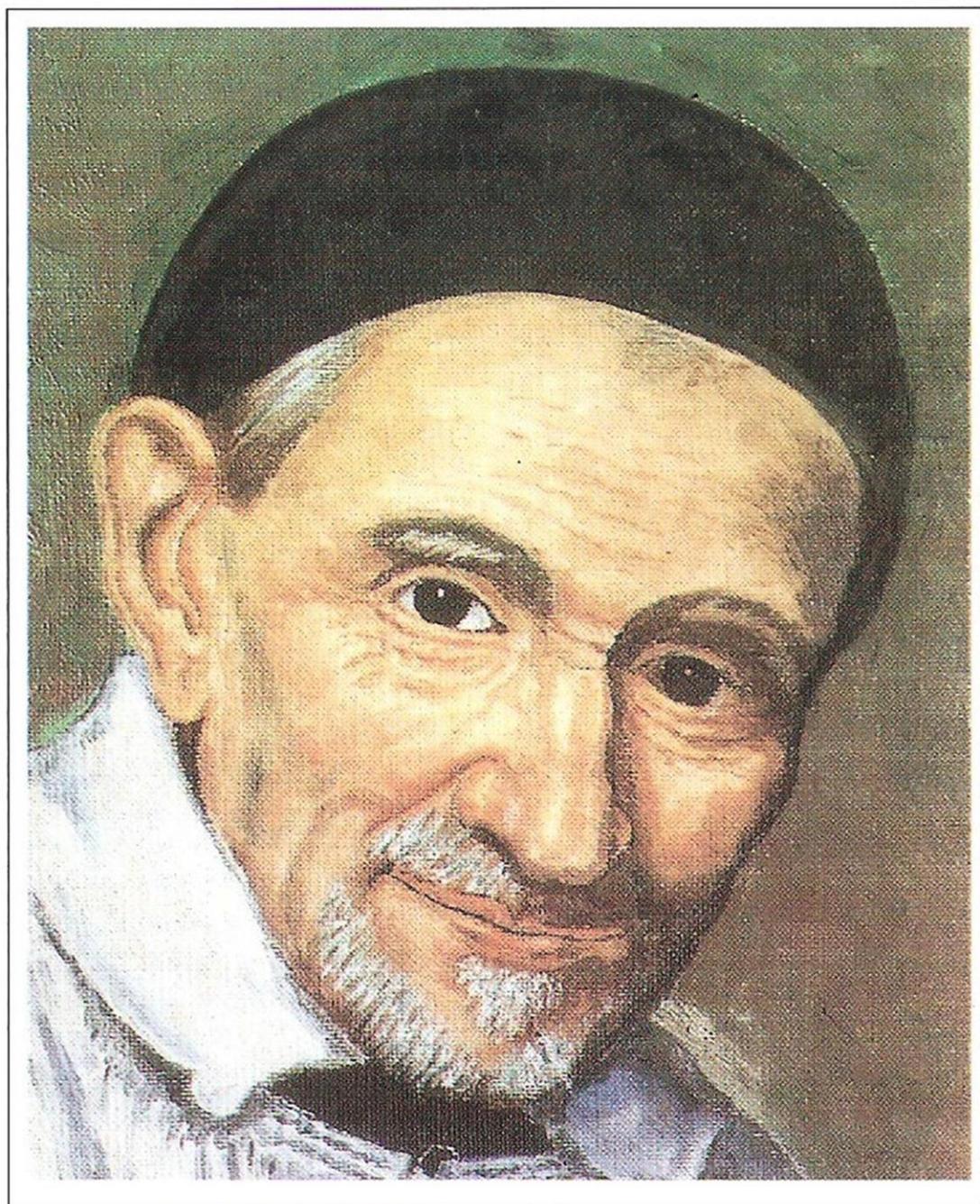


# VINCENTIANA

48<sup>th</sup> YEAR - N. 3

MAY-JUNE 2004



*“New Missions” of the C.M.*

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION  
GENERAL CURIA

# GENERAL CURIA

Rome, May 25, 2004

## *To the members of the Vincentian Family*

Dear brothers and sisters,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you!

Over the last ten years we have been thinking, praying, planning and acting together increasingly as a Family. This February 20-22, at a meeting in Paris of the heads of some of the principal branches of the Family, we reviewed many of the events that have taken place in the decade since our annual meetings first began. All of us are delighted to see how much has happened in such a short period of time and join in thanking God for his many gifts to us in the Vincentian Family.

Each year we write to you at this time to encourage you to begin preparing for our Vincentian Family Day of Prayer held around September 27. This Day of Prayer, which has been evaluated very positively in the many countries where our Family exists throughout the world, has also, in recent years, been the occasion for introducing a common theme or a campaign of action within the Vincentian Family.

As you begin to prepare for 2004's celebration, we offer you the following information, which we hope will be of help:

1. We have decided to continue for another year the campaign entitled "The Globalization of Charity: The Fight Against Hunger." This campaign has produced extraordinary results. We know of more than 160 projects which have been organized worldwide and recognize that there are also many others about which we have not received information. In this past year a number of projects have been initiated which aim at combatting the causes of poverty. In implementing such projects, branches of our Family in poorer countries have received significant financial aid from branches in better-off countries.

The commission responsible for organizing the "Fight Against Hunger" will soon be writing a letter to all the Vincentian Family

National Coordinating Councils summarizing what we know of the results of the campaign so far and encouraging the National Coordinators to promote action projects in which all the branches of the Family in the country, region or locality can be involved and also encouraging further projects aimed at eradicating the causes of poverty.

Since it is clear to us that collaboration in projects against hunger has been more effective in those countries where a Vincentian Family National Coordinating Council exists, we want to encourage all the countries to form such a council.

2. We also decided to extend the Campaign Against Malaria in which, for the first time in our history, the branches of the Vincentian Family are joining in a "political action" campaign to express the views of our Family with a clear, united voice, to those who have the power and the economic resources needed to effect a change in regard to malaria. At the same time, in some countries our Family is also undertaking concrete projects to reduce malaria locally.

This campaign has begun slowly, but has huge potential for saving lives. Globally there are more than 300 million acute cases of malaria each year, resulting in more than a million deaths. About 90% of these occur in Africa, mostly in young children. In fact, malaria is Africa's leading cause of death for those under five years of age.

The commission responsible for organizing the Campaign Against Malaria will soon be writing to the Vincentian Family National Coordinating Councils with concrete suggestions on how to formulate a document that might be presented, after adaptation and reformulation according to local circumstances, to government agencies or to other institutions which have the resources for combatting malaria.

3. At our meeting, we agreed on a common theme for the coming year (September 27, 2004 - September 27, 2005):

**The Year of Youth:  
Sharing the Vincentian Charism with All Generations:  
Prayer  
Formation  
Service of the Poor**

We want to encourage all the branches during the coming year to seek new, young members to share in the charism of our Vincentian Family. To assist you in presenting this common theme to the Family on September 27, several pages of materials have been attached. These can, of course, be adapted and supplemented in different countries and cultures.

As we celebrate the tenth anniversary of our annual Vincentian Family meetings and as we look forward to “The Year of Youth” within our Family, we urge all the members of our various branches to reach out to young people and share with them simply and openly the charism of St. Vincent. It is an immensely attractive one: relevant, concrete, effective. Within the branches of our Family, it manifests itself in different ways, each branch having its own particular characteristics. At the same time, much unites us. All of us focus on Christ in the poor and the poor in Christ. All of us look to St. Vincent as a principal source of inspiration. All of us seek to live and serve with simplicity, humility, and practical charity. All of us recognize that the works we do are ultimately God’s works. So we labor and pray both individually and communally, trusting in God’s daily providence in everyday life.

We conclude this annual letter with the words of St. Vincent: “Let us go then, my brothers and sisters, and work with a new love in the service of the poor, looking even for the poorest and the most abandoned, recognizing before God that they are our Lords and Masters...” (SV XI, 393). We hope that, in the year ahead, all of us will repeat these words genuinely as an invitation to young people.

Your brothers and sisters in St. Vincent,

**Anne Sturm**  
President,  
AIC  
(founded in 1617)

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

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

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

**Sr. Évelyne Franc, D.C.**  
Superior General,  
Daughters of Charity  
(founded in 1633)

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

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

**Eva Villar**  
President,  
MISEVI  
(founded in 1999)

## VINCENTIAN FAMILY THEME FOR THE YEAR

September 27, 2004 - September 27, 2005

**Theme:** We have decided on the following common *theme* for this coming year (September 27, 2004 - September 27, 2005):

**The Year of Youth:  
Sharing the Vincentian Charism with All Generations:**

**Prayer  
Formation  
Service of the Poor**

**Objective:** In the concrete, this means that every branch of the Family will focus on this objective: "Inviting more young people to join us in the service of the poor."

**Motivation:** By way of motivation, it may be helpful to know that some of the branches have been remarkably successful in recent years in recruiting new younger members (cf. the attached "Guidelines" for some examples).

**Some possibilities:** During the year, each branch is asked to devise its own means for contacting young people. Some possibilities, for example, might be:

1. In each country, each branch (AIC, CM, DC, SSVP, RSV, JMV, AMM, MISEVI) might launch a "Youth Recruitment Campaign," with the goal of enlisting more young members in the service of the poor. Each branch would design the means for carrying out this campaign (visiting universities, speaking in parishes, etc.). JMV and MISEVI could also be asked to focus during the coming year, in a renewed way, on recruiting new members. The AMM could organize a special drive during the year to acquire young members.
2. In each country a "Convocation of Vincentian Youth" from all the branches of our Family could be organized, asking each house or work of the country or province to send five to ten young people, at least half of them new. The houses of the CMs and the DCs, the local Conferences of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the local AIC groups could be asked to identify five to ten young people and send them to the Convocation. If JMV or MISEVI exists in that same country, its members could help in organizing the Convocation and as many of them as possible could take part.

At the Convocation one could present:

- concrete models for serving the poor (St. Vincent himself, Rosalie Rendu, Frederick Ozanam...);
  - the “Vincentian way” of serving the poor
    - a prayerful focus on seeing Christ in the face of the poor person,
    - concrete, practical service,
    - in coordination and friendship with others.
3. In each country, on the day of prayer (around September 27) of the Vincentian Family, the local associations (AIC, CM, DC, SSV, RSV, JMV, AMM, MISEVI) might be encouraged to invite three or four “new” young people to participate at the Eucharistic celebration or whatever other meeting was organized. This might be a good opportunity for young people to experience our prayer and, in some small way, our ongoing formation.
  4. In each country, each branch could invite young people to meet the poor, offering them concrete opportunities for joining us in serving them in our various programs. Formation could be offered to the young people before they go out to serve. Afterwards an evaluation session, with further formation, could be organized.
  5. In each country, and even on an international level, an interactive Vincentian Family website for young people could be created, inviting them to share their experiences in the service of the poor, to ask questions, or to communicate whatever thoughts they might wish to offer other young people. This same site might advertise programs to which young people are invited or projects in which they might collaborate. For example:
    - Project Vincent - July 8-10, 2004: an opportunity for young people to gather together in the Vincentian spirit to learn about and be energized in their faith. For information, contact: <http://www.projectvincent.org>.
    - Youth camp in Ukraine - summer 2005: we are looking for four animators. For information, contact AIC-Ukraine.
    - ...

A recruitment program, a convocation, participation in our Family Day of Prayer, a call to service, and an interactive website are only five means for inviting more young people into our Family. Surely many others could be devised.

