challenging arenas

Of course, beyond the examples of creative evangelization projects described above, there are still some striking challenges that are crying out for a response.

a) *Youth ministry*

One of the great evangelization challenges is the communication of God's word to young people, or what we commonly call youth ministry. Can the young people in our Vincentian parishes and schools be reached by creative websites or through email or the cell phone or Twitter?

Recently, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, of Dublin, stated:

Young Irish people are among the most catechised in Europe but apparently among the least evangelized. Our schools are great schools; our young people are idealistic and generous, but the bond between young people and Church life ends up being very weak....

Probably my greatest discouragement as Archbishop of Dublin comes from the failure of interaction between the Church and young people. I visit parishes where I encounter no young people. I enquire what is being done to attract young people to parish life and the answers are vague. Many experiments flourish for a while and then die out. Everyone knows that there is a missing generation and perhaps more than one, yet there are not enough pastoral initiatives to reach out to young people.

Parishes offer very little outreach to young people and I feel that an increasing number of young people find parishes a little like alien territory. A form of religious education which is separated from the parish will inevitably collapse for most the day that school ends. We need a more demanding catechesis, within a parish framework, and more opportunities for young people to deepen their faith and to develop a Christian sense of their generosity and social commitment.

I suspect that the same could be said in many countries. How might pastors work *with* the young for *the* young?

b) *Radio and Television*

How about the means of communication that billions of people use day in and day out? In the USA, 85% of the population listens to the radio daily. Millions tune in morning and evening as they drive back and forth to work. 238,000,000 people settle down in front of the TV at some time each day; the average person watches for more than 4 hours daily. I suspect that, with adjustments for varying economic and social circumstances, the reality is similar in many other countries. Are we using these media to communicate the good news effectively?

From 1951 to 1957, Bishop Fulton Sheen's "Life is Worth Living" was one of the most watched TV shows on the air. It competed successfully with other prime-time shows and drew as many as 30 million viewers every week. In 1952 Bishop Sheen won an Emmy Award as the Most Outstanding Television Personality. He accepted the honor by saying, "I feel it is time to pay tribute to my four writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John". The Archdiocese of New York could not meet the demand for tickets to his show. *Time* magazine called him "the first 'televangelist'".

Today Catholic preachers have faded from the list of outstanding radio and television evangelists. Who will revitalize these ministries in what – to use John Paul II's terminology – are much frequented "areopagi"?

c) *Films*

Holiness attracts – yes, even today, in what many regard as very secularized times. Last year "Of Gods and Men", the true story of Trappist monks murdered in Algeria won numerous awards, though it was denied an Oscar nomination on technical grounds. It received 11 nominations for the César Awards in France and won second place for the Grand Prix at Cannes.

Over the years, numerous explicitly "Catholic" films have won Oscars. "Going My Way" and "A Man for All Seasons" (the life of St. Thomas More) received the best picture of the year award. In 1948, "Monsieur Vincent" won the best foreign film award. "The Bells of St. Mary's" was nominated for 6 Oscars in 1946 and took home one. Ingrid Bergman won the best actress nomination for "The Bells of St. Mary's" and "Joan of Arc" (for which José Ferrer was nominated too). In 1964, "Becket" won an Academy Award for the best screenplay. Both Peter O'Toole and Richard Burton were nominated for Best Actor, and John Gielgud was nominated as Best Supporting Actor. Numerous other award-winning films had less explicit, but very Catholic themes, like "Dead Man Walking" for which Susan Sarandon won an award as Best

Actress (and Sean Penn, Tim Robbins and Bruce Springsteen received nominations).

Could more be done in film? There are some wonderfully attractive lives of saints and other themes that might fascinate viewers.

d) Games

The brother of a friend of mine is the founder of Zynga, the largest online game producer in the world. At the end of 2010, Zynga's most popular game "Cityville" had 69 million users, only a few weeks after its birth. Zynga's second most popular game "Farmville" had 57 million users. By January 14, 2011, "Cityville" had surged past 100 million users and was heading toward new records. While I must confess that I have little interest in online games, I have to acknowledge that a huge number of people do, especially (though by no means exclusively) the young.

Zynga was recently evaluated at 7.5 billion dollars. One must applaud the company for its inventiveness and also for its social conscience. It has helped Haiti in post-earthquake reconstruction and has assisted in projects to aid those living in poverty in other countries as well.

I sometimes ask myself: could not someone invent a good game that would alert users to the plight of those living in poverty? Could "Cityville" have added in slums as part of the city's overall design? Could its design have included poverty-reduction programs for improving the city? Could someone invent a good game for catechetical or evangelical purposes? Or even just a good game of any sort, whose proceeds would go toward alleviating poverty?

For a good number of us, the world of games is a foreign world. But it is a world inhabited by many residents, younger and older. What can we do to enter that world, and, by entering, influence it?

Let me conclude these reflections on evangelization and systemic change by asking some fundamental questions. Will we, the members of the Congregation of the Mission, followers of Christ *as the Evangelizer of the Poor*, evangelize effectively by "words and works" as St. Vincent says? Will our provinces be communities of priests and brothers evangelizing the poor creatively and leading others to evangelize them, as our Constitutions envision? Can the Church, as it commits itself to a new evangelization, really become a church of the poor, as Pope John XXIII called it to be in his opening address at Vatican II, reaching out to them in a new evangelization, as John Paul II hoped?

I trust that the answer to all these questions can be *yes*. But it is quite a challenge.

Spirituality and Charism of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

Austin Fagan

St. Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales)

When we consider how St. Vincent de Paul, in 1609, and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, in 1831, arrived in Paris, interesting similarities and differences emerge. As legend has it, after his ill-fated short-cut across the Gulf of Lyon and his capture by pirates, Vincent was sold into slavery, escaped to France, received an appointment in Rome, and eventually, a new mission at the Court of Henri IV. None of this circuitous route to Paris could possibly have been planned!

Frédéric Ozanam's arrival was, on the other hand, very much part of a plan. His father wanted him to begin studying at the Sorbonne University in autumn 1830, but the July revolution that year prompted a postponement. The irony is that his home city of Lyon soon exposed him to a different kind of challenge. The Saint-Simonians, a new religious sect bitterly opposed to Christianity, decided to concentrate their efforts there. They did indeed win many converts and could be well satisfied until Ozanam had other ideas. Annoyed at the publicity given by a local newspaper, *le Précurseur*, he wrote a complaint to its editor, insisting that his own refutation should receive equal coverage. His article was duly published. Encouraged by friends, he expanded it as a brochure, entitled *Reflections on the Doctrines of Saint-Simon*. The Saint-Simonians had therefore spurred him into completing the first of his many published works, just as they were to jolt him later into dedicating himself to charitable works.

When he did eventually begin his studies in Paris, he joined the History Conference, a university debating society, in which there were also some Saint-Simonian students. One of these admitted that Christians had done much good in the past, but ask what was the Church doing NOW? No one could answer, but Blessed Frédéric later admitted he and his Catholic friends were doing nothing. He persuaded some of them to found a new society to not merely debate, but in which members would perform some kind of Christian action by helping people in need.

