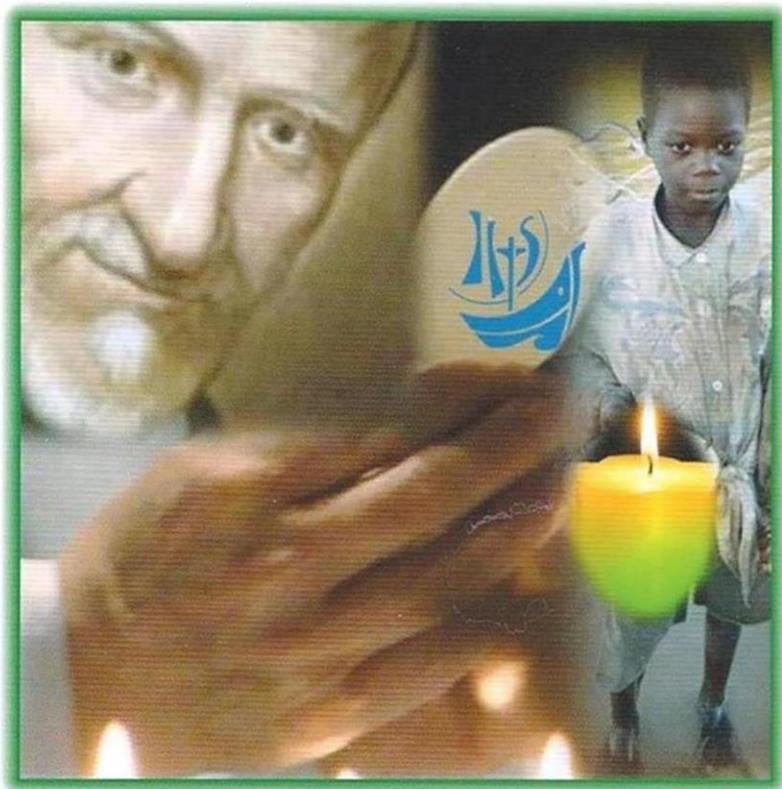


# VINCENTIANA

56<sup>th</sup> Year - N. 4

October-December 2012



## Solidarity, Union, and the New Evangelization

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION  
GENERAL CURIA

# INTRODUCTION

## Editor's Note

John T. Maher, C.M.

This final issue of *Vincentiana* for 2012 draws upon themes familiar to all who embrace the Vincentian charism: solidarity, union, and the “New Evangelization”. These themes were living realities in the lives of Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. The authors of the articles draw upon the rich heritage of our Catholic faith and community history to demonstrate their relevance – indeed the indispensable need today – for a renewed appreciation of the need for solidarity, union, and the “new evangelization”.

In “*Economic Solidarity: An Ongoing Challenge for the Congregation of the Mission*” the title might tempt one to presume the article’s focus is solely on the difficult and contentious topic of finance and budget. However, the authors, Frs. Robert Maloney and G. Gregory Gay make it clear from the outset that true solidarity in the Congregation involves a genuine sharing of mission, personnel, community life, prayer and spirituality, and resources. Tracing the call to solidarity from the early Church through the life of St. Vincent, to modern papal encyclicals, the article challenges all who follow the Vincentian way to be in solidarity with the poor. They note this can be done in projects that promote active creative collaboration with those who are poor.

This article is also unique for a reason other than content or style: to my knowledge, it is the first time an article co-authored by a recent and current Superior General has graced the pages of *Vincentiana*. As the slogan in American news said: “You saw it here first!”.

Fr. Eli Chaves, Assistant General, used “Union and Collaboration in St. Vincent: Insights for Today” as the basis for a conference he delivered to the AIC last March at their annual world-wide meeting in Brazil. Fr. Eli notes that St. Vincent’s union with Jesus led him into relationship with the poor. From the plaintive cry of the poor “I need you”; St. Vincent was led to be one of heart and mind with them, and strove his whole life to enlist others to do the same. The first “networks of charity” left his followers – down to the present day – to see that union and collaboration occur when one moves from the “I” to the “we”. Fr. Eli concludes with a rich, full exploration of collaboration: personal, communal, ecclesial, and within our charism of charity.

The remaining four articles are based on the “New Evangelization”, each with a unique perspective, on the as seem in the gathering of the recent Synod of Bishops and Lineamenta prepared as the “working document” for the Synod. Fr. Nicola Albanesi, Visitor of the Province of Rome, offers a short but direct meditation on the meaning of the New Evangelization and the year of faith in light of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council.

Fr. Jean Landousies, a former missionary to Algeria, superior at the Maison-Mere, and now on staff at the Vatican Secretariat of State, offers his perspective on the *Lineamenta*, the so-called “working paper” that was used as a basis for Synod discussions and figured prominently into the formulation of the final document. Fr. Javier Alvarez, Vicar General, reflected on the “newness” of the new evangelization, and discovered some startling parallels with the great challenges that faced the first-generation Vincentians.

Finally, the following confreres served as members of the Synod: G. Gregory Gay, C.M.; Most Rev. Markos Ghebremedhin, C.M., Titular Bishop of Gummi and Apostolic Vicar of Jimma-Bonga (ETHIOPIA); Most Rev. Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, C.M., Metropolitan Archbishop of Addis Ababa; Most Rev. Cristoforo Palmieri, C.M., Bishop of Rrëshen (ALBANIA); and Rev. Emmanuel Typamm, C.M., General Secretary, “Confédération des Conférences des Supérieurs Majeurs d’Afrique et de Madagascar”. As part of their duties, each was required to make a presentation (or ‘intervention’) which was recorded and then placed into the official record of the Synod. All were required to present short statements, but in their ‘compacted thoughts’ one will find a wealth of knowledge, insight, and experience.

As this edition of Vincentian comes to you, a new year is well underway. The coming editions of *Vincentiana* in 2013 will focus on themes, including “The Vincentian Parish of Today and Tomorrow”, “Reflecting on Frederic Ozanam’s Life and Works”, “Highlights of the International Visitor’s Meeting” in New York City, and “Reconfiguration: Opportunity and Challenge”. It is my hope that these topics along with many other interesting features will be informative and assist in our better coming to know and live the charism of charity given us by our Holy Founders, Saints Vincent and Louise.

May your year be a blessed, happy, healthy, and fruitful one for all you meet and serve!

## About Our Authors



Fr. NICOLA ALBANESI, C.M. is Visitor of the Province of Rome, where he has served since 2005. He entered the Congregation in 1988 and was ordained in 1992. He resides at the Provincial headquarters at the Leonine College in Rome.



Fr. FRANCISCO JAVIER ÁLVAREZ MUNGUÍA, C.M. is the Vicar General of the Congregation. He is from the Province of Madrid where he served in formation work and as a Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity. His most recent post was Director General of the Daughters of Charity.



Fr. ELI CHAVES DOS SANTOS, C.M. is an Assistant General of the Congregation. Originally from Brazil, he served in the Province of Mozambique on the provincial council and as Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity. He entered the Congregation in 1972 and was ordained in 1979.



Fr. G. GREGORY GAY, C.M. is Superior General. Ordained in 1980, he served on missions in the Republic of Panama and Central America, where he was elected Visitor of the Province of Central America. He was elected Superior General in 2004 and reelected in 2010.



Fr. JEAN LANDOUSIES, C.M. is a member of the Province of Paris. He has served as a missionary in Algeria and superior of the Maison-Mère. He has served as staff of the Vatican Secretariat of State since 2004. He entered the Congregation in 1965 and was ordained in 1972.



Fr. ROBERT P. MALONEY, C.M. served as Superior General from 1992-2004, and was an Assistant General from 1986-1992. He is a member of the Eastern Province, and has served as a seminary formator and missionary in the Republic of Panama. He was ordained in 1966.

# FROM THE CURIA GENERAL

## The Season of Advent, 2012

### A Journey to Christ and our Charism

*“The way of evangelization... is to let the truth become charity in me. Like fire, charity ignites my neighbor. Only in igniting one another through the flame of our charity does evangelization really grow. The presence of the Gospel is no longer just words, but a lived reality”.*

POPE BENEDICT XVI, meditation at the opening of the Synod for New Evangelization (8 October 2012)

*To All Members of the Vincentian Family*

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Jesus fill your hearts now and always!

I recently served as a delegate to the Synod for New Evangelization, which coincided with the start of the “Year of Faith” to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. The presence of the Gospel that our Holy Father noted above is a gift and challenge for all who follow Christ in the way of St. Vincent de Paul. It is a gift given us by Jesus, the Word made flesh. It is our challenge to make it a ‘lived reality’ in serving our lords and masters, God’s poor. The season of Advent offers



us an opportunity to ponder the beauty, mystery, and awesome responsibility of our vocation as Christian disciples who follow the Vincentian charism. Our Advent journey has four distinct movements that mirror this liturgical season as well as stages in Christian discipleship.

### ***A Time of Anxiety and Uncertainty***

The world of today is wrought with anxiety and uncertainty of all stripes: economic, geo-political, ethnic, social, and personal. Wars, skirmishes, and natural disasters in turn, beget poverty, famine, hunger, homelessness, and human miseries impossible to catalogue. As alarming and disconcerting as our world is today, the Advent Sunday Scriptures remind us of similar situations in ages past. *"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars, and nations will be in dismay... people will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world"* (Lk. 21:25). Our Holy Founders, Saints Vincent and Louise, faced catastrophic challenges in their lives: war, famine, disease, disregard for the poor, and ignorance and indifference to the practice of the Catholic faith among clergy and laity. What was their response to these trials and tribulations?

I believe it can be found in the same Lucan Gospel in the First Sunday of Advent: *"When these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads, because your redemption is at hand... Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy. Be vigilant at all times and pray"* (Lk. 21:28.34-36). In coming to know Jesus more fully by meditating on his Word and receiving him in the Eucharist, Vincent and Louise made Christ the center of their hearts and lives. Jesus calmed their anxieties and moved them to undertake a dynamic and prophetic way of living the Gospel.

Their spiritual journey continues as we put into practice the charism of charity they gave us over 350 years ago. Let this Advent be a time we seek the person of Jesus Christ in Word and sacrament, trusting in God who *"will do what is right and just in the land"* (Jer. 23:5). With Emmanuel, God-with-us as our mainstay, we will *"increase and abound in love for one another and for all... strengthening your hearts to be blameless in holiness before our God"* (1 Thes. 3:12-13).

### ***A Time of Awareness and Anticipation***

Amidst life's ambiguities, Advent offers growth in awareness and anticipation of the coming of our God among us. Advent is a time of beginnings and endings: a new liturgical year, and the end of the calendar year. But as Christians, we realize that despite this *chronos* time

of endings and beginnings Advent shows us the true *kairos* moment: in the Incarnation, God is forever with us. The prophet Baruch reminds us to be a people “*rejoicing that they are remembered by God*” (Bar. 5:5). No matter what the year has been for us, through Jesus, God calls us to more abundant love.

The prophetic voice of John the Baptizer brought Israel an awareness and anticipation of God’s coming. John proclaimed a “*baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins... a voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight his paths’*” (Lk. 3:2-3). John, prophet of the Reign of God, told of the coming of the Messiah in a life disciplined by asceticism and full focus on Jesus. Advent helps us turn our gaze to God’s only-begotten Son through the beauty of the scripture, readings, and hymns which awaken us to God’s mercy.

A steady gaze toward Jesus as “God-with-us” is the effect of an Advent asceticism, as it was in the lives of Vincent and Louise. For them, Jesus was their “all”. Vincent urged his followers to “*lead strong interior lives to make Jesus Christ reign in us... let us seek the glory of God; let us seek the reign of Jesus Christ*” (COSTE XII, pp. 131-132). Vincent and Louise advanced the reign of God on earth by serving Christ in the poor. Advent prepares us to do the same.

### ***A Call to Conversion to Christ and our Charism***

As Advent moves us from anxiety to anticipation, we find openness in our lives and hearts for Jesus to enter. In doing so, we encounter again the mystery of conversion, as Christ gently reveals new ways to live the Gospel truths. The refreshing words of St. Paul acquire new meaning for us: “*Rejoice in the Lord. I say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near*” (Phil. 4:4-5). That nearness gives us a taste of what conversion to Christ means. It calls us to a decision: on whom and what do I set my heart?

The ‘Gaudete’ Sunday Gospel portrays the first fervor of those whose hearts were moved to conversion by John the Baptizer. Luke tells us that although the crowds varied from ordinary folk to tax collectors and soldiers, all had the same question: “*What should we do?*” (Lk. 3:10). And John’s response was simple and direct: Share all you have with the needy; do not collect more taxes than required; do not extort or falsely accuse anyone; and be satisfied with your wages (from Lk. 3:11-15). John’s call to conversion was not a jump in the Jordan and a fleeting feeling of relief. It led to Jesus and a new, dynamic relationship with God and neighbor.

Our Holy Founders had their ‘conversion moments’: Louise’s Pentecost Sunday experience, and Vincent’s Chatillon and Folleville encounters. Both discovered following Christ was not to be found in esoteric

spiritual exercises or abstract religious doctrines, but in ministering to others as though they were the Lord Jesus himself. Louise wrote, "*I felt in my prayer a great attraction for the holy humanity of Our Lord, and I desired to honor it insofar as I was able in the person of the poor and all my neighbors*" (Spiritual Writings of St. Louise, A. 26, p. 809).

The Vincentian charism that now inspires and guides us came from our Founders' conversion to Christ and their willingness to stake their lives on that belief every day. Advent allows us to rekindle our connection to the charism by living it as "*ambassadors for Christ*" (2 Cor. 5:20). Vincent reminded his first followers: "*In order to start right and to succeed well, remember to act in the spirit of Our Lord, to untie our actions with his, and to give them a totally noble and divine purpose by dedicating them to his greater glory*" (COSTE V, pp. 456-457).

### ***A Time for Redemptive Action***

Once we allow Advent to renew us in Jesus' love and mercy, we can give ourselves more fully to the Vincentian charism. In a prior letter to the Vincentian Family, I suggested this theme to enhance collaboration: "Let us work together to share the Good News and to communicate life to those who are poor" (June, 2012). Like our charism, Vincentian spirituality is practical and applicable. That was the genius of Vincent and Louise: they saw Christ in the poor, and the poor in Christ. We must work together to spread that charism of charity in our modern-day milieu.

However, both Vincentian spirituality and Advent remind us that what we seek for ourselves and those we serve is not merely temporary relief, but redemptive action. The Advent scriptures highlight ordinary people in salvation history called by God to play extraordinary roles: John the Baptizer, Mary, Elizabeth, and Joseph. By her openness to God's will, Our Blessed Mother accepted her role in God's redemptive action as Mother of the Lord, showing us a powerful path to faith and fidelity. No wonder Elizabeth would say to Mary upon her visit, "*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb... blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled*" (Lk. 1:39-45). Mary's witness, as well as all the Advent stories can deepen God's grace in us, as we make their stories of salvation our own.

The Vincentian Family is composed of members with enduring faith who share in the mission to evangelize the poor. All are called to be missionaries who live the Good News. Last summer, I visited the Philippines to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presence of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity there. The picture that graces the first page of this letter is taken from a play,

*“San Vicente: A Zarswela”* produced at Adamson University for this great event. As I enjoyed this spectacular depiction of our history and of the mission in the Philippines, I was filled with gratitude for the many sacrifices made by the first missionaries, the Vincentians and Daughters of Charity who came there from Spain. It was also evident to me this former ‘mission territory’ has grown into a dynamic faith community with its own missionary outreach.

Advent reminds us that the work of God continues anew each year in all of us, no matter our age or state in life. The new evangelization begins with each one of us! So let us give ourselves to this holy season with open and willing minds and hearts and be lifted from life’s worries and anxieties into a deeper communion with Christ and a renewed commitment to the Vincentian charism of charity. In the spirit of Jesus and our Holy Founders, I again ask: “Let us work together to share the Good news and to communicate life to those who are poor”.

I pray the Lord Jesus may bless you abundantly in Advent and Christmas seasons!

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

# Letter on the Feast of the Miraculous Medal

Rome, 27 November 2012  
Feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal

*To call the Vincentian Family to greater devotion  
to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in St. Vincent:

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

As the Church rejoices at the start of this “Year of Faith”, I am very pleased to write to you in this month of November as we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. This is a time for us to pause and give thanks to the Lord for all the graces we have received through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother.

In light of the “Year of Faith” proclaimed by Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, it is noteworthy that among the various proposals suggested during the recent *Synod of Bishops on New Evangelization for Transmission of the Faith* was one calling for promotion of pilgrimages to different Marian shrines throughout the world. In light of this, I would especially encourage our various shrines throughout the world dedicated to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal to promote pilgrimages throughout this Year of Faith. Hopefully, the local Associations of the Miraculous Medal can be of great assistance in this undertaking.

The Synod of Bishops also encouraged people to celebrate this Year of Faith by studying and deepening their understanding of the documents of Vatican II, in this, its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. These documents continue to be prophetic today, calling us to embrace the world by our own witness of love. The gift of faith given us in baptism and strengthened by the Word of God and Eucharist make the transforming love of God our standard in the midst of a secular society.

To assist us in this endeavor, the Synod reminded us of the importance of our Catholic Social Doctrine and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which celebrates 20 years since its publication. Both Catholic Social Doctrine and the Catechism are key instruments

for the New Evangelization, and were recommended by Pope Benedict in his opening address.

We are called to proclaim our faith in the risen Lord Jesus, and to show that through expressions of charity to one another, and especially to the poor and marginalized. The fruit of faith and charity is service to the poor; this message was clearly presented by the Pope. As the Association of the Miraculous Medal, we are encouraged to continue to evangelize with renewed enthusiasm. This can be accomplished through prayer, service, and in the tradition of home visits. Members go to one another's homes with an image of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal to pray, share Scripture, and enter into a faith dialogue. The "Year of Faith" provides an opportunity for our Association to continue this tradition or to even start it up. It is a wonderful way for all of us to participate in the New Evangelization.

From November 3-4, the International Council of the Association of the Miraculous Medal met in Havana, Cuba, as mandated in our general statutes. In reports presented by different national councils, we had the opportunity to learn about the work of the Association. We also noted with regret a lack of information from some areas, which deprives us of knowing the wonderful efforts being made by other national councils.

In light of this, I want to encourage all Visitors and Visitatrices to make every effort to accompany this branch of the Vincentian Family by those you have appointed as moderators of the Association of the Miraculous Medal. By their efforts at animation, I am sure they will continue to find creative ways to bring the laity into roles of leadership that will strengthen our Vincentian charism.

This letter will also serve to inform you of the convening of our first General Assembly of the Association of the Miraculous Medal in 2014. Previous meetings held in 2001, 2005, and 2009 were not considered Assemblies, as the statutes of the Association were not fully in place. This First General Assembly will be held in Rome from November 17-24, 2014.

I thank you for your spiritual and temporal support of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, and in this "Year of Faith" and "New Evangelization", I urge you to continue to do so. By our prayer and activities, we can continue the work of Jesus and Mary as instruments of evangelization.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

# Tempo Forte Circular

December 2012

My dear Confreres,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be forever in our hearts!

I write to share with you the proceedings of our most recent Tempo Forte meeting which was held from December 3-8 here at the General Curia in Rome.

We began our Tempo Forte with an ongoing formation session on Sunday 2 December by inviting the international student-priest confreres studying in Rome to join us for reflection and discussion on the relationship of New Evangelization and our Vincentian charism. We covered a great deal of issues in this particular Tempo Forte. I will list them in topical order, with shorter points for clarity and economy of style.

## **UPDATES**

**INTERNATIONAL VISITORS' MEETING:** The International Visitors meeting will take place at St. John's University in New York from 30 June to 13 July, 2013. We looked at the responses from the provinces regarding their implementation of the "Lines of Action" of the General Assembly. Although the responses were minimal, those who did respond offered rich subject matter for reflection, which will form the basis for further discussion at the Visitors Meeting. We also reviewed and approved a "logo" for the Visitors Meeting, which was designed by Fr. Alexis Cerquera of the Province of Paris.

**CONFRERES IN DIFFICULTY:** We reviewed a report from Fr. Javier Alvarez, Vicar General on the topic of confreres in difficulty. We are hoping to consider a proposal to initiate a program designed to help confreres in the Hispanic-speaking parts of the world.

**RECONFIGURATION:** We reviewed reports from provinces that met recently in France, Spain, Italy, the northern and southern zones of CLAPVI, the three provinces of Brazil, and the initiation of this process of provinces located in the Asia- Pacific region.

**RATIO FORMATIONIS:** We studied the first draft by the committee for the formulation of a *Ratio Fomationis*, setting aside the entire day of December 8 for discussion. A synthesis of this document will be presented at the Visitors Meeting.

**CM-NGO:** We had another discussion on creating an NGO for the Congregation to solicit funds in Europe while working in conjunction with the Vincentian Solidarity Office.

**POPULAR MISSIONS:** Fr. Thomas Lunot, our confrere who does translation work and resides at the General Curia presented us with a project detailing ways to revitalize the popular mission in France.