## GUIDELINES VINCENTIAN FAMILY DAY OF PRAYER

September 27, 2004

### I. **Suggested Theme: The Year of Youth: Sharing the Vincentian Charism with All Generations: Prayer - Formation - Service of the Poor**

We hope that some of the following information will be helpful as you prepare this day.

#### 1. **Youth: Do we know the facts?**

Half the world's population is below 26.4 years of age. The median age in various regions, as broken down by the United Nations' Population Database, is as follows:

Africa:	18.3
Asia:	26.1
Europe:	37.7
Latin American and the Caribbean:	24.2
North America:	35.4
Oceania:	30.7

Some of the branches of our Vincentian Family have been remarkably effective in recent years in attracting young people. A few examples:

- a) In the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in England and Wales, since 1999, over 5000 new young people have engaged in voluntary service as members of the Youth SVP group.
- b) In 1998 there were JMV National Councils in six countries. In 2004, there are National Councils in 46 countries. There are 70,000 JMV members registered in the Association.
- c) In Brazil the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has more than 15,000 members under 30 years of age.
- d) In the United States 56% of all adults (more than 110 million persons) engage in some form of volunteer work. At our Vincentian universities the percentage is even higher. Eighty-six percent of those who volunteer state that they do so because they feel compassion for those in need.
- e) In Asia, the vocation programs for the Daughters of Charity have been very active and fruitful over the past six years; many young women have entered the Company in Vietnam, the Philippines, India, and Indonesia.

- f) In the Philippines, AIC has organized projects for the “Luisa’s,” young people to whom spiritual and technical formation is offered in view of service of the poor.

## 2. Calling young people to share in the Vincentian charism: a three-pronged approach

- a) **Prayer.** Many young people yearn to know how to pray. Our own Vincentian spirituality is at its best when it holds prayer and action in dynamic tension with one another. St. Vincent had the wonderful gift of being an incredibly active man while, at the same time, all those who lived around him regarded him as a contemplative.

It is important that young people feel at home in praying with us. In his document *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (33) Pope John Paul II says this: “Our Christian communities must become genuine ‘schools’ of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly ‘falls in love.’ Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God’s plan.”

So our prayer together should lead to action together. Divorced from action, prayer can turn escapist. It can lose itself in fantasy and create illusions of holiness. But on the other hand, service divorced from prayer can become shallow. It can have a driven quality about it. It can become an addiction.

It is good to offer young people the experience of different kinds of prayer: liturgical prayer, meditative prayer, imaginative prayer, centering prayer, *lectio divina*. In the Vincentian tradition, prayerful reflection on the word of God leads us to the poor. Mary’s song of praise, the Magnificat, exemplifies this type of prayer. She recognizes, in faith, that God can turn the world upside-down: casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry with good things and sending the rich away empty.

We encourage all our communities and groups to be open to offering young people the possibility to participate with us in our prayer.

- b) **Formation.** We will provide an enormous service to the Church, and to the poor, if we offer young people a vibrant, Christian, Vincentian formation. We who live in the Vincentian tradition

have a wonderful gift to offer the young. We should transmit it to them joyfully and generously.

The challenge is not just to create youth groups, but to form them well. We must help them respond to a question that Pope John Paul II posed at the end of a recent synod: "You, young people, you are 'sentinels of the morning.' [...] How is the Lord of history asking you to build a civilization of love? You have a keen sense of what honesty and sincerity require. You do not want to be caught up into divisive ethnic struggles nor poisoned by the gangrene of corruption. How can we be disciples of Jesus together and put into practice Christ's teaching on the Mount of the Beatitudes?"

It is important to offer young people long-range, ongoing formation. This can take place in a brief weekly or monthly meeting that is linked with their prayer and/or apostolic service. It can also take place through some type of regular reading material (a newsletter, a bulletin, etc.) which is given to them and discussed with them. An occasional intensive moment of formation is also important, like a workshop or a retreat. Many formation materials are available on our websites.

- c) **Service of the poor.** Initiate young people into simple forms of service of the poor, even at an early age. A number of the branches of our Family have been quite successful in doing this: distributing clothing and food at centers for the homeless, helping younger pupils with schoolwork after school, offering friendship to lonely people by visiting them, assisting those with learning and physical difficulties at rehabilitation centers, reading to the homebound or the sight-impaired. Invite young people to serve the poor with us. This is another way of sharing our charism.

## II. Organizational Guidelines

### Possible Scripture Readings

- Jeremiah 1:4-10
  - 1 Samuel 16:1, 4-13a
  - 1 Timothy 4:12-16
  - Matthew 5:1-12
1. The heads of the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, AIC, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, JMV, MISEVI, the Miraculous Medal Association, and the Religious of St. Vincent de Paul in each city or area should meet as soon as possible in order to begin to plan the prayer celebration. After

receiving this letter, would you please contact one another by phone or other suitable means as soon as possible. To facilitate this matter, we ask the superior of the Congregation of the Mission in each area to initiate these contacts. If there are no members of the Congregation of the Mission in the area, then we ask the superior of the Daughters of Charity to be the initiator. If there is a Vincentian Family Coordinating Council in the country, it will be easier to organize this celebration.

2. Please invite the other branches of the Vincentian Family in your area to join in this celebration (e.g., other groups of laity, sisters, brothers, or priests living in the Vincentian spirit). This year, as we celebrate "The Year of Youth," it is especially important that the young feel at home at our celebrations. Our gathering can be an opportune moment for them to know men and women who share St. Vincent's vision. It is important to give a special place to young people in this celebration.
3. We encourage you too to provide for the participation of the poor, who evangelize us by their presence.
4. The day of prayer could include a common celebration of the Eucharist or some other communal service, according to the circumstances in each area. If a Mass is not possible, one might envision a celebration of the word, with readings, hymns, prayers, sharing of thoughts, etc. In other contexts, one could envision a "Holy Hour," with the usual liturgical actions (processions, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, readings, etc.).
5. During the celebration, the prayer of the Vincentian Family, distributed two years ago, could be said together. All could be encouraged to use this prayer frequently in their group meetings and, even daily, personally.
6. One could also organize, depending on the circumstances, a moment for ongoing formation and/or for relaxed social contact.
7. The celebration should be organized on or around September 27, in accord with what date would best promote the participation of the various members of our family. It is important that the celebration be truly *communal*, with the active participation of members of the various branches. A wise distribution of roles will guarantee that all associations take part in the organization process.
8. The readings listed above or any of the readings suggested for the Mass of St. Vincent may be used (cf. Lectionary of the Congregation of the Mission), along with, if you judge it helpful, other appropriate selections from St. Vincent's writings. Much will depend on the kind of celebration that is organized in each area. A prayer of the faithful should be prepared with intentions

contributed by members of the various branches of the Vincentian Family.

9. In order to raise consciousness about our annual day of prayer, about “The Year of Youth,” about our campaign against hunger, and about our “political action” campaign against malaria, we suggest the following:
  - a) the use of various media to publicize them: articles in the press, announcements on the radio, television, etc.
  - b) the use of our international, national, and local web pages to publicize them.
10. We hope that, around September 27, our Family in each country might evaluate the projects that have been organized for the Campaign Against Hunger and the Campaign Against Malaria and make new commitments.

# FEATURE:

## *“New Missions” of the C.M.*

### New Dawn in the East: The Vice-Province of SS. Cyril and Methodius

by Paul Roche, C.M.

*Vice-Visitor of SS. Cyril and Methodius*

*Unless you are very close friend, being asked to look through the Family Photo Album can be rather tedious! With this in mind, I have tried to reflect on what might be of interest to all readers — not just those who know the Vice-Province directly.*

#### **1. Origins**

The birth of the Vice-Province on 1 January 2001 was a little untypical of how vice-provinces generally start. It was not a case of a mission from a mother province gradually developing and becoming strong enough to stand alone. Instead it was the bringing together of five separate missions. These missions were quite distant from one another in three different countries of the former USSR; they worked separately under the guidance of their home provinces. The Polish Province was responsible for two of them, Slovakia for a third, and the remaining two were International Missions directly under the Superior General. There was very considerable energy and enthusiasm in each of these missions and remarkable progress had been made before there was any plan to merge them together.

**Belarus.** The present Vincentian mission in Belarus, which was resumed in 1990, is in fact a continuation of a much longer presence, which actually survived through the communist era in the

remarkable person of Fr. Michal Woroniecki. Fr. Michal was arrested in Lyskovo (Belarus) in 1949 and spent seven years in exile in Kazakhstan. On being set free he returned to nearby Ruzhany, and spent the next 34 years labouring alone in a very large area of Western Belarus. His final years were spent as Spiritual Director of the seminary in Grodno. At present five Polish confreres work in this region not far from the Polish border, in an area which was part of Poland up to the end of World War II. Four of these confreres work in separate but neighbouring parishes, while the fifth works in the Diocesan Seminary in Grodno.

**Ukraine.** By the time the new Vice-Province began in 2001, Ukraine was already home to three separate Vincentian Missions. 1) Slovakian confreres were working in the Zakarpatye region of Western Ukraine, directly across the border from Slovakia. They made their centre at **Perečín**, and took responsibility for a number of parishes in the neighbourhood. The area has a very large Greek Catholic community, and a much smaller Orthodox presence. Vocations were attracted and our first two Ukrainian confreres were ordained for the Slovakian Province in June 2000. 2) In the southwestern Ukrainian region of Bukovina (on the border with Romania) the Polish Province had a mission dating back to 1992. It centres in the town of **Storozyniec**, but covers a very wide area with a total of 15 churches and Mass centres. The area is poor and has a variety of nationalities and religions living there: Ukrainian, Polish, Hungarian, Romanian and a small German community. The people give allegiance to Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches, and a number of sects have recently been established. As in most of the areas where we work, there was a thriving Jewish community here up to World War II, but no more! Here too vocations to the Congregation have resulted from the tireless work of the confreres and Daughters of Charity. The first of these was ordained in May 2001. 3) The third Vincentian Mission in Ukraine to be incorporated into the new Vice-Province was the International Mission in the city of **Kharkiv**. This was started in 1995 and combined Slovakian and Polish confreres. Kharkiv is a city in eastern Ukraine, and was capital of the country during the Soviet era. The people of Kharkiv are mainly Russian speaking, and the city has a Russian feel to it. Catholics are a very small proportion of the population. Vincentian life here revolves around a very fine Social/Pastoral Centre and Parish Church, which were built directly by the confreres, who began with nothing other than an abandoned orphanage in 1995.

**Russian Federation.** The final mission which was incorporated into the new Vice-Province in 2001 was the International Mission in the remote Ural Region of Russia. It is more than 1,600 kilometres east of Moscow, and is in Asia rather than Europe. The community

there has combined Slovenian and Polish confreres since it began in 1997. The centre of this mission is Nižnij Tagiĭ, an industrial city of over 450,000 inhabitants. One of the main centres of the armament industry of the Soviet Union, it is only in recent years that it is gradually finding a new purpose in life. The Catholic population here, and in the other centres which the confreres care for in this region, are mainly of German or Polish origin and many are the children of those who were exiled by Stalin to exploit the mineral resources of that inhospitable region.