They founded the Charity Conference, which soon changed its name to the St. Vincent de Paul Conference. Not only should it have Vincent

as Patron, but his name should not simply be used in the way that a tobacconist's might be named after a saint. Vincent was to be regarded as an example to follow and someone who should be imitated by those identified with his name.

When he responded to the challenge "What is your Church doing NOW?", Blessed Frédéric Ozanam chose to do so in a way alien to most Christian students and intellectuals of the age. Belonging to a revolutionary age, very much in a minority and constantly on the defensive, they were used to "arguing" both in spoken and written word. They were not used to "doing".

St. Vincent de Paul's founding of seminaries sprang from a realisation that many priests were hopelessly ill-equipped to fulfil their mission. Some were woefully ignorant about the Faith and almost incapable of administering the Sacraments. In contrast, others were so erudite that their preaching amounted to no more than a literary exercise, aimed at cramming more Latin quotations into a homily than would be achieved by their ever-watchful, jealous "rivals".

If Vincent had insisted that his priests should preach in a simple style, which must be understood by people of little education, Frédéric was to make a similar plea for more appropriate homilies. He condemned the same kind of irrelevant erudition which had beset the pulpits in St Vincent's 17th century and he accused some priests of merely repeating well-rehearsed arguments which were fast becoming obsolete in the industrial 19th century. Warning that the Church was under attack from increasing numbers of new enemies, he insisted-Christians must learn to reply by arguments and language more appropriate to the times in which they lived.

On behalf of Catholic students at the Sorbonne, he petitioned the Archbishop of Paris, Msgr. Quélen, to appoint in Notre-Dame a preacher able to relate more closely with the young generation. Fr. Lacordaire, a convert from rationalism and a qualified barrister, was adept at using the rationalists' own techniques to re-state Christian doctrines in a way that remained topical. Archbishop Quélen opted for a group of traditionalist theologians, but Notre-Dame remained almost empty, echoing to the sound of their well-worn oratory. Meanwhile, Lacordaire was attracting capacity congregations at the nearby chapel of the Collège Stanislas. The Archbishop finally granted the wishes of Ozanam and his companions, so Fr. Lacordaire then began to fill the Cathedral and to exert a crucial influence on Catholic revival.

Blessed Frédéric's support for Lacordaire had been based largely on the belief that an "intellectual" approach was required if converts were to be won. He never ceased to stress this need but continued still more to realise the importance of Christian "action" as well. Throughout the rest of his life, Frédéric's emphasis would move more strongly in the

direction of demonstrating his beliefs through acts of charity, rather than in cleverly contrived arguments.

Neither Frédéric nor Vincent simply threw up their hands in an empty gesture of horror at what they saw. They each reacted positively by first organising practical charity and “applying first-aid to the wound”. Yet they were not content to offer charity as the initial but only solution. For them Charity must be a prelude to Justice. Vincent had witnessed the horrors of battle in the Thirty Years War and during the Fronde. Working behind the scenes, he pleaded with the Queen Regent and with Cardinal Mazarin to restore peace. Each day, at Saint-Lazare, at least one priest, one lay-brother and one cleric used to fast and pray for peace.

Ozanam may have been an idealist, hoping that 19th century France would listen once more to the voice of the Church, but he was also a realist, knowing that the State must intervene by just laws. In the early part of his career he lectured in commercial law and, eight years before the revolution of 1848, told his students that:

*“Public charity should have a rôle to play in moments of crisis. But charity is really only the Samaritan pouring his soothing ointment on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is for the law to prevent such attacks”*¹.

Not remaining content with providing charity to the poor, Vincent had also been determined to persuade the rich and powerful that it was natural justice for the poor to enjoy standards of health and living conditions worthy of their human dignity. He set the example of care provided by Daughters of Charity whom he sent to work in overcrowded hospitals. By pricking consciences, he was able to establish confraternities wherever the need arose to supplement and, he hoped, to succeed in eventually reforming the inadequate services offered by the State. He also used as propaganda missionaries’ letters describing appalling conditions throughout France. From Lorraine, a Vincentian priest described how the people lived on a form of bread made from straw.

When Ozanam complained about the conditions in which poor families were forced to live, he did not want their poverty relieved solely by alms-giving. He also suggested improvements in the economic structure which caused poverty. When lecturing on commercial law, he encouraged students to regard their profession not in isolation, but to

¹Notes d’un cours de droit commercial, XXIV^e Leçon: *Des Ouvriers*, A.F. OZANAM, *Œuvres complètes*, Lecoffre, Paris 1872-1873 (9 vols., 2 volumes of letters added, 1881), t. VIII, p. 586.

feel an integral part of the whole society. Their training should not be aimed simply at acquiring a professional status. Law must be more fully appreciated as a truly vocational service.

While politicians discussed ways of alleviating the suffering caused by poverty, Blessed Frédéric asked if they truly understood the causes of human misery. He begged them not to be concerned only with material conditions, but drew their attention to how a fundamental lack of spiritual purpose was responsible for much of the unhappiness. When writing or lecturing about working-class conditions, he really knew what he was talking about. One of the few people belonging to the educated middle class who had seen at first-hand what he described and analysed, he continued, in both Paris and Lyon, to visit the poor in their own homes.

We have seen how Ozanam's approach developed from being mainly intellectual to showing an increased concern for good actions as well as good arguments. At the same time, he was also becoming aware that political solutions would never solve problems associated with the industrial revolution. He knew that religious and social questions were much more important than changes of political government.

He saw Christianity as the most important basis for any solution. He believed the Church should show concern for poor workers, because of the tradition which had been handed down:

*"The One Who was to regenerate the world hid for thirty years His Divine Person in the workshop of a carpenter"*².

Christianity had restored the dignity of work. Blessed Frédéric emphasised that members of religious orders had never been afraid to undertake manual work. Workers could therefore be persuaded that there was a personal dignity in whatever they did.

Yet, no matter what good some members of his St. Vincent de Paul society might have done, Blessed Frédéric never considered his own work a very significant contribution to even the most elementary needs. He simply offered the example of his charitable society for other Christians to follow. When he proposed legal reforms, he thought they would only be effective if a greater spirit of charity already existed before such laws were passed.

Realizing that merely to appeal for the natural generosity of the public was an action obviously doomed to failure, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam sometimes altered his approach. Instead of appealing, he issued stern warnings. As if anticipating Pius XI's thoughts – that he

²Notes d'un cours de droit commercial, XXXIV^e Leçon: *Des Ouvriers*, o.c., t. VIII, p. 579.

greatest tragedy of the Church in France during the 19th century was the loss of the working classes – Frédéric criticised not just employers but also some clergy:

“If a greater number of Christians, and especially of clergy, had concerned themselves with the working classes during the last ten years, we would be more sure of the future; and all our hopes rest on the little which has been done so far”³.