### **GENERAL CURIA - PERSONNEL**

**ARCHIVIST/LIBRARIAN:** We have named a new archivist and librarian for the General Curia, who will begin his work in March 2013. I am most grateful to Fr. Alfredo Becerra for over seven years of dedicated service as archivist and librarian, but also as a confrere who has undertaken various responsibilities for the Congregation and Vincentian Family. He is the second-longest serving current member of the Curia, and I am thankful for his generosity, and also to the Province of Mexico for allowing him to serve in Rome. An official announcement of the confrere replacing Fr. Alfredo will be forthcoming.

**PROCURATOR GENERAL:** We also named a new procurator general to replace Fr. Alberto Vernaschi who has done a wonderful job in this position, along with his other responsibilities for the Province of Rome. Fr. Vernaschi gave of his time most generously when we were in great need. Information regarding his replacement will also be forthcoming.

### **GENERAL CURIA - REPORTS**

**DC DIRECTOR GENERAL:** Fr. Patrick Griffin, Director General of the Daughters of Charity, visited us and made a report on his work as Director General. His visit gave us a chance to discuss clearly and thoroughly the role of our Congregation with the Daughters of Charity, both in terms of the provincial directors and on a general level. We discussed the possibility of a joint meeting between the General Curia Councils of the Congregation and the Daughters with the goal of strengthening our ties.

**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS:** Fr. John Maher, Director the Office of Communications reported that the revised web site for CM-Global would be "coming on-line" by January 25, 2013 in English, Spanish, and French. The work of revising and creating three new web

sites has been extensive and complicated, but it will result in a unified and easy to use web site for the Congregation. Fr. Maher reported that he has been working with Fr. Edward Udovic of DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, to have the past issues of *Vincentiana* available in the three languages digitally on "*Via Sapientiae*", the on-line library that DePaul manages for Vincentian related materials. This will encompass issues of *Vincentiana* dating from 1995 to the present day. The Curia is grateful to Fr. Udovic for his leadership and to DePaul University for their foresight in making *Vincentiana* accessible for members of the Congregation and the world-wide Vincentian Family.

Fr. Maher reported that the *Vincentiana* editorial board had met and approved themes for the 2013 issues of *Vincentiana*. He also reported that the SIEV board will meet at the General Curia in February, 2013 to discuss future directions of SIEV, and how to attract young confreres to engage in research and writing on Vincentian history and spirituality.

Fr. Maher also proposed to the General Council that they consider having an ongoing formation on the role of communications in the life of the Congregation at a 2013 Tempo Forte meeting. The Council agreed, and so Fr. Maher will now formulate a session to assist the Council in the role digital communication to enhance the work of the apostolate and life in the Congregation. Lastly, Fr. Maher proposed the Council do an annual evaluation of the 2011 Strategic Plan (based on the 'Lines of Action' of the General Assembly) which focuses on an annual theme for provinces and confreres to reflect upon and implement. The Council has agreed, and asked Fr. Maher to devise a process to facilitate this evaluation.

**CIF:** We had a report from the Directors of the Center for International Formation (CIF). Frs. Marcelo Manimtim and Dan Borlik have prepared a job description for a new assistant director who will be named at a later date. Dan Borlik has generously agreed to be next CIF director, and will assume that responsibility in 2014. Meanwhile, he and Marcelo will continue to coordinate different ongoing formation programs designed for confreres and the branches of the Vincentian Family. We asked both the director and sub-director to be present at our March Tempo Forte meeting for an in-depth program evaluation.

**SYSTEMIC CHANGE:** The Commission to Promote Systemic Change submitted a report, along with the announcement of their annual systemic change project award for three sites to receive funding. The first recipient was the "Agro - Care Cooperative", a project of the Congregation in Rwanda. Another project funded was for the Vincentian Family, located in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, USA. A third funding award for the Vincentian Family went to "Daybreak", a homeless center in Macon, Georgia, USA.

We also discussed how the Commission will prepare for a transition in leadership and membership. In the next three years, the Commission will undergo a rotation of two founding members leaving and two new members coming aboard. The two new members in 2013 will be Mr. Jim Claffey, of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul USA, and Ms. Kerry Anthony, of DePaul International. They will replace Fr. Norberto Carcellar of the Province of the Philippines, and Rev. Mr. Gene Smith, a deacon and former President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the USA. Both have served from its start seven years ago. I am most grateful for the service that they have rendered to the Vincentian Family.

The 2013 workshops for the Commission will be held in February in India; August in Salamanca, Spain; and November in Lebanon. In addition, the Commission has collected ten new testimonies on systemic change which will be published on the "Fam-Vin" web site. ([www.famvin.org](http://www.famvin.org)). There will be a new story every week for 10 weeks. Also in 2013, the Commission will develop a pre-systemic change type of program.

In addition, the Commission will be training "teams" on different continents to give systemic change workshops. It was recommended that a systemic change approach be integrated into the training of all Vincentian Family formators. In addition, the book "Seeds of Hope" will be made available on-line. Two of our Assistants General will participate in systemic change workshops this year. Fr. Zeracristos will attend the one in India, and Fr. Eli Chaves will participate in the Salamanca workshop.

**SOUTH SUDAN:** We had a discussion about a project initiated by the Union of Superior Generals entitled *Solidarity with South Sudan*. Fr. Zeracristos will represent the Congregation at their meeting, and offer to be a candidate for their board of directors. At this time, Fr. Manuel Ginete (a former member of the Curia and delegate for the Vincentian Family) participates in this inter-congregational project in Southern Sudan.

**ALETEIA:** We have also joined ALETEIA, a new initiative of the Church, which is an organization formed in response to the request of Pope Benedict XVI to utilize modern communication in order to advance the New Evangelization. Their web site is [www.aleteia.org](http://www.aleteia.org). The General Council decided to align ourselves with ALETEIA to promote the Year of Faith and New Evangelization in the context of our Vincentian charism.

**VSO:** Fr. Miles Heinen, the Director of Vincentian Solidarity Office sent us a report. The VSO sponsored a project with the Province of China, arranging a visit to China for different members of the Vincentian Family to explore the possibility of establishing a presence there.

The VSO funded a new project for our new international mission in Benin. Unfortunately, we have a shortage of funds now available for micro-projects, with currently less than \$4000 on hand. **Please consider making a donation to the Vincentian Solidarity Office** so these micro-projects can continue. Fr. Miles reported that the funding of a micro-project in Hungary, which involved the renovation of a school, has been completed after many years of planning and execution. Congratulations to Fr. Miles and the VSO staff on this achievement!

**PATRIMONY FUND:** Fr. Miles continues to build up our Patrimonial Fund Project, which depends on donations from confreres and persons confreres know who may want to contribute in order to promote the Vincentian charism in different parts of the world. As you know, this Patrimonial Fund (also known as the Vincentian Endowment Challenge) has been made possible through the help of a donor. It calls for us to raise \$5 million with a matching gift, and the deadline is soon coming. As of this writing, we are far from our goal.

### ***ECONOME GENERAL***

Fr. Joe Geders, Econome General, offered a detailed report on the financial position of the General Curia, and in particular, the financial statement of the general fund. We also approved the 2013 budget, and made some significant changes in order to improve the service we provide to the Congregation.

### ***REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS***

**BOLIVIA:** We reviewed reports from the international missions beginning with **El Alto, Bolivia**, which has a VSO project firmly established. You can view it on the web at: [www.saytasim.org](http://www.saytasim.org). It could be a model program for human, spiritual and local economic development. They have begun a five-year fundraising plan called "A Miraculous Impact". You can also view it on their web site: [www.vocesvicentinas.org/donate](http://www.vocesvicentinas.org/donate). The confreres have a solid working relationship with the diocese: one serves on the Presbyterial Council; another provides ongoing formation materials; and one assists with liturgical music in Ayamara. There are three missionaries in this large and demanding area of El Alto, which is always open for new recruits.

In **Cochabamba**, we are happy to announce the arrival of a new missionary from the Province of Chile: Fr. Luis Miguel Montano Flores. Fr. Luis is a native of Bolivia and speaks the local language. He will accompany Fr. David Paniagua and Fr. Jorge Manrique.

**SOLOMON ISLANDS:** We received a communication from the international mission in the Solomon Islands. A recent arrival is Fr. Jose Manjaly from the Province of India-South. Leaving the mission is Fr. Agus Setyono, who returns to his Province of Indonesia, and Fr. Udochukwu Nwaorgu returning to his Province of Nigeria. I thank them for their ministry in this mission in the Solomon Islands. Fr. Michael Walsh, Visitor of Australia, has informed us that the former Visitor, Fr. Greg Cooney, has accepted an assignment to the Solomon Islands and will arrive in 2013. I offer thanks to Greg Cooney for his fine example of missionary spirit. We renewed our contract with the Bishops of the Solomon Islands and will continue to serve at the Holy Name of Mary Seminary.

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA:** News from the international mission in Papua New Guinea includes the following: the former superior of the mission, Fr. Homero Marin, is now working in the Diocese of Alotau-Sideia, where our confrere Rolly Santos serves as Bishop. Our confrere Justin Eke from the Province of Nigeria is soon to depart for his sabbatical year. A newly arrived confrere in Papua New Guinea is Fr. Jude Lemeh, another member of the Province of Nigeria.

**TUNISIA:** Fr. James Thomas Kunninpurayidam of the Province of India-South arrived in November after completing his studies in Rome. The Superior General, together with Fr. John Maher, Director of Communications visited our confreres there in December. The superior of the mission is Fr. Firmin Mola Mbalo of the Province of Toulouse.

**HAITI:** The mission in Haiti, which is coordinated through the Province of Puerto Rico, recently received Fr. John Baptiste Nsambi E Mbula from the Province of the Congo.

**CHAD:** Fr. Roch Alexandre Ramilijaona of the Province of Madagascar, pastor and superior of the mission in Chad, reported on the state of the parish mission for the past year. A parish assembly was held from 11-13 October. This will be discussed at the next meeting of COVIAM. The President of COVIAM, Fr. Guillaume Leukeumo, visited Chad along with Fr. Fanta Getahun, Visitor of the Province of Ethiopia.

**ANGOLA:** Fr. José Maria Nieto, former Assistant General, and Fr. Jose Ramirez of the Province of Mexico are working in Angola, another new international mission. They had hoped to receive a third missionary. Fr. Henry Kristan. However, he was named Visitor of the Province of Venezuela, so have considered another confrere.

We have signed a contract with the Diocese in Angola. As with many parts of Africa, the diocese is quite limited financially and thus unable to fund some of the usual necessities, such as insurance and stipends for vacation. Nevertheless, we have entered into a contract with them

for three years. We hope that the contribution of the Congregation will awaken in the Christians of Angola a call to generosity. Besides carrying out pastoral activities in the diocese, they will support the Vincentian Family and Daughters of Charity throughout the country.

**BENIN:** The two missionaries in the new mission in Benin are Frs. Stanislaw Deszcz and Rafal Brukarczyk, both from the Province of Poland. They report that the mission is well underway, and they are enjoying their experience. Unfortunately, Fr. Rafal recently had a motorcycle accident, suffering a broken leg in several places, and is now in the process of a long recovery. We pray for him and we thank them both for their generous service. We also offer thanks to the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal who invited us to open this mission.

### ***VOLUNTEERS: INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS***

This year we were blessed with an opportunity to review letters from 12 confreres who volunteered for the various missions. Of these, we assigned five to the international missions for 2013. The remainder will be reviewed again for service in 2014. We had two requests from bishops for missionaries, but at this time we are unable to respond. However, we have forwarded the bishops' requests to provinces to see if they can offer assistance.

**PUNTA ARENOS:** In response to the mission appeal, two confreres began their work as missionaries in Punta Arenos in southern Chile. They are Bruno Enzo Tonelli from the Province of Argentina, and Pablo Vargas Ruiz from the Province of Chile. They are settling in and excited about starting up this new mission

### ***VINCENTIAN FAMILY NEWS***

Fr. Eli Chaves, Assistant General and delegate of the Superior General to the Vincentian Family, gave us a report on the development and perspectives of the Vincentian Family. The Vincentian Family Office formulated a questionnaire for those who serve as moderators of the Vincentian Family throughout the world. The response was well received, as there were 60 returns to the questionnaire. Here is a brief summary:

- In over 80 countries on five continents, there exist initiatives and collaboration among different branches of the Vincentian Family. More than 60 branches of the Vincentian Family are engaged in some type of organization and interaction.

- Members of the Vincentian Family are part of a new Commission for Christian-Muslim Dialogue, which met in October 2012, and is planning activities for 2013.
- We have begun to put together the Vincentian Family Collaboration Program, which will launch a pilot program as a workshop in May 2013 in Paris.

However, there are challenges and difficulties that leaders and members of the Vincentian Family face. Among these mentioned in the questionnaire were a need for greater participation and commitment of a number of the Vincentian Family branches. Some branches of the Family are still enclosed in their own personal and group interests, with the result being indifference and a lack of awareness of the need for formation and collaboration.

In a positive light, many who answered this questionnaire noted that today there is truly a process of renewing our Vincentian identity and vocation. The challenge is to imprint our charism and heritage in the hearts and lives of the all members of the branches of the Vincentian Family. Today, we must accept that challenge to promote and intensify projects for collaboration, using the methodology of systemic change.

The call to collaboration surpasses conventional practices, goes beyond traditional congregational and provincial frontiers, and requires new practices, new methods, and new structures. All of these are expressions of actions called for in the New Evangelization, proposed in this "Year of Faith". The results of the questionnaire will be published in the three languages and serve as a resource for planning.

## **INVITATIONS/VISITORS' CONFERENCES**

**VINCENTIAN VOLUNTEERS, ITALY:** We received an invitation from the Vincentian Volunteers of Italy to participate in its 13<sup>th</sup> National Congress. We will be represented by Fr. Giuseppe Turati, Secretary General. The theme for the congress is "*In the footsteps of St. Vincent—the courage to grow through change*".

**OZANAM ANNIVERSARY:** We were extended an invitation to participate in the major celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Blessed Frederic Ozanam in Paris on 19-21 April 2013. Three members of the General Curia will join in the celebration.

**VISITORS' CONFERENCES:** The APVC, CEVIM, and CLAPVI conferences will have group meetings during the International Visitor's Meeting at St. John's University in July. The COVIAM conference will meet 1-6 May 2013, and will focus on the theme of the Vincentian parish today. The NCV, will meet with the Superior General in his canonical visit of the Province of the West in February, 2013.

## **CALENDAR**

We reviewed the calendars of the Superior General and Assistants General, firming up dates for Council Meetings, canonical visitations, and Tempo Forte meetings for 2013. Our next on-going formation will be 9 March, with a theme focusing three main areas:

- The statute on the vow of poverty which is unique to our Congregation;
- The economic outlook of the Congregation today and projections for the next five years;
- A review the economic situation and financial stability of provinces in the Congregation.

## **SUPERIOR GENERAL'S CALENDAR**

On 1 January 2013, the Superior General made his traditional visit to the Rue du Bac to deliver a conference at the Eucharist on New Years' Day with the Daughters of Charity. On 12 January, there was the annual meeting of the Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family in Paris. On 15 January, the Superior General visited the interprovincial internal seminary in Teruel, Spain. This was followed by a meeting of the international Council of the Vincentian Marian Youth. From late January through February, the Superior General will do the canonical visitation of the Province of the West in the United States.

The Superior General will return to Rome in March for the Tempo Forte meeting and then will give a mission in his home parish of St. Stephen's in Bradshaw, MD. He will celebrate Holy Week in Bolivia with Daughters of Charity in a remote mission area, reachable only by riverboat. After Easter, the Superior General will visit the confreres stationed in El Alto and Cochabamba, Bolivia.

New year, I ask our loving God to bless each of you, along with your local communities and provinces. As we celebrate together the "Year of Faith", may 2013 be a year of grace and favor, so like Jesus and St. Vincent, we might become new evangelizers of the poor.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

# FEATURE

## *Solidarity, Union, and the New Evangelization*

### Economic Solidarity

An Ongoing Challenge for the Congregation of the Mission

G. Gregory Gay, C.M., and Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

We have often discussed this theme together. Recently, convinced of its importance, we decided to author this article jointly. It sketches a vision which we judge to be crucial for the future vitality of the worldwide Congregation of the Mission and it offers practical steps toward making that vision a reality.

Today people often talk about globalization, weighing its positive and negative aspects. But, no matter how one assesses its pros and cons, there is no escaping globalization as a reality. As communication and transportation have become more and more rapid, it has become a part of life. A recession in Europe and the United States affects billions of people on all continents. Combat in Iraq and Afghanistan creates waves that break on every shore. A change in the price of oil in Saudi Arabia or Venezuela causes rising gasoline prices worldwide.

For us as members of the Congregation of the Mission, globalization is one of the signs of the times which call the Congregation to “a continual state of renewal”<sup>1</sup>. We are more and more conscious that, while the Congregation is divided into provinces, it is international. Today too, we acknowledge increasingly that we are part of a larger Vincentian Family, which is part of a universal Church that exists as a leaven within a global human community.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Constitutions*, 2.

The theme of this article is Economic Solidarity<sup>2</sup>. After some general introductory considerations, it will focus only the Congregation of the Mission, though, as we trust will be evident, these reflections are applicable to other congregations and to the Church as a whole. The article will offer: 1) some background about solidarity, 2) a description of a number of initiatives within the Congregation to promote economic solidarity, and 3) ten possibilities for the future.

## I.

### BACKGROUND

#### 1. An ancient theme in a new context

While the language of solidarity is new, the theme itself has been central to Christianity since Jesus himself. In the limited space of this article, it is impossible to develop this point at length, even from the limited point of view of economic solidarity.

To put it briefly, the Book of the Acts describes a community where the members, like Jesus and his disciples<sup>3</sup>, hold all things in common<sup>4</sup>. The Fathers of the Church continually evoked the need for solidarity, especially with the poor. St. Basil, in particular, attacked the theme courageously in his homilies. He states that anyone who is eager to love his neighbor as himself, in accordance with God's commandment, "must possess no more than his neighbor"<sup>5</sup>. During a time of famine, he exhorted the faithful with passionate words "not to be crueler than beasts... by taking over what people possess in common or by grabbing what belongs to all"<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> As this article was being completed, Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice, stated publicly that he might need to change the way he talks about the Church's social teaching, since the Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice has been surprised to find that terms commonly used in church documents are misunderstood or misinterpreted "in certain circles". He said, for instance, that the popes' teachings on the theme of "social justice" have sometimes been mistakenly connected to "socialism" and "communism". As a result, he indicated, the popes are mistakenly seen as promoting socialist or big-government solutions to social problems. In that context, he noted that the council has also learned that words like "social" and "solidarity" are dismissed by some persons for their perceived connection with communist regimes such as the Soviet Union.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. John 13:29.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 2:42 and 4:34.

<sup>5</sup> *Hom. in divites*: PG 31, 281b.

<sup>6</sup> *Hom. tempore famis*: PG 31, 325a.

St. Vincent was quite aware of this theme. He tells the members of the Congregation that, after the example of the first Christians, all our goods are common property<sup>7</sup> and that no one should use anything as if it were his own<sup>8</sup>. The Congregation's Fundamental Statute on Poverty (1659) spells out in detail how the Vincentian vow of poverty is to be lived. The General Assembly of 1980, interpreting that document for today, emphasizes once again "the communal dimension of our poverty"<sup>9</sup>. Following suit, our 1984 Constitutions state that we live within "a true community of goods" and "hold all our goods in common"<sup>10</sup>.

## 2. Solidarity in the writings of John Paul II

Echoing themes from Vatican II<sup>11</sup> and from Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*<sup>12</sup>, Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* developed the topic of solidarity at length. The pope stated that solidarity should be the Christian response to increasing interdependence in the world: "This then (solidarity) is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a *firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good*; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all"<sup>13</sup>.

John Paul asked us to look beneath poverty to examine its roots, especially the decisions of human beings that flow from "real forms of idolatry". He expresses a special concern about the "all-consuming desire for profit" and "the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one's will upon others". It is "the concrete acts of individuals [which] introduce these [unjust] structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove"<sup>14</sup>.

He calls these unjust structures "structures of violence" that bring suffering and death to the poor. These become embodied in unjust laws, power-based economic relationships, the arms trade, inequitable treaties, artificial boundaries, oppressive governments, and numerous

<sup>7</sup> *Common Rules*, III, 3; henceforth CR.

<sup>8</sup> CR III, 5.

<sup>9</sup> 36<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the CM (1980), "Interpretation of the Fundamental Statute on Poverty", (A) 5.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. C 32; 25, 4<sup>o</sup>; 148, 149, 154.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 9, 26, 38, 42, 54, 68, 84, 86, and especially 90-91.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Populorum Progressio*, 65.

<sup>13</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, December 30, 1987, 38.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

other more subtle obstacles to harmonious societal relationships. Such unjust societal structures keep the poor poor.

To respond to these structures, John Paul II urges that solidarity be built on national and international levels as well as on the individual level<sup>15</sup>.

In his later years, John Paul became acutely aware of the process of globalization and the unprecedented growth in telecommunications and economic and financial connections within the global community. He saw the possibilities for genuine communication that globalization was bringing, but he was also aware of its many dangers, especially the increasing inequality between the rich and the poor. "The challenge", he wrote, "is to ensure a globalization in solidarity, a globalization without marginalization"<sup>16</sup>.