## **2. Works of the Vice-Province**

We are mainly engaged in parishes. This has been the request of the various bishops. In each of these areas, while the number of church-going Catholics is relatively small, there are any amount of social problems, and a real absence of welfare support. Poverty abounds in both cities and rural areas; broken homes are almost the rule; alcoholism and, increasingly, drug abuse wreak havoc in people's lives; unemployment gives rise to despair. There is a great need for the hope that the Gospel can bring. We are trying to respond to these needs as a Vincentian Family. In practically all the missions of the Vice-Province, the confreres work with the Daughters of Charity from Poland and Slovakia. They bring their gentleness and compassion to many a desperate life. The AIC is alive and active in a couple of the missions, and hopefully will gradually begin in each place. The support and encouragement we are receiving from the international leadership is greatly appreciated. The Vincentian Marian Youth has begun in the past year, and each area has groups of youth looking for the sort of Christian formation and involvement that JMV offers. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is the longest established of the lay Vincentian groups and is already making a very worthwhile contribution in the struggle against poverty, especially in Kharkiv.

At the first Assembly of the Vice-Province, held in September 2003, we adopted as a norm for the Vice-Province that each Vincentian community must establish and run a project of direct service of the poor. This is virtually the case already, and some of the missions have more than one such programme.

## **3. Membership of the Vice-Province**

The membership of the Vice-Province is gradually changing from being a group of foreign missionaries to a community of confreres born and reared here. Five Ukrainian confreres have already been ordained priests in the Congregation and this year we will hopefully have two more deacons. In addition we have a further eight students

(one of whom is Belarussian), studying philosophy and theology in the diocesan seminary near Kiev.

I can imagine that it was the fact of these vocations, which convinced those responsible to decide to start a new Vice-Province. Other indicators might be less encouraging. Catholics are a small minority in virtually all the places we work and financial support is minimal — and there is little realistic hope of much improvement in the immediate future. Also it is difficult to develop a sense of unity in a huge region where we are separated into different countries with very different legal, political, economic and social conditions. Language differences too are very real. We have adopted Russian as our official language, even though it is the first language of just two of our 33 members. To move from one house to another of the Vice-Province frequently involves getting a visa, and generally requires a new language — our ministry is in Polish, Ukrainian, Slovakian, Russian, Belarussian, German and, if we had it, Hungarian and Romanian, and hopefully soon also Lithuanian. In Vilnius, Lithuania, we hope eventually to regain the beautiful Gothic Church and large former seminary of the Polish Province.

In this widespread Vice-Province I travel a lot by train, and on average spend four or five days a month looking out train windows, as the snowy landscapes gradually give way to mile after mile of corn and sunflower under bright blue skies, as winter changes to summer.

The city of Kiev is the centre of the Vice-Province. Presently we are engaged in building a house for our students, and appropriately it is very close to the central railway station. At least for the present the new house will also be the home of our Internal Seminary, in addition to being the beginning of a city parish and a base for our direct work with the poor.

#### **4. Sons of St. Vincent de Paul in the former USSR**

Ours is far from being the most difficult mission of the Congregation, not the poorest, nor the most remote. Yet it does have some distinguishing marks. I pick out just two: *i*) We work in a land with a marvellous Christian tradition dating back more than 1,000 years. However this tradition is suspicious and at times even hostile to our Roman Catholicism. The Orthodox Church has produced a host of great saints and has passed on the salvation of Christ to succeeding generations. How should we respond? *ii*) We are working among a people whose political and social framework is only gradually readjusting after 70 years of atheistic communism.

Both these factors colour much of our life and work, and any plans we might have for the future must take them into account.

**i) *Evangelising in an Orthodox world***

It is now almost 1,000 years since the tragic and scandalous division of Christianity between East and West. Each has developed its traditions separately from the other, and with the passing of time the differences have become more and more pronounced. Suspicion and fear have grown, and both sides are cut off from the life and energy of the other. We need each other. The Holy Father constantly uses the image of the Christian Church as a body with two healthy lungs, rather than someone puffing along on one lung. East and West have need of each other and can draw life from each other as well as give vitality and depth. We have something to offer and much to gain from the world in which we live.

Matt Molloy is an Irish traditional musician, and leader of the music group, *The Chieftains*. Recently he has written his autobiography, and recalls his experience going back 40 years or more. In the 1960s they played on the Great Wall of China, played in communist East Germany, Africa, Cuba, America — really all over the world. What were they trying to do? To get everyone to play Irish music? Surely not. He insists that far from imposing our music on others, his wish is to use Irish music to draw out the music from the hearts and souls of other peoples. They must be proud of their own music and traditions; it is part of their identity. Celebrate it — and do not just rely on pop and rock music from the west. It struck me as something similar to what we are trying to do here, as a small group of priests. We are not here to bring God to a people without God. We are here so that the people will discover and come to love the God who is with them already. They already possess the treasure; they must rediscover and celebrate it.

For all this to happen some humble listening is vital. We need to listen well in order to identify the real needs of the people, and avoid the danger of answering our questions — not theirs. I think we can well be guided by the four basic thrusts of evangelisation as found in the Gospel:

***Koinonia*** — friendship — welcome — to provide the people with a real sense of belonging. Can we help to form a Christian community which accepts, loves, forgives and supports the individual?

***Diakonia*** — service. From the very outset, this was a clear mark of the Christian community. They cared for one another, rich supporting the poor, residents welcoming strangers, etc. This is also the tradition of the Vincentian Family, and very much suggests itself in a region where so many people find it difficult to make ends meet.

***Kerygma*** — proclamation, in season and out of season. So much of the life of Christ was devoted to teaching the people, often freeing

them from the burdens of tradition and law which had been laid on them by their religious leaders. This is something which also marks out the Vincentian way of evangelisation — from the example of Vincent himself. It is something very much needed here today. People are spontaneously devout, but have very little knowledge of the Christian Faith, without which real commitment is scarcely possible.

*Eucharistia* — thanks and praise. This is the summit and heart of the Christian life, and the goal to which all our work ultimately leads. It is however the final destiny rather than a starting point.

If we go no further than the first two steps, we are truly evangelising. When Jesus healed the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter, he gave the mother all she wanted and told her to go home happy. There was no demand that she be in the synagogue that Saturday!

Many people — not just young people — may not yet be interested in the third and fourth steps of evangelisation; they may not yet be ready. Perhaps this is because they have not yet experienced the first steps, true friendship and support. We can only help others towards healthy change in so far as we love them. Jesus, Vincent, Justin de Jacobis and all the great evangelisers, loved people into the Kingdom.

Our society here is changing at a rate much faster than we knew in the West. Old certainties are turned upside down; people seek meaning. Many feel themselves left out, passed by. What they first need may well be support and encouragement, rather than sermons and Eucharist. (It sometimes strikes me that some of the newly arrived sects here appreciate this better than we do).

## ii) *The Gospel after 70 years of communism*

As someone coming from the West I am very conscious of the recent history of the Soviet world. However walking down the central streets of Kiev, one is struck by how young and energetic the city is. People under 20 years of age scarcely remember communism, and are little concerned about it. During the German occupation of Kiev in 1942-1943 more than 100,000 people were executed in the woody ravine, Babi Yar, not far from the centre of the city. Kharkiv and many other cities had similar experiences. Earlier, in 1932-1933, as many as 7 million inhabitants of Ukraine died in a man-made famine associated with the Stalinist programme of enforced collectivisation. The scars and trauma which must result from such a brutal history, not to mention the Chernobyl catastrophe (and the immediate cover-up that accompanied it), may provide a starting point for the light and healing of the Gospel.

Generally the communist experience has resulted in people being more passive and dependant on government than is the case in the West. (How much of this is actually an Eastern way of viewing things, rather than a product of communism, is another question). The individual generally counts for less than the collective and people tend to view themselves in this way. Authority is respected and generally unquestioned, and political leaders (Church ones too) can continue in a very authoritarian fashion, and in some sense are expected to do so. It has also been observed — and I think largely correctly — that communism greatly damaged the moral values of the people, but left their religiosity intact.

All of this makes for very confusing signals: people appearing so devout, yet living lives in sharp variance with the Gospel. Much of what we are about, and are trying to do here, involves inculcating different attitudes and understanding from that which is prevalent in society. Christian help is not easily distinguished from the government welfare of before and people try to take advantage of it and get all they can for themselves.

With the end of the Soviet era, there was no great rush to religion and worship. After more than 13 years of independence, I would say perhaps 5% of the population of Kiev (at most), regularly goes to church on Sunday. Formal church going does not appear to hold a very central place in the lives of most people. Can it be that, as in the West, we face a long task of making the Gospel relevant to people, first by the way we live, and then by our preaching and teaching.

I am frequently struck by the fact that many in the Orthodox Church and also in the government are also engaged in caring for the poor, the elderly, the sick, the abandoned of the places where we work. I sometimes wonder if there is more that we can do to cooperate with these groups, rather than set out to create Catholic and Vincentian works in parallel with theirs. Working side by side with Orthodox priests in caring for the poor might be a much more realistic way of restoring unity and understanding than theological debate. This possibility is not available in every place, but certainly it is in some instances.

## **Conclusion**

As I look back over three years here, I give thanks to God for the progress that is being made in establishing the creative and practical Christianity of St. Vincent de Paul. The progress has not just been since January 2001, but ever since the first Vincentians and Daughters of Charity returned after the formal end of communism. They have been responding with great and sometimes heroic

generosity. However everything we are trying to do depends on the financial and moral support we have been receiving from individuals and provinces around the world. Any achievements we have made here are also the achievements of our supporters. I wish to record my deepest gratitude to you, and promise the only return I can make, to regularly call the blessing of God on you in Mass and prayer.

The feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodius on 14 February has largely been eclipsed in the West by St. Valentine's Day. However in this part of the world, these 9<sup>th</sup> century missionary brothers, from Thessalonica, Greece, are greatly loved and venerated by Orthodox and Catholics alike. They are our heavenly patrons and I entrust our future to them. They will teach us how to belong here, and also offer us the example of combining the monastic and apostolic way of life.



Vice-Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius: first meeting of all the members of the new Vice-Province (Kiev - Ukraine, September 2002). At the meeting, the Superior General, Fr. Józef Kapuściak (Assistant General) and the Visitors of Hungary, Poland and Slovakia also participated.

*Vincentiana*, novembre-décembre 2005

## The International House at El Alto, Bolivia

by Franc Pavlič, C.M.

*Province of Slovenia*

The house of the Vincentian Community in El Alto, Bolivia, is located about 20 minutes from the international airport of the capital of this nation, La Paz. This same house is about eight hours from the rural mission area where we minister (on the Peruvian border). During the rainy season (which lasts for three months) and the time of roadblocks (which lasts for two months), communication between the city and the mission is impossible.

The place where we work is noted for its high altitude: an average of almost 4,000 meters above sea level, and includes communities of the altiplano that are between 2,600 and 4,800 meters. The population is peasants, very poor and their language is mainly Aymara (with some exceptions where the people speak Quechua). The root of the material poverty is the spiritual poverty. The people were evangelized 400 years ago but in their heart and mind they have maintained their traditions. Therefore there is a passive resistance toward the Good News, though there are some exceptions of committed people who proclaim and live the faith. The root of this resistance is historical (the domination of the masters over the natives which continues even today) and political (the original trade unions wanted to implant a new system that is cruel: a form of "native communism").