This was written in a letter to his brother Alphonse, a priest himself. It was written only a month after the climax of the 1848 revolution but Blessed Frédéric was by no means criticising Alphonse who had, in fact, been giving an excellent example of how priests could help the poor. In his parish in Lille, he had organised evening classes to teach reading and writing. That was the kind of work which Frédéric also arranged as part of his SVP activity in both Paris and Lyon.

By following in Vincent’s foot-steps, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam tried to imitate not his exact same works so much as his spirit of Charity. If he had tried indiscriminately to copy only the deeds themselves, he would have looked for galley-slaves in the centre of Paris. That would not have been to follow in foot-steps, but would have meant trying mechanically to fit his ownfeet into someone else’s foot-prints.

If today we tried slavishly to match Ozanam’s foot-prints, we would find ourselves carrying firewood to families in high-rise flats. No, we try to walk truly in the foot-steps of both Vincent and Frédéric by identifying the needs of our own time and developing works of charity appropriately answering the needs of our own poor.

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam realised that many practices must develop differently if the Gospel were still to mean anything. In other words, he was in favour of Systemic Change. The Gospel itself never changes but our application of its precepts can never remain exactly the same.

If the Gospel is “Good News”, then not only must it be good for us but it must also be NEW. If ever it ceased to be new, it would no longer be “NEWS”. It would be “history”. As something new, the Gospel will be fresh and capable of helping us to find new ways of living it ourselves and of proclaiming it to others. Both St. Vincent and Blessed Frédéric found new ways of serving Christ in the poor.

If one of the charisms of both Vincent and Frédéric was to care for poor people, the care of souls was always an important part of their mission. The Congregation of the Mission had been founded not just to provide material assistance, but to preach the Gospel. St. Vincent de Paul saw people’s greatest need to be a religious one. Blessed Frédéric

³To abbé Alphonse Ozanam, Paris, 25 March 1848, *o.c.*, t. XI, p. 228.

gave this same message to members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Reporting to Council-General about the work undertaken in his home city of Lyon, he stressed that material aid was not the most important part of their service to the poor:

*"To report, indeed, how many Christians we have brought back to the fold"*⁴.

In this same account, Ozanam expresses concern about the extent to which Catholics had a shallow knowledge of their Faith. Their practice of it also lacked commitment:

*"They all possess the Faith, but a Faith which is lukewarm; they still practise their religion, but often without understanding it. We must bring light into this semi-darkness, warm up this chill; edification, rather than conversion, is the chief necessity. There is no lack of Catholics among us. We must mould them to sanctity"*⁵.

Our St. Vincent de Paul Society in England & Wales suffered a very sad blow, last year, at the sudden death of Steve Whitley, who had been manager of our national holiday centre, which provides respite for needy families. Steve was not a Catholic and his family organised a humanist funeral, which many of us attended. Have you ever experienced such an occasion during which God is never mentioned and where there is a total absence of all the consolations from religious belief, which our Christian funerals can so often provide? I quote the remark made by Monica, one of our former Diocesan Council Presidents, who has given many years of service to the Society: "I feel so ashamed at all the chances I missed to teach more lessons about the Faith". It was as if she blamed herself for this total absence of God from a funeral. But how many of have sat back and allowed the absence of religious belief or, at least, religious indifference to prevail?

In his Letter to the Romans, St. Paul warns us against this danger of accepting things as they are:

*"Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect"*⁶.

⁴Lyon, 27 April 1838, quoted in SVP National Council of England & Wales, *Manual*, 1938, p. 160 et surtout combien de chrétiens rendus à leurs devoirs. *Manuel de la Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul*, 22^e édition, 1941, p. 212.

⁵Lyon, 27 April 1838, *Manual*, loc. cit., p. 161.

⁶Romans 12:2.

I think, like Monica, that many of us could have felt equal guilt at modelling ourselves so readily on the behaviour of the world which surrounds us. Do we find it perhaps much easier to relieve poverty than to consider the many spiritual needs of the families we visit? Blessed Frédéric never shrank from his responsibility as a Christian to seek, in the words of St. Paul, “what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do”:

“But the principal object of this assistance is to ensure our moral influence; our task is to put right the interior disorder of the houses of our poor; to arrange for the upbringing of the children and to find them work; to console so many sorrows and, most of all, to destroy vice”⁷.

Despite criticising this lack of Faith and indifference to religious practice, Blessed Frédéric always remained humble in his charitable work:

“It is at such a time that we acknowledge, in the words of St. Vincent de Paul, ‘that the poor, who belong to Jesus Christ, are our lords and masters and that we are hardly worthy of rendering to them our petty services’”⁸.

He also refused to remain content at whatever good work he did, realising that there would be always much more to do:

“Charity must never look backwards but always to the front, because the number of good deeds already accomplished is very small, while present and future hardships remain infinite”⁹.

Among the work undertaken by Blessed Frédéric’s St. Vincent de Paul Conference in Lyon was to visit an army barracks. There his members taught the soldiers reading, writing and math. but most of all, they showed them friendship and true Christian charity. This was at a time when the military were often hated by other citizens, especially after riots following unemployment in the Lyon silk industry, during which the army was ordered to control the rioters.

The charitable nature of these visits was not limited to friendship or the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Well aware that, separated from family influence, few of the young soldiers had continued to practise their religion, the St. Vincent de Paul Society visitors provided religious instruction also. They helped the soldiers to pray and even taught them hymns. Not only were some encouraged to resume the practice of their

⁷Lyon, 27 April 1838, *Manual*, loc. cit., p. 161.

⁸Lyon, 27 April 1838, *Manual*, loc. cit., p. 162

⁹To Léonce Curnier, Paris, 23 February 1835.

Faith but a request for Baptism was received, which would gladden the hearts of all Vincentians:

*"One Jewish soldier expressed the wish to know the Christian Faith and is receiving regular lessons, which will probably end in his Baptism. You may well imagine that he will be called Vincent de Paul"*¹⁰.

Believing his Society's charism included the saving of souls, he also considered this as his own personal vocation, as a committed layman. One of his closest friends, Jean-Jacques Ampère, was the son of the celebrated scientist and very devout Catholic, André-Marie Ampère. But Jean-Jacques was a non-believer. This greatly worried Frédéric and, in many of his letters, he encourages Jean-Jacques's return to the Faith:

*"You are fulfilling all the duties of Christianity towards men but should you not fulfil them towards God? Should you not serve him? To live in close relationship with him? Would you not find infinite consolations in such service?"*¹¹.

We may think it hardly surprising that, after a life of such Christian commitment and concern to save the souls of others, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam contemplated the end of his own life without fear. He died at the early age of 40, after many years of illness, during which he often travelled to warmer countries, in search of a cure.

Four months before dying, he wrote to Alexandre Ferriny-Jérusalem, a convert from Judaism to Christianity. He enthusiastically explained his love of the Psalms, relating this to other Old Testament readings which brought him similar reassurance:

*"God's hand has touched me. It has touched me, I believe, like Job, like Hezekiah, like Tobit, not unto death but until I have been tested for a long time. Unfortunately I do not have the patience of those just men, letting myself be depressed by suffering, and I would not be comforted in my weakness if I did not find in the Psalms cries of pain which David shouts out to God and to which God finally replies by granting him forgiveness and peace"*¹².