### 3. Solidarity in the writing of Benedict XVI

Benedict XVI returned to this theme repeatedly and forcefully in *Caritas in Veritate*. Speaking of economic solidarity, he wrote: "Through support for economically poor countries by means of financial plans inspired by solidarity – so that these countries can take steps to satisfy their own citizens' demand for consumer goods and for development – not only can true economic growth be generated, but a contribution can be made towards sustaining the productive capacities of rich countries that risk being compromised by the crisis"<sup>17</sup>.

He emphasizes the need for solidarity within the Church: "*Feed the hungry* (cf. Mt 25:35.37.42) is an ethical imperative for the universal Church, as she responds to the teachings of her Founder, the Lord Jesus, concerning solidarity and the sharing of goods"<sup>18</sup>. Referring to the writings of John Paul II, he states: "In the global era, economic activity cannot prescind from gratuitousness, which fosters and disseminates solidarity and responsibility for justice and the common good among the different economic players. It is clearly a specific and profound form of economic democracy. Solidarity is first and foremost a sense of responsibility on the part of everyone with regard to everyone"<sup>19</sup>.

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>16</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Peace Message* (January 1, 1998), 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Caritas in Veritate*, June 29, 2009, 27; cf. also 11, 13, 19, 21, 25, 28, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 53, 54, 58, 59, 60, 61, 67, 73, 78.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

#### 4. Solidarity in the Congregation of the Mission

By promoting worldwide solidarity in our own life and works, the Congregation is attempting to foster the positive aspects of globalization within our life as a community, even as we teach and preach the social teaching of the Church.

In recent years the Congregation has been focusing on various aspects of solidarity:

- Solidarity in Mission
- Solidarity in Personnel
- Solidarity in Common Life
- Solidarity in Spirituality and Prayer
- Solidarity in Economic Resources

Much has already happened in this regard. Actually, the process began a good while ago, before the word *solidarity* became popular. The Constitutions and Statutes of 1984 offered a renewed focus on our common mission to the poorest of the poor<sup>20</sup>. They called confreres to be willing to go anywhere in the world<sup>21</sup>. They asked Provinces to assist one another mutually in foreign missions<sup>22</sup>. They recognized the unequal distribution of the world's goods<sup>23</sup> and called Provinces to share their temporal goods with one another so that those who have more help those in need<sup>24</sup>. Subsequent General Assemblies repeated these same themes.

Over the last two decades, there has been increasing solidarity in *mission*, as is evident in older missions like Madagascar, where a number of provinces collaborate, and in the new international missions like the Solomon Islands, where several provinces staff the seminary.

Worldwide, there has also been greater solidarity in *personnel*, with many confreres serving in provinces other than their own, particularly in formation and in the foreign missions, but also in many other works. A number of provinces have confreres working in many other countries.

Our solidarity in mission has made new demands on us in regard to *common life*<sup>25</sup>, since, increasingly, confreres from different cultures

---

<sup>20</sup> C 1, 2°.

<sup>21</sup> C 12, 5°.

<sup>22</sup> S 5, 1°.

<sup>23</sup> C 12, 2°.

<sup>24</sup> C 152, § 1.

<sup>25</sup> The document *Fraternal Life in Community* (25) states: "Thus community becomes a 'Schola Amoris', a School of Love, for young people and for adults

and languages are living side by side. One day at table in Paris a few years ago, we noticed that all eight of us were from different countries. Among us, we counted 24 languages which we used in our work.

In recent years, too, the Congregation has been promoting greater solidarity in regard to our *spirituality and prayer*<sup>26</sup>. Formators on the different continents now meet regularly. Workshops are offered on the five virtues, the four vows, and other aspects of our spirituality. CIF (the International Center of Formation) has brought together confreres from a wide variety of cultural settings to live together, pray together, and study together, focusing especially on the Constitutions. Many of the sources of our spirituality, especially the writings of St. Vincent, are now translated into various languages and are therefore available to confreres throughout the world.

## II.

### INITIATIVES TOWARD ECONOMIC SOLIDARITY

Over the last sixteen years, with the help of the Franz Foundation, the Congregation has taken some very significant steps in the direction of economic solidarity. One of the goals of the Franz Foundation, which Fr. Lou Franz has talked about at CIF, is to help bring about a “relative, not absolute, economic equality” among the provinces, so that all “will have sufficient funds to address the urgent needs of the poor in their geographic areas”. Fr. Franz added: “...in a world more and more concerned with the vast gulf that separates the haves from the have-nots, this disparity needs to be addressed if the Congregation is to become a prophetic witness... Sharing one’s money gives a credibility to one’s actions that is unmistakable”.

Over the past year, the Franz Foundation and the Congregation of the Mission have been formulating ways in which their relationship might be not just that of donor and receiver, but more and more a partnership to assist the Superior General in fostering economic solidarity among the provinces of the Congregation.

A striking sign of the times within the Congregation of the Mission is that some provinces with diminishing personnel have significant economic means, while others with increasing personnel have few financial resources. By fostering economic solidarity among ourselves,

---

– a school in which all learn to love God, to love the brothers and sisters with whom they live, and to love humanity, which is in great need of God’s mercy and of fraternal solidarity”.

<sup>26</sup> Likewise, *Fraternal Life in Community* (16) speaks of “fraternal solidarity in prayer”.

the Congregation, which encourages us to preach and teach the social doctrine of the Church and its preferential option for the poor<sup>27</sup>, attempts to “practice what it preaches”.

During a well-received talk given in Mexico at the 2007 gathering of all the Visitors, the Treasurer General at that time, Fr. John Gouldrick, spoke of an overall plan for economic solidarity in the Congregation that has a vision, goals and strategies<sup>28</sup>.

He describes the vision in this way: “That those provinces with minimal income to meet their expenses might be able to stabilize their financial resources in the near future”. Within that vision, he delineates three goals. First, the plan aims at strengthening the financial position of provinces that are struggling financially. Second, “the plan seeks to enable provinces to undertake capital improvements to support their mission”, including various small or large projects that go beyond ordinary expenses; e.g., building a novitiate or obtaining computers for a school. Finally, the third goal is “securing long-term financial stability in these provinces”.

Over the last two decades, a number of strategies for achieving those three goals have been developed. Below, we will describe those mentioned by Fr. Gouldrick, plus a number of others.

### **1. IMF (International Mission Fund): 2000 and IMF: 2004**

In 1993, the Franz Foundation became aware that the Superior General lacked the resources needed to assist poorer provinces which were appealing for help and to respond to requests to begin new international missions among the poorest of the poor. It offered to aid him. Conversations between the General Curia and the Franz Foundation led to the setting up of a fund, known as IMF: 2000. The Foundation, in its offer to help create this fund, laid down a condition; namely, it asked the General Curia to raise the same amount of money that the Foundation was offering; that is, it offered a “matching grant”. The Superior General appealed to a number of provinces to help him gather funds for the “match”. The response was very generous. Initial donations from the five Provinces of the United States, followed by donations from provinces in Europe, Asia, and Latin America, enabled the Curia to set up, over two five-year periods, not just one, but two endowment

---

<sup>27</sup> Of course, this issue is much wider than the Congregation of the Mission. For some interesting analogous considerations, cf. THOMAS J. GREEN, “Shepherding the Patrimony of the Poor: Diocesan and Parish Structures of Financial Administration”, *The Jurist* 56 (1997), 706-734.

<sup>28</sup> JOHN GOULDRICK, “Solidarity in the Congregation, Our Efforts at Economic Collaboration”, *Vincentiana* 51 (January-April 2008), 35-40.

funds. Today, IMF: 2000 and IMF: 2004 have a market value of more than \$14 million, even after disbursing more than \$5 million to poorer provinces. The income from these funds constitutes a large percentage of the total amount disbursed in the annual Mission Fund Distribution.

## 2. VSO and VSF

A strategy for implementing the second goal (enabling provinces to make capital improvements) and also for encouraging creative projects in the developing world was to set up the Vincentian Solidarity Office (VSO), which helps poorer provinces to write grant proposals and to direct them to appropriate agencies. Brother Peter Campbell was appointed to lead this office, which, using a newly created Vincentian Solidarity Fund (VSF) wisely, especially by assuring agencies that the VSO could find matching funds for any grants it received, has financed numerous large projects and the micro-projects each year. In 2011, for example, the VSO, currently headed by Fr. Miles Heinen, helped poorer provinces obtain 23 new grants and add to 4 older grants, for a total of more than \$1,080,997. Since the office opened it has raised quite significant funds:

### VSO - TOTAL GRANTS JUNE 2002 - DECEMBER 2011

VSO - TOTAL GRANTS BY TYPE AND ACTIVITY						
PROJECT ACTIVITY	PROJECT TYPE				GRAND TOTAL	%
	ADMIN	CANDIDATES	PASTORAL	SOCIO-ECONOMIC		
Construction	181,488	1,034,691	1,135,205	2,278,891	4,630,275	66.20%
Equipment	43,966	249,993	54,284	166,219	514,462	7.36%
Materials	16,255	106,614	42,305	103,982	269,155	3.85%
Program	30,000	31,707	65,436	647,523	774,665	11.08%
Scholarship	39,249	48,800	0	16,490	104,539	1.49%
Vehicle	30,234	224,444	357,393	89,330	701,401	10.03%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>341,192</b>	<b>1,696,249</b>	<b>1,654,623</b>	<b>3,302,434</b>	<b>6,994,498</b>	<b>100.01%</b>
%	4.88%	24.25%	23.66%	47.21%	100%	—

In recent years, the VSO has taken on some aspects of an international Development Office, reaching out to donors beyond the Congregation of the Mission. This creates additional demands on the time of

the Superior General, since it requires that he be directly involved in fund-raising and in face-to-face meetings with significant donors.

In order to help the Superior General in his fund-raising efforts, a committee has been appointed to examine the possibility of creating a non-profit organization at the level of the General Curia<sup>29</sup>.

Over the last several years, the VSO has also been appealing to confreres throughout the world to identify possible donors. Within the United States, it has set up a sub-committee made up of former students who left the major and minor seminaries, as well as former confreres, to assist in raising funds.

### **3. Patrimony Funds for Poorer Provinces**

The principal strategy for attaining the third goal (assuring long-term financial stability within poorer provinces) was the creation of patrimony funds, which are a type of endowment fund. Over the last 11 years, the Franz Foundation has been collaborating with the General Curia of the Congregation of the Mission (CM) in a long-range project to help each of the poorest provinces of the CM to establish a Patrimony Fund; that is, a stable fund which will guarantee a firm financial foundation for each of those provinces. This project is now also called the “Vincentian Endowment Challenge” and is described in detail at [www.cmglobal.org/patrimony-en](http://www.cmglobal.org/patrimony-en). The patrimony funds are invested securely in order to ensure their permanence. The annual returns from the investments provide those provinces with a stable base from which they can plan for the future in three areas: 1) the needs of the poor served by the province, 2) the formation of its seminarians (who are often numerous), and 3) the care of its elderly members. Some distinctive features of endowment funds are these:

- The principal or corpus of the fund is not to be liquidated; that is, converted into cash in order to meet current expenses
- Only the returns – namely, interest, dividends and capital gains on the investment – can be used
- The returns must be used only for the purposes for which the fund was established.

A large number of patrimony funds have been established. Some are already completed, some are in the process of being completed, and some are just beginning. These funds, from a legal perspective, have different “owners”. In some cases, the “owner” of the patrimony fund

---

<sup>29</sup> In Italy, such organizations are called an ONLUS (Organizzazione Non Lucrativa di Utilità Sociale – Non-Profit Organization Social).

is the sponsoring province from which a new province or mission originated. For example, the Province of Holland, which has had admirable foresight, created patrimony funds for China, Indonesia, Ethiopia and Fortaleza; the Province of Ireland, for Nigeria; the Province of Naples for Eritrea; the former Province of Belgium for the Congo. Spain has generously helped set up stable funds for missions and provinces to which it gave birth. Many other financially stable provinces have formed a relationship with financially struggling provinces and have created patrimony funds to help guarantee their future. For example, the former Southern Province of the USA set up a patrimony fund for the Province of North India. The Eastern Province of the United States began patrimony funds for seven different provinces. The Province of Turin is currently helping to build a patrimony fund for Madagascar. The money in some of these funds has sometimes been augmented by matching funds offered by the Franz Foundation.

#### **4. A Patrimony Fund for the General Curia**

In 2005, foreseeing in 2025 the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission, the Franz Foundation suggested to the Superior General the creation of a large patrimony fund over a 20-year period, with half coming from the Foundation and half coming from the fun – raising efforts of the Congregation of the Mission. The Patrimony Fund would be at the disposition of the General Curia, so that it might better serve the needs of the provinces and of the poor whom the Congregation serves throughout the world. Nine poorer provinces were originally included as beneficiaries of the patrimony fund during the first 10 years. Part of the fund built up during that same 10-year period would go toward assisting three international associations which fall under the direct supervision of the Superior General: Vincentian Marian Youth (JMV), Vincentian Lay Missionaries (MISEVI), and the Association of the Miraculous Medal (AMM). During the second ten years, the fund that would be built up was intended for “mega-projects” such as those which will be described below.

#### **5. Commission for Promoting Systemic Change**

In 2005, Fr. Gay, with the help of the Franz Foundation, established the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change. In recent years, the Commission has written a book entitled *Seeds of Hope: Stories of Systemic Change*, developed a toolkit for teaching about systemic change and offered systemic change workshops in Mexico, Brazil, Cameroon, Thailand, and the United States. In coming years, it plans to offer

workshops at three locations in Europe; it has also received numerous invitations from both inside and outside the Vincentian Family in Latin America, Asia and Africa. At a recent systemic change workshop, which took place in the USA, 113 members of the Vincentian Family, including the leaders of all its principal branches, took part actively. Besides presentations on the notion of systemic change, 12 projects in the USA with a systemic change focus were analyzed.

## 6. Three Award Programs

The Franz Foundation assisted the General Curia in setting up three award programs:

- a) The Mission Awards.** These awards, which were offered from 2006 until 2010, aimed at stimulating missionary creativity in the evangelization of the poor. In 2010, the Superior General and his council awarded a total of \$100,000 to projects in Brazil, Guatemala, Bolivia, Ethiopia, and Mozambique.
- b) The Systemic Change Awards.** As is evident from the name, the goal of these awards, which were granted from 2006 until 2010, was to promote systemic change projects. A sum of \$100,000 was given out by the General Curia every other year. In 2009, for example, the Superior General and his council distributed awards to projects in Honduras, Costa Rica, and Ireland.
- c) Start-up Grants.** The Franz Foundation also finances the distribution of start-up grants for systemic change projects within the broader Vincentian Family. These awards are granted by the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change. In 2011 they were given to new systemic change projects in Ecuador, Burundi and Mexico.

## 7. Wise Money Management for the Mission

This is one of the core values of the Franz Foundation. In 2010 the Foundation sponsored a three-week workshop, directed by Fr. John Gouldrick, for Provincial Treasurers in the Asia-Pacific region. Nine participants engaged actively in the workshop, which took place in Manila. The evaluations submitted by the participants were quite positive.

In August 2013, the Foundation will co-sponsor a symposium in Paris, along with DePaul University, on the same theme. The papers and discussions at the symposium will be published online, so that the key concepts and practices involved in wise money management for

the mission will be more widely available to the international Vincentian Family.

In conjunction with that symposium, Fr. Joseph Geders, the current Treasurer General, is preparing a workshop for Provincial Treasurers which will include a segment on economic solidarity and wise money management for the mission. He is also working at designing a longer program for training local, regional, and provincial treasurers by pairing them with experienced mentors.

Recently, the Superior General asked Fr. Joseph Agostino to facilitate a strategic planning process in Ethiopia, assisting the confreres there, as well as the Daughters of Charity, in both provincial planning and, with the help of Sr. Marge Clifford, D.C., the development of Advancement Strategies, including wise money management, grant-writing, and the development of income-generating projects for self-sufficiency.

Many provinces, of course, have taken significant steps in regard to wise money management on their own, creating revenue to support their mission through developing commercial enterprises, renting out properties they own, staffing income-producing schools, etc. Examples of these initiatives will be described in the third section of this article, under #6, but, as we trust is evident, such initiatives are too numerous to describe them fully here.

Often, professional advice about money management and property management is indispensable. One interesting example of the good use of expert advice occurred recently in the Eastern Province of the United States. The province's minor seminary closed in 1992. Since that time, though various programs continued there, the buildings and property were a very heavy financial liability for the province. In 2008, the province invited a company of professional property consultants, David Belt Incorporated (DBI), to assist it in finding ways to utilize the property better. Now, all the buildings of the former minor seminary are occupied by a consortium of four schools. The rest of the property will soon be used by a cemetery. Consequently, instead of being a significant liability, the property is a notable financial asset for the province.

## 8. Haiti

Conditions in Haiti, which were terrible before the earthquake of January 12, 2010, are now disastrous. The Franz Foundation is helping the Congregation and the wider Vincentian Family there in several ways.

*Zafèn* is a micro-finance website developed by DePaul University to assist the poor of Haiti, through online loans and donations, to begin small businesses that will enable them to become financially independ-

ent. It also appeals for donations for scholarships for Haitian children (a full-year scholarship costs only \$50!). The Franz Foundation has joined with various branches of the Vincentian Family in initiating a Seed Money Fund which helps sustain the website and which often matches funds contributed through the website for scholarships. More than 4800 scholarships have already been awarded. A recent project called CLM (Chemen Lavi Miyò or Pathway to a Better Life), which was put online on September 27, 2011, raised more than \$520,000. The Seed Money Fund, to which many other groups are now contributing, is helping finance the salary of a Vincentian Family Project Developer in Haiti and a Zafèn Administrator in the USA.

We conclude this section of the article with three observations.

**First**, while above we have described at length the General Curia's involvement in promoting economic solidarity, we trust that it is evident, from some of the examples we have given, that the Curia's plan is not the only instance of economic solidarity in the worldwide Congregation. Much collaboration is also taking place among the provinces themselves. For years, for example, the Province of Toulouse has been helping other provinces with their financial needs. Numerous provinces directly assist missions to which they have given birth. Others help with CIF. There are multiple examples on all the continents.

**Second**, in the case of initiatives launched by the General Curia, many provinces quickly joined in and have contributed generously; e.g., to IMF: 2000-2004, to the Vincentian Solidarity Fund, and to the Patrimony Funds.

**Third**, in regard to Patrimony Funds, it is important to note that, in the Vincentian tradition, neither the donor provinces nor the receiving provinces "own" what our Constitutions call "the patrimony of the poor"<sup>30</sup>, and which the Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity speak of as the "patrimony of the most deprived"<sup>31</sup>; rather, we are called to be responsible stewards of this patrimony<sup>32</sup>.

---

<sup>30</sup> C 148, § 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity*, 30a.

<sup>32</sup> In this regard, it is interesting to note that, in St. Vincent's extant writings, the word "patrimony" appears only three times. Twice he was speaking about the patrimony that confreres received from their families, so the context in those instances was quite different from our present theme. On the third occasion, speaking specifically about the material goods of the Congregation, the phrase actually used by St. Vincent was: "We live from the patrimony of Jesus Christ, from the sweat of the poor" (SV XI, 201). In this context, Vincent evokes

### III. SOME POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

To foster a “relative, not absolute, economic equality” among the provinces – if we might return to the terminology employed by Fr. Franz at CIF – is an ongoing challenge for the Congregation. Toward that end, we offer the following suggestions. This list is by no means exhaustive. It is only a modest attempt, which we hope will encourage others to offer further suggestions. Once again, our focus here is on the Congregation of the Mission. One might suggest many other things in regard to the universal Church.

#### 1. Consciousness-raising

Participants at CIF have felt that many confreres, and even many Visitors, are not aware of all that the Superior General and his Council, the Provinces, and the Franz Foundation are already doing to promote economic solidarity. They suggested that presentations on this theme would be helpful in raising consciousness about it. A presentation might address, for example:

- a) The importance of solidarity among ourselves and with the poor today (using the documents of the Church<sup>33</sup>, our own Constitutions, etc.)

---

the image of a missionary who is returning home and going to the refectory. He states that, as a missionary, he ought to ask himself whether he has earned the food he is about to eat, which comes from the work of the poor. «Nous vivons du *patrimoine de Jésus-Christ*, de la sueur des pauvres gens. Nous devrions toujours penser quand nous allons au réfectoire: “Ai-je gagné la nourriture que je vais prendre?”. J’ai souvent cette pensée, qui me fait entrer en confusion: “Misérable, as-tu gagné le pain que tu vas manger ce pain qui te vient du travail des pauvres?”. Au moins, si nous ne le gagnons pas comme eux, prions pour leurs besoins». The phrase of the 1984 Constitutions, “patrimony of the poor”, is found in Abelly. Describing Vincent’s role on the Council of Conscience, he speaks of the saint’s concern about equity “in the distribution of ecclesiastical goods, which the holy Fathers call the patrimony of the poor and the price of redemption from sin”. Cf. ABELLY, II, 447: «Ainsi, ce fidèle conseiller avait, d’un côté, les yeux ouverts pour prendre garde qu’on n’usât d’aucune surprise dans les affaires bénéficiales, au préjudice du service de Dieu et de l’honneur de l’Église; et de l’autre, il tenait en main la balance pour garder, autant qu’il dépendait de lui, une juste équité en la distribution de ces biens ecclésiastiques, que les saints Pères appellent le *patrimoine des pauvres* et le prix du rachat des péchés».