During the 1950s, some missionaries from the then Pacific Province worked among the Aymara and Quechuan of our rural area and the altiplano. Some confreres worked in the seminaries. The first missionary who remained in the actual work area of the international mission of El Alto was Fr. Manuel Blanco, C.M., a Spaniard. He was a true Vincentian pioneer here and he ministered in a very extensive area (Puerto Acosta, Umanata, Mocomoco and Italaque). His words and his character are still present in the hearts and minds of the people, especially the catechists.

Fr. Bernard Massarini, C.M., French, came to the mission in 1994. A while later, Fr. Bogusław Sroka, C.M., Polish, arrived. They

worked in the area that was “ours” until 1997. Frs. Aarón Gutiérrez and Homero Elías, Mexicans, arrived in 1995. Fr. Homero ministered in Italaque and Fr. Aarón in Umanata. Two years later, Fr. Krzysztof Wrześniak, Polish, volunteered and began to work in Mocomoco. With the arrival, however, of Fr. Rafał Brukarczyk, also Polish, a change was made. Fr. Krzysztof began to minister in two parish chapels in El Alto and with the Vincentian Family in the country, while Father Rafał worked in Mocomoco.

With the arrival of Fr. Abdo Eid, C.M., Lebanese, in 1998, the house had a formator. Fr. Homero left the mission at the end of 1999 and Fr. Aarón who was working in Umanata since 2001, was named the Director of the Daughters of Charity in Mexico. The last two missionaries to arrive on the mission were Frs. Franc Pavlič, Slovenian, and Aníbal Vera, Peruvian. Fr. Franc works in Italaque and Fr. Aníbal in Umanata, El Alto and with the Vincentian Family.

At present, Fr. Abdo works in the area of formation, Fr. Rafał in Mocomoco, Fr. Franc in Italaque and Fr. Aníbal in Umanata, El Alto and with the Vincentian Family. We still need two confreres who are willing to volunteer in order to cover the basic needs of the International House; that is, one for the mission and another for the pastoral ministry in the rural area. The following are the lines of action for our ministry.

## 1. Education

*a)* The formation of the seminarians is done in Chile. Before sending them there, however, Fr. Abdo prepares the candidates for one year in Chaskipampa. The candidates in whom a vocation “is perceived” are sent to Chile to continue their formation and studies. The reason for sending them there is to provide them with a place where they can prepare themselves well in the Vincentian vocation and so that they can return afterwards and work in our mission of Bolivia.

*b)* In two alternative secondary educational centers in Umanata and Italaque, we prepare young people and adults so that they might have a better future in obtaining work. Those who have to travel a long distance, eat and sleep at these centers.

*c)* Through means of the day care centers (in Umanata and Italaque) we help the children by providing them with nutritious food and caring for their health, hygiene, pre-school education, etc. During the meetings with their parents, we insist on the importance of the family and education.

*d)* In Mocomoco, Fr. Rafał has taken the first steps in working with the JMV. In Umanata and Italaque, as well as in the two chapels of El Alto, youth groups have been formed. The three parishes in the

rural area have dedicated much effort to the formation of catechists and sacramental preparation. Beginning this year, there is also a football (soccer) school in Italaque. The confrere there wants, through sports programs for children and teenagers (there are more than 70 students in the different communities), to help them overcome longstanding animosities and bloody quarrels among the communities.

## **2. The Vincentian Family**

Fr. Krzysztof began to meet with and encourage the different lay groups in Bolivia, which were dispersed throughout this large country. Fr. Aníbal has continued this work, visiting the lay groups, encouraging them, assisting them in organizing, etc. Today the problem of dispersion has been overcome and the groups know one another within the country. They are in a much better situation: they know one another better, plan their work and undertake missions with the support of the Daughters of Charity in Bolivia. Fr. Aníbal gives retreats and formation talks to the different groups of the Vincentian Family.

## **3. Pastoral Work**

The three parishes of the rural area have the same pastoral lines of action. For this reason, we have no problems with mutual assistance and collaboration. Time and energy are dedicated to visiting the communities spread out in the mountains and plains of the Cordillera of the Andes. The catechists who have been formed and are committed are our collaborators in these communities. We also take seriously the pastoral lines of actions of the Diocese of El Alto and we believe that we have enriched them with our own charism. According to the bishop our parishes are alive and are always searching for an adequate pastoral approach to the people.

The work of Fr. Abdo in the diocesan seminary should be highlighted, as well as his vocational work together with the Daughters of Charity and other congregations in Bolivia. Before he leaves Bolivia, Father Rafał wants to furnish the new day care center that he built in Mocomoco. In Italaque, the rural university, "San Vicente de Paúl," is about one-third completed. He is seeking financial assistance in order to complete the construction. And, with the help of God, we also hope to have a home for the elderly of the entire Department of La Paz, for those who have been abandoned by their families in the rural area.

#### 4. The Future

We are in urgent need of two more Vincentians to continue the activities in which we are currently engaged. We are overwhelmed with work but happy to be able to serve these people who have been forgotten and abandoned in their material and spiritual poverty. We would be able to continue and strengthen our basic activities with these new volunteers. Within a few years we hope to be able to reinforce the pastoral work with the help of the first Bolivian missionaries who are currently in formation in Chile.

This last point is crucial for the International House in El Alto: **all the religious Congregations have their house of formation in the city of Cochabamba.** The Vincentians are the only exception. The city of Cochabamba has a better university (theology) than La Paz. This fact has to be taken into consideration to give the young Bolivians the possibility of being formed *in* Bolivia and *for* Bolivia — for a future **“Vincentian Region in Bolivia.”** In this way the economic support that we receive from the Curia for the students in Chile could be reduced. If this proposal were to be accepted then the door would be open **to restructuring the House in El Alto**, and we would have the possibility **of opening a new house in Cochabamba** (where we could count on the support of more priest volunteers since the climate is better, the altitude not as high, the political situation less conflictive and there is more security for the pastoral, social, and educational work). I do not mean to imply that we should abandon the “dangerous” Altiplano, but rather that we should think about **moving out** into other areas while maintaining the work that is already in place. The distance between El Alto and Cochabamba would not be a serious problem because we would be able to communicate daily with one another by radio (as the Daughters of Charity in Beni and the priests and the bishops in some vicariates of Bolivia do). In fact, this type of communication already exists among the three parishes in the rural area (Umanata, Mocomoco and Italaque). The missionaries work here wholeheartedly! We ask that, in any case, these suggestions be analyzed by the Curia. Moving to Cochabamba would also open us to a greater possibility of economic self-sufficiency.

(CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M., translator)

# The Mission of Rwanda and Burundi

by Juan Ávila, C.M.

*Province of Colombia*

## Introduction

Because of the war which began in 1990 and ended in 1998, and of the double genocide which Rwanda suffered in those years, some bishops, many priests, religious and pastoral agents were killed and many others had to flee to different countries of Africa and Europe.

The Diocese of Ruhengeri, in northern Rwanda, was left without a bishop (he had fled together with the population, and his return was held up by the army and he disappeared) and with just five foreign priests and one Rwandan.

In 1997, the Administrator of the Diocese, Bishop Antonio Martínez, M.A., petitioned the Superior General of the Community to come to his aid, especially in the minor seminary in Nkumba and in a parish. Joined to this request was another from the Daughters of Charity of the Central African Region that a C.M. come to offer them spiritual assistance.

The Superior General, Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M., sent out a circular letter inviting the confreres to go to the missions *ad gentes*, among which was Rwanda; later he offered the Colombian Province the possibility of taking over this mission.

Fr. Aurelio Lodoño, Visitor of Colombia, visited the country together with Fr. Victor Bieler, C.M., Assistant General for the Missions. The report of this visit was presented to the Provincial Assembly which met at the end of 1997. At the time the petition was presented, the province's contract with the National Seminary in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where it had worked for 18 years, was ending. The Assembly received the petition with great enthusiasm. Fr. Gabriel Naranjo, C.M. was now the Visitor; he and his council named as missionaries Frs. José Antonio González, C.M., Luis Ariel Ramírez, C.M. and Juan Ávila, C.M. Their job would be to work in the Minor Seminary and in the parish of Busogo in Ruhengeri.

In March of 1998 the three missionaries left for Belgium where the confreres of that region received them with a warm welcome and sent them to study in the French Language Institute for missionaries.

The unstable situation in Rwanda persisted so that it was impossible to go there at that time. The visa for Belgium had also

expired. Meanwhile, on 27 June, Bishop Kizito Bahujimihigo was appointed as Bishop of Ruhengeri. It was impossible to get in touch with him. In the beginning it seemed possible to get as far as Nemba, where the Daughters of Charity had a house, but they had to leave it for security reasons. Then came the idea of going to Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the Daughters of Charity were taking care of refugees. But the Daughters also had to leave there. The Visitor of the Congo, Fr. Janusz Zwolinski, C.M., invited us to go to the Congo in order to open up the possibility of this province also working in Congo Brazzaville, but the offer was not accepted so as not to confuse the original intent of the mission. Finally the three confreres had to return to Colombia since the idea of reaching the Rwanda mission had failed.

A week after they had returned to Colombia, the Superior General sent a letter to the Visitor, Fr. Gabriel Naranjo, C.M., communicating the desire of the Regional Superior of the Daughters of Charity that a confrere go to collaborate in the formation of the Daughters of Charity. Fr. Naranjo named Fr. Juan Ávila who set out for France in November 1998.

## **1. A Brief Description of the two countries: Rwanda and Burundi**

The two countries have a similar history. Each has three tribes: *Hutu* (the vast majority), *Tutsi* and *Batwa*. Even the languages of both places, Kinyarwanda and Kirundi, are very close. Some facts about the two countries:

### **1.1. Rwanda**

The country is located in East Central Africa with an area of 26,338 square kilometers and a population of 8,000,000, with a density of 303 people per km<sup>2</sup>. Rwanda is basically an agricultural country; the urban population is barely 6%. The official languages are Kinyarwanda, French and English. In the countryside only Kinyarwanda is known. The capital is Kigali which is in the center of the country and has a population of about 500,000. The next most important cities are Butare (a university city), Ruhengeri and Gisenyi.

Rwanda is known as “the country of a thousand hills.” Besides the volcanoes and mountain ranges in the north of the country, the greater part of its territory is crisscrossed by constant hills which get lower as they advance toward the south and east. The great majority of the people practice farming and the basic food crops are: beans, sweet potatoes, potatoes and corn. They also cultivate plantain and sorghum used in the making of the native beer and as part of

the daily diet. In some very limited areas tea and coffee are grown for export.

The salary for a farmer who works a full day is 300 Rwandan francs. In February 2004, the dollar was worth 595 francs and a euro was worth 640 francs. The educational level is rather low and the illiteracy rate is 45%. Added to this, and basically because of the war, studies were practically suspended from 1994 to 1998 so that those who were studying had to begin again at a more advanced age and some stopped studying altogether.

The government is a moderate dictatorship. In August 2003 democratic elections were held and the man already in power was elected with an overwhelming 95% majority. The reality we lived in certain areas of the country (except for the capital and a couple of important cities) was that there were no free elections. Everyone had to vote for the incumbent president for fear of being labeled a "divisionist." The vote was not secret, but rather guided by agents to obtain the desired result. But it should be recognized that, thanks to this president, there is a peace that, although imposed, allows the country to live tranquilly.

The people of Rwanda are very religious. More than 60% are Catholic; 25% are animists (the traditional religion); the rest of the population is divided between different churches and sects and Islam. The United States government supports the spread of the sects, just as it does in other parts of the Third World. There are nine dioceses and each one has a minor seminary. There is one national major seminary. The preparatory study is done in the Archdiocese of Kigali, philosophy in Kabgayi and theology in the Diocese of Butare. Vocations are abundant, and right now all the cycles of the Major Seminary are filled to capacity.