Explaining the relationship between Old Testament books and Christianity, Blessed Frédéric believed the Gospel alone was superior to David's hymns, because it was their fulfilment:

¹⁰Lyon, 11 April 1839, *Manual*, loc. cit., p. 164.

¹¹To Jean-Jacques Ampère, Dieppe, 24 August 1851.

¹²To Alexandre Ferriny-Jérusalem, San Jacopo, 6 May 1853.

*"All promises, all eagerness, every holy impatience of the prophet find their purpose in the Saviour who sprang from his race. And such is the link between both Testaments that the Saviour himself has no name dearer to him than Son of David. The two blind men of Jericho called him thus and I myself often cry to him like they did: 'Son of David, have pity on us'"*¹³.

After his final journey had taken him to Italy, knowing that death was very near, Blessed Frédéric derived great comfort from the Psalms. Here is a quotation from Fr. Massuco, a Vincentian priest, in Livorno, whom he had asked to become his confessor:

*"The first time I saw him in Antignano, he wanted to know what to do in order to prepare for death. I told him to read the Psalms and to think about the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He was pleased with this advice and put it into practice"*¹⁴.

Some of his commercial law lectures and later, in some of his newspaper articles, we may read a vociferous Ozanam condemning the injustice of employers who treated their workers not as partners, but as instruments from which to draw the highest profits at the lowest possible costs.

It is nevertheless surprising to find equally strong language in a letter to Fr. Tommaso Pendola. This priest was a teacher among whose pupils were children of very wealthy parents. Blessed Frédéric's invective is a warning against the moral dangers which those boys were risking, if they did not learn to appreciate the sufferings of poor people. He seems to give advice with great urgency, not wasting time on couching his language in social niceties. This urgency may be explained by the fact that he was writing with less than two months to live:

"You have some rich children. Oh, Father, in order to educate those pampered hearts, the best lesson would be to show them the salutary spectacle of Our Lord Jesus Christ not only in pictures painted by the greatest masters or on altars glittering with gold and light, but to show them Jesus Christ and his wounds in the persons of poor people! The pupils are like that because something is lacking in their education. There is something they have not been taught, something they know only by name and which they must see other people suffering in order to learn how to suffer it when it will come sooner or later. That thing

¹³To Alexandre Ferriny-Jérusalem, San Jacopo, 6 May 1853.

¹⁴SSVP National Council of France, Cahiers Ozanam, édition spéciale consacrée à Frédéric Ozanam, janvier/juin 1974.

is pain, it is privation, it is need. These young lords must know what hunger is, thirst, the emptiness of an attic. They must see such wretches, sick parents, children in tears. They must see them and must love them. If such a sight does not awaken some beating of their hearts, then this generation is lost"¹⁵.

It is often said that the approach of death concentrates the mind. The letters which Ozanam wrote, during his final weeks, certainly illustrate very vividly the fear of death, repentance, hope of a cure but frustration at the failure of medical treatment and finally resignation and peace. His widow, Amélie, described how his reading of Sacred Scripture had been her husband's constant daily practice:

*"Almost from infancy, he dedicated himself to the defence of truth, and began studying Hebrew to read, in the original text, the fundamental truths of the Faith. Despite his endless work, each morning found him reading a passage from Scripture"*¹⁶.

His meditations on the Bible brought consolation for himself but could also be a gift to others. He annotated many of the readings, in the hope they might later help others suffering like himself. This is how Amélie understood such preoccupations:

*"He found great pleasure in thinking that this work would, someday, comfort poor sick people like himself"*¹⁷.

Amélie reviewed these notes, after his death, and the collection was published five years later, in 1858, entitled *Le Livre des Malades*, variously translated as *The Book of the Sick*, *The Bible of the Sick* and *The Companion of the Sick*. A revised French edition was published in 2006. Amélie described how, at the end of his life, Frédéric's fear gave way to an amazing calm and great confidence in God's mercy. His two brothers, Fr. Alphonse and Dr. Charles, helped him return to France, where he died in Marseille. The local priest, Fr. Pignatell, prepared him for death, with the words: "Take courage, my son, with confidence in God".

Blessed Frédéric's reply was simply:

*"Why should I fear God? I love him so much!"*¹⁸.

¹⁵To Fr Tommaso Pendola, Antignano, 19 July 1853.

¹⁶*Bible of the Sick*, Fédération française de la Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul, 2006, p. 34.

¹⁷*Bible of the Sick*, p. 15.

¹⁸*Bible of the Sick*, p. 16.

The current Archbishop of Paris, André Vingt-Trois, has written a Foreword to *The Bible of the Sick*, mentioning an aspect of Blessed Frédéric's life which we should not overlook:

*"The Bible of the Sick, In its new edition, introduces us to a special dimension in the history of his life: illness. He lets us discover how the long illness was also a road to sanctification"*¹⁹.

This statement confirms what Amélie also had written:

*"When the bad days returned and his body was stricken with illness, his soul, thus strengthened and magnified, was raised up by the very thoughts with which he had fed it. As the disease progressed, his piety was still evident and simply grew stronger, so I can bear witness that he was constantly living in the presence of God"*²⁰.

He even saw his suffering as a form of service to God. When eventually unable to practise the charitable works which had been so much the centre of his more active life, this kind of service seemed all that remained:

*"Finally and above all, dear friend, pray for me, so that, if God does not want me to serve him by working, I might resign myself to serving him by suffering"*²¹.

¹⁹ André Vingt-Trois, Archbishop of Paris, Foreword to *The Bible of the Sick*, 2006, p. 6.

²⁰ *Bible of the Sick*, p. 14.

²¹ To Joseph Arthaud, Paris, 3 November 1849.

Method to Transform an Existing Program

The Marillac Center: A Project on the Path of Transformation

Patricia P. Nava, A.I.C.

Commission for the Promotion of Systemic Change

Do not meddle in my affairs! Leave me alone! I only came here because my sister forced me to come but now I am leaving! I am fine and I do not need anyone's help!



Those were the first words that Teresa spoke when she arrived at the Marillac Center three years ago. We looked at her and had no idea what to do or say... she began to scratch her arms and continued to do so until they bled... her anxiety betrayed her.

Teresa was the third child in a dysfunctional, violent family that lived in extreme poverty. Her parents were illiterate and treated her badly because she was always *disobedient and arrogant*. When she was six years old, she was given to an aunt. For several years she lived with her aunt and “uncle” and several cousins who mistreated and abused her. At the age of nine she was forced to work in order to help provide for her “new family”. She became a domestic worker and endured new humiliations, yet was expected to be grateful for this opportunity to work. The abandonment by her mother had a more profound effect on her than the scoldings, the lack of attention and hunger.

She escaped her situation and lived on the streets. As a result she became pregnant... then with the father of her child she returned to her parent's house where she was received with insults and reproaches which she endured because she had no other place to live. Her parents allowed her, her “boyfriend” and her



five year old child to live with them. They were given a room that was made of cardboard and some sheets of zinc. To support herself she collected iron scraps which she then sold.