<sup>33</sup> In this regard, many cite *Populorum Progressio* (65): “That is the goal toward which we must work. An ever more effective world-solidarity should

- b) The different types of solidarity mentioned above: solidarity in mission, personnel, common life, spirituality and prayer, as well as in regard to economic resources
- c) The many things that the Congregation has done in recent years to promote economic solidarity (as above)
- d) Further steps that might be taken toward economic solidarity in the future

Perhaps this theme could be highlighted at meetings such as these:

- Provincial Assemblies
- the periodic meetings to orient new Visitors
- the meeting of all the Visitors between General Assemblies
- the next General Assembly
- the periodic meetings of Provincial Treasurers
- CIF
- the Money Management for Mission Program.

## 2. Building up the Patrimony Funds

These funds are a very concrete way in which the resources of the Congregation are being shared. Not only do they involve *economic* solidarity, they also stimulate *collaboration* among the provinces in training confreres in developing provinces so that they might eventually manage the new resources of the province autonomously. Building up the patrimony funds until they reach maturity is an ongoing challenge.

As mentioned above, it is not just the General Curia that has contributed to such funds. Many provinces have been helping too, but there is still more to be done. From time to time each province might ask itself: is there a poorer province or mission on which we might focus? Could we tithe our earnings for the benefit of our developing provinces and the poor they serve?

## 3. Clarifying the Conditions for the Use of the Patrimony Funds

The patrimony funds are now numerous. They came into existence at different times, and often quite independently of one another. So it might now be useful, in the light of the experience of the last ten years, to examine all the contracts that have been drawn up between donor

---

allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny". *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (9, 47) and *Octogesima Adveniens* (5, 18, and 41) continue this theme.

provinces (or the General Curia) and receiving provinces and to determine what contractual conditions will best guarantee the stability of the funds for the future.

Unfortunately, not all receiving provinces have used their patrimony funds well, nor have all carefully observed the conditions laid down for their use. As a result, the patrimony destined for some developing provinces has suffered damage.

#### **4. The Use of Micro-Credit as Illustrated in Efforts to Assist Haiti**

Economic solidarity can take place not only by assisting a poorer province in its inner life (e.g., by helping to finance its formation program or the care of its elderly confreres); it can also take place on the level of that province's works. In fact, often those works serve the poorest of the world's poor.

The Vincentian Family's use of micro-credit to help those in Haiti who are living in poverty is a relevant example. The website *Zafèn* assists Haitians to begin small business enterprises and it also raises money for scholarships for Haitian children. The initiative for the website came from the international leaders of the Vincentian Family and DePaul University. They then entered into partnership with Fonkoze, the largest micro-credit agency in Haiti, and with the Haitian Hometown Associations Resource Group. Through this joint venture, hundreds of jobs are being created in Haiti, numerous small business enterprises are being opened, and thousands of Haitian children are receiving the opportunity to go to school.

Could micro-credit be used to assist the poor in other provinces? Could provinces which have experience in this regard assist those that do not?

#### **5. Mega-Projects**

Some large projects in the service of the poor involve, but at the same time transcend, the Congregation of the Mission. Today, in such projects, we often collaborate with the various branches of the Vincentian Family and with other groups outside the Family. One of the goals of the patrimony fund for the General Curia which Fr. Greg has initiated is precisely to help fund such projects.

Much could be written on this subject. Here, a couple of examples will suffice.

- a) At present, as a very interesting spin-off of *Zafèn*, a consortium of 36 schools is being organized in Haiti. These schools are sponsored by the Daughters of Charity, the Congregation of the Mis-

sion, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and FATEM, an NGO with whom the Vincentian Family collaborates on the central plateau of the country. Recently, we have entered into negotiations with a foundation called Mary's Meals to provide a hot meal each day at those schools, probably the only hot meal that most of the students will eat that day. Through Zafèn we hope to provide scholarships for many students at those schools who otherwise might not be able to attend and also raise the level of their education through teacher-training programs. It is a huge project, involving thousands of students. If successful, it will have a profound effect on the lives of the young children who attend those schools. Organizing and financing the project will demand economic (and other types of) solidarity, not just within the Congregation of the Mission, but also within and beyond the Vincentian Family.

- b) DREAM (Drug Resource Enhancement against AIDS and Malnutrition) is a project of the Community of Sant'Egidio and the Daughters of Charity. Since the two communities entered into a contractual relationship in June 2005, DREAM has spread to a new country almost every year. The Daughters and the Community of Sant'Egidio now collaborate in Mozambique, Nigeria, Kenya, Cameroon, the Congo, and Tanzania, with other countries on the horizon. In Mozambique alone, the DREAM centers serve more than 8,600 patients. The project has grown exponentially. Provinces of the Daughters of Charity have joined in offering economic and personnel assistance. In a lesser way, the Congregation of the Mission assists, as does the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

These are the types of projects that Fr. Greg is envisioning when he speaks of a patrimony fund for mega-projects.

## **6. Efforts to Help Provinces to Become Self-Sustaining**

Of course, the ideal is that all provinces become self-sustaining. An ongoing exchange of information between provinces which are self-sustaining and those which are not could be very helpful, since it might generate ideas about how poorer provinces might develop assets.

It is interesting to ask the question: how did provinces that are self-sustaining get to be that way? A whole article could be written on this subject. Here, a few examples and some schematic thoughts will have to suffice.

Some provinces have developed significant income-producing works whose revenues are used for the province as a whole; e.g., universities in the United States and the Philippines, high schools in India, some

parishes in numerous provinces. Some provinces have had works which raised money for specific purposes; e.g., initially two associations in the United States – the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal in Philadelphia and the Miraculous Medal Association in Perryville – raised money especially for the support of seminarians; then they expanded their purposes gradually.

Some provinces, at an early stage in their history, acquired land or buildings. The development, renting or sale of those real estate assets at a later date became a source of significant income. In Spain, Italy, Lebanon, and Greece – just to give a few examples – the Congregation still possesses very significant properties.

At times, wise Visitors and Treasurers have known the opportune moment to convert such assets into other stable investments. In the western world especially, investment portfolios have often come to play the same role as property does in other parts of the world.

In recent years, many provinces have taken very creative initiatives in launching business enterprises. The Province of Madrid has a factory that produces olive oil, as well as a parking garage which provides significant income. The Province of Paris is in the process of building a similar garage. The Province of Rome and the Province of Paris earn income by renting out rooms in their large provincial houses.

The Provinces of Slovakia and Poland, which emerged from behind the Iron Curtain only two decades ago, quickly took wise steps toward economic independence. In the design for its new Provincial House and its seminary, Slovakia allotted space for stores to be rented out on the ground floor. Poland began a similar venture (renting to McDonald's!), and built a power plant in Piekary, just outside Krakow, to help support the impressive work named "Good News 2000". Other provinces have similar income-producing sources.

In Africa and Asia, developing provinces are evolving plans for raising crops and animals not just as food for the members of the Congregation, but as sources of revenue for the future.

At a recent meeting, Brother Peter Campbell suggested that start-up grants, like those awarded by the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change, might be used to stimulate similar creative ventures that are geared toward making provinces self-sustaining.

## **7. Wise Money Management for the Mission**

The keys here are wisdom and mission. To use a phrase from our daily prayer, wisdom is *recta sapere* (which the English translator has rendered rather aptly as "a sense of the true and a taste for the good"). In financial matters, this involves the careful conservation of the province's patrimony for the sake of the mission, but at times it also involves

some prudent risk-taking. Not all will always agree with a wise money manager's choices. In 1867, when the Secretary of State of the United States, William Seward, purchased Alaska for 7.2 million dollars, newspapers and political opponents scoffed at the deal as "Seward's Folly". Today, seeing Alaska's natural beauty, its fisheries, and its petroleum resources, all recognize that it was one of the best buys in history.

Within the Congregation, a golf course bought at a cheap price during the depression of the 1930's is now St. John's University in New York. Members of many provinces can think of similar bargain purchases that are now worth ten or even a hundred times the original price paid. Many can also, unfortunately, think of properties which their province sold cheap and which would now be worth a fortune!

One of the principal interests of the Franz Foundation is wise "Money Management for the Mission". Toward that end, it helped finance the workshop in the Philippines described above. It will soon, in collaboration with DePaul University, organize a symposium in Paris on the same topic. It has addressed the theme in CIF sessions too.

Could each province have at least one or two confreres trained in wise money management for the sake of the mission?

## **8. Promoting a Fully-Functioning Development Office**

Above, the origin and purpose of the Vincentian Solidarity Office was recounted. In recent years, the Superior General, Fr. Greg, has expanded the personnel in that office with a view toward making it a development office for the worldwide Congregation.

Seeing that the needs of the poor are enormous and that the resources of the Congregation are limited, he is eager to tap not just remaining sources of funds within the Congregation of the Mission, but also sources outside it, including individuals, foundations, NGOs and governments.

Such an office could prove a significant factor in raising funds for poorer provinces and for mega-projects. The Western Province of the United States began a development office six years ago, which now raises 1 to 1.2 million dollars annually for the needs of the province, including annuities and bequests.

## **9. International Investment Committee**

In light of the creation of numerous patrimony funds, which now have significant value, an international Investment Committee is now being formed. There are, of course, numerous lay investment advisors who already assist the Congregation. But it is crucial that we not

renounce our own responsibility in that regard. The Congregation itself is ultimately responsible for the use of its assets, including its financial ones, in the service of the poor. A small investment committee, with confreres from various parts of the world, will be able to offer wise counsel to the international Congregation about its resources.

## 10. Preserving and Sharing the Patrimony

When someone lives a hand to mouth existence, it is hard to think about the future. But it is a mistake not to. Wise parents, even among the poorest of the poor, labor strenuously to put aside something for their children's education, hoping that they can break out of the circle of poverty.

St. Vincent and St. Louise, while living very simply, saw no contradiction between trusting in Divine Providence and in being provident themselves. They laid solid economic foundations for all the houses and works they founded<sup>34</sup>.

The lure to invade one's patrimony is perennial. Immediate needs usually capture our attention much more forcefully than long-range ones. At times, families mortgage their homes and bite into their retirement "nest egg" for reasons that are less than grave.

So, too, it is imperative that provinces keep their patrimony intact, manage it wisely, and increase it appropriately. If, as sometimes occurs, the patrimony becomes larger than the reasonable future needs of the province demand, our Constitutions then call provinces to share their patrimony with other provinces. As mentioned above, there have been numerous examples of this within the Congregation. The temptation is to spend surplus assets on ourselves. One hopes that, within the Congregation, we can avoid that temptation.

Years ago, in graduate school, a famous patrologist, Johannes Quasten, was offering a course that many of us took because he was so well-known. We were rather awestruck one day when he offered, quite humbly, to help us do research for a project that we were working on. He referred us to a foundational work on the economic-ethical teaching of the Fathers of the Church<sup>35</sup>. It had a great impact on us. Today we would describe its contents as the early social teaching of the Church. One of the key themes was the "common ownership" or the "universal

---

<sup>34</sup> Cf. JOHN RYBOLT, "St. Vincent de Paul and Money", *Vincentian Heritage* 26, 1 (2005), 81-103. Also, JOSÉ-MARÍA ROMÁN, "Foundations of St. Vincent", *Vincentiana* 18 (1984), 457-486.

<sup>35</sup> IGNAZ SEIPEL, *Die wirtschaftsethischen Lehren der Kirchenväter* (Vienna 1907).

destination” of material goods<sup>36</sup>; that is, the conviction of the Fathers of the Church that the goods of the earth are made first of all *for all* and that private property is only a secondary, even if privileged, means for distributing those goods. A second theme was that the goods of the Church are also the goods of the poor.

Both these themes are extremely relevant today, not just in the global human community and the worldwide Church, but in the Congregation of the Mission. They are the foundation stones of economic solidarity.

---

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

# Union and Collaboration in Saint Vincent: Insights for Today

Eli Chaves dos Santos, C.M.

During the 2011 International Assembly of the AIC, I heard an idea in a discussion that has helped me very much. I also believe that this idea can help all of us understand the experience of collaboration that was developed by Saint Vincent... an experience that ought to exist among us today. The presenter stated: *When we speak about actions to combat poverty, we identify the needs of the person and we look for a response. In my opinion I believe we have to revise the meaning of the word "need" and we have to begin to tell people, "I need you"... I need you so that together we can build something. This is the best way to help people get back on their feet. A short story best illustrates this point. Father Pierre said that his first companion was a person who wanted to commit suicide. Father Pierre told this man: do whatever you want, but I need you to help me build a house... this man became Father Pierre's first disciple*<sup>1</sup>.

"I need you!". I need your collaboration in order for us to accomplish some work together. This was how Vincent experienced his relationship with God and his relationship with other people, especially those persons who were poor. This led Vincent to change his life and as a result Vincent, together with other persons, collaborated with God as he engaged in a mission of charity on behalf of those persons who were poor. In the same way we are invited to have this same experience of needing the poor and needing one another in order to continue the Vincentian mission.

## I.

### VINCENT'S EXPERIENCE: "I NEED YOU!"

A poor man who did not want to be poor. There was a time when Vincent searched for a lofty position in society. He was concerned about his own financial position and his own needs. During this time

---

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Elena Lascida's presentation, *Education as a means to eradicate poverty*, given on April 2, 2011 during the International Assembly of the AIC – [www.aic-internacional.org](http://www.aic-internacional.org)

he experienced failures and deceptions. Yet as he opened himself to collaboration with others, his life was transformed and became productive. Let us look at some examples.

### **1. Vincent and his relationship with the poor: "I need you!"**

The poor were the path that led Vincent to an encounter with his true self and with God. As chaplain to Queen Marguerite, he came in contact with people who were hungry and this helped him to understand the reality in which he lived and consequently, Vincent became concerned about the social inequality that existed in France. In Clichy, his experience with the poor helped him discover true religion. In Folleville and Châtillon the poor who were pastorally abandoned and physically hungry made it possible for Vincent to discover the profound call of the gospel and the meaning of his priestly ministry. He was aware of and listened to the internal and external cries of the poor. He allowed the reality of the poor to touch his heart. He learned the painful reality of the peasants, the galley slaves, orphans, the sick poor, the hungry... all of whom were marginalized and Vincent saw this as a great disrespect of the human dignity of the children of God. The reality, especially the reality of those most poor and abandoned, reveals the transformative power of Vincent's person and the depth of his commitment.

In the school of the poor Vincent no longer understood the Christian faith as an affirmation of abstract truths... now in the midst of concrete situations Vincent discerned God's call, a call that was very real in the cries of those persons who were suffering, abandoned and excluded. He understood that the poor were victims of a social, political and economic system that inflicted them with hunger, disease and war. Opposed to those who saw the poor as insignificant, as individuals who had to be cast aside so that order could be maintained and the cities could be "cleaned", Vincent saw the poor as the image of the crucified Christ and saw in them the dignity of the crucified Son of God. The poor became Vincent's teachers and they showed him that faith involved commitment... commitment to a mission, commitment to charity, commitment to collaboration. The best example of collaboration with the poor is found in the Daughters of Charity, poor peasant women, who were gathered together and formed on behalf of the service of charity.

The cries of the poor that arose from the midst of seventeenth century France, cries that were heard by Vincent and that led him to clothe himself in an active attitude of human and Christian compassion... cries that led Vincent to engage in effective and affective action on behalf of the poor... these cries ultimately inspired Vincent to become

involved in an intense missionary and charitable activity. With the poor, for the poor, and by the poor, Vincent opened himself generously and creatively to the multiple calls that arouse from the reality in which he found himself and no form of human misery made him indifferent.

## **2. Vincent and collaboration with the laity: “I need you!”**

In Châtillon, after being made aware of a family that had been abandoned and that was hungry, Vincent called upon the parishioners to help that family. With the collaboration of the laity, especially women, Vincent began the Confraternities of Charity. After his missionary experience in Folleville and upon his return to the de Gondi estate, Vincent, with the valuable assistance of Madame de Gondi, was able to initiate the work of popular missions and to establish the Congregation of the Mission. In light of the need for more service on behalf of the poor and the limitations of the Ladies of Charity, Vincent welcomed the collaboration of Louise de Marillac and the humble peasant woman, Marguerite Naseau, and this collaboration gave birth the Vincent's most innovative initiative, the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

These three events illustrate the great importance of the laity, especially women, in Vincentian ministry. There is a long list of lay persons who were involved in the life and the ministry of Vincent. This collaboration led him to a deeper understanding of the role and the importance of the laity in the Church's mission. The laity have a divine vocation to participate in Christ's mission and therefore they should not be passive but active ministers in the life and the work of the Church... active in word and deed. Within the framework of lay ministry Vincent established a fundamental relationship with lay persons in order to strengthen his missionary and charitable ministry. We can observe in the cities and the rural areas a notable presence of women in the Vincentian ministry of service to the poor. Women, who had previously been marginalized socially and ecclesiastically, whose domestic values and qualities were recognized and promoted, now played a decisive role in the organization of charitable and evangelizing activities.

## **3. Vincent and his companions on the mission: “I need you!”**

After Vincent preached the first sermon of the mission in Folleville, he had recourse to the Jesuits in Amiens to help him hear confessions. Because of the numerous needs that occurred during the missions

Vincent sought collaborators from among members of the clergy who were known to him. He noticed that he was able to do little and therefore in 1625 Vincent joined together with some other priests in order to preach popular missions... thus began the Congregation of the Mission.

Vincent's awareness of the pastoral needs of the poor was the point of departure for the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission. The Congregation was not the result of some preconceived idea but rather was a response to the missionary needs that Vincent discovered in light of his faith. The Congregation emerged as a collaborative project among priests who dedicated themselves to a specific mission. The cries that arose from the midst of the people led the priests to become strengthened and to collaborate among themselves. Vincent knew how to interpret these cries and was able to organize people in such a manner that they participated in a common missionary project, in an effort of mutual cooperation and as friends who desired to do good.

Vincent's attitude of openness to collaboration with others is again revealed in the configuration of the Congregation of the Mission. After many years of experience, the Congregation was organized and received a definitive juridical, community and missionary structure (in 1658, thirty-three years after its establishment, the members received the Common Rules). The Congregation first passed through a structural process which brought together elements that were learned from their missionary experience, from the collaboration among its members as well as its collaboration with many other individuals. The result of this collaboration, under the inspiration and coordination of Vincent de Paul, made it possible for the members of the Congregation to adopt a lifestyle with practices and structures and a spirituality that was unique to themselves.

Once again the Congregation became an instrument for collaboration in ministry. Vincent described the Company as a group of *poor missionaries who live simply and have only one objective, namely, to serve the poor people of the countryside*. It was thanks to these missionaries, in collaboration with many other persons, that the evangelization of the poor was extended throughout France and to other countries... and it was also thanks to these missionaries, in collaboration with many other persons, that the reform of the clergy became a reality and that various significant initiatives were begun that led to the revitalization of the French Church during the seventeenth century.

#### **4. Vincent and his relationship with Louise de Marillac: “I need you!”**

In 1625 Louise's former spiritual director, Jean Pierre de Camus, presented her to Vincent de Paul. In the process of spiritual accompaniment there developed a deep friendship, a relationship of spiritual exchange and service on behalf of the poor.

Louise was a thirty-five year old widow who had endured personal suffering and who was anxious about many things. Beginning in 1629 Vincent involved her in his charitable ministry. He proposed that she visit the Confraternities of Charity and in this way encourage the members of these groups and help to organize their service activity. As a result of these visits Louise experienced God's love that was revealed in Christ, the evangelizer and servant of the poor. Through her love for the poor Louise was freed from her anxiety and doubts. Her horizons were broadened. More important than the thirty-three acts of adoration that she made every day to honor the thirty-three years of Jesus' life, Louise realized that God is love and that people had to approach God through love. With the sure guidance of Vincent, Louise simplified her piety and devotions and became involved in the ministry of charity.

As Louise served the poor with faith she opened herself to discover other realities that were revealed to her by God in the person of those men and women who were poor. In this Louise showed herself to be a strong, virtuous and gifted leader and organizer, a creative and bold woman who developed a meaningful relationship with Vincent, a relationship that was characterized by charitable service as together they confronted many different forms of poverty. Through the grace of God and the guidance of her spiritual director, Louise discovered her true vocation and became the first Daughter of Charity and the co-founder of a new community, a community that was innovative and original and that would play a most significant role in expanding the Vincentian ministry of service to the poor.

In close collaboration and in a spirit of communion with M. Vincent and all the other collaborators, Louise was decisive in the formation and animation of a large Vincentian network of charity. With her feminine sensitivity and human qualities, she believed in the power and the potential of the young peasant women and assisted in bringing them together and forming them for the mission of charity. The collaboration established between Vincent and Louise went beyond a simple functional relationship. It was a true exchange of gifts, a reciprocity that was cultivated by the mystique of charity, a productive friendship of mutual assistance that aided their human and spiritual growth.

## 5. Vincent and the many ecclesiastical and political collaborators: “I need you!”

Vincent’s life involved a large network of relationships and collaborators. Vincent’s activity was not the result of personal and willful intellectual analysis. Rather it was the fruit of an attentive reading of the signs of the times, the result of a difficult process of discernment that was done in community, in collaboration and with the help of many people.