## **1.2. Burundi**

The country is located in East Central Africa, southeast of Rwanda, with an area of 27,834 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 6,500,000 giving it a density of 234 inhabitants per square kilometer. Burundi is basically agricultural; the urban population is barely 9%. The official languages are Kirundi and French. Only Kirundi is spoken in the countryside. The capital is Bujumbura, situated in the western part of the country near Lake Tanganyika, with a population of about 350,000 inhabitants. The next most important cities are Gitega and Ngozi.

Burundi is a mountainous country, but with fewer and lower hills than Rwanda. Like Rwanda, Burundi is principally agricultural with basically the same products as Rwanda, although the climate is better for fruit. The living conditions are more deficient than in

Rwanda, so that a farmer's income is only slightly more than half of what it is in Rwanda.

The educational level is quite low. Illiteracy is estimated at about 50%. The war, which began in 1993 and is just ending now, has exacerbated the educational situation. After many national and international peace efforts, ways to achieve it are just beginning to be seen. The guerillas have caused thousands of deaths (among them the Apostolic Nuncio, assassinated on 29 December 2003), causing the impoverishment of the people and forced migration towards the capital and the borders of the country. At this moment, only one guerrilla group refuses to enter into a peace dialogue.

The Burundi people are very religious. Fifty-five percent are Catholic, 25% practice the traditional religion and the rest belong to the different churches and sects and Islam. There are seven dioceses in Burundi and four of them have minor seminaries. There is also a national major seminary with a large number of seminarians.

## **2. The C.M. in Rwanda and Burundi**

To the request of the Apostolic Administrator of Ruhengeri was added that of the Bishop of Musinga, Burundi, asking the C.M. to come and take charge of the parish of Ruzo, directed up until then by the Xaverians from Parma. On 7 December 1998 Fr. Juan Ávila, C.M., arrived in Rwanda to give spiritual assistance to the Daughters of Charity and to study the possibility of the Community's coming to work in Ruhengeri in Rwanda and in Musinga in Burundi.

The Daughters of Charity had already founded the Central African Region which comprises the countries of Rwanda and Burundi. And they had established, among other houses, those of Ruzo in Musinga and of Nemba in Ruhengeri. Their presence favored our going to these two places. After seeing the situation in the Ruzo parish and speaking with the bishop at that time, Jean Berckmans Ntere, it was agreed to accept this parish. To that end Fr. Rogelio Toro, C.M., was sent and arrived in Rwanda in August of 1999. After a few days of adaptation, he traveled to Ruzo to take charge of the parish. He was alone there for almost two months until Fr. Alirio de Jesús Ceballos, C.M., arrived to become part of the team.

The parish is small in extension and is made up of six "mission stations" which are located at an average distance of 15 minutes by vehicle from the parish center. The Xaverian Fathers were developing an interesting social promotion work with the support of the Daughters of Charity: water supply, a crafts center, goat raising, crops and housing construction. They were also constructing two beautiful chapels in two of the mission stations. Meanwhile, Fr. Ávila continued on in Rwanda, studying Kinyarwanda and helping in small

ways with the formation of the Daughters of Charity. The unstable conditions prevalent at that time did not allow traveling to any of the priest-less parishes in the Diocese of Ruhengeri.

In June of 1999, Fr. Ávila began his work in the parish in Nemba, although a permanent presence there was not advisable. The pastor was in Spain waiting to return when circumstances would permit it. In the parish there was an atmosphere of real spiritual hunger, because the lay people were caring for it and a priest could only come once in a while to celebrate the Eucharist. The parish is extensive. There are seven "mission stations" between 40 and 75 minutes by vehicle from the parish center.

On 16 October of the same year Fr. Orlando Yesit Fonseca, C.M., arrived in Rwanda to work in this parish. He came with Fr. Ceballos who was assigned to the parish in Ruza. Two days later the former pastor, Fr. José Cabayol, a *Fidei donum* priest from the diocese of Tarragona, arrived. We found a very interesting pastoral program, the fruit of the labors of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers). The lay people play an important role in the pastoral work. The parishes are subdivided into "centers" or "mission stations." In each place there is a good-sized chapel where the Sunday celebration is held. Many Catholics attend the celebration: the chapels are filled for the two or three Sunday celebrations. The lay people are the ones who normally preside at the Sunday celebration. We go to celebrate in these "stations" once or twice a month, but not always on Sunday. The purpose of our presence there is mainly to celebrate the sacraments of the Eucharist, Baptism, Reconciliation and Matrimony. Of course, we also use the occasion to visit the Basic Christian Communities, the Catholic Action Groups and some groups of poor or orphans.

Each "center" is subdivided into Basic Christian Communities, established by area and made up of no less than 15 nor more than 25 families. This is the base, so to speak, of Christian life in the parish, for it is there that the Christians are followed more closely, where they receive individual spiritual support and where decisions are made about the advisability of receiving the sacraments or helping a particular poor person. By way of example: the Nemba parish has 489 Basic Christian Communities. In each one there are four people in charge and 12 ministers dedicated to the care of the sick, the poor, the catechumens, those who have difficulties living the Christian faith, the liturgy, the music, etc.

On 9 January 2001 two other confreres arrived to form part of the team, Frs. William Alonso Marín Saldarriaga, C.M., and Julio César García, C.M. The former was assigned to Ruza and the latter to Nemba. On 1 May 2001 the Central African Region of the Daughters of Charity was made a province. Sr. Sabina Iragui, D.C., was named

the first Visitatrix and she took possession on the 31<sup>st</sup> of the same month. The naming of the Director took some time. Fr. Fenelón Castillo, C.M., was assigned and he came to Rwanda on 6 April 2002, becoming a member of the Nemba Community.

### **2.1. Vocations**

Little by little young men interested in joining the C.M. began to present themselves. They are young men encouraged by the Daughters of Charity or by the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul of Lendelen who work in the Dioceses of Ruhengeri or of Goma (Congo). We waited a while before beginning to give a positive response. Finally we made the decision to receive the first two: Jean Sauveur Cyiza and Emmanuel Imanahamwenatwe. They went through a long period of experiencing the community in the Nemba parish and were later (3 September 2001) sent to begin their formal formation in Cameroon where they did the preparatory instruction and the first year of philosophy. Our sincere thanks to our confreres in Cameroon for such fraternal welcome and assistance. Meanwhile, at the beginning of 2001 a new aspirant joined the community, Jean Pierre Kashori; a year later he was sent to do his Internal Seminary in Colombia. The petitions kept coming, and seeing this as the work of God, we consulted the province about the advisability of beginning a preparatory school in Rwanda.

On the occasion of the canonical visit of Fr. José Ignacio Fernández de Mendoza, the Vicar General, who was accompanied by Fr. Guillermo Campuzano, a Councillor of the Colombian Province, three important decisions were made: to petition that the mission become a Region, to continue the formation of our own candidates in Rwanda, and to take charge of the parish of Rwisabi in the diocese of Ngozi, Burundi. These three decisions were accepted by the General Council and our Provincial Council. But one problem remained unresolved: there were too few confreres to respond to the challenges. And so the work began on 27 September 2002 in the Nemba parish, in a house of the parish that the diocese of Ruhengeri graciously lent to us. It began with 12 young men: three from Burundi, two from the Congo and seven from Rwanda. Fr. Orlando Yesit Fonseca was appointed director.

The experience we have initiated should continue. At present we have in formation one man who just finished his pastoral year, seven in philosophy in the seminary in Kabgayi (one in second year and six in first), eight in the preparatory stage in Kabgayi. Two confreres are in charge of the house: the superior who is also the Director of the Daughters of Charity, and the Treasurer. They take charge of the classes in the preparatory school with the help of the parish priests and a professor of French.

### **3. Challenges**

The Vocation Pastoral Program has become one of our great challenges. There are numerous vocations and, without our having to do any advertising, many candidates show up at our door. We do not have the capacity of knowing our aspirants well enough or even of visiting their families. There are very few formators, just two; and one of them has other important responsibilities to attend. The economic poverty of our candidates is striking. Moreover, their families completely wash their hands of their children once they have helped them to finish secondary school. They hope their children can help their parents and siblings.

And the problem of ongoing formation! One of them should begin his novitiate at the end of this year. Where? If it is in Rwanda, what would be best? With what formators? In which house? And then comes theology... and the same questions must be answered. Some African provinces have opened their doors to take in our candidates, and the perspective for studies and formation are very good. But we know all too well what these moves entail in terms of paper work, transportation, etc.

Our houses of formation need libraries! Here in Rwanda it is impossible to find the books our formation houses are demanding. Getting them from outside the country is beyond our means. Our economic resources are very limited. The parishes where we work can offer no economic support. In fact they cost us money, because none of them can sustain the priests that work there. All the parishes of Rwanda and Burundi must receive help from the diocese for the maintenance of the priests, and our Communities also have to help us in order to survive.

Thanks be to God we have received support from the General Curia and from our province and significant help from the General Council of the Daughters of Charity, and from the provinces of Salamanca and Zaragoza to whom we are very grateful. We can also count on the support of the Daughters of Charity of the Central African Province. Nevertheless the future is in no way assured. In our parishes the first challenge we have is learning the native language. Both languages, Kirundi and Kinyarwanda, are particularly difficult. Furthermore, the lack of personnel obliges us to start working full-time very quickly. But we are aware of the importance of learning the language and culture of the country, and each one makes real efforts to take advantage of the means we have at hand in order to respond to this challenge.

The number of missionaries is very small to respond on so many fronts. The province sent us reinforcements, Frs. Néstor Emilio Giraldo, C.M., and Félix Eduardo Osorio, C.M.; but just a few days before their arrival, Frs. Julio César García and Orlando Yesit

Fonseca had to return to Colombia. At the present time our personnel distribution is: Fr. Toro is working in the parish in Rwisabi; Frs. William Alonso Marín Saldarriaga and Félix Eduardo Osorio are in the Ruzo parish; Frs. Fenelón Castillo (who is the Director of the Daughters of Charity) and Alirio de Jesús Ceballos are in the Formation House in Kabgayi; Frs. Néstor Emilio Giraldo and Juan Ávila are in the parish in Nemba. Three confreres are already on their way to the mission and we expect their arrival around June of 2004. Our province continues to make efforts to send more men, but there are personnel limitations at home as well, and our disposition to go “everywhere” runs into the lack of personnel.

The lay people in our parishes are a real treasure. I have already mentioned this: the catechists and the heads of the Basic Christian Communities play a fundamental role in the life of the parish. But they need formation; and, fortunately, they have a real desire to receive it. The St. Vincent de Paul Society is well known in Rwanda and Burundi. Its members too ask us for formation. The Vincentian Marian Youth are just beginning and require particular attention. They are easy to be with; they are so receptive. But we cannot really give them what they ask for and need.

Our people's poverty is enormous. We are and we feel very close to the poor; in general they receive us well. But we lack the means to respond effectively to what they ask of us. The C.M. offers the means to apply for grants, but we ourselves need formation in this area. And besides that, each of us is immersed in the immediate and urgent tasks that formation and the parishes require. Without doubt, there is in each one of us great confidence that we are doing God's work. He is with us; he never fails. For example, there is the economic aid already mentioned, the donation of books from the provinces of France, the reception given us by the Diocese of Kabgayi so that our philosophy students could study there, and the fact that they have lent us, at no cost and indefinitely, a house where our House of Formation is operating.