When we first met Teresa she was in terrible condition, both physically and mentally... undernourished, extremely nervous and dirty. Someone had had compassion on her and brought her to a mental health clinic where she was erroneously

diagnosed as an epileptic and a schizophrenic. She was prescribed drugs which had a terrible effect on her: she would bang her head against the wall and had attempted suicide.



Little by little she began to trust us and allowed us to bring her to the psychiatric department of the Central Hospital in the city. There she underwent a series of tests; she was taken off her medications and a new treatment was begun that enabled her to avoid panic attacks (her only emotional disorder). Very soon we realized that Teresa was not insane

but rather was a very realistic and intelligent woman who nonetheless had some serious problems and deep-seated resentments. As her treatment continued, her general condition improved and she began to realize that she had to do her part in order to move forward. She began to take steps to better her situation. We realized that it was urgent to formulate a more holistic plan which would not only provide for Teresa but which would also take into consideration and all the members of her family.

We proposed helping them by utilizing the principles of systemic change which in turn enabled us to provide for various fundamental aspects of their life: health, hygiene, nutrition, housing, work, respect for their human rights, education. It was necessary to provide them with elements in order to empower them.



Teresa received personalized, on-going attention at the Marillac Center. The psychological treatment was of particular importance because it enabled her to heal (at least partially) some of the wounds



that were caused by her parent's abandonment and the constant humiliations and mistreatment she had suffered as a child. Actually Teresa was very interested in participating in the different workshops on violence, self-esteem, effective communication, parenting skills. She was able to complete her primary and secondary education at the National Institute for

Adult Education (INEA) which operates at the Marillac Center. She now has two official diplomas which are indispensable in order to obtain work.

She is now a member of the Marillac promoters and is one of our most enthusiastic collaborators. She is a good mother and is concerned about the health and nutrition as well as the education of her son who is in his second year of primary school. Her panic attacks are controlled even though at times she fears that they will return. Without any hesitation Teresa affirms: *My life has changed since I came to the Marillac Center... above all else I have begun to believe that yes, I can change.*



She realizes that true change depends on her and therefore she is responsible for change. Now Teresa has dreams and hopes. She is happy because she feels she is useful though at times she weakens when she has to confront problems, especially financial problems that affect her family. Yet even in those situations she has learned how to look for alternatives and thus is able to give direction to her life. She is confident that she will achieve economic stability that will allow her to continue the education of her son so that he is able to take his place in society.

For us, Teresa is a good example of what can be achieved through the application of the principles of systemic change... what can be achieved when people who live in situations of poverty are affirmed as capable of transforming their situation.

Some history: the context

The story of Teresa would never have been told in this manner when we first began to work at the Marillac Center.

The Marillac Center is a Vincentian Center, coordinated by the volunteers of the AIC and is located in the midst of the marginalized community of San Luis Potosí, Mexico. For more than twenty years the center has engaged in various activities on behalf of the community.

In the beginning the Center was directed by young men and women who offered primary and secondary education through INEA, carpentry workshops and spiritual formation. A little later, women began to come to the center and soon ministry with women became our primary objective. We formulated a new plan that we called **empowerment of women**. Aware of the importance of their participation we assigned them small tasks, such as opening the Center, setting-up different areas of the Center, distributing flyers, etc. We organized a series of classes: crafts, hairdressing, sewing, baking, catechetics. These activities that were part of our initial plan were not related, however, to one another and had no impact on the lives of the women. These activities were not planned with the women, did not satisfy any of their real felt needs and their participation was a myth.

The number of teachers increased because we mistakenly thought that if we offered more classes, we would be able to change the lives of these women. Often, without even being aware of it, we fell into a common error: we used the same mental model that caused the very problems we were attempting to resolve. In this regard Albert Einstein said: *"No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it. We have to think with a new mind"*.

The women were immersed in a cycle of poverty, violence and discrimination that was very difficult to break. Yet it was necessary to break the cycle and take steps in the direction of transformation.



Process toward transformation

I am going to attempt to illustrate the process that was followed in transforming the Marillac center and I will refer to two related sources:

- The principles of the *strategies for systemic change*, as identified and suggested by the International Commission (these principles will be highlighted in bold and italics in the text).
- The steps taken in order to obtain the transformation of projects as explained by Margaret Posig, Ph.D.¹ who refers to a process that she calls “the heart of change” and that was first proposed by J.P. Kotter and D.S. Cohen. This process is guided by a very specific methodology that is developed in different stages, all of which are important.

At each stage I will mention the new activities that we put in place as a result of this process of change.

The process began with an analysis of the actual reality of the women and their surroundings.

§. *Start with a serious analysis of the local reality, flowing from concrete data, and tailor all projects to this reality.*

This analysis was done with the participation of the women from the community. Very soon we became aware of problems that we had not noticed before and which created difficulties and obstacles for empowering women:

- Because women were frequently the victims of various forms of violence which they endured in silence, they were unable to achieve a full life, unable to influence in a positive manner the education of their children, and furthermore unable to experience themselves as empowered.
- The women endured this situation because they were embarrassed to admit that their dignity was being threatened and destroyed. Fear was a constant in their lives and the lack of affect was an evident result of this fear and also increased their own suffering.
- There was a gap between the psychological problems that the women had to confront (especially those women who were most

¹MARGARET POSIG, PH.D., *Saint Vincent de Paul as a Leader of Change: The Key Roles of a Higher Purpose and Empowerment*, Vincentian Heritage, Volume 23-25, Number 2; Volume 26, Number 1, 2005, pp. 27-41.

poor), and the symptoms that they evidenced by their chronic state of depression, their fear and their anxiety. No consideration was given to these matters even though they required immediate attention.

- These women and their spouses were immersed in a vicious cycle of violence that was perpetuated by their children's violence (repetition of behavior).
- Among young people these acts of violence were reproduced in their relationships and thus reinforced the submission of yet another generation of women. This was done through different forms of psychological violence, for example, jealousy, and eventually psychological violence became physical violence.

We were unaware that these situation of violence were at the root of so many problems and that if we wanted to empower women we would have to break this cycle. This meant that we had to confront a difficult challenge... resistance to change. This same challenge also had to be addressed by some members of the administrative team of the Marillac Center.

When I was invited to become a member of the Commission that was promoting systemic change, we began to envision a new path. The strategies to achieve said change in the life of those living in poverty gave us new insights and new methods to bring about this change.

These strategies, based on mission, were very important in order to achieve change and therefore they formed the doctrinal foundation that sustained the project (these principles can be applied to any project that Vincentians throughout the world might be engaged in). We began to internalize these strategies with deep conviction:

§. To consider poverty not just as the inevitable result of circumstances, but as the product of unjust structures that can be changed, and focus on actions that will break the cycle of poverty.

§. To design projects, creative approaches, policies and guidelines that flow from our Christian and Vincentian values and mission.

§. To evangelize and inculturate our Christian and Vincentian charism and values while maintaining a profound respect for the local culture.