- a) *Vincent’s personal reality*: Vincent was an impulsive man, inclined to melancholy and he had to work in order to overcome these tendencies... he experienced a crisis in faith and had to learn and search for practices and methods in order to become a good missionary. He grew personally and spiritually; he knew how to ask for help and was not afraid to be dependent on others. In his initial formation he relied on M. De Comet. During the difficult years of crisis and personal searching (1608-1612) he had the support and guidance of Pierre de Bérulle who helped him to overcome his crisis of faith and to advance in human and spiritual maturity. As Vincent developed his spiritual conviction he sought out spiritual masters and established solid friendships with individuals who supported and encouraged his growth in faith and who helped him reformulate his mental concepts and his daily practices. For example, Vincent established the theological foundations for his life and ministry upon the theology of the Council of Trent and the teaching of Saint Ignatius; in Benedict of Canfield Vincent discovered the importance of seeking the will of God and living his life in conformity with God’s will; in Bérulle he found the assistance to reorient his priestly life in the direction of pastoral service and to focus his life of faith around the Incarnate Word; in Francis de Sales he accepted the idea of love expressed in works and the importance of the virtues of meekness and goodness; he also received much assistance through the wise and sure counsel of his second spiritual director, M. Duval.
- b) *Vincent’s relationships with ecclesiastical authorities*, especially with bishops, were intense and these relationships led him to undertake different ministries: he initiated the ministry of reforming the clergy after a process of discernment with the bishop of Beauvais. Vincent developed his initiatives within the framework of ecclesial collaboration which involved three aspects: first, Vincent always acted in harmony with the guidelines and the thinking of the Church, following faithfully the guidelines of the Council of Trent and the specific directives of the bishops. Second, Vincent, in a spirit of communion and obedience to the

Church, sought the support and the approval of the Pope and the bishops for his initiatives and establishments. Vincent, as a humble and obedient servant, was always willing to listen to the Pope and the bishops and on a personal and community level was willing to accept their decisions. At the same time, he knew how to augment and find support in order to overcome obstacles and thus obtain the approval of the Pope and bishops for his initiatives and establishments (for example, the approval of the Congregation with its specific autonomy with regard to the bishops). Finally, Vincent placed his initiatives and establishments at the service of the Church, willing to respond to the Church's pastoral needs, mindful of the bishop's demands, and seeking to collaborate with other ecclesial associations (the Company of the Most Blessed Sacrament) in charitable works.

- c) Vincent developed broad and complex collaborative relationships **with political and public authorities**. He maintained good relationships with distinguished individuals, wealthy families and prestigious figures in the area of French politics and economics. He was able to rely on the collaboration of public officials and numerous persons from the upper class who helped him consolidate his missionary and charitable activity. For example, during the Thirty Years War and the two Fronde Wars, Vincent organized the collection, storage and distribution of assistance that arrived from every region of France. Appointed by Queen Anne of Austria to the Council of Conscience, a type of Ministry of Worship. Vincent was involved in several tasks dealing with ecclesial matters, for example, the appointment of bishops. Vincent intervened in political matters (unsuccessfully), for example, in 1638 he pleaded with Richelieu for peace in Lorraine which had been devastated by the army; he presented Richelieu with a proposal that would have given the Cardinal 3,000 livres in order to finance a military operation in Ireland that would defend the Catholics who were being oppressed by the invading English troops; on two occasions during the Fronde, once personally and again through a letter, Vincent asked the prime minister, Mazarin, to resign in order to put an end to the people's suffering and establish peace.

A man of his era, Vincent accepted the feudal social structure, the absolute power of the king, and the alliance between political and religious powers... Vincent acted within the existing social-political structure although he expressed a certain unease with the difference between his criteria and the criteria of certain politicians. He felt that religious matters should not be mixed with political matters. It is true that Vincent sought the collaboration of political powers but he himself

was not properly speaking a political man nor did he act from political motives or personal self-interest. His primary concern was the public good and the welfare of the poor and this explains his direct and indirect interventions in politics.

## II.

### ENLIGHTENMENT FOR OUR COLLABORATION TODAY AS A VINCENTIAN FAMILY

*“We need one another!”*

The work that was undertaken by Vincent was not strictly speaking a personal work. It was a community and participative work, a work that was done by a team, by a network of collaborators (as we would say today). Vincent brought together rich and poor, members of the clergy and laity, men and women. He mobilized and formed people of good will; he was able to rely on the important collaboration of other persons in order to establish his institutions (the Confraternities of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, the Company of the Daughters of Charity); and he involved public officials and saw that collaboration was the key for success in serving the poor.

Today Vincent’s experience serves as an invitation that is extended to the members of the various groups of the Vincentian Family... an invitation to collaborate. In Vincent’s experience we are able to find some insights and guidelines for our collaboration today.

#### **1. Collaboration begins with the cries of the poor and must involve the poor in the process of collaboration**

All the participative and community action that Vincent directed was structured and developed around the poor. As Vincent read, with the eyes of faith, the reality that surrounded him, he developed a true collaboration that was undertaken as an option of solidarity on behalf of the poor. Vincent lived with the poor, shared their conditions, entered into their sentiments and learned from them. He acted with the poor beside him and embraced their cause, defended their interests, awakened in them a sense of collaboration and served them with love, humility, simplicity, self-sacrifice, meekness and sensitivity. He oriented all his activities, efforts, attitudes and material and human resources toward an effective service of the poor.

Today our collaboration should be based on the cries of the poor and should be developed as an effective service that transforms the reality of poverty. This means that we are willing to search together

and organize ourselves so that we can respond to the cries of poor with a methodology of reciprocity that invites the participation of those persons who are poor and develops their potentials. In this way our methodology becomes a part of the life and the culture of the poor and creates a dialogue between the culture and the faith of the poor and the culture and the faith of those who serve the poor. True collaboration on behalf of the poor cannot be a place of experimentation and improvisation for the business matters or financial interests of some group or some persons.

## **2. Collaboration on behalf of the poor begins with the gospel mystique of faith, hope and justice**

Vincent loved and served the poor within the framework of the mystique of evangelical charity: *Charity is above all Rules, and everything comes down to that. If it is a woman of rank, you have to do what she tells you* (CCD X, 478). *There is no act of charity that is not accompanied by justice* (CCD II, 68). *Charity is inventive unto infinity*. In the gospels Jesus developed an immediate relationship with the poor: what is done to the poor is done to Christ. The poor are a living expression of the Lord's presence among us and not simply intermediaries. In this sense the poor are the sacrament of Jesus: a revelation and a communication of his mystery. The cries of the poor, interpreted in the light of faith, led Vincent to discover and follow Jesus Christ, evangelizer and servant of the poor. The covenant of love became the most significant aspect of Vincent's life and he saw an intimate relationship between love of Christ and love of neighbor: *in serving persons who are poor we serve Jesus Christ* (CCD IX, 199).

This evangelical mystique that Vincent experienced grounds and motivates every form of Vincentian collaboration. *Charity is an elevated form of love that is beyond the senses and reason*. Charity is a gift of the Spirit and the measuring rod of our action; it is the principle of discernment and the guide for our action and our life of faith; it is the transforming power of life and society that sheds new light upon social and personal relationships and requires new attitudes: respect for human dignity, justice, friendship, solidarity. Charity arises from faith, is intimately related to justice and gives authentic, liberating and divine meaning to life and Vincentian ministry. Charity allows people to experience the depth and the fullness of true social love.

In those individuals committed to pastoral ministry charity presents the possibility of creating new values, experiences, attitudes and practices that go beyond "the doing of things", beyond the search for objective and material results that have been established by some individual who works in the social environment. As a result of the establishment

of new human relationships based on gratitude and communion and the development of an authentic sense of life, charity presents the possibility of building a new life and becoming involved in committed action on behalf of a society whose members are bound more closely together and live in solidarity with one another. Without charity, collaboration on behalf of the poor can, with the aid of sophisticated and advanced means and modern resources, be successful and produce results, but it will be void of warmth and affect, void of a vision of hope and will be unable to promote the true integral human development of those persons who are most poor and vulnerable.

### **3. Collaboration with a profound ecclesial sense**

The collaboration that was developed by Vincent was not an isolated activity but was part of the church's life and ministry. The ecclesial community is the mystical body of Christ, the evangelizing and missionary community that is commanded to act with mercy toward the poor. With this understanding Vincent stressed the importance of unity and communion within the community and the whole church. Recognizing the diversity of functions as individuals engaged in merciful service on behalf of the poor, the suffering members of the Church, Vincent also stressed the importance of collaboration and the co-responsibility of everyone in order to achieve the greater well-being of the body.

Vincentian collaboration has to be a lively expression of mission and charity on behalf of the poor and this collaboration has to be expressed within the Church, with the Church and for the good of the Church. Our Vincentian identity is rooted in and built upon our missionary and charitable commitment to the poor. This commitment defines our specific place within the church and gives a specific form to our collaboration with the church. Vincentian collaboration (in union with the Pope and bishops, in communion with other ecclesial groups and inserted into the pastoral reality of the local church) ought to strengthen our prophetic and missionary witness on behalf of those who are poor. We must distance ourselves from isolated and parallel action and we must resist the temptation to put aside our spirituality and to desire to be involved in successful, prestigious social and ecclesial activity to the detriment of becoming involved in committed and liberating activities with the poor.

#### **4. Collaboration that empowers the poor and those who collaborate with the poor**

Vincent was a master of empowerment<sup>2</sup>. He developed processes that helped people take control of their life and that helped the poor and women and parents discover their dignity and their strength which in turn enabled them to seek a better life, a life that was more dignified and just. Cooperation in ministry with the poor consists of helping them discover the power to develop themselves and free themselves from every form of slavery, vulnerability and poverty. In reality, the poor have a power and a faith that enables them to evangelize and initiate a process of renewal and liberation. Missionary and charitable collaboration ought to be action that arise from faith and helps people to discover and live with a new interior awareness. Thus our missionary and charitable collaboration should also help people transform themselves and the reality in which they live. It is necessary to recognize the richness and giftedness that each person and association offers. To minister in order to initiate a process of empowerment is an important and urgent task because it provides individuals with strength and power for personal and social growth as well as enabling people to engage in a process of liberation. In this process of Vincentian empowerment it becomes important to accept and mobilize the poor so that they themselves engage in service. It is equally important to value and promote the missionary potential of the laity, especially women. Finally, we must make every effort to form collaborators and provide them with technical, human and spiritual skills so that they can become true servants.

#### **5. Collaboration that is creative, real and diverse and that leads to a process of good decision making within the church and society**

Using the means and concepts of his era, Vincent engaged in service of the poor that was understood as a defense and a promotion of the dignity of the children of God. Vincent acted in a charitable manner as he interacted with distinct levels of society where he combated poverty with the participation of different individuals and organization.

Vincent's experience of strengthening the social sectors of society to act on behalf of the poor is an element of Vincentian collaboration that

---

<sup>2</sup> I use here the word "empowerment" which consists of a process in which we recognize that there exists in others a power to develop themselves so that they become the author of personal and social change.

should be explored. Charity, which is intimately bound up with justice, indicates that activities that involve providing social assistance or social promotion ought to begin with a respect for the legitimate rights of the person and therefore the poor are not the object of some favor or charitable act but are the subject of rights. This service of charity asks a social-political question that demands a response and also demands our defense of people's legitimate human rights. Our service of charity also demands our condemnation of those actions that directly or indirectly deprive people of these rights, for example, the accumulation of wealth by a minority of individuals that ultimately creates poverty for the majority of people.

Vincentian action ought to seek greater strength through the collaboration of distinct social actors (the poor, politicians, social organization, popular movements, etc.). In this way everyone, in accord with their possibilities and qualities, joins together in a common project on behalf of a more just and human society, on behalf of a society whose members live together with strong bonds of solidarity. Certainly, as we see from Vincent's experience, collaboration demands much learning and discernment... it demands that we confront and overcome many possible conflicts. The Vincentian contribution to this effort of collaboration must be guided by the gospel criteria of social justice and the social doctrine of the Church. We must always act with a critical sense and we must interact within the reality of the different vibrant social forces that are present in our society. We must also always act on behalf of the interests of those who poor. As we act we must not allow ourselves to be manipulated nor should we become involved in a search for or the defense of unjust, partisan interests that are opposed to the cause of justice and solidarity.

## **6. Collaboration in the humble reciprocity and exchange of gifts**

Looking at Vincent, not as an isolated figure, but as one who was surrounded by numerous collaborators, we discover a person who was able to bring other people together, who needed others and who opened himself to mutual help. It was no accident that Vincent emphasized humility as the fundamental virtue to guide his life and activity. Humility, the virtue of Jesus Christ, implies that we affirm the reality that every good gift comes from God. This includes the recognition of our limitations which should lead us to total confidence in God.

Humility supposes a constant emptying of self that enables one to put aside every form of arrogance, self-sufficiency and self-centeredness. Humility makes us dependent on God and interdependent with our brothers and sisters. No one is sufficient unto themselves; no branch of the Vincentian Family can consider itself as self-sufficient

and in no need of assistance from some other branch of the family. Collaboration leads us to view the poor and other collaborators as persons who have qualities and abilities that can be developed and that can help us grow in charity. A new attitude of reciprocity, interdependence and openness to collaboration with others requires relationships that are free from every form of discrimination and the desire for power. In the humble exchange of gifts, we create the possibility for growth in charity and the establishment of a true alliance on behalf of the Vincentian mission.

Vincent said: *We are to run to the spiritual needs of our neighbor as if we were running to a fire* (XI, 25). With words and attitudes and effective action, Vincent clothed himself in the reality of the poor and to the degree that he was able to, he engaged in activity to relieve their suffering. He did all of this by trying to unite and organize people of good will and as a result his activity was organized, united, and carried out in collaboration with other individuals and organizations. Following in the footsteps of Vincent may the members of the Vincentian Family come together, organize themselves, and move forward together in order to collaborate in the great ministry of serving the poor.

### ***A question for reflection***

In light of Vincent's example, how can we collaborate among ourselves as members of the Vincentian Family so that together we build up this great Vincentian work of mission and charity on behalf of the poor?

Translated from Portuguese to Spanish by FÉLIX ÁLVAREZ SAGREDO, C.M.

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

# A Meditation on the New Evangelization and the Year of Faith

Nicola Albanesi, C.M.<sup>1</sup>

## **The mission is “of God”**

The expression *Porta Fidei* can be traced to a passage from Acts of the Apostles (Acts 14:27). Paul and Barnabas, returning from a long missionary journey, tell the mother Church of Antioch all God had done and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles! And “God who acts in the mission and uses the apostles is the God who opens the door of faith”! Paul and Barnabas are spectators of “how” God enters the hearts and minds of the people and opens them up to Jesus Christ. Every generation of Christians must identify “how” God communicates himself to humanity, the “manner” in which it is shown in the lives of people, and then choose the “forms” more appropriate to communicate the Gospel and transmitting the faith.

The content of the Gospel is always the same, although people, their contexts, cultures and life situations will vary. Blessed Pope John XXIII, at the opening of the Second Vatican Council, asked the Council Fathers to take a “leap forward” in both “doctrinal dissemination” and “formation of conscience”. He identified this as “The deposit of faith, namely the truths contained in doctrine and other forms in which they are expressed” (11 October 1962).

## **The origins of the new evangelization**

One can understand the insistence with which Blessed Pope John Paul II spoke of a “new evangelization”. Historically, the first articulation of the need for a new evangelization came in 1979 by Pope John Paul II at a visit to Nowa Huta, Poland. Subsequently, the Holy Father

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a meditation that Nicola Albanesi (Visitor, Province of Rome), on the Year of Faith (11 October 2012 - 24 November 2013), begun on the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council in the light of the Synod of Bishops on “The New Evangelization for The Transmission of the Christian faith” (7-28 October 2012).

spoke more at length formally in an address on March 9, 1983 during his visit to Haiti, where he spoke to CELAM conference to celebrate the fifth centenary of the evangelization of Latin America. This centenary, said the Pope, must not just be oriented as a 're-evangelization' but a 'new evangelization', "new in its ardor, methods, and in its expressions". Its purpose is not to evangelize again, but to do so in a "new form".

Pope John Paul II further developed these ideas while visiting Salto, Uruguay on May 9, 1988. What would be characteristic of the 'newness' of this project is the zeal for Jesus Christ which it would be expressed as a unity "that changes hearts". A key approach for this 'new method' of evangelization is to challenge every member of the Church to become a promoter of evangelization by living it in regular, daily discipleship. In this new expression of evangelization, if one is listening to what the Lord Jesus teaches, then a commitment to justice and human promotion will always accompany the action of evangelization. The "newness" of the "new evangelization" therefore lies in enthusiasm and methods (St. Vincent would them zeal and creative love) and is expressed as a new language of love which St. Vincent would as akin to the Vincentian virtues of humility, simplicity, and meekness.

It has evolved to the actions of his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, who, on September 10, 2010 created the Pontifical Council to Promote the New Evangelization, entrusted with the task of "providing adequate responses for the whole Church, regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, to present to the contemporary world a missionary zeal for a new evangelization".

## **The Synod of Bishops on the new evangelization**

The *Instrumentum Laboris*, a preparatory document of the Synod of Bishops on new evangelization, assert that its purpose is he "transmission of the faith". It states that the Church transmits the faith which "she herself lives" by listening to the word in the liturgy, the sacraments and the Christian life. The Creed we profess is the "record" of faith but charity is clearly the privileged language of the faith: "Love is the language of the new evangelization than words is expressed in works of community, of closeness and helping people in spiritual and material needs". In other words, it is about sharing, closeness and help, especially to the marginalized.

All this must be done "in our time". That phrase is taken from the opening line of the Vatican II document "*Nostra Aetate*" dealing with the Church's relationship to non-Christian religions. However, this expression synthesizes the "mission" of the Church according to the mindset of the Council. The mission must take place "in our time";

otherwise, it lacks currency and relevance. Missionaries today should be contemporary and attuned to these times, using methods of evangelization that encompass preaching and catechesis. It employs a language of expressing faith, so people may communicate and feel, act, and live in a manner of solidarity with the poor.

### **The proclamation of the Year of Faith**

However, for many years, we have talked about a crisis of faith. The crisis facing the West now is that of how to act and live as people of faith. It seems we have lost the ability to think of ourselves as a Christian community, and specifically, in the use of both language and how to perceive Christian values as a guide for ethical choices. Even in traditional forms and associations, a crisis is still present for in the Church. Faced with this crisis situation, Pope Benedict XVI invites us to enter *Porta Fidei*, the “door of faith”.

Practically speaking, it means coming into contact with Christ. Interestingly, the Pope insists the year of faith is not so much about the need for a renewal of the Church, as much as the beauty of the encounter with Christ. This encounter needs to be available to all, and with this new opportunity to meet Jesus comes the call to be a missionary. Faced with this crisis of faith, the Church is called upon to respond by evangelization by proclaiming the Gospel as its true source. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the true strength of the Church, is no longer perceived as such in the consciousness of many Christians.

### **The invitation to faith addressed in particular to the younger generation**

Today, it is urgent that to continue the mission of the Church, we find new ways and a new language to speak of Jesus and God, and to give people the opportunity to engage in an ecclesial experience of the Catholic faith. Young people in particular have a thirst for spirituality, but cannot always articulate their spiritual needs which can be unspoken. There is need to help them express their needs and deep aspirations, and to give them a way of engaging the language and Christian culture to help them understand and interpret fundamental questions of existence. The Church must “Be Christ” to young people by talking to them, making an effort to listen to them, accompanying them in their paths of human and spiritual growth, and supporting them in times of difficulty. Young people trust those who they find reliable. And trust comes from personal relationship that are lived and cultivated.

The Church can give them a taste of God, educating them to the beauty of a life of faith. In the face of disappointment and disillusion-

ment of the many economic, political, social, and personal obstacles to living a full life in today's world, the Church must assist the young so, in the words of Jesus, they may have "abundant life". This can be done by showing them viable ways to live the Christian faith as members of the Church.

### **Over a new vision of charity**

Of all the ways in which the faith can be expressed, the best is that of charity (1 Cor. 13). Unfortunately, the Church's commitment to charity is not always seen as evangelization in itself. Compared to priority given commitments to areas such as mission, catechesis, and liturgy, works of charity and service can appear relegated to the private sphere, the task of individual members, or be seen as the responsibility of some particular group. It is clear that, from a Christian perspective, love only serves to strengthen the credibility of the work of evangelization, making it greater than that just a moral commitment of the individual, or at most, a practice of the Catholic social doctrine. An example of the link between evangelization and works of charity is seen in many parishes where their works of charity and service are parallel to its pastoral work. The challenge today for both the Church and the parish is to foster links between service and evangelization, and with those who serve and are served as members of the one Body of Christ.

Therefore, it is necessary to overcome the idea that charity and service are peripheral but rather, to see it as a place for pastoral activity of the Church, as envisioned by St. Vincent. Charity and service are not merely ways to evangelization, or promote good human behavior. It is so much more: a pathway to a deeper connection with Christ in the poor, and with the poor in Christ. Evangelization without charity can make the quest for faith seem like an abstract search, the fruit of faith disembodied 'spiritualist' way. Promoting charity and service without the context of the Church's rich faith tradition would make it into a type of social action, philanthropy, or solidarity but lose out on the crucial ecclesial and salvific dimensions necessary for the new evangelization.