We need the prayers, the nearness and the solidarity of our Vincentian Family. We know we are not alone even though the distance feels like a great weight sometimes. The Province of Colombia is present here and most assuredly many confreres will come to share the charism of St. Vincent de Paul in the midst of our brothers and sisters in Burundi and Rwanda.

(JOSEPH CUMMINS, C.M., translator)

# Reality and Challenges of the Mission of the CM in Papua New Guinea

by Rolando C. Santos, C.M.

*Province of Philippines*

It was in the year 1999, the eve of the great Jubilee, when I first heard the name Papua New Guinea mentioned in our council meeting. Fr. Robert Maloney, the Superior General, sent a letter to Fr. Manuel Ginete, our Philippine provincial, asking for volunteers to serve as formators at Holy Spirit Seminary in Bomaná. Sensing that the council was finding it difficult to find somebody to respond to this request, I excitedly volunteered myself. I felt this was the golden opportunity I had been waiting for to respond to the call of going to the missions.

It was not until six months later when I heard again about Papua New Guinea. I was in Thailand giving a retreat to the Daughters of Charity when I unexpectedly received a fax letter from Fr. Maloney asking whether I wanted to go to Papua New Guinea. It did not take long for me to reply. That very night I wrote my letter. I gave my yes and the reasons why. The year 1999 was the silver jubilee of my priesthood and going to PNG would be a good way to thank the Lord for this wondrous gift of the priesthood. Secondly, the coming Jubilee Year would be just the right time for me to respond to the call to go to the foreign missions and carry on the work of evangelization. Finally, Papua New Guinea was just the perfect place. It is a Third World country and not too far from the Philippines. The people there understand English. And, the work of seminary formation is something with which I am familiar. Moreover, I was coming to the end of my second six-year term as Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity. Everything seemed to be telling me that PNG was the place for me.

## **1. Paradise Country**

It was not until 6 February 2001 that I finally reached this beautiful country, also called "Paradise." It is the largest of the Pacific nations and lies in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, north of Australia and east of Indonesia. Three-fourths of the country is dense

rain forest. It has very few roads. Of the roads that do exist, only 4% are paved.

What called my attention upon arrival was the color of the people. They are dark-skinned, and hence, called "Melanesians." They like to chew betel nut and you can see the evidence almost everywhere. According to the 2003 national census, there are 5.5 million people in Papua New Guinea. The country is very culturally diversified. They speak more than 800 different languages, though the official languages are Tok Pisin and English.

It was only about 120 years ago that the local inhabitants had their first contact with white people. In the 1800s the Germans came and colonized the northern part of the country and called it New Guinea. About the same time, the British colonized the southern part and called it Papua, meaning fuzzy hair. After the First World War, the German colony was given by the League of Nations to Australia to administer along with Papua. In 1975 the country gained independence and took the name Papua New Guinea. Today, the country is fighting to preserve its abundant natural resources and rich traditions while making a giant leap from the Stone Age to the Age of Globalization.

## 2. Problems and Opportunities

One of the strong cultural values in Papua New Guinea is kinship. I was amazed how closely they know their relatives, even 4<sup>th</sup> degree cousins whom they call brothers and sisters. These strong family ties provide them with the support they need for survival. Unfortunately, these strong kinship ties have also led to tribal hostilities, which continue up to the present and bring much destruction to lives and property. The *wantok* system (close ties based on common language) has led to corruption in government where elected officials are often tempted to use government money for the good merely of their own families and clans, and not for that of the larger community. As a result, much needed public services, especially health and education, have been neglected. Many health aid posts are closing down. AIDS is on the increase and many are dying of pneumonia, malaria and other diseases. There is lack of schools as the government cannot provide the needed funds to build classrooms and pay for teachers' salaries.

Criminals are a big problem in many towns and cities, especially Port Moresby. Without education and employment, many young people are driven to criminality. In Port Moresby and the surrounding suburbs, people have to guard themselves against so-called "rascals" who commit armed robberies and do not hesitate to shoot at their victims or even rape them. This has given PNG a bad

name in the international community as being one of the worst countries in which to live. During my first year in PNG, some rascals entered the property of the Franciscans and shot dead a 65-year old Franciscan priest, who was asleep in his room. This happened only some eight kilometers away from our seminary.

### **3. Christianity and the Challenge to a New Evangelization**

In spite of all the criminality and violence in the country, PNG regards itself as a Christian nation. The first Catholic missionaries to arrive in the country were the Marists. They came in 1845 and settled in Woodlark and Rooke Islands. Then came the PIME priests and brothers in 1852. These, like the Marists, did not stay long due to sickness and lack of progress in the work of evangelization. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart then arrived in 1882, and the Society of the Divine Word in 1896. The Congregationalists, Methodists, Lutherans and Anglicans also arrived in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the Seventh Day Adventists came in 1908. Today, according to the 2000 census, Roman Catholics are still the single largest Christian group in the country. They comprise 27% of the total Christian population. However, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Evangelical Alliance and Pentecostals have registered a 71% increase in membership from 1990 to 2000, while the Catholics increased only by 24% against the 38% increase for the total Christian population. This poses a challenge to the Church to reevaluate her presence in PNG and ask whether she is truly responding to the needs and aspirations of the people, who are now switching in big numbers to the new Christian groups.

There is no denying that Catholic and Protestant missionaries have contributed much to the good of the country, especially in evangelizing, pacifying hostile tribes, and providing greatly needed services in health and education. At the same time, however, the efforts of missionaries have also uprooted many Papua New Guineans from their own culture. Some have fostered a paternalistic and superior kind of attitude, and did little to contextualize the gospel. They have also contributed to the splintering of tribes, clans, communities and families into different denominations.

While the first missionaries arrived 156 years ago, many areas in Papua New Guinea were evangelized only about 50 to 70 years ago. Many non-Christian practices still persist today like tribal fighting, polygamy, sorcery and payback. The need to deepen the faith received from their great grandparents is one of the urgent challenges today for the Church in PNG.

#### **4. Bomana**

Located about 12 kilometers away from Jackson International Airport in Port Moresby is the suburb of Bomana. It is well known for its prison as well as the War Memorial Cemetery. Bomana is also home to the Catholic Theological Institute (CTI), Holy Spirit Seminary (HSS), and seven other houses of formation belonging to different religious congregations. These are all located on one large campus. This year, 2004, there are 165 seminarians studying at CTI: 74 come from HSS, and 91 from the religious. The students of HSS come from 16 different dioceses in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

HSS has five priest formators on the staff. Two are diocesan and three, Vincentian. The two diocesan priests are the rector, an Australian, and the assistant spiritual director, a national. The three Vincentians are Frs. Tulio Cordero, Homero Marín and Rolando Santos. We also have a lay missionary volunteer who acts as bursar and business manager of the seminary.



Fr. Rolando Santos after celebrating the Eucharist with a group of *Mekeos de Maipa*, Bereina (Papua New Guinea), who are wearing traditional dress.

## **5. A New International Mission**

It was just last year, 6 May 2003, that the Vincentian Community in Bomana was created. It is one of the new international missions established by, and directly under the supervision of, the Superior General. The confreres of Bomana come from three different provinces. Fr. Santos is from the Philippines and arrived on 6 February 2001. He is the spiritual director of the seminary and professor of Homiletics, Spiritual Direction and Spiritual Theology at Catholic Theological Institute. He is also the superior of the community. Fr. Marín, comes from the Province of Colombia and arrived on 26 July 2002. He is the vice-rector of the seminary, pastoral director and in charge of the infirmary. He is also the community treasurer. Fr. Cordero comes from the Dominican Republic but belongs to the Province of Puerto Rico. He came last year, 27 February 2003. He is the academic director, librarian and music director at the seminary. He helps out in spiritual direction and teaches Church History at CTI. He is also our community secretary.

It is not clear how long we will be staying at Holy Spirit Seminary. Fr. Maloney made us to understand that we are not here to run the seminary but only to assist until local formators can do the work. Our contract will be ending next year, 2005, but it will most probably be renewed.

## **6. Urgent Need for Formators**

As a newcomer to Bomana, I was told that the Vincentians had long been awaited to help in seminary formation. HSS was then suffering from a lack of formators. There was also a constant change of formators such that it was difficult to establish a steady tradition in the seminary. Moreover, because of the difficulty of finding a rector and spiritual director, there was talk that HSS might be closed.

Sometime in the 1990s, there were bishops who felt unhappy with the way priestly training was done at Bomana. As a result, the dioceses of Rabaul and Vanimo pulled out their seminarians and personnel. HSS was then left without the needed formation staff. There was a plan to have national priests run the seminary but there was also the difficulty getting them because bishops were holding on to their personnel. The lack of available, willing and qualified formators somehow affected discipline in the seminary. It was then that the bishops sought the help of the Vincentians, knowing that formation of the clergy is one of our important charisms.

## 7. Holy Spirit Seminary

It was in March 1963 that the Catholic Bishops of PNG and the Solomon Islands established Holy Spirit Seminary for the purpose of training candidates for the Roman Catholic priesthood. It was first opened in Kap (near Madang) under the auspices of the Society of the Divine Word. Then it was moved to Bomana where the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had opened *de Boismenu* Seminary. In 1994, as a result of the recommendations made during the Roman visitation conducted by then Bishop George Pell, HSS became two institutions. HSS caters to the non-academic dimension of diocesan priestly formation, while Catholic Theological Institute caters to the academic formation of both the diocesan and religious candidates to the priesthood.

## 8. Rascals, Malaria and Papuan Blacks

Anybody who comes to Bomana soon falls in love with the beautiful natural surroundings and the non-polluted environment. However, one also learns sooner or later that there are three things to which he needs to be alert. These are the *raskol* (common criminals), malaria and the deadly Papuan Black. The year I arrived, rascals came and carted away about 4,000 kina (US \$ 1188) worth of food supplies from our kitchen. A year before this, rascals came to the Franciscan house and shot two seminarians in the leg. Malaria is another problem. Every year many students catch malaria. The symptoms are familiar: headache, dizziness, vomiting, body pains and fever. Fr. Homero attends to them, refers them to the doctor and provides them with medicines. A third problem are Papuan Blacks. These are small poisonous snakes whose bite can kill within 15 minutes. They abound on the seminary property. A couple of months after Homero arrived at the seminary, one seminarian got bitten by this snake. Fortunately, the seminarian survived.

## 9. The Seminarians

Most of the seminarians come from families who are subsistence farmers. Their ages range from about 22 to 30 years old. They are strong and hardworking, as well as kind and friendly. They enjoy being together, chewing *buai* (betel nut), telling jokes, and walking barefooted. I particularly admire the diligence and effort they put into their studies, and how they manage reasonably well in class in spite of the limited education they received in their home villages. I also admire their common sense, their interest in justice and family issues, their frankness and their sense of humor. Their faith is simple and it is edifying to see students spending extra time in the chapel

for prayer. Those who have previously finished Religious Studies stay at HSS for three years of theology. Those who have not stay for six years. They then go back to their respective dioceses to be ordained as deacons and priests.