Steps that led to the process of change

1. *Affirming the need for change*

It is true that the majority of people do not want to change. Awareness of the need for change does not occur overnight. It is easy to believe that our project is the best... we are very pleased with the things we do and when we look at the beneficiaries of our services we are convinced that these individuals need us, love us and are very grateful for all that we do for them. *Our project is the best!*

People will feel more committed to change if said change goes to the heart of the matter. The first challenge was to change behavior... and this change can be achieved if we allow people to see how the reality of their situation influences their feelings. Finally the whole administrative team had to become convinced of the fact that change was indispensable. The suffering of so many women touched us profoundly and impelled us to attempt, together with the women, to change the situation.

We no longer offered most of the classes that we had established and we initiated new activities and services which resulted in the following project: ***social co-responsibility and education for a world without violence. A point of encounter for women and children.***



2. *Creation of a transformative vision*

The first step in creating a new vision was the creation of a Listening Center where the women could freely express themselves in an environment of trust, care, and respect. Members of the AIC took on responsibility for this center and we proposed:

§. *To listen carefully and seek to understand the needs and aspirations of the poor, creating an atmosphere of respect and mutual confidence and fostering self-esteem among the people.*

Based on the primary needs that the women expressed, we decided to promote programs and activities that would assist people in becoming autonomous and that would attack the root causes of poverty and violence. Therefore it was indispensable:

§. *To have a holistic vision, addressing a series of basic human needs – individual and social, spiritual and physical, especially jobs, health care, housing, education, spiritual growth – with an integral approach toward prevention and sustainable development.*

A clear vision, shared by all those who participate in the program, was necessary in order to channel our efforts toward change, thus enabling people to see a possible “future”. When people desire transformation they ought to have effective strategies to achieve strategic changes. We were all convinced that if we discovered and attacked the root causes of poverty, we would be able to achieve effective transformation.

A holistic vision ought to include different subsystems that affect and impact the lives of the people being served. Without these subsystems it would have been impossible to provide a culture of gender equality and eradicate violence. Convinced of this fact we included in the project all those persons who were related to these women, that is, their spouses, children (both small children and adolescents), neighbors and other members of the community.

The new mission that resulted from our analysis was the following: *In the future (in five to ten years) fifty percent of those who will have participated in the global process created by the Marillac Center (especially women) will be living a dignified, healthy life where there is no violence... they will have transformed their lives and the life of their family and will have also transformed their surroundings. They will have access to opportunities and different sources of work and in this way they will have achieved empowerment. Many unjust situations related to poverty will be transformed and we will be able to impact public policy with regard to gender equality.*

In order to make this mission a reality, it was necessary:

§. *To involve the poor themselves, including the young and women, at all stages: identification of needs, planning, implementation, evaluation and revision.*

It was also necessary to take further steps in this process of change.

3. Creation of a team of advisors



In accord with this new vision the team needed the ability to respond to the detected needs in order to promote transformation. In order to achieve the desired impact it was indispensable to focus on the integration, formation and training of those persons responsible for the project. The elements that were highlighted as being important were credibility,

capacity, relationships, reputation, formal authority. We took and continue to take the necessary steps in order:

§. *To educate, train, and offer spiritual formation to all participants in the project.*

Aware of this reality we formed a new work team that was able to respond to people's needs. The new team included psychologists, a lawyer, an expert in medications, a social worker and, from the very beginning, women from the community. All of these persons were convinced of the need:

§. *To promote learning processes and to work toward forming effective multiplying agents and visionary leaders in the local community, servant-leaders inspired by Saint Vincent de Paul.*



The team dedicated a significant amount of time to the process of planning. A good system of strategic planning (which was part of a workshop on Institutional Strengthening in which all of the members of the administrative team participated) gave rise to a new infrastructure of change and led to a better work model.

Together with the women we decided on some fundamental changes. Different areas of the Center were restructured and we asked people to take responsibility for each area. We also initiated some new activities:

- **In the area of social work:** we detected and were attentive to individual and community problems and advised families in extreme poverty;
- **In the psychological area:** we offered individual and group and family counseling; served as mediators between spouses.



In the area of education: we provided education in the defense of human rights; legal counseling; workshops dealing with the prevention of violence against women, adolescents and children; parenting workshops; workshops on self-esteem and how to write an autobiography.

- **INEA Center:** primary and secondary education was offered to adults, adolescents and children; scholarships were made available for single teenage mothers thus enabling them to continue their studies. Different opportunities were offered to young people who were involved in drugs and gangs; summer camps were made available for children and extra-curricular activities were initiated for children.



In the area of health and nutrition: health brigades (medical and dental care, blood pressure, weight control); fire prevention and prevention of accidents in the home. Establishment of food banks where provisions were sold at a low cost; nutritional formation; workshops in preventive health care for young people; supportive programs for adolescents (yoga and aerobics classes, promotion of sports).

- **In the area of work skills:** computer classes; workshops in self-esteem and leadership; budget management.



4. Communicate the vision in order for it to be accepted

Sensitizing all levels of society and the formulation of a shared vision was fundamental because without support, it would have been impossible to continue this project. To communicate the vision, leaders were needed. The leaders were instructors who listened and shared information (according to the needs of the people). Without communication it would have been impossible for team members to commit themselves.

§. To construct a shared vision with diverse stakeholders: poor communities, interested individuals, donors, churches, governments, the private sector, unions, the media, international organizations and networks and more.

The creation of networks, based on social co-responsibility, made it possible to engage in the present work at the Marillac Center. We would never have been able to implement the majority of the activities that we are actually doing unless we...

§. Promoted social co-responsibility and networking, sensitizing society at all levels – local, national and international – about changing the unjust conditions that affect the lives of the poor.



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A simple heart-felt message is indispensable in order to develop understanding, commitment and the necessary energy that is needed to achieve one's vision. The leaders should be models whose behavior can be imitated... again this is necessary in order to make the vision a reality and in order to be able to communicate this vision to others.



In order to make our vision known to others we engaged in several events that allowed people to become aware of our Center and the reasons for its existence. At the same time we were able to motivate various sectors of society to combat violence (this was the primary focus of our project). We used different means of communication, but especially the

radio, and we distributed posters and flyers that contained simple messages that appealed to people's heart. The members of the team acted as authentic leaders and were able to motivate others through their example.

In this area the leadership workshops were of particular importance... ten women were formed as multiplying agents of the plan and as community agents concerned about the eradication of violence.

5. Empower others to act in accord with our vision

We proposed empowering women, making them responsible for and giving them authority to implement the vision. Through understanding and affirmation we instilled in them self-confidence. We were convinced that commitment to achieving the goal and the participation of persons who are poor were keys to empowerment and also demanded that the leaders communicate information. Besides sharing information in meetings, we transmitted information through informational bulletins and a newspaper that appeared as a mural.