### **The Vincentian Way**

The path to the Vincentian charism is that the Gospel: a charity which evangelizes. At a time when so many believe that love exists in and for itself, the proclamation of the love of God is best expressed in the Gospel. The Gospel shows us that God favors the poor. Due to their particular conditions of life, such as poverty, discrimination, and being

marginalized, it is harder for those living in poverty to feel loved and to open themselves to the love of God and neighbor. They need the support of the Church as Body of Christ to give and return love, and to see their lives as worth living.

According to St. Vincent's writings and actions, mission and charity are the two parallel, but complementary roads the Church travels on the road to evangelization. "New evangelization" needs to unite the mission of the Church with love of God and neighbor; to see them indissolubly united. It is a mission that is charity and charity that is mission! This path is long and winding, it takes time and effort, much personal energy, and great vision. The new evangelization is a difficult, but exciting task. It continues the mission of Jesus who spoke and acted lovingly and unconditionally to all people.

### ***Quick References***

#### **Two classics on this theme:**

- R. BLÁZQUEZ, *Iniciación cristiana y nueva evangelización*, Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao 1991 (trad. en. *Woe to Me if I do not Preach the Gospel! Christian Initiation and the New Evangelization*, Graphite, Naples 1997);
- J.-M. LUSTIGER, *Comment Dieu ouvre la porte de la foi*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 2004 (trad. en. *God Opens a Door of Faith*, St. Paul, Cinisello Balsamo [Milan] 2006).

#### **Two current contributions:**

- R. CANTALAMESSA, *Like the Wake of a Ship. Horizons for a New Evangelization*, St. Paul, Cinisello Balsamo (Milan) 2012;
- R. FISICHELLA, *The New Evangelization*, Mondadori, Milan 2012.

# The New Evangelization

## According to the *Lineamenta* of the Synod of Bishops 2012

Jean Landousies, C.M.

The topic asked of me is very vast. Presuming in principle that all have already read the text of *lineamenta*, I shall treat only a number of points which seem to me important.

*Lineamenta* is the working document to prepare the *Instrumentum laboris* of the 30<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General meeting of the Synod of Bishops, which will be held at Vatican City from 7<sup>th</sup> till 28<sup>th</sup> October of this year, on the topic *New Evangelization, for the Transmission of Christian Faith*. This document has already been worked on by Bishops' Conferences, Conferences of the Religious and other authorities. The *Instrumentum laboris*, which will be used for the work of the Synod will be, in a way, a synthesis of all this reflection. *Lineamenta* retain its interest however since it serves as a catalogue of the great challenges in which Evangelization is confronted today and is an invitation to be answered with the means that one disposes of or that is called to invent. After an introduction, on the notion of New Evangelization, I shall introduce the three great parts of this document:

1. *The time of a New Evangelization*
2. *To Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ*
3. *To Initiate to a Christian experience*

### INTRODUCTION:

#### THE NOTION OF NEW EVANGELIZATION

The notion of "New Evangelization" is rather broad in reality. The text of *Lineamenta*, gives a great number of definitions (almost twenty!). We can therefore be flexible!

In the Apostolic Exhortation on catechesis, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, of 1975, Paul VI has already spoken "about new time for Evangelization", adding that "the conditions of the society oblige us to review methods, search by all means, study how to make the Christian message reach

the modern man”<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, it is in the encyclical *Redemptoris missio* (1990) n. 33, that one finds that a diagnosis of a new stage for the mission of the Church is necessary. It points out 3 situations which confronts the Church: that of Mission *ad gentes*, that of the well constituted communities where Church exercises its pastoral activity, and finally, between the two, that of whole groups which have lost the sense of the living faith, requiring a “New Evangelization”. In practice, these three situations are often mixed. Finally, I think that one can detect there a realization by the Magisterium of the importance of de-Christianization in the said countries “of old Christendom”.

Before seeing rapidly what the expression “New Evangelization” implies, let us put aside first what it is not or what it does not envisage. First, we do not have to compare it to the ordinary pastoral ministry, nor search in it a catalogue of new “pastoral recipes” which would have an assured result. It is neither a question of disclaiming what has been heretofore made nor to make “tabula rasa” of all the missionary heritage of the Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We know how rich it was, and we still largely live in it today. It is neither a question of favoring an introverted assertion of the identity of the Church or a change of attitude toward those who do not believe.

Now, what is New Evangelization? It consists principally for the Church to take seriously its identity and its missionary commitment. It is a kind of missionary “awakening” of the Church, in the new context of modern cultures. Waking up is all the more necessary since the temptations to fall asleep are numerous! The temptation of immobility (opposition to change), to do what has always been done, with the weight of routine – or even to conform to the surrounding culture, setting aside the proposal of faith to the advantage of an exclusively social religion. We are also confronted with discouragement in the face of the lack of apostolic workers, before the difficulty in finding a language which reaches the people. There is also our own look at the Church, where failures, negative images, the cultural gap between the Church and the society, etc., are often reasons of discouragement. Finally I think that one can say that New Evangelization is essentially a missionary resurgence of the Church, a new breath of hope, a new spiritual enthusiasm for mission. One could even speak simply of Evangelization, or even of the first Evangelization, because one realizes that, in the end, many people have not been evangelized!

New Evangelization will consist, then, in a revival of the life of faith, which will implicate a discernment of what has to be done in the new

---

<sup>1</sup> This document comes after the Synod of 1974 which had as theme *Evangelization in the Modern World*.

situations which touch Christian life, a rereading of our past and also a resurgence of various responsibilities and search for new energies for a cheerful and infectious proclamation of the Gospel. A huge work but which we can make very exciting!

### **FIRST PART: CHALLENGES FOR THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

At first, it is a question of looking at the world in which we live, such as it is, the world often marked by a certain disenchantment, actual economic crisis, but more broadly still, a phenomenon of globalization, with fears, sometimes irrational, which affect many people faced with the reality of migrations, an uncertain future and perhaps especially a cultural and spiritual crisis which touches man in the very depths of his being. This is, of course, the negative side of things, but very happily, our societies are also marked by the other face of these phenomena which allows the development of a lot of experiments of brotherhood and solidarity.

While referring to these phenomena that our societies live, I would particularly like to stop on these “sites of New Evangelization” which are listed in the first part of the document, which are also new challenges for Evangelization. The first task for the Church will be to decipher them in different situations where they present themselves in our different countries.

1. The first challenge which holds attention is cultural, and it is that of secularization, more or less advanced according to countries, but is active a bit everywhere. Most of us are confronted by it. It deals with the possibility of imagining the life of the world and humanity without referring to a transcendence. God has, in a way, disappeared from existence and from human consciousness. It is present, sometimes insidiously, in every field of daily life: likewise, it shows itself as well in the development of relativism with its anthropological implications in the rapport of man-woman, the meaning of generation and death, but also in the behavior of many Christians: hedonistic and consumerist mentality under so varied forms as egoism, superficiality, worship of the person, with the risk of an internal void or a vapid spiritualism. One will note in passing and a bit everywhere, of a blossoming of Christian religious movements or the risks of fundamentalism. How does the Church, how do our communities find themselves before this challenge? How can the announcement of the Gospel be an encouragement for the Christian communities first so that they rediscover the joy of Christian experience, and find the sense of freedom and truth?

2. The phenomenon of migration. Today societies are more and more fluid, people leave their country or their region to live, deliberately or not, in new contexts, This leads to a modification of the ethnic geography of our countries and of our continents, with a meeting or a mixture of cultures which our societies have not known for centuries. At the same time, it favours a crumbling of the fundamental references of life, of values, of links according to which the persons structure their identity and achieve the meaning of life, or else an identitarian closure of societies which receive migrants and of the migrants themselves with all the fears that are attached to it. The great cultural or religious traditions which structured the sense of history or identity of the persons are shaken. Globalization is linked to this phenomenon. All this can be read at the same time negatively when linked only to economic and productive dimension, – or positively, as an instance of growth where humanity can learn new forms of solidarity and sharing for the development of all. From the point of view of Evangelization, we now become aware that mission is no longer a movement that is North-South or West-East, as we knew it up to this point, but that it moves beyond geographical borders. More profoundly still, we must learn to know areas that are foreign to the faith that we have never met. We need to find the energy to pose the question of God in all these processes of encounters, brewing, in the building or rebuilding of social tissues. Here, one would have to underline the importance of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, which, in my view, the *Lineamenta* does not underline enough.
3. The challenge of social communications. We are in media and digital age and social communications pervade the planet. It has become an essential “place” of social life. One saw its importance, for instance, in what has been called “the Arab spring”. Here also are the advantages, as the access to information, new possibilities of knowledge and exchange, in new forms of solidarity, the possibility of making the best values a common heritage for all – but also the risks, first that to reinforce individualism, which expresses itself in selfish concentration about oneself or about one’s individual needs, the exaltation of the emotional dimension in relations, thought reduced to a confirmation of the feeling of each. It is the culture of present, the ephemeral, and of appearance with the risks of the incapacity for memory or of vision of the future. The ethical and political dimension of life of the people increasingly diminishes. Evangelization must therefore encourage to live in this new world, in this new “Areopagus”, find means to make itself heard and transmit the heritage of wisdom and education of the Christian tradition.

4. Economic challenge. We notice the growing inequality between the North and the South of the world for access and distribution of resources, and the damage to creation. The actual crisis shows that the use of material forces has not found the rules of a worldwide market capable of protecting a more just life in common. We can also note that the voice of poor people is less and less heard, and one does not start from what they have to say. At the same time, however, they expect a lot from the Church in terms of sensitization and concrete action. Ecclesial documents on this subject are in general received favourably but (alas) not much put into practice!
5. The challenge of scientific and technological research. One benefits from it constantly, with the risk that science and technology become new idols or a new religion, to which one addresses questions of truth or expects meaning from it, all the while knowing that it can provide only partial and inadequate answers. That's how one sees new forms of gnosis emerging, which see a form of wisdom in technology. There is also a religion or worship of prosperity and instantaneous gratification, with the question of those who are excluded from it. What will the Church say about it?
6. The challenge of politics. Since Vatican City II the situation of the world has changed. We have passed from the clash of the East-West blocks of the Cold War into a multipolar world. There are new actors of economy, politics and religion (Asia, Islam). The historical Churches have reorganized themselves. We are in an unheard of situation rich in potentialities and also in risks and in temptations of domination, of power. The areas are numerous: commitments for peace, development, liberation of peoples; the improvement of forms of worldwide and national government; the building of new forms of life in common, dialogue, collaboration between religions, cultures; the safeguarding of human rights, of peoples, of minorities; promotion of the weak; the care for the planet. New Evangelization is all there, in the light of the Gospel.

\* \* \*

### **How to react as Christians, faced with these new challenges?**

Faced with such transformations – and there would be many others – which challenge our identity and our faith in their foundations, the first reaction can be of distraction or fright. It is therefore necessary to develop a rereading of these very concrete situations from the perspective of Christian hope, first by surpassing the emotional level,

defensive judgments or of fright, to seize truly the signs of novelty, challenges and fragility. This rereading can be done only in a true dialogue with others, that would allow us to identify what these challenges can bring to the world, what can be assumed and on what one cannot cede. This leads to have a critical look on the styles of life, structures of thought and values, languages of communication in our societies, but also within the Church which must always re-learn to understand itself from its roots. This rereading must be made in the Church, in the community, to translate the hope of the Gospel into accomplishable terms.

If the Church wants to be a living body, it must have the boldness to pose the question of God within these problems which seem to be only questions of man or on man. The Church realizes the peculiarity of its mission then, by showing that Christian perspective renders light to the great problems of history. It does not remain locked up in its communities and its institutions, but she agrees to enter these phenomena of the life of man in order to testify there to God. This leads it, on one hand, to work with other Christians to show the force of the Gospel, this is ecumenism in act, but also, on the other, to accept confrontation with religions, either with agnosticism or sometimes with aggressive atheism or extreme secularization which want to eliminate the question of God from the life of man.

To illustrate it, I would like to make allusion here on the two initiatives of Benedict XVI, which show the necessity of a dialogue with the persons who consider religion as something foreign: on one hand what is called “the court of the Gentiles” and on the other hand, the participation of nonbelievers in the meeting at Assisi on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011<sup>2</sup>. The Church can never abandon the idea of searching, with patience, all forms of possible dialogue to seize the deepest expectation of man and his thirst for God.

### **New Evangelization and need of spirituality**

Another point on which I would like to dwell on is what one may call a return of the need for religion and spirituality which one notices in many European societies. The Catholic Church is affected by this very phenomenon. I think, for instance, of the development of pilgrimages, big gatherings (World Youth Day), and others, varying from country to country. This has not always been accepted, definitely not

---

<sup>2</sup> La *Documentation catholique* n. 21 (2011), 4 December 2011, pp. 1031-1064. See also the site of the agnostic philosopher Julia Kristeva, who took part in it, [www.kristeva.fr/assise2011.html](http://www.kristeva.fr/assise2011.html) (texts in English, French and Italian).

so for a long time, but it reveals itself as very important opportunities of Evangelization today. Religious sentiment has not been extinguished. For the Church, it is then a question of discerning the signs of the Spirit which is at work and to educate these expressions towards a mature and conscious faith.

The same goes for the consecrated life, in new communities (and also among the most ancient!), where they disclose needs of certain radicalism, but is it or will it always be evangelical? Elsewhere, one also remarks a regain of interest, even among the Catholics, for the great religious traditions, notably oriental, which for the Church becomes certainly a requirement of encounter, of dialogue and, especially, of discernment. But it is also a call to learn to know and confront forms and languages of the religious need, as they come in other religious experiences, to understand better the ways by which the Christian faith listens and takes the religious need of every person.

### **New Ways of Being Church**

The actual social and cultural contexts which are in rapid change also lead the Church to identify new expressions of Evangelization. To speak, for instance, of "Christian country" and "mission country", has no longer sense. One sees, rather the slow work of building a new model of missionary Church, without sectarianism nor proselytizing, a Church close to the daily life of the people, which announces the Gospel starting from new realities. The time of a New Evangelization has come for the West where many people live completely outside of Christian life or know badly the faith, images of which are caricatured or distorted.

There is also a vast diffusion of religious indifference, secularization and atheism, a life lived as though God did not exist, the chase of consumption or economic well-being side by side with frightening situations of poverty and misery. These 'old' Churches of the West which live these new, difficult situations, with communities, sometimes dispersed, little accustomed to live in situation of minority; these Churches have certainly a lot to learn from the Churches of the East, the persecuted Churches or those that were victims of intolerance.

In conclusion of the first part of the document, I would simply like to underline a question which is asked there: Are we really interested to transmit faith? Do Christians take this mission seriously? The missionary duty of Matthew 28:19 (Mk 16:15; Lk 24:48) has entered a new stage. The one who loves his faith wants to manifest it, to take it to other people, to allow the others share in it. The lack of missionary ardour is a lack of ardour of faith. New Evangelization is the name

given to this new attention of the Church to its fundamental mission, to its identity, to its reason-of-being. No ecclesial situation is excluded from this program. New Evangelization means mission. It demands to be shared, to go beyond borders, to widen the horizons. It is the opposite of “to do what has always been done”. It is a call to the pastoral conversion to the missionary sense of action and of structures of Christian communities.

## **SECOND PART:**

### **PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST**

The second part tackles the question of the transmission of faith as such, under different aspects.

#### **1. The purpose of the transmission of faith: the encounter and communion with Christ**

The missionary mandate received from Christ has a definite reference to proclamation and the teaching of the Gospel (Mt 28:20). Paul presents himself as Apostle chosen to announce the Gospel of God (Rm 1:1). He will go even to the point of saying that he was not sent to baptize but to announce the Gospel! (cf. 1 Co 1:17). The first task of the Church is to accomplish the announcement and the transmission of the Gospel, which is not a system of articles of faith and of moral precepts, even less a political program, but the person of Jesus Christ, the definitive Word of God, made man, a living and effective word. The objective of the transmission of faith is therefore to realize the encounter with Jesus Christ, in the Spirit, to make the experience of the Father. To transmit faith it is to create the conditions with the aim of this encounter between man and Jesus Christ. The Church must therefore be basically a “Church of encounter”, with all that it implies. Meeting of men with the aim of meeting with God and meeting with God with the aim of meeting with men. That’s how it fulfills its mission. The result expected of this meeting, the purpose of transmission, of Evangelization, is to insert men in the relation of the Son with his Father to feel the force of the Holy Spirit (cf. Ep 2:18). To transmit faith in Christ means to create conditions for a faith that is reflected, celebrated, lived and prayed over, that is to say, inserted in the life of the Church (cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium*).

## 2. The Church transmits the faith which she herself lives

If one pursues reflection with this theme of meeting, one understands definitely that the meeting of God and meeting of men are linked. In effect, one cannot come to a meeting with somebody that one has not himself met, one cannot transmit what one does not believe in or what one does not live. One cannot transmit the Gospel without having as foundation a “being” with Jesus, without living the experience of the Father with Jesus in Spirit. In return, the experience of “being with Jesus” encourages to announce, to proclaim, to share what one has lived, because he has experienced something that is good, beautiful, positive. This action of transmission of faith is the experience of every Christian and of the whole Church that rediscovers in it its own identity. All the faithful are involved in it. The transmission of faith structures the face and the actions of the Christian communities. In order to announce and spread the Gospel, the Church must build Christian communities that are capable of articulating the fundamental works of the life of faith: charity, witness, announcement, celebration, listening, and sharing. Thus, Evangelization implies a certain logic which includes the whole existence: the Church receives and renews cultures, she testifies among the peoples of the new ways of being and living which characterize the Christians, she proclaims the Gospel by calling to conversion (first announcement), she initiates to faith and to Christian life by catechesis and sacraments of initiation, she develops the gift of communion among the faithful by the continuing education of faith, sacraments, the exercise of charity, and finally, she promotes the mission by sending disciples to announce the Gospel in works and in words throughout the whole world.

## 3. How to transmit the Gospel?

First, by means of Scripture and Tradition. It is one of the great contributions of Vatican II. The announcement of Word is at the root of the duty to transmit faith (cf. *Verbum Domini* n. 93). The Church transmits the faith which she lives, celebrates, announces and gives witness of<sup>3</sup>. For it she must take a greater consciousness of the place of the Word of God, of its revealing power through its proclamation in Assemblies, of its role in the mission of the Church. A particular attention should be given the announcement of Word to the new generations to favour a more mature faith.

---

<sup>3</sup> Refer in particular to the Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, and to the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of BENEDICT XVI, *Verbum Domini* (2010).

The transmission of faith, however, is not only made with words: it demands a relationship with God through prayer, which is faith itself at work. Liturgy is decisive here. We will have to rediscover this liturgical dimension of the announcement of the Gospel. The missionary aim was one of the strong points of the liturgical movement which has led to the conciliar document on liturgy, the *Sacrosanctum concilium*. Furthermore, there are two fundamental instruments to transmit faith and allow living the encounter with God, in a double fidelity, to God and to men: catechesis and catechumenate. We need to relaunch these two instruments to give a new depth to the pedagogy of faith. At the centre of all the journey is the mystery of the Passover of Christ.

The transmission of faith is therefore communitarian. The local Church is at the same time the subject which announces the Gospel, transmits faith, as well as fruit of this announcement and this transmission (cf. Ac 2:42-47). The faithful are gathered by the preaching of the Gospel and those who received the announcement are constituted into the single body by the celebration of Eucharist. And if the great number of Christians involved in the announcement of the Gospel is a gift of Holy Spirit in our communities, there is however new challenges for the transmission of faith the document underlines: the reduced number of priests renders less trenchant results; the laxitude of numerous families weakens the role of the parents; without counting that the number of Christian parents diminishes or no longer knows how to transmit faith; many are thrown into confusion in the face of the attitude of their children who are uninterested. One often notes that the level of sharing in the Christian community is too weak, that the missionary ardour seems to lack impulse. The burden risks, therefore, falling again on the catechists for whom the task becomes very heavy and who sometimes experience loneliness in accomplishing the task. The cultural climate and situation of lassitude of numerous Christian communities risk weakening the capacity of announcement, transmission and education of faith of the local Churches; then, how does one believe without a preacher? The question of Paul (Rm 10:14) is very concrete.

The present situation demands, therefore, a new style, a new impulse to take with joy and fervour the announcement of the Gospel. Every Christian must feel challenged by the call of Peter (cf. 1Pt 3:15-16) to give reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness, respect and determination. It is a style which must include thought and action, personal and public behavior, internal life of communities and missionary impulse, attention to the poor people etc. With ardour, trust and freedom of word. It deals with setting out to lead men towards friendship with God. Every community and every baptized should feel involved.

In conclusion of this second part, one can say that the purpose of any process of transmission of faith is the building of the Church as a community of witnesses of the Gospel. For it the Church always needs to be evangelized. The fruits of this process of Evangelization take form in confrontation with challenges of our time. On one hand, it is a question of building families which are true and real signs of love and sharing, to build communities with an ecumenical Spirit, capable of dialogue with other religions, to support initiatives of social justice and solidarity, by putting the poor in the centre of interest of the Church, to show that to embark on following Christ is source of joy, and that finally the Spirit guides and transfigures history. On the other hand, one has to denounce the infidelities and scandals in very community, to acknowledge errors, while keeping the capacity to continue witnessing to Jesus Christ, having a permanent need to be saved and by having a solid trust in the hope which has been given to us.

