

Sharing the Experience of the Vincentian Month

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We have arrived at the end of this first **Vincentian Month** for Vincentian Family Advisors. We have worked together for three weeks and have shared many experiences in an atmosphere of simplicity, family and joy. We are surely beginning now to feel the need to return home and share our experiences.

The days spent in Paris have not let us forget the situations of our countries. On the contrary, we have shared who we are and what we do. It is now time to return to our missions where the Vincentian laity, our brothers and sisters in community as well as the poor await us in order to continue our service.

Before beginning our work this morning we need to ask ourselves: What have I received from this Vincentian Month? What do I have to share with the members of the Vincentian Family and the poor? How can I share with them what we have lived out during this meeting?

I would like to suggest the following **objective** for this morning's work: determine concrete actions through which we can transmit this experience in our own countries. In being good news for our brothers and sisters, this good news must be communicated. Bad news comes by itself ... and it is said that that is all there is. What we have experienced during this Session is good news and we should not hide it or keep it to ourselves, if so we will lose it for we manage to keep only what is given to us.

Mary is an example of this. In the silence of prayer, she welcomed God's gift by accepting to be the Mother of the Eternal Word in an attitude of servant. This is very important news. It is "the news." And the gospels tell us that she left in haste to meet her cousin, thereby allowing Elizabeth and John the Baptist to share in her joy.

The witness of the apostles also crosses my mind. They lived with Jesus who formed them and shared with them through his words and actions the Good News that God is Father. In the end he confided his mission to them: "Go out into the world and announce the Good News...." He made them participants and successors in his salvific mission for humanity. Yet, after his death, they became fugitives gripped by fear. When they received the good news of the Resurrection, their lives were changed, no longer fearful in the face of threats and death. They were not the same ... they became courageous people, witnesses of the supreme "news": the Resurrection of Jesus.

All during these days we have experienced and shared much good news. We have also been friends of God's good news. God once again told us that we, ourselves, are good news for our brothers and sisters. Welcome this good news and allow it to transform, convert and change our mentality, our hearts ... and equally become multiplying agents of the good news.

Fr. Maloney, at the beginning of this meeting, told us something very important: **A good formator is a good communicator**. We are formators, that is, "experts in the Vincentian charism" in order to share it with our brothers and sisters. Sharing this meeting implies taking on new attitudes. What are these **attitudes**? I will cite a few:

- Being **creative and inventive** missionaries for our brothers and sisters. We need a new perception of charity. An authentic passion for God is bound to translate into sincere compassion for the brother or sister who is poor. How can I take this news to my own country?
- Having the courage to **take on new dispositions and attitudes** in order to live out our relationship with the laity and our commitment close to the poor — especially attentive listening and the humility of those who know that all in life is gift and that we need each other. Willing to courageously wager new pathways in order to meet the poor and new places that allow the laity to live out their vocation of service to the poor.
- Continuing to **take on and incarnate** in our lives the new materials received during this Session. All that we have heard these days has been wonderful and has surely touched our hearts. But let us allow these truths time to achieve their transforming work. We continue to note all that we have seen and heard here, from the bottom of our hearts.

Also as Advisors of Vincentian Family Groups we have discovered some **challenges**. I will list four of them:

1. *Make ministry with young people and laity a priority among the priorities of our other ministries.* This priority is not yet an effective reality within the ministries and services of numerous provinces or communities; maybe it has only reached being affective. Often service of the laity "is tolerated," it is not done with conviction but through devotion. A large number of our brothers and sisters work with the laity as non-professionals "because they enjoy it" and not because it is a provincial or community choice. This is our challenge: What can we do so that this work with the laity, especially with young people, becomes a serious option and that it have human and financial resources devoted to it?

2. *Form laity at the heart of the Association so they may become Group Advisors of their brothers and sisters.* The Advisor's function is a ministry that the laity also has a right to exercise; in fact, there are many who are already doing it. We,

CMs and DCs, cannot monopolize this ecclesial ministry at the core of the Vincentian Family. In addition, we are not able to do everything. Our challenge: What can we do so the laity can receive formation and become Advisors of their Groups?

3. *Organize CM and DC Provincial or Regional formation meetings.* There are many brothers and sisters in our countries and provinces who are working with Vincentian Family Groups just as we do. During these days we have noted that we have great cultural variety and that situations, as well as the social and political problems of our countries, are very different. The history of the Vincentian Family itself, in our countries, has followed different growth and organizational processes. A challenge for us, is to duplicate what we have lived out here. Would it be possible to organize a seminar for one or two weeks, in our respective countries, in order to reflect together on our role as Vincentian Family accompaniers? And another challenge would be: How can we inculturate the Vincentian Charism within our realities?

4. *Continue our own formation and updating.* During these days we have seen that various Vincentian Associations are finding themselves in an ongoing process of renewal and updating. All of this because they want to be a current response to today's reality. We know that one Vincentian Association did not exist ten years ago. The Associations renew themselves. New formation documents are developed as well as guidelines for Advisors and current documents of lay Vincentian spirituality. New apostolates and new internal organizations have been created. We have not exhausted our understanding and knowledge of Vincentian Associations during this meeting. This reveals a challenge: What can we do to continue a serious process of ongoing formation? What means are available in order to continue to know and understand Vincentian Associations?

Sisters and brothers, today we are called to dream and to invent new paths. We are aware that we need a **“new perception of charity.”**

(Translation: TRANSLATION CENTER – DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY, Paris)