We committed ourselves to the formation of community leaders and we assigned them responsibilities. A young woman became responsible for receiving the participants and another for supervising the logistical aspects of the Center. We formed a group of women so that they would become multiplying agents and in the future they would be able to lead the

workshops and give the presentations and thus spread the culture of non-violence. This has not been an easy task. At times it seemed to be much easier to do the work myself rather than form others to do this work. Nevertheless one of our specific objectives was:

§. To promote learning processes and to work toward forming effective multiplying agents and visionary leaders in the local community, servant-leaders inspired by Saint Vincent de Paul.



We empowered women through our leadership workshops and delegated certain tasks and responsibilities to them, demonstrating our confidence in them and promoting their own sense of self-esteem.

6. Creation of short-term goals

A long-term goal can be divided into goals that can be achieved in less time. Small victories create confidence and every step toward change should be celebrated. We established long-term and short-term goals for the Center, formulated a plan and a calendar that outlined the work that would be necessary in order to achieve these goals.

The creation of a wide network of collaborators on behalf of the women was one of our primary goals. We became part of a vast network that involved the public and private sector and that ultimately allowed us to engage in the many different activities that we are able to continue to offer at the Center. This has not been a static network but one that has experienced on-going growth and that has allowed us to offer new opportunities for formation to the members of the coordinating team.

The total reconstruction of the Center was another important goal in order to provide quality services to people... this was accomplished thanks to the support that we received from the government. The re-inauguration of the Center, an event that involved the participation of individuals from diverse sectors of the community and individuals who had responsibility for community decisions, was the starting point for our new project. The next goal was furnishing the Center and much of the equipment was donated by individuals/institutions who shared our vision.



The workshops on self-esteem were very valuable in attracting other women to participate... women who were often afraid of being able to carry out the tasks that had been requested of them. Another important goal was that of redesigning our policies and strategies, so that the participation of women was included in every aspect of the project.

§. Implement coherent strategies, starting modestly, delegating tasks and responsibilities, and providing quality services respectful of human dignity.

The realization that every systemic change project begins with the implementation of small steps toward change gave us the strength to commit ourselves to the process of change.

7. *Do not grow weak*

On different occasions we felt overwhelmed with problems, especially the lack of financial resources as the number of participants at the center increased. We have a clear vision and this has enabled us to be creative in seeking to resolve our problems. Saint Vincent stated that love is inventive unto infinity... and we have attempted to be faithful to these words. In place of the traditional requests that are extended to donors, we undertook two projects to collect funds. One was the printing of a “Calendar with a social significance” – here we were able to obtain various businesses who advertised their logo in the calendar which was widely distributed throughout different communities. Another creative idea was the sale of the CD, *Coincidir* (Coincide), which was recorded by two children who gave us the gift of their voices. Both projects were well received in the community and were financially profitable. In addition, these projects involved many persons in a process of social co-responsibility.



The process of systemic change is not easy. Frequently one will encounter obstacles and problems as one undertakes this journey. As we have struggled, our problems have become challenges. The courage of the women at the Marillac Center has encouraged us to continue to move forward and has strengthened us to walk with these women on the road of transformation. For us, and for many of the women, the workshop on conflict resolution was very important because it provided us with tools to create an environment of peace and thus continue our journey.

8. *The institutionalization of new methods, policies and strategies*

A “new culture” that produces good results should not be “frozen” in time but should be continually nourished and institutionalized as an ever-present strategy, as an indispensable policy for action. Clear examples of these policies and strategies have been adapted as indispensable components of the project and we have already referred to these above, for example, participation of people who are poor, listening to the aspirations and desires of people, use of a global vision when

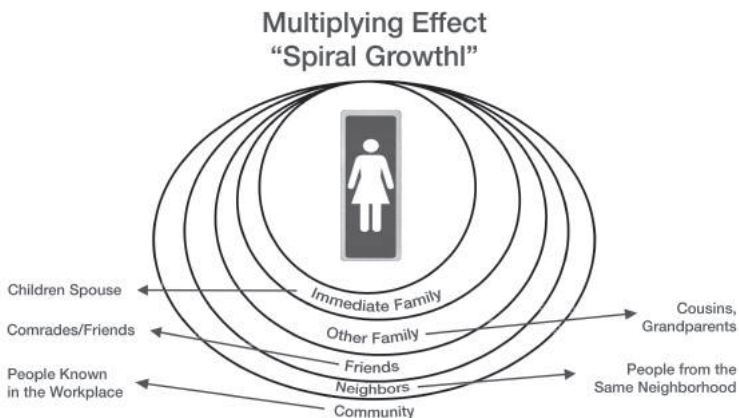
interpreting problems, creation of networks of collaboration, the prevention of violence (the primary objective of the project), evaluation.

Aware of the fact that success must involve on-going evaluation, we engaged in various forms of evaluation: evaluation at the end of each activity; evaluation when a short-term goal was achieved; etc. On the activities calendar, evaluation had a fundamental place. These evaluations were done with the participation of those people involved in the program and with the coordinating team. In order to verify the attainment of various objectives, measurable indicators were established which could be reviewed during the evaluation process. We also included in the process of evaluation (at least sometimes) those institutions that supported our project. We believe that our methodology with regard to work should allow us:

§. To systematize, institutionalize and evaluate the project and its procedures, describing measurable indicators and results.

How do we view the future of the project?

Women are the best multiplying agents because they can have a greater influence on their family, their friends and neighbors. ***“Change a woman and you will change the world!”***. With this conviction we prepared a group of women to become facilitators of the workshops and the various presentations... women who would be able to duplicate the project in neighboring areas.



One of the objectives that we hoped to obtain was that the women who participated in the initial project would be able to direct a similar project in the future. This required accompaniment of the administrative team and further formation by some experts in the field of pedagogy.

We have studied the multiplying effect of the project and can now state that the pilot project can be duplicated, completely or in part, and adapted to different situations.

The women, (in the family setting as well as the community setting), are now the multipliers of a culture of non-violence, respect and dignity. We support them by providing them with formation through workshops in the areas of self-esteem, effective communication, prevention of violence, as well as self-help groups and psychological therapy.

This process of formation has allowed us

§. *To construct structural and institutional models, where communities can identify their resources and needs, make informed decisions, and exchange information and effective strategies within the community and among various communities.*

Among our objectives we wanted to provide a system to the work that we have engaged in and to the methodology that we have utilized. This would enable us to publish didactic material that would facilitate the replication of this project in different settings. More than 80% of the present Vincentian Centers in Mexico work with women and the Marillac model could be useful in bettering the services offered by these various agencies.

As the result of an evaluation in which the women participated, we decided to initiate two new projects:

- **Project – Healthy nutrition for everyone:** this project has begun with the support of the International Commission for promoting Systemic Change. Our analysis of the reality made us aware of the high percentage of families in the community who are malnourished... this is a negative factor which prevents people from achieving a profound change in their life. The project consists of using a solar dehydrator in order to preserve highly nutritional foods. We have provided formation to women in this process and other techniques for preserving food.





Project – Happy children, children of peace: this is an after school project that is composed of a children's choir, theatre groups, scouts and a multi-media educational program that provides children with an initial education in music and mathematics (ProSofia de Eduspark). The primary objective of this project is to foster the socialization of the children and share with them a culture of non-violence, respect and collaboration.