### **THIRD PART: INITIATE TO CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE**

I shall dwell quickly on this third part, by underlining some points. Besides you would notice that in this third part there are repetitions.

First, one will note the intrinsic link between the sacraments and Christian initiation. The importance is once again given to the way of the sacraments of initiation. One would have to review baptismal practices, because there was logic of rupture as well as inertia, when one held on to the repetition of the past. One needs to work on discernment in adopting new styles of pastoral action for Christian initiation.

A second point which seems to me important for mission is the requirement of new forms of discourse on God in the announcement of the Gospel. One notes a growing lassitude with which people intend to speak about God. One has to renew the discourse on God, to discern why our culture has moved away from this discourse, to search forms and instruments that help working out the discourse on God which is able to interpret the expectation and fears of the men of today and to show that Christ is the gift that we all await, to which all men aspire. We must be inventive to be able to lead the Christians and every man who tries to accept the call of God in his conscience. For this, one has to have a great trust in the Spirit which guides, to conquer fear and have a great clarity of mind to situate the question of God at the centre of the life of the men of today.

On the other hand, I would like to underline what the document calls an “educational emergency” and that joins the educative action of the Church to transmit to the new generations the basic values

of existence and right behaviour. This has become more and more difficult both for the Church as well as for the parents and for the school. The society often makes its credo of relativism. If the light of the truth is lacking, one ends up doubting the goodness of life. Often today one transmits only a know-how or determined capacities, while trying to satisfy the desire for happiness of the new generations by immersing them in the objects of consumption and of ephemeral gratifications.

Are we still able of transmitting to the young persons the true values which give a meaning to their life? The parents are often demobilized or outmoded. There is a growing demand for genuine teachers, for an education in faith that helps the society get out of this educational crisis. The objective of this educational commitment is to guarantee the future of the Church but also that of the person and the humanity, by inserting the question of God and the experience of faith in the questions of the present. One needs to form free and mature persons, capable of putting the question of God in their life, their job, the family. The Church has a long experience in this domain.

Finally, we know, according to the expression of Paul VI, that man listens more readily to witnesses rather than to teachers. The Church evangelizes first by its behavior, its life, its witness lived in fidelity to Christ. To evangelize one needs persons who by their behaviour reinforce their commitment and confirm what is announced and taught. It is a question of being credible witnesses. It is therefore necessary to support and to form the persons who get involved in the Evangelization and education, by clearly affirming the essential character of this ministry, showing the place of the Christian family in the education to prayer, in faith, by calling upon new strengths through spiritual formation.

Only he can evangelize who has allowed himself to be evangelized. New Evangelization is a duty, a spiritual challenge, a task for the Christians in search of holiness. The baptized have to be conscious of their missionary and evangelizing commitment. I would finally like to make here an allusion to the Year of Faith which Benedict XVI wanted as an expression of the commitment of the whole Church for New Evangelization. I invite you to read the apostolic Letter *Porta fidei* which is a nice meditation on faith, as well as the pastoral note of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> Documents in different languages may be found in [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would say that New Evangelization is meant be an appropriate answer to the signs of the times, to the needs of men and peoples, to all the challenges of today's world. It is not reserved for specialists. All are responsible. "An obligation that has been imposed on me" St. Paul said (1 Co 9:16). To get there, one must look at future with the eyes of hope to proclaim there a message which gives joy and which liberates, to have a vision of the Church which is evangelizing. Men need hope to live their present. I think that one of the obstacles to Evangelization is the lack of joy and hope when we meet difficult situations. We must confront this new stage of Evangelization enthusiastically, to learn the comforting joy of announcing the Good News.

# The New Evangelization and Saint Vincent de Paul

Francisco Javier Álvarez Munguía, C.M.

We would do well to be attentive to the proceedings of the XIII Synod of Bishops, especially in light of the fact that our objective in the Church coincides with the theme of this gathering, namely, *the new evangelization for the transmission of the Catholic faith*. The bishops' reflections (that will continue until the redaction of a final document) ought to encourage, strengthen and animate us in our ministry of evangelizing those who are poor.

I have been asked to share some reflections on the new evangelization and Saint Vincent. Therefore I will apply the Vincentian vision to this plan with regard to the new evangelization because we can be sure that Vincent can help us understand this project. Furthermore, even though it might appear to be an anachronism, Vincent attempted to become involved in a process of "new evangelization" or more precisely, a re-evangelization process. When he was born, France was a country that was largely Catholic but was in need of someone who would remind the people about the great truths of faith (in their purity and with all their demands). From the time that Vincent was thirty-seven until the time of his death at the age of eighty, he dedicated himself and all the institutions that he had established to this task.

Raymond Chalumeau presents us the result of Vincent's evangelizing ministry with the following impressive statement:

*"In great part the Christian reconversion of France was due to the efforts of St. Vincent and his confreres. We have only to compare the religious situation in France in 1600 to the situation in 1675. We can find a certain satisfaction in the fact that those results were obtained by our Holy Founder and by the members of the Congregation that he founded"*<sup>1</sup>.

The historian Daniel-Rops states something similar:

---

<sup>1</sup> R. CHALUMEAU, *San Vicente de Paúl y las misiones*, in *Vicente de Paúl, evangelizador de los pobres*, CEME, 1973, p. 128.

*“Sociological studies carried out in our day have demonstrated that the areas which are still Christian in twentieth century France are precisely those in which missionaries worked hardest three hundred years ago, and the areas into which they did not penetrate, or hardly at all, are those unfortunately notorious areas which Canon Boulard has marked in red on his famous map indicating the frontiers of religious practice in present day France. No homage more definite than that could be paid to the missionaries of the seventeenth century and to the admirable men who led them so effectively”<sup>2</sup>.*

I have organized this presentation into two parts. In the first section we will look at that which is common to both Vincent de Paul and the new evangelization. In the second section, by way of conclusion, we will reflect on where the new evangelization is leading the Congregation and the confreres.

## I.

### **POINTS OF CONFLUENCE BETWEEN VINCENT DE PAUL AND THE NEW EVANGELIZATION**

Vincent de Paul was a charismatic man who, during the seventeenth century, played an important role in two very specific areas of the Church: charity and mission. As an individual, Vincent belonged to an era that was culturally, socially, religiously and theologically distinct from ours. It would be difficult for Vincent to shed light on the problems that we confront as we engage in the process of evangelization. Nevertheless, as a charismatic person who felt deeply within himself the urgency of evangelization, and as one who established various institutions, Vincent can make a contribution to this process of the “new evangelization”. As Vincentians, we must ask ourselves what insights and nuances can Vincent contribute to the new evangelization. This is important, given the fact that the Church will never ask us to put aside the spirit that animates us. Rather, we are invited to contribute the richness of our charism to the larger Church and to the world, that is, we are being invited to evangelize from the perspective of our charism. We can find four points of confluence between Vincent and the Church’s plan with regard to the new evangelization.

---

<sup>2</sup> HENRI DANIEL ROPS, *The Church in the Seventeenth Century*, JM Dent and Sons, Ltd., London, 1963, p. 90.

## 1. The catechumenate and catechesis

When Vincent stated with great conviction and concern that *the poor are being damned*, he was referring to their lack of knowledge concerning basic religious truths. In accord with the theology of that era, Vincent was convinced that religious ignorance was the cause of condemnation (CCD XI, 172-173, 343-344; XII, 71-72). The following text, for example, reveals Vincent's attitude in this regard. In a letter dated 1631 and addressed to Monsieur François Du Coudray who at that time was in Rome, Vincent stated, "*You must make it understood that the poor are being damned for want of knowing the things necessary for salvation... If His Holiness were aware of this necessity, he would have no rest until he had done all he could to set things right*" (CCD I, 112).

This conviction made Vincent realize that he and his followers had to emphasize the catechetical aspect during the popular missions. In fact, this characteristic has always distinguished the Vincentians from other missionary groups in the Church who emphasized the penitential aspect during the missions that they preached. Emphasizing the catechetical aspect of our popular missions Fr. Corea states, "*What poor rural men and women of faith needed was a systematical catechesis that would lead them to a sacramental and charitable orthodoxy and ortho-praxis*"<sup>3</sup>. Thus, Vincent utilized popular catechesis in order to re-evangelize France during the seventeenth century.

As stated by the Council of Trent the whole society needed to be re-evangelized. Nevertheless, Vincent and his confreres felt impelled to evangelize the poor country people. Those poor men and women were not seeking to be instructed in the lofty theological language of Trent or in the language of the theologians who inspired the Conciliar documents. Rather, they wanted some type of "little method" that would make the truth of faith available to even the simplest persons. In the words of Vincent de Paul, "*That man works wonders, he preaches like a missionary, like a missionary, like an Apostle*" (CCD XI, 259).

In accord with this contribution of Vincent de Paul, it should be noted that in the process of the new evangelization, the catechumenate plays an important role. Two references are relevant: in #14 of the Lineamenta (a basic document for dialogue during the Synod) we find an extensive and clear statement about catechetics and the catechumenate. These two realities comprise the "pedagogy of the faith" that the Church utilizes in order to transmit the faith in an active and profound manner. Also, Pope John Paul II, initiator of the new evangelization,

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf., J. CORERA, *Nueva evangelización para vicentinos ayer y hoy*, in CLAPVI, #65 (1989), p. 338.

solemnly stated that *“catechesis was the specific application and the basic instrument of the evangelization”* (JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse to the Bishops of Campania*, January 11, 1987).

## 2. The “new ardor” as a characteristic of the missionary

Evangelization is impossible today unless there are persons who are converted and filled with hope and expectations, persons who feel profound happiness in their faith. Men and women who are skeptical, discouraged, afraid and indifferent can only be enlivened when they encounter people who are completely opposite, that is, men and women who are unselfish, happy and helpful. In all of this we want to state that the personal testimony of people who joyfully live their faith is decisive in this process of the new evangelization. Lineamenta #25 states, *“one of the obstacles to the new evangelization is precisely a lack of joy and hope among people. Oftentimes, this lack of joy and hope is so strong that it affects the very tenor of our Christian communities”*. When John Paul II referred to the new evangelization, he pointed out the fact that today evangelization is impossible unless there is a new ardor because new evangelization is not just *“taking up the first evangelization again, or simply repeating the past. Instead, it is the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today”* (Lineamenta, #5).

Vincent’s conviction about the need to be filled with fervor (what he called “zeal”) coincides with that which the Church today proposes in order to carry out this process of the new evangelization. This call of the Church, first proclaimed by John Paul II and now reaffirmed with emphasis by Benedict XVI, besides its insistence on new content and new expressions, also calls for a new ardor which is nothing more than the actualization of apostolic zeal or Christian charity. A missionary who is lacking in zeal is, as Vincent said, simply the skeleton of a missionary, one who has lost a sense of purpose in life. Vincent rejoiced when he saw confreres ministered with great zeal: *“I cannot restrain myself and must tell you quite simply that this gives me renewed, greater desires to be able, in the midst of my petty infirmities, to go and finish my life near a bush, working in some village. I think I would be very happy to do so”* (CCD V, 204). Vincent was seventy-five when he wrote that letter. When Vincent referred to the confreres serving as missionaries in Madagascar, he was filled with enthusiasm and exclaimed: *“These men are workers, they are true Missionaries”* (CCD XI, 192). Contact with confreres who were especially zealous gave Vincent a more positive vision of the Congregation, and at the same time filled him with enthusiasm and joy.

On the other hand, Vincent reacted with great virulence when he encountered Missionaries who lacked this virtue: “*When you see a lax Missioner talking this way, or inclined to have us abandon all those benefits I just mentioned, say boldly, behold the Antichrist is born; there he is!*” (CCD XI, 184). Fr. Antonio Orcajo, after a detailed study of the virtue of zeal as practiced by Vincent, has written words to enlighten all Vincentians called by the Church to engage in the new evangelization: “*The virtue of zeal is most significant as regards the missionary vocation. Its practice encompasses the exercise of all the other virtues*”<sup>4</sup>.

### 3. Evangelization and charity

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has slowly connected mission-evangelization with charity. The “*preferential option for the poor*”, which has been stated repeatedly in Church documents, is a clear proof that the poor (and the attention the Church gives to those who are poor) ought to be the object of evangelization. In fact, the *Lineamenta* states this reality, though it does so in a very timid manner. For the Church, the new evangelization ought to be “global”. This is explained as follows: “*This manner of acting ought to be all-encompassing, including our way of thinking and our deeds, individual conduct and public witness, the interior life of our communities and their efforts at being missionary, their attention to education and their concerned dedication for the poor, and the capacity of every Christian actively to take part in the conversations taking place within real-life situations and the workplace, so as to bring to these situations the Christian gift of hope*” (*Lineamenta*, #16).

Vincent had a global vision similar to that which we refer to when speaking about the new evangelization. Vincent stated that we had to evangelize “*by words and by actions*” or else the “*poor would be condemned to die of hunger*” (CCD XII, 78). There are many references in Vincent’s writing where we can find this sensitivity toward the poor, especially at those times when Vincent was considering the mission of the Congregation. These words were addressed to the first confreres, as can be seen in two texts. The first is from the *Common Rules*, where Vincent expressly stated that a Confraternity of Charity was to be established at the conclusion of each mission (cf., *Common Rules*, I, 2). In the second text, Vincent expressed his conviction that preaching and the promotion of charity should not be separated, as they are different aspects of a holistic evangelization. He said:

---

<sup>4</sup> A. ORCAJO, *El seguimiento de Jesús según San Vicente* [The following of Jesus According to Vincent], Ed. La Milagrosa, Madrid, 1990, p. 213.

*“If there are any among us who think they are in the Mission to evangelize poor people but not to alleviate their sufferings, to take care of their spiritual needs but not their temporal ones, I reply that we have to help them and have them assisted in every way, by us and by others, if we want to hear those pleasing words of the Sovereign Judge... To do that is preach the gospel by words and by works; and that is the most perfect way; it is also what Our Lord did”* (CCD XII, 77-78).

This is the new methodology used by Vincent in his mission of re-evangelization: uniting charity with evangelization: making charity not only a Christian virtue, but also a pivotal dimension of evangelization. The object of evangelization is not only salvation of the soul (through catechesis) but also the salvation of the whole human person, body and soul. For Vincent, evangelization meant serving the poor by tending to their spiritual and material needs, *to make the gospel effective*. It must be said that the official church sustains this “global form” of evangelization even though it does so in a more timid manner than Vincent de Paul. Leaving aside for the moment the differences between Vincent’s era and our own, it may be inferred that the ideals of our Holy Founder share in the global concepts of evangelization, charity and justice as these have been developed in the theology of liberation in Latin America.

#### **4. Evangelization and the laity**

As we come to a deeper understanding of the new evangelization we immediately see the importance of the laity in this process. The new evangelization cannot be *“left to a group of ‘specialists’ but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God”* (Lineamenta, #24). In reality, the laity have always been important in the Church. In practice, we know that for many centuries they were maintained in a passive role. Why, then, today do the laity have an indispensable role in the process of new evangelization? Their role is indispensable, because if we are attempting to evangelize the culture and transform society, then this mission corresponds more directly to the laity than to anyone else.

We know Vincent avoided this present concern because he never viewed the laity apart from the mission and charity. In fact, in opposition to the attitude of his era, Vincent understood that the laity could be a dynamic force as he attempted to renew the Church and society.

What is truly admirable in Vincent is that even though he shared the model of the Church that was presented by the Council of Trent, because of his zeal, he projected a distinct model, one that was more evangelical. We know that Trent over-reacted to the excesses of Prot-

estantism, thus exalting to the highest degree the person of the priest and relegating to a lower position the vocation of the laity. Within this context of Tridentine theology and its model of Church, Vincent, in addition to his option on behalf of the poor, would make another option that seemed to go against the grain: an option on behalf of the laity, especially women who were not seen as equals in society or the Church. It should be said that at no time was Vincent opposed to the official Church, but because of his sense of fidelity to the great traditions of the Church, he reminded people about those matters that Trent did not emphasize. It has been said that Vincent never took risks in the area of orthodoxy, but because of the urgency regarding evangelization and providing for the poor, Vincent took many risks in the area of ortho-praxis.

Our Founder was in perfect harmony with another conviction of the present day Church: baptism is the fundamental sacrament of Christian dignity (cf. *Christifideles Laici*, ch. 1). Thus, as noted by Vatican II, the holiness of the laity is rooted in their baptism. It is true the theme of the holiness of the laity was also popularized by St. Francis de Sales. But it is also true that Vincent de Paul was most enthusiastic about the doctrine expressed in the *Introduction to the Devout Life* and the *Treatise on the Love of God*. All of this demonstrates that Vincent was very sensitive to the role of the laity, something which rarely occurred at that time. It was this sensitivity that led him to mobilize so many lay people, not just the men and women who became members of the Confraternities of Charity, but thousands of other men and women who collaborated in his charitable endeavors. It was in this sensitivity toward the laity that we discover Vincent's missionary experience as he evangelized the poor. He saw the laity as God's instruments who allowed him to approach the poor in a different manner, thus, he began to find new ways to involve the laity in his ministry.

At the same time, however, Vincent never sent anyone to minister alone. Here, then, we find another idea that coincides with the attitude of the present day Church. Spontaneous and solitary acts of charity provide no guarantee for continuity and effectiveness, nor do they reflect our Trinitarian faith. Vincent provided structures that enabled people to minister together. The beginning of the Confraternity of Charity in Châtillon was an attempt to organize the laity so that they could work together as members of a team. Vincent's concern went beyond pastoral effectiveness. He told the members of the Confraternity to "*cherish one another as sisters who profess to honor Our Lord*" (CCD XIIIb, 106). They ought to pray for one another and "*share with one another the warmth of the love of God*" (CCD XIIIb, 386). In this manner, Vincent was attempting to create a community spirit, and to thus encourage all its members.

## II.

### **CONCLUSION: WHERE DOES THE PROJECT WITH REGARD TO THE NEW EVANGELIZATION LEAD THE VINCENTIANS?**

In light of everything that has been stated, neither the Vincentian institutions nor those persons who share the spiritual heritage of Vincent should find it difficult to accept and adapt themselves to this universal plan of the “new evangelization”. We only have to clothe ourselves in the Vincentian spirit and then we will surely find ourselves involved in the new evangelization. Is this a simple task? No! There is one exception: the new evangelization is directed toward the whole society, for all persons. No one is excluded, even though the Church has opted in a preferential manner for the poor. What is a preferential option for the Church in general becomes an exclusive option for Vincentians. Indeed, among the many ministries in the Church, serving the poor is our special ministry and charism.

This presentation could end here with an impeccable conclusion: our way of responding to the new evangelization consists in following the demands of our vocation. This is especially true since Vincent was a new evangelizer long before such a phrase became popular. The Church cannot demand anything more of us. Now the only thing that we can do in order to conclude this presentation is to ask which aspects of the new evangelization (aspects related to our mission) should Vincentians be especially attentive to in order to respond in a better way to this ecclesial project. The following might be our response.

#### **1. It is necessary to grasp and discern and cultivate that which is new**

There is much discussion about the new evangelization, new evangelizers, a new ardor, new expressions, reconfiguration, new ministries that are more aligned to our spirit, a new era... This objective newness exists, but is all of this understood by the Congregation and the confreres? It is not enough to be an observer or one who is informed about all these novelties. It is not enough to be a transmitter of these novelties. The new evangelization invites us to grasp, discern, accept, and cultivate this newness in our language and expression, and in the daily events in our lives and the world around us. At the very heart of the new evangelization, we discover an invitation regarding those things that are new: *“The new evangelization is not a matter of taking up the first evangelization again, or simply repeating the past. Instead, it is the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today”* (Lineamenta, #5). If Vincent had not opted for that which

is new, neither the Confraternities, nor the missions, nor the laity, nor the Daughters of Charity, nor the organization of the Charities, none of this would have become a reality. Things would have continued in their hopeless, downward spiral.

An observation: to embrace this newness does not mean abandoning the profound convictions and principles that provide a foundation to our life and our vocation as evangelizers. A building cannot be supported without cement. Therefore what must we do in order to confront the rapid and profound changes that affect us as evangelizers while at the same time maintaining our convictions and yet being flexible enough in order to travel along these new paths? There is no other path than that which was pointed out in the General Assembly of 2010: personal reflection, reading, a determination not to be out of sync with the thinking of the present era, and on-going formation. This plan will prepare us, as it did Vincent, to be authentic evangelizers.

## **2. The new evangelization can provide us with an opportunity to renew our ministries**

Evangelization has never been easy, and the present time is no exception. We know that the new evangelization is demanding because it moves us forward while turning upside down our well-formulated plans and comfortable routines, all of which have become so futile. So then, what are the specific demands that the new evangelization places upon the evangelizer? Without a doubt the new evangelization challenges evangelizers to move beyond a conservative pastoral approach which, in light of the dawning of this new age, is no longer adequate. The poor must be given what they need, without falling into a pastoral immediacy proper to that type of attitude, and without succumbing to the frequent temptation of believing that the poor demand little. It is not a question of what the poor demand or request, but rather a question of what the Vincentian evangelizers ought to give to those who are poor.