#### **10. Some Challenges in Seminary Formation**

Though PNG and the Solomon Islands have many vocations, unfortunately, there had not been an adequate screening of candidates to the seminary in the past. Many seminarians have also not had the experience of receiving regular spiritual direction. As a consequence, we, on the formation staff, encounter at times seminarians who have drinking problems and problems associated with chastity. We also encounter seminarians who are not clear about their vocation or their motives for becoming a priest. Entering the seminary seems an easy way for some to get a free education or to become a “big man.” Lately, however, the different dioceses and seminaries have been more careful in the selection process. Bishops make sure that their students take prayer and spiritual direction more seriously. In HSS, through talks, spiritual direction and the Thursday formation sessions, students are starting to appreciate more the value of prayer and spiritual direction, and to discern their vocation more honestly. It is also wonderful that 32 priests and religious, who live mainly on campus, have made themselves available for spiritual direction to the seminarians.

Another challenge is providing the seminarians with appropriate role models to follow. Seminarians usually admire the zeal and piety of the missionaries as well as of some national priests. However, there are also those who are scandalized. There are national priests who continue to run for political office despite the threat of suspension from their Local Ordinaries. There is also the problem of drinking and unfaithfulness to the vow of celibacy. These pose a challenge for us Vincentians to be true to our own priestly commitment and be role models to the seminarians.

A final challenge in HSS is that of culture. The five of us, who are on the staff, come from five different countries and hence, also, from five different cultures. Moreover, three of us are Vincentians while the other two are diocesan. The seminarians also come from various cultures. This multicultural diversity at times becomes a source of potential conflict and misunderstanding among us. However, we are learning to listen more openly and respectfully to one another, to resist the temptation of being judgmental and absolutizing our own narrow view of things, and to allow ourselves to be enriched by each other's experience, formation, culture and individuality.

In general, we, Vincentians, here at Holy Spirit Seminary, are happy to be here in this country and consider ourselves privileged to

serve the Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. We are ready to serve for as long as we are needed. Our only request is that you, who have read this article, remember us in your prayers because it is only with the grace of God that we can persevere in our Vincentian commitment of following Christ and working together faithfully and joyfully for the evangelization of the poor and the formation of the clergy in Papua New Guinea.

# Annual Parish Mission

*Parish of San José in San Pedro Sula (Honduras)*

“Go to the other shore”

by Fausto A. Leonardo Henríquez, C.M.

*Province of Barcelona*

## **Introduction**

Part of my work as a parish priest has involved the organization of the “Annual Parish Mission.” I would like to present here my reflections on this work, which has been realized in an urban parish. I offer these reflections to the confreres of the Congregation with the hope that they might enrich the pastoral work of those laboring in many different situations.

As a young missionary, with less than ten years of priestly experience, my concern has centered on maintaining my Vincentian missionary vocation as a pastor in an urban parish. The problem was one of attitude and of understanding the Vincentian charism as it pertains to missionary practice. Really, I was not prepared to be a pastor but I was asked to serve as pastor and so, in obedience, I accepted this responsibility. Today, I now see that it is possible to be a missionary pastor, without converting the missionary parish into some kind of euphemism or a stereotype that then justifies parish work.

## **1. Respect for established pastoral practices of the parish**

I arrived at a parish that had, over 40 years, acquired traditions, habits and customs. The fundamental pastoral lines of action had been established many years before my arrival. It was important to provide continuity to existing structures, especially if they were functioning well. Naturally there are always areas that need to be strengthened and bettered. Yet in all of this it is important that one not destroy the work that others have done for the ecclesial community. So I began the process of adapting myself, learning the reality of the people and integrating myself into the parish life of San José, located in San Pedro Sula (Honduras).

## **2. Importance of the parish laity in the mission**

As one enters into missionary work in a parish, it is most important to continually cultivate the participation of the laity, especially the dedicated Vincentian lay men and women. Since the parish from which I write these reflections has been inspired from its foundation by the double Vincentian charism of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, an underlying Vincentian spirit has animated the pastoral work.

A case in point is the parish team of Catholic Charities, whose spirituality, set down by my predecessors, is characteristically Vincentian. The criteria that guide the charitable action of this team have been in place for more than 20 years. New members to this team are formed in these principles. The Vincentian Marian Youth Group, which has also been a presence in the parish for over 20 years, has created a Vincentian mentality in a great majority of the young people of the parish. Their pastoral activity is key to making contact with the youth and the four characteristics of this group are vibrant and alive. In the same way, the leaders of various groups and movements are indispensable for the realization of the parish mission (I will explain this later in my reflection here).

## **3. The parish with a Vincentian spirit**

As you might suppose, there are no instant recipes that enable one to establish a missionary parish without losing the charism that is the heritage of St. Vincent de Paul. There are, however, some hints and insights that enable this process to move forward.

We use as a starting point, the pastoral reality of the parish in order to outline, theoretically, the concept of a missionary parish. I list the following elements that, in my judgment, enter into the formation of parish with a Vincentian spirit:

- a) A varied formation for the laity. By this I mean providing a faith formation for children, young people and adults. The means for accomplishing this is the establishment of a school of formation for the laity.
- b) Organize workshops for the animators of the mission. This time is used to fortify these leaders in the spirit of Jesus Christ, the evangelizer, and in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul.
- c) Vincentian Week during which time the laity and the faithful in general are able to come to a deeper understanding of the charism of Vincent de Paul and the charism of the Vincentian Family.

- d) A Week of Charity, which affirms the Christian vocation of the whole ecclesial community and especially the charitable groups of the parish. Naturally the point of reference of this is the charitable action of Vincent de Paul as seen in light of the gospel.
- e) Creation of an evangelization team made up of different pastoral ministers. They are delegated functions and responsibilities. In all of this effort there is also a great respect for the principle of pastoral subsidiarity.
- f) The proclamation of an Evangelization Campaign or an "Annual Parish Mission" which gives continuity to the ongoing mission of the parish and creates a state of permanent evangelization in the parish. This is especially urgent given the fact that, frequently in the city, many new immigrants arrive.

#### **4. The urban parish mission**

To develop a parish mission it is necessary to involve the committed lay people: leaders of the various organizations and movements, leaders of the children's and youth pastoral, as well as other leaders of the different ministries in the parish. Traditionally we are accustomed to bring in missionaries from outside the parish. I see this as a positive dimension. Nevertheless, when dealing with a large, heavily populated parish with many complex problems, it is necessary to take into consideration and develop the leadership within the parish. In the parish, where I have been working for the past five years as pastor, there are about 80,000 inhabitants. I would say that not even 2% of the people are evangelized, even though the majority of these people have been baptized. For every ten couples that come forward for the sacrament of matrimony, at least three or four individuals have not been baptized, or have not received the other sacraments. There is a need then to develop a catechetical program.

#### **5. Practical steps for the organization of a parish mission**

- The first step is the creation of an "animation team" composed of persons whom the pastor considers mature in their pastoral approach and also dynamic. The pastor works side by side with this team, because it will be this team that will initiate the work of the mission. Together they will decide on the dates and length of the mission, as well as the objectives of the mission. It is good idea to sponsor one or two workshops for this group so that they might clearly understand what they are about.

- Next one convokes the “evangelization team” composed of all the different coordinators and leaders of the different pastoral ministries, leaders of the parish team and different commissions and movements within the parish. If there are other religious communities or institutes within the parish boundaries, they should also be invited to participate. The pastor is the primary leader of this team, but a layperson should serve as moderator. The pastor’s role is to assure a “missionary tone” to the team and to serve as an advisor to the team.

The “calling together” of this evangelization team is fundamental and most important if the people are to accept responsibility and ownership of the mission. If from the outset one is able to communicate enthusiasm to this team, then half the work is already done.

As this team comes together it is important to solicit suggestions and ideas for a theme, music, topics for preaching, etc. In this way one avoids creating the impression that all of this is being imposed. In other words, this creates ownership.

From the beginning it is necessary to delegate functions and responsibilities. For example, if there is someone who is familiar with the songs that the people can sing, then this person should be put in charge of selecting the music that will compliment the theme of the mission and/or the slogan or “catch phrase” that is used in the mission literature. Thus if the theme of the mission is “Church, your life is mission” and the slogan is “Go to the other shore,” then songs should be chosen accordingly. If there is a parish liturgy committee, then these persons or committee should put together the penitential rites and the prayers of the faithful, as well as organize the opening and closing Mass and/or rituals.

The “animation team” should meet as often as necessary. Here much time will be needed. The length of the meeting is not important as long as the preparatory work is being dealt with. On the other hand, the “evangelization team” should meet only when it is absolutely necessary since these persons are often involved in many other activities within the area of their respective ministries, and therefore they should not be given tasks that will overburden them.

It is important to delegate the area of communication to those persons who are involved in the pastoral life of the parish and who are formed pastorally and have an understanding of the Church. These persons should be placed in charge of contacting the mass media, that is, the religious and secular radio, television and press. The frequent use of sound equipment is certainly in line with the popular character of the mission. The placement of posters and banners reinforces the idea that this is the time of mission. If there is the possibility of obtaining sponsors or organizing other activities to

support the mission, then these responsibilities should also be delegated to a committee.

Our last two parish missions have become well known because of the utilization of the diocesan radio station and the Church's national television station. We were also able to acquire space on some secular radio stations and transmit our parish celebrations through telephonic means. Before the actual mission took place, we were able to produce theatrical presentations dealing with evangelization and the local television station, in turn, transmitted these dramatizations. It is very probable that the first mission will not obtain all the desired results one hopes for, but this is a first step that creates a certain vision for the next year. In fact, each year one sees new possibilities that strengthen the parish's missionary work.

#### **6. Youth and children in the context of the parish mission**

The person in charge of youth ministry, as well as the catechists working with the youth and the children should be invited to participate in the "animation team." They should be involved in this effort from the beginning of the planning for the mission. It is important to support the initiatives and proposals of the young people. In other words, the youth deserve out total pastoral support. If they propose theatre, then a theatre group should be organized; if they propose a concert, then a concert should be organized; if they propose a walk or a march, then it should be organized, etc. in all of this, it is important to spell out the limits of the mission theme and to be faithful to the general criteria of the mission.

The young people can also be invited to produce a drawing that will be used as a symbol throughout the mission. It should be remembered that the youth of the parish have many talents and these talents should be utilized in the mission. If many groups participate and present several drawings then the "animation team" should select the drawing that seems to best represent the theme of the mission. This drawing is then used on all the literature during the mission. In this way one continually promotes the values of the young people and affirms their contributions and service to the Church.

On another level, the same is done in coordination with the children's catechetical program. The mission themes are presented to them but in a way that is adapted to their age and understanding. We have seen some very positive results from this work. In our visits to the families we have found that the children play a key role in providing us with entrance into their homes. At the same time the catechist promotes a missionary sense in these children by going with them to visit other children in the neighborhood and extending an invitation to them to participate in the mission.

## 7. Themes for the mission and the post-mission

In my diocese, we use the themes for Lent and Advent. On other occasions we have used themes that were prepared for specific celebrations (for example, The Centennial Celebration of the First Eucharistic Congress in Honduras, the Week of the Bible, the Missionary Holy Year, etc.). We have also considered material produced by some of the missionary groups that are present in the diocese. These themes are then presented to the small communities where they are then developed. This is a conscious act on our part and, in my opinion, one that is also very Vincentian, since the Vincentian mission cannot be realized outside the parameters of the evangelizing activity of the diocese. From the different possible themes, we select those that seem to be most timely; that is, those themes that will challenge and/or strengthen certain areas of the parish life that are in need of this missionary touch. We follow the same process for the preaching that is done in the church during the week of mission there. This preaching is done by either a priest or a committed layperson, who is known for his/her integrity and example.