Our greatest concern about the future is that we will not be able to achieve financial independence. The nutritional program referred to above envisions the sale of dehydrated foods in school and school cooperatives (this would not only enable us to finance the center but would also provide work for women). One of the strategies of systemic change is very clear in this regard:

§. *To make the project self-sustaining by guaranteeing that it will have the human and economic resources needed for it to last.*

Conclusion

When people commit themselves to the process of change, new needs arise and, as a result, new areas of intervention also arise. During the last stage of our Marillac Project we attempted to create a new infrastructure for change and for implementing the process of systemic change. This change would not only modify some aspects of the present reality but would also change the structures and modify the whole system that affected the life of so many women and whole families... people who had been unable to find happiness because of violence.

If we want to move toward transformation then the first step is to work with a new mentality and broaden our perspectives, in other words, we have to begin to transform ourselves. Only in this manner can we contribute to the transformation of others. If we want to transform our projects we have to become servant-leaders in the image of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac; we have to satisfy not only the needs of others but we must also form and strengthen these women and men who live in situations of poverty so that they themselves accept the responsibility of being leaders. New values, new forms of behavior, new attitudes as well as a greater awareness of our Christian and Vin-

centian identity ought to be internalized by all those who participate in our projects.

As I conclude this article I want to express some personal feelings. The Vincentian Family and the Commission for the Promotion of Systemic Change has given me new strength to live and proclaim my faith and to defend the rights of those who are marginalized in society. I firmly believe that at the very heart of change is this sense of clothing ourselves with a prophetic attitude, a courageous and decided attitude to defend the rights of the poor and to do this through proclamation and denunciation.

The poor, especially women, have given me the encouragement and the necessary emotional support that has kept my hope alive, my hope of achieving, with other women, a better, more complete life... a life where peace and dignity and happiness reign... a life in accord with gospel values. I hope never to deceive these women.

Translated from Spanish by CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M.

2011 ANNUAL STATISTICS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

by Giuseppe Turati, C.M.

MINISTRIES

Number of confreres involved in the ministries listed below. Each confrere is counted only once, considered under his principal ministry, as of 31 December 2011.

MINISTRY	BISHOPS	PRIESTS	DEACONS	BROTHERS	STUDENTS
1. Parish (popular) Missions to the faithful		111		2	
2. Missionary parishes or districts	2	258	7	6	1
3. Parishes	4	839	11	16	7
4. Pilgrimage sanctuaries		48		5	1
5. Seminaries and clerical formation		118	7	1	2
6. Formation of our own exclusively	2	144		5	
7. Missions Ad Gentes	1	149	1	5	
8. Daughters of Charity (Director; chaplain)		124			
9. Schools (primary, secondary, superior, professional)		173	1	7	1
10. Social Communications (publications, radio, television)		16		3	
11. Special studies		61	5	1	9
12. Chaplains (military, immigrants, hospital, associations)		99			
13. Chaplains (Vincentian Lay Groups)		84	1		
14. Direct Service of the Poor		53	1	9	
15. Manual work				25	
16. Administration	6	135		12	
17. Retired, ill, convalescing	4	321		28	
18. Other	15	97	22	17	17
19. Absence from the Congregation		160	7	4	3
TOTAL	34	2990	63	146	41

P R O V I N C E S	HOUSES & INCORPORATED MEMBERS BY PROVINCE - 2011								ADMITTED MEMBERS & ASPIRANTS BY PROVINCE - 2011												
	HOUSES	Bishops	Priests	Deacons	Permanents	Brothers	Students with Vows	TOTAL	ADMITTED MEMBERS					ASPIRANTS							
									CP	CB	P*	PD*	TOTAL	Voc. Grps.		Min. Sem.		Prep. Year		TOTAL	
														AP	AB	AP	AB	AP	AB		
GENERAL CURIA	5	0	8	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
AFRICA	49	6	290	10	0	13	7	326	146	9	0	0	0	155	62	1	60	0	37	5	165
Congo (Dem. Rep.)	10		46	4		1	5	56	21	1			22		1			3	1	5	
Ethiopia	5	3	42			3		48	2				2						4	4	
Madagascar	9	2	65	3		6		76	49	6			55	28		22		3		53	
Mozambique	8	1	19			3	1	24					0	34				18		52	
Nigeria	10		75	3				78	72				72					13		13	
St. Justin de Jacobis - Eritrea	7		43				1	44	2	2			4			38				38	
AMERICA	186	14	1003	25	1	62	17	1122	68	1	0	0	69	180	0	35	0	40	3	258	
Argentina	8	1	37				2	40	3				3	3				5	1	9	
Brazil - Curitiba	7	4	67	4		2		77	1				1	8						8	
Brazil - Fortaleza	3		39	2				41	1				1	15				3		18	
Brazil - Rio de Janeiro	12	2	63	1		8		74	4				4			16		3		19	
Central America	10	2	45	3		2		52					0							0	
Chile	5		22			2		24	4				4	6						6	
Colombia	25	1	150	5		10	7	173	9					95				21	2	118	
Costa Rica	4		12			3		15	1				1	4						4	
Cuba	4		11					11	1				1							0	

[illegible]

P R O V I N C E S	HOUSES & INCORPORATED MEMBERS BY PROVINCE - 2011							ADMITTED MEMBERS & ASPIRANTS BY PROVINCE - 2011												
	HOUSES	Bishops	Priests	Deacons	Permanents	Brothers	Students With Vows	TOTAL	ADMITTED MEMBERS					ASPIRANTS						
									CP	CB	P*	PD*	TOTAL	Voc. Grps.		Min. Sem.		Prep. Year		TOTAL
														AP	AB	AP	AB	AP	AB	
Italy - Naples	11	2	40			1		43	8					3		3		5		11
Italy - Rome	9	1	44		1	1		47	1				1							0
Italy - Turin	12		59	1	2			62	2				2							0
Poland	27	2	258	7		3	2	272	20				20							0
Portugal	10	1	49					50					0		2					2
Slovakia	7		33	1		3		37				0								0
Slovenia	8	2	42	1		2		47	2				2							0
Spain - Barcelona	8	1	37			2		40				0		7						7
Spain - Madrid	14		93			12	1	106				0								0
Spain - Salamanca	13		70	1		9		80				0		4						4
Spain - Zaragoza	19		108			2		110	3			3		3						3
SS. Cyril and Methodius	7	1	24			1		26				0					2			2
OCEANIA	6	0	43	0	0	4	0	47	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australia	6		43			4		47	5				5							0
TOTAL	509	34	2990	59	4	146	41	3274	402	14	1	0	417	321	1	213	0	140	9	684

CP = Candidates to the Priesthood; CB = Candidates to the Brotherhood; P = Priests; PD = Permanent Deacons; P*/PD* = Priests/Permanent Deacons coming from a diocese or another Institute; AP = Aspirants to the Priesthood; AB = Aspirants to the Brotherhood.