In Vincent, we find the best example of ministerial creativity. When he began the popular missions, Vincent founded the Congregation of the Mission and established the Tuesday Conferences, a plan for on-going formation for the diocesan clergy. Vincent did this because with the existing parish structures and the ignorance of the clergy, it would have been difficult to carry out the re-evangelization of France. Vincent's passion as an evangelizer enabled him to see beyond a pastoral approach that was incapable of responding to the needs of the poor. It is precisely this Vincentian spirit that enables us to ask ourselves how to renew our ministries in order to respond to the demands of the new evangelization.

The commitment to serve the poor obliges confreres to confront the challenges that result from such a mission. Therefore, in order to evangelize the poor today, confreres need to be equipped with sound doctrine; they also need to be connected to the world of those who are poor, and to have knowledge of the Church's social doctrine in those aspects that affect the ministry of the evangelizer and the lives of those being evangelized. They also need to understand modern and post-modern thinking. Finally, confreres must be individuals with firm convictions. Perhaps it is in this sense that we should interpret Vincent's words, i.e. "*the poor are our lords and masters*". The poor can be the ones to teach Vincentian evangelizers because as missionaries, we have much to learn from them.

### **3. The new evangelization demands a broad vision**

We lived in a world characterized by social, cultural and even religious pluralism, a world quite distinct from that of previous generations. It is a world characterized by homogeneity in every aspect and also characterized by the autonomy and the independence of each nation. The powerful means of digital communication (now within everyone's reach), and the world phenomenon of migration have been decisive factors in creating multi-racial European societies. This pluralistic perspective should be the starting point of the new evangelization. For example, for some, God is the center of their life and the voice of the Church is still credible. On the other hand, many other persons live in the midst of an environment of unbelief and indifference. More than a few groups of people profess a religious understanding that would be seen as marginalized from the perspective of the historical religions. Evangelizers who engage in the process of the new evangelization can no longer be satisfied with an outreach that extends to those who are under the Church's influence. Such an approach would reduce evangelization to a process of 'saving the saved'. Evangelization must be directed toward everyone.

Evangelizers today must have broad horizons; an attitude of acceptance that extends to everyone; a ability and a willingness to dialogue with those who are indifferent, and with those seeking answers to their burning questions; and with those who profess a different set of beliefs. I believe that, in a certain sense, this broad vision can be seen in Vincent, even though he lived at a time when any sign of pluralism was suspect. For example, when Vincent was appointed pastor in Châtillon, Calvinism had a strong hold on the people in that region. It is interesting to note that when Vincent arrived in Châtillon, he took up lodging in the house of M. Jean Beynier who, as a result of Vincent's influence, changed first of all his life-style and then his religion and was reconciled

with the Catholic Church<sup>5</sup>. Four or five years later, the events at Montmirail and Marchais further enlightened Vincent's path: three Huguenots were converted, one of whom complained (with reason) that the poor were spiritually condemned.

In his era, Vincent proposed a method of preaching to the confreres not unlike that of Calvin. Vincent said: "*A second example, which shows us how careful we must be to maintain our method (i.e., the little method) is that of the Huguenots. Calvin invented his own method of preaching: take a book, as Our Lord did, read it and explain it in the literal and spiritual sense; then draw some moral teachings from it*" (CCD XI, 267). Vincent spoke the following words to the Sisters opening a new house in Metz: "*You are going to make known to everyone, Catholics, heretics, and even Jews, the goodness of God*" (CCD X, 448). Vincent also wrote to a coadjutor Brother (a surgeon by profession) being sent to Madagascar and said: "*It would be well not to distinguish between Catholics and heretics in the services you give to God on this ship, for by this they will know you love them in God*" (ABELLY II, 27).

In conclusion, we see this broad vision, which we refer to as the new evangelization, reflected in Vincent, as he sent the Missionaries beyond the French borders to evangelize the non-Christian world. Vincent, even though his dreams would not and could not become a reality, dreamt of going to remote parts of the world, including Persia, Brazil and Canada.

---

<sup>5</sup> Cf., JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, CM, *St. Vincent de Paul, a Biography*, translated by Sister Joyce Howard, DC, Melisende, London, 1999, p. 120.

# Moments of Presence, Listening, Service, and Action: Keys to New Evangelization

An Address to the Synod of Bishops  
for New Evangelization

*The following address was presented by Fr. G. Gregory Gay, CM (Superior General, Congregation of the Mission) delegate to the Synod for New Evangelization, on behalf of the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, and the members of the world-wide Vincentian Family.*

The document *Instrumentum Laboris* for New Evangelization offers a central truth: **Announcing and proclaiming is not the task of any one person or a select few, but rather a gift given to every person who answers the call to faith** (IL, #92).

This truth came alive for me some thirty years ago when I was called to our Vincentian mission in the Republic of Panama. There, I experienced a Church alive; a Church making sincere efforts to adapt the teachings of Vatican II to the reality of life in Latin America. The formation of the laity was carried out by the efforts of religious congregations, diocesan clergy, and bishops. In experiencing the Word of God come alive in basic Christian communities, I witnessed many simple people participate enthusiastically in their faith.

At that time, I said, “This is the Church I want to be a part of. This is the Church that was envisioned by Vatican II”. I was privileged to work in that part of the world for more than two decades. Working collegially with bishops, diocesan clergy, religious men and women, and the laity to achieve a common good, in the service of the Church and the world has been both the promise and gift of Vatican II for me. The Church of Latin America continues to inculturate the Gospel, as can be seen in its documents from Medellin to Aparecida, the most recent and often quoted document at this Synod. These times have

been energizing and life-giving for me as a missionary of a religious congregation and now as its Superior General.

In order to proclaim the gift of faith and strengthen the Church's renewal, there are three moments of encounter and two pathways I consider crucial for new evangelization.

- **A moment of presence:** Presence has two dimensions: the first is that Presence we call God, and the other is the presence we find in opening ourselves to the other. Those whom God puts in our path reveal the person of Jesus Christ, especially the poor, marginalized, and abandoned. In the Presence of God, we gain strength to be present to all members of the Body of Christ in a courageous and prophetic way.

- **A moment to listen:** Listening also has two contemplative moments: *an inner and an outer one*. The inner moment is given to the Word of God, the Eucharist, the prayer of the Church, and the experience of the poor. In this 'inner room' of our soul, we allow the person of Jesus to enter the quiet of our hearts to accompany us in our daily journey. This leads us to the outer rooms of deeper relationship with the world and one another. Before we can teach and preach, we must first listen.

- **A moment of service:** Being present and listening allows God's grace to lead us into service. New evangelization calls us forth and unites us with an enduring element of our faith: love of God and service of neighbor. "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34). Service in Jesus' name is about action and advocacy, not only on behalf of the poor, but together with the poor. In the crucible of service, the Church finds its true identity and salvation, in and through Jesus Christ.

- **A pathway to service by virtue:** We evangelize by entering into the world of the poor, and by growing in the virtues of *humility, simplicity, charity, and justice*. This is at the heart of our Vincentian heritage. The preferential option for the poor is fundamental for new evangelization. In the experience of community, we make visible and credible the person of Jesus, promoting a civilization of love. In living out these virtues, we draw nearer to God, each other, and the poor, our lords and masters.

- **A pathway from virtue to action:** With love for God and the poor who image his Son Jesus, we can bring new evangelization to fruition by revitalized popular missions. With religious, clergy and laity collaborating, we evangelize by being present, listening, and serving in the way of Jesus Christ, the first evangelizer. In following pathways of virtue, action and advocacy, we not only preach and teach the Good News, but we become Good News for the world. The words of Jesus

to the young person healed will also ring true for us: “Go home to your people and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how he had mercy on you” (Mk. 5:19).

I humbly entrust these thoughts and our efforts at this Synod to Jesus Christ, Evangelizer of the poor, and to Mary, his Mother, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

16 October, 2012

***His Excellency, Most Rev. Markos Ghebremedhin, CM,  
Titular Bishop of Gummi and Apostolic Vicar of Jimma-  
Bonga (Ethiopia).***

The program of preparing and educating catechists in dioceses must be reviewed, reformed, and revitalized to prepare them for their particular ministry in the Church. The ministry of catechist needs to be given prominence by making it a permanent office of the local Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church remains very difficult to understand for many of the faithful. There is need to simplify it and also to have such versions made available in various local languages. Catechesis must be situated within the context of ongoing formation, to change the prevalent and incorrect assumption that it is only for children and youth

The catechetical program must be fashioned so it will be appealing to the faithful of various age groups. Catechetical materials must be adapted and made suitable for all age groups. Pastoral training centers are needed to refine and intensify the methods of training and learning for those involved in catechesis. The involvement of parents, godparents, and all relevant members of the Christian community in the preparation of children for the sacraments is essential.

The Church needs to reaffirm the irreplaceable role of catechists in the Church and to equip them with resources to make them efficient ministers of the New Evangelization. They need to be given adequate resources to sustain their families. The catechists must also seek to understand their role in the Church as not merely an occupation, but a vocation. At this great moment of renewal in proclaiming and transmitting the faith, taking the above actions would be seen as a strong support and resource in the new evangelization called for by the Church.

18 October, 2012

***His Excellency, Most Rev. Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, CM, Metropolitan Archbishop of Addis Abeba, President of the Episcopal Conference of Ethiopia and Eritrea, President of the Council of the Ethiopian Church.***

Small Christian communities, established as the most local presence of the Catholic and universal Church, share in this same mission. These Christian communities provide an ideal pastoral context to establish and develop lay ministries. One of the most significant differences between traditional Catholic associations and small Christian communities resides in the apostolic orientation of the latter.

Small Christian communities are not built only on the personal holiness of their members, but in their humble availability and fidelity to their apostolic mission. Personal holiness is a requirement and consequence of the mission, but not its only or final purpose. Small Christian communities have an essential apostolic spirituality oriented to mission. Without a sense of mission, the small Christian community and the universal Church would be unfaithful to its very fundamental vocation as a witness to the Gospel. This mission becomes a concrete reality with the establishment of lay ministries to be exercised for the building up of the community.

Lay Ministries therefore, are not to be seen as an accessory or optional activity of the small Christian community to relieve the work of the priest. They are part and parcel of its life and growth; when ministries decline, the whole life of the community is in decline. Experience has shown that religious associations centered only in prayer and devotion can become a kind of exclusive spiritual club for "holy members only" They can end up being more faithful to the minutiae written in the handbook of their founder than to the demands of Jesus in the Gospels.

The field is vast and open to pastoral creativity. However, in establishing new lay ministries, care must be taken that dialogue, consultation, and communion with the local Bishop is observed and that periodical evaluation of these ministries is made. Otherwise, there may arise a disparate variety of lay ministries without a common vision and focused pastoral guidelines. This, in turn, may result in creating confusion among the people of God.

Such is the main challenge of the new evangelization. Though a relevant re-education of our Christian people is necessary for effective lay ministries, it is not from the Christian community that objections and resistance to them will come. Christians are eager to participate in a more active way in the life and growth of the Church.

***Most Rev. Cristoforo Palmieri, CM, Bishop of Rrëshen (Albania).***

Evangelization is a first proclamation for those in Albania who were born and have grown up without ever knowing anything about God, other than seeing a hidden Christian gesture by the elderly, or evangelization of Muslim brothers who had and still have Christian roots. Many will show themselves to be open to the proclamation once revealed, and the need to do so is more urgent and serious than ever before.

Therefore, we expect from this Synod some stimulating suggestions and new methods in order to be supported and committed to preaching with love and sacrifice. This is required also due to various difficulties, including the poverty of the Albanian people, and their geographical dispersion of the population, which makes encounters and gatherings more difficult to hold.

The harvest is not meager and is in part ready, but to reap it, there is a lack of zealous and trained workers willing to sacrifice by drawing closer to the people, working for and with love and in line with other sister Churches. Only after 50 years since promulgation are the teachings of Vatican II finally being translated into the Albanian language so we can familiarize all with the teachings of this Council. Your support in prayer sustains us.

The blood of martyrs was spilled during the communist regime in Albania. The process of beatification for forty of them has already progressed to a good stage with the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. This reality is for us a reawakening of Christian life, the wish to deepen, illuminate and render more convincing the reasons for faith for the purpose of filling the void created during the years of dictatorship; it makes us missionaries to those near and far from us.

May the whole Church, including those most responsible before God for the proclamation of the Gospel, soon see the birth of a new humanity, a new man, beyond that which presumed to create the Communist dictatorship. May we as the Church in Albania be able to fully move beyond those terrible years of a humanity without God, without Church and therefore entirely inconsistent. May we become humanity created by God, called to live in justice and holiness.

16 October, 2012

**Rev. F. Emmanuel Typamm, CM**, *General Secretary of the "Confédération des Conférences des Supérieurs Majeurs d'Afrique et de Madagascar" - CO.S.M.A.M. (Cameroon).*

To transmit Christ to the world today, consecrated persons must re-read their lives. It is true that we already transmit, more or less faithfully, Christ and His Gospel. However, the new poverties of our globalized world oblige us to adopt new attitudes for transmitting Christ.

As members of the Conference of Major Superiors in Africa and Madagascar, the experience of living in an African context leads us to believe that to communicate the Christian faith with joy and build a civilization of love today, it is necessary for us religious to rediscover certain fundamental elements of our consecration. I would like to name seven.

1. The centrality of Christ in our lives as consecrated;
2. fraternal life in community;
3. a spirituality of inculturation;
4. the prophetic nature of consecrated life in the preferential option for the poor;
5. collaboration among consecrated persons;
6. unity in diversity and not in uniformity, and;
7. collaboration with the laity.

As some of the Founders of our religious institutes have noted, God's poor are our Lords and Masters. Should we not stop being fearful? And should we widely open the doors of our hearts to the Spirit of Pentecost and offer our lives to the poor of today to bring peace and justice to the world? An African proverb states, "We never empty the pot at night". This proverb shows us the attitude to have; namely that of organizing ourselves to always have something in reserve to give to the poor. Could this not be a witness to the true meaning of evangelization rather than giving nothing to a poor person who truly is needy and who reaches his hand out to us?

If the family is the privileged place for the proclamation of the Gospel, it is time to form ourselves, consecrated and laity, to put ourselves at the service of each other, each with our own talents; this would help us, the consecrated, to not fall into the temptation of thinking we are superior to others in the Church of Christ which is the family of the Church.



# General Index Year 2012

## N. 1

### JANUARY-MARCH 2012

- 1 Editor's Note – *John T. Maher, C.M.*

#### **General Curia**

- 3 The Season of Lent, 2012 – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*  
8 Highlights of March 2012 Tempo Forte Meeting – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*  
14 Strategic Plan for Communications. A Framework to Organize, Communicate, and Infuse the GA Lines of Action: 2012-2016 – *John T. Maher, C.M.*  
21 Announcement of 2013 International Visitors Meeting – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*  
23 Application for Systemic Change Grant, 2012 – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.* - *Robert P. Maloney, C.M.*

#### **Feature: Theme Articles on Systemic Change**

- 31 A Primer on the Purpose and Principles for Systemic Change – *John T. Maher, C.M.*  
39 Evangelization and Systemic Change. Some Reflections – *Robert P. Maloney, C.M.*  
66 Spirituality and Charism of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam – *Austin Fagan*  
77 Method to Transform an Existing Program. The Marillac Center: A Project on the Path of Transformation – *Patricia P. Nava, A.I.C.*  
95 2011 Annual Statistics of the Congregation of the Mission – *Giuseppe Turati, C.M.*

## N. 2

### APRIL-JUNE 2012

- 101 In Memory of Fr. Julio Suescun Olcoz, C.M.  
103 Editor's Note – *John T. Maher, C.M.*  
105 About Our Authors

#### **Feature: Vincentian Symposium on Inter-Religious Dialogue with Islam**

##### **INTRODUCING OUR TOPIC**

- 107 Inaugural Speech: Basic Principles for Dialogue with Islam – *Varghese Thottamkara, C.M.*

**TODAY'S CHALLENGES**

- 110 Called to Live Together, but How? – *Abdo Eid, C.M.*  
 116 The “Stripping” of the Church in Algeria – *Christian Mauvais, C.M.*  
 128 Duc in Altum. Vincentian Journey of Dialogue from Fatqa (1999) to Pacet (2011) – *Eko Armada Riyanto C.M.*

**PERSPECTIVES ON INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

- 137 Islam in the Past Ten Years in Indonesia and in the World – *Mudjia Rahardjo*  
 145 Interreligious Dialogue Beyond Conflicts. Pacet, Java, Indonesia, August 11, 2011 – *Felix Körner, S.J.*  
 168 Interfaith Dialogue Beyond Conflicts. A Muslim Point of View – *Siti Musdah Mulia*

**VINCENTIAN RESPONSES**

- 181 Dialogue with Islam – *Eko Armada Riyanto, C.M.*  
 205 Put Out into the Deep: The Vincentian Way – *Claudio Santangelo, C.M.*

**MOVING FORWARD IN HOPE**

- 216 Closing Reflection: “Putting Out into the Deep” of Our Own Lives. SIEV Symposium on Christian-Islam Dialogue (Pacet, Indonesia, 7-17 August, 2011) – *Abba Zeracristos Yosief, C.M.*  
 219 Interreligious Dialogue with Islam: Contexts, Vision and Action. Synthesis Statement by Symposium Attendees (Pacet, Indonesia, 7-17 August, 2011) – *SIEV Symposium Participants*

**N. 3****JULY-SEPTEMBER 2012****Introduction**

- 227 Editor’s Note – *John T. Maher, C.M.*  
 229 About Our Authors

**From the Superior General**

- 231 Letter on Christian-Islam Commission – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*  
 234 Letter on Vincentian Family Collaboration – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*  
 237 Mission Appeal Letter – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*

**From the Curia General**

- 247 Tempo Forte, October, 2012 – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*  
 254 Vincentian Family Leadership Meeting Proceedings – *Juventino Elias Castillero Jaén, C.M.*

**Feature: Meeting of Provincial Directors for the Daughters of Charity**

- 261 Opening Mass for Directors of the Daughters of Charity (2 July 2012) – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*
- 264 Aspiring to a Life of Interiority, Authenticity, and Solidarity: A Portrait of the Daughters of Charity Today – *Sr. Évelyne Franc, D.C.*
- 282 Vincent de Paul: Co-founder of the Daughters of Charity – *John P. Prager, C.M.*
- 289 Louise de Marillac and the Spirituality of the Daughters of Charity. Meeting of Provincial Directors – *Sr. Antoinette Marie Hance, D.C.*
- 312 Animating the Daughters of Charity. A Role of the Director of the Daughters of Charity – *Patrick J. Griffin, C.M.*
- 326 The Ministry of the Provincial Directors to Elderly Daughters of Charity – *Fernando Casado*
- 331 Documents of the Church for Consecrated Life – *Patrick J. Griffin, C.M.*
- 345 The Joys and Blessings of Being a Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity – *Fergus Kelly, C.M.*
- 354 Closing Mass for Directors of the Daughters of Charity (14 July 2012) – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*
- 357 List of Participants

**N. 4****OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2012****Introduction**

- 361 Editor's Note – *John T. Maher, C.M.*
- 363 About Our Authors

**From the Curia General**

- 365 The Season of Advent, 201. A Journey to Christ and our Charism – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*
- 270 Letter on the Feast of the Miraculous Medal – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*
- 272 Tempo Forte Circular. December 2012 – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M.*

**Feature: Solidarity, Union, and the New Evangelization**

- 381 Economic Solidarity. An Ongoing Challenge for the Congregation of the Mission – *G. Gregory Gay, C.M., and Robert P. Maloney, C.M.*
- 402 Union and Collaboration in Saint Vincent: Insights for Today – *Eli Chaves dos Santos, C.M.*
- 415 A Meditation on the New Evangelization and the Year of Faith – *Nicola Albanesi, C.M.*
- 420 The New Evangelization. According to the *Lineamenta* of the Synod of Bishops 2012 – *Jean Landousies, C.M.*

- 433 The New Evangelization and Saint Vincent de Paul – *Francisco Javier Álvarez Munguía, C.M.*
- 444 Moments of Presence, Listening, Service, and Action: Keys to New Evangelization. An Address to the Synod of Bishops for New Evangelization – *Synod*
- 451 General Index Year 2012

# VINCENTIANA

Quarterly Publication of the Congregation of the Mission

## SUBSCRIPTION FOR 2013

1. The subscription of all the communities of the Congregation of the Mission is paid automatically through their accounts with the Economy General.

2. The individuals who wish to subscribe in their own name should:

- **Direct their subscription to:**

VINCENTIANA  
Congregazione della Missione  
Via dei Capasso, 30  
00164 Roma - Italia  
vincentiana@cmglobal.org

- **Indicate in which language to receive it:**

English       Spanish       French

- **Indicate their complete data:**

**Surnames and Name:** .....

**Complete address:** .....

**Fax:** ..... **E-mail:** .....

- **Pay their subscription thus:**

*Members of the Congregation of the Mission* may do so either directly to the Economy General, in the form indicated below, or through their Provincial Economy.

*Other subscribers*, through a bank check in the name of:

*Congregazione della Missione*

3. VINCENTIANA considers renewed automatically all subscriptions that have not been voided or terminated

4. The General Council has determined that VINCENTIANA will be published quarterly so we have so we have set the subscription price at:

**Annual Subscription € 55,00**