In the post mission we continue to develop the same themes (at times there will be as many as 40 themes for reflection). The lay missionaries gather together family groups each week and reflect on these themes and apply the theme to their daily life. As part of our follow-up and also to continue to encourage the missionary spirit, we have "open air" meetings in different sectors of the parish. For these meetings it is necessary to do some preparatory work: a family is chosen to host this gathering (preferably a family that is not very active in the parish), the choir is asked to animate this gathering through song, a layperson or priest is selected to lead the group in reflecting on the theme, at times a statue of a saint that this family is especially devoted to is given a place of prominence, as well as a crucifix and some flowers.

This missionary experience has the possibility of enriching all involved. It requires, however, time, patience, and commitment. Like anything that is important, one has to invest in the mission. Thus in order for the evangelization to reach the greatest number of persons, the economic resources of the parish have to be set aside for this purpose.

As I conclude my reflections I would like to say that the annual parish mission is a sign of hope that renews the life and the faith of the parish. If one is willing to put in the effort, God will definitely reward this effort with the presence of the Spirit. As the missionaries "go to the other shore," they are in turn then missioned.

(CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M., translator)

# LIFE IN THE CONGREGATION

## Spain Celebrates the Tercentenary of the Arrival of the Vincentians (1704-2004)

by Mixel Olabuenaga, C.M.

*Province of Zaragoza*

According to a famous expression, if you lose your beginnings, you have lost your identity. This is possibly only a romantic or nationalist expression. But it is certain that in our dynamic western societies, celebrations are more frequently of short duration. Married couples, families, educational institutions and organizations all celebrate some event that, one way or another, makes their past present to them. And, even more interestingly, these events conclude with wishes to have many more such events.

We Spanish Vincentians are celebrating in 2004 the tercentenary of the arrival of the first confreres in Spain. The Preparatory Committee has designed various programs to celebrate the event and, from what we have been able to tell, our confreres are showing great interest in them.

In these pages of *Vincentiana* we would like to present, in a much-abbreviated way, highlights of these three hundred years. These are words of thanksgiving, words to stimulate young provinces, and words of homage to the many confreres who have preceded us. Indeed, they are the main actors in these pages.

## 1. St. Vincent's wishes for a Spanish foundation

St. Vincent himself made three attempts to establish the Congregation in Spain. The first involved **Catalonia**, although we do not know exactly where. This is gathered from letters written by the saint to Bernard Codoing, a priest of the Mission, and from the recommendation that Fr. Martin learn Spanish. The second looked to **Toledo**, mentioned in letters sent to Edme Jolly, a confrere and superior of the house in Rome. The third attempt was to begin in **Plasencia** (Cáceres) as we learn in a letter of St. Vincent to the same Fr. Jolly. In none of these cases, however, was the foundation carried out.

## 2. First steps and consolidation (1704-1774)

**Barcelona (1704)**: the directives of the Council of Trent about the formation of the clergy and the need to give missions to the people led bishops and priests to promote the creation of seminaries and institutions dedicated to the exercise of missions. One of those priests was **Francisco Senjust y Pagés**, archdeacon of the cathedral of Barcelona. Thanks to his vigilance, the first Italian Vincentians landed at Mataró (a seaport near Barcelona), on 8 July 1704. They were Frs. Giandomenico Orsese, Giovanni Battista Balcone and Luis Narváez, together with Brothers Antonio Camino and Giacomo Bisso. They began in *Calle Tallers* in Barcelona, with Fr. Orsese as the first superior. Their works were retreats for ordinands and clergy, ecclesiastical conferences and missions. The first seminary for future Vincentians opened in 1704.

A slow consolidation followed this first establishment: **Palma de Mallorca (1736)**, **Guisona (Lérida) (1751)**, **Reus (Tarragona) (1757)**, **Barbastro (Huesca) (1759)**. The consolidation of the presence of the Congregation in Spain received a significant boost when the General Assembly of 1774 decreed the creation of the **Province of Spain**, and the naming of Fr. Vicente Ferrer as its first Visitor. Fifty-six priests, 28 brothers and nine seminarians composed the new province. They lived frugally, although they had sufficient income to exercise their ministries freely. The levels of stability were changeable, since many left, both priests and brothers. During the French Revolution, several French confreres fled to Spanish houses.

The new province began a period of establishment with a large increase of personnel (77 priests and 33 brothers in 1808). A new foundation was added to the former ones: **Badajoz (1802)** which took care of secondary students of San Atón and supervised the seminary, gave retreats of all kinds, and preached missions.

### 3. Two major crises in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

**The Spanish-French war of 1808** set in motion the swing between the contraction and expansion so characteristic of Spain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The house of Badajoz barely survived being looted, and the communities of Barcelona and Reus had to flee to Mallorca. Normality did not return until after 1815. The houses were then reconstituted, but the personnel had been reduced to 55 priests and 24 brothers. Two other foundations were made during the first third of the century: **Valencia (1820)** and **Madrid (1828)**, with responsibilities to assist the Daughters of Charity, to conduct an internal seminary, to preach retreats to all classes of people, and to give missions in the villages. Several characteristics are worthy of note: 1) a relatively youthful personnel; 2) an increase of stable confreres, although only in the last third of the century did this begin to be important (especially with the suppression of religious communities in 1835); 3) a large number of those entering as already priests or clerics; this tendency would decline by half during the 19<sup>th</sup> century; 4) the large number of coadjutor brothers; 5) the overwhelming majority of Catalans, and the majority of those from the province of Barcelona; 6) the notable stability in the Congregation, although several left of their own free will or were expelled; 7) a significant number of confreres dying before completing ten years of vocation.

**The decisions of successive liberal governments (1820, 1835)** profoundly damaged the province's organization and works, except for the assistance given to the Daughters of Charity. Out of the suppression (1836) and subsequent seizure of property (1837) only the house of Palma survived, thanks to the work of Fr. Alejo Davú. The confreres and students fanned out all over Spain, France and Italy, and from there to various countries in the Americas, where they developed a huge apostolate.

The Concordat of 1851 between Spain and the Holy See recognized the Congregation of the Mission. Three reasons helped in this: the government's need for help for the Daughters of Charity, the good offices of Fr. Buenaventura Codina (future bishop in the Canary Islands and victim of the intransigence of Fr. Étienne), and the secular character of the Congregation. Beginning at that time, a slow process of recovery of personnel and of new houses took place. Fr. José María Román has noted that out of 115 priests, brothers, students and novices, 40 died before the restoration of 1852; 38 returned to join the Spanish province; 13 remained until their death in other Vincentian provinces; eight left the Congregation entirely; and nothing is known of the other 16.

Of the eight houses that the Congregation had before 1836, it was able to recover only two: Badajoz (in the summer of 1858, for the purpose of helping the diocesan seminary; enlarged to include missions in 1863) and Palma (1853, although, as already noted, this house always had a confrere responsible for it.) New and interesting perspectives opened at this same time both in Spain's colonies (Philippines and Cuba) and in the peninsula: **Madrid** (1852, Calle Duque de Osuna, 5), **Vitoria** (1854, where Fr. Julián González de Soto labored, another victim of the close-mindedness of Fr. Étienne), **Arenas de San Pedro (Ávila)** (1862), **Barcelona** (1867) and **Teruel** (1867).

An internal conflict (linked with the cutting off of the Daughters of Charity of Reus, and the attempts to introduce changes to their habit) began to disturb the progress of recovery. The Visitor, Fr. Armengol, with the approval of some of his councillors, asked the Superior General, in view of political circumstances, for extraordinary powers to govern the province. Fr. Étienne brought the case to the Holy See, where a committee of cardinals examined the issue and decided *that nothing should be changed, and that the authority of the Superior General should remain one over the entire Congregation, and thus over Spain*. The most immediate result of this decision was the dismissal of Fr. Armengol as Visitor and Director General of the Daughters of Charity; Fr. Étienne later expelled him from the Congregation along with other confreres.

**The Revolution of September 1868** put an end to this entire restoration. By the decree of 22 October, religious orders were dissolved, including those of Sts. Philip Neri and Vincent de Paul, and the subsidy granted for seminaries was suspended. Only the house of Palma de Mallorca remained afloat during this situation. The house of Arenas de San Pedro was able to continue for a year. Some confreres dispersed to offer service in parishes or to the Daughters of Charity, while others went abroad. Especially important were the groups that reached the **Philippines** and **Cuba**, accompanied by scholastics.

The ups and downs that our confreres experienced were many, but little by little the situation normalized, as is reflected in the various Circulars of the superiors general. The **Shrine of Los Milagros** (Orense) was given to the Congregation in 1869 as the result of a mission.

Year	Houses	Priests	Brothers	Seminarians
1704	1	6	4	5
1774	5	54	28	9
1808	6	77	33	5
1834	8	96	33	6
1851	1	12	2	14
1868	6	44	39	83
1875	5	30	20	24

#### 4. Restoration, growth and expansion of the Congregation (1875-1931)

After the political restoration of 1875, the Congregation was able to recover all its houses in a relatively short time: Madrid [1875] (which needed a new location, at Calle García de Paredes where it is now), Badajoz [1875], Ávila [1876] (moved from the former house of Arenas de San Pedro), Barcelona [1876] and Teruel [1877]. The seminarians and the Visitor with the community arrived in Madrid from Elizondo in November 1875. The house of Palma was reestablished formally, although it had never been abandoned and, in 1876, it numbered six priests and eight brothers.

The interest and effort poured into the reconstruction of the province and the renewal of its ministries are well known. The list of new houses is as follows: the seminaries of **Sigüenza** (1877), **La Laguna** (1899) and **Oviedo** (1900); the chapel of **Andújar** (1879); the mission houses of **Alfranca** (1885), **Arcos de la Llana** (1888), **Tardajos** (1892), **Las Palmas** (1894) and **Paredes de Nava** (1897); the residences of **Figueras** (1894), **Hortaleza** (1896) and **Valdemoro** (1897); the schools of **Murguía** (1888), **Alcorisa** (1893), **Limpías** (1893) and **Villafranca del Bierzo** (1899) and the apostolic school of **Bellpuig** (1899). At the same time, personnel began to nurture the houses in the **Antilles**.

In 1902 the Spanish Province was divided into two, called the provinces of **Barcelona** and **Madrid**. According to the catalogue of January 1902, there were at that time in Spain, 21 houses, 147 priests, 124 brothers, 160 scholastics and 60 novices. Far from lessening the expansion of the Congregation in Spain, the division energized its growth and enlarged its fields of ministry. In this period, there were 26 foundations in very diverse parts of Spain and new apostolates as well: the mission houses of **La Iglesuela del Cid (Teruel)** (1902), **Rialp** (1904), **Santa Cruz de la Palma** (1906), **La Orotava** (1910), **Lodosa** (1914), **Pamplona** (1922, when it was

moved from an earlier location), **Puerto de la Luz (Canaries)** (1928, moved from Las Palmas) and **Gijón** (1929); the residences of **Orense** (1902), **Écija** (1906), **Cádiz** (1908), **Ayamonte** (1916), **Madrid-Lope de Vega** (1917), **Zaragoza** (1924), **Baracaldo** (1925), **San Sebastián** (1925), **Málaga** (1927) and **Sevilla** (1929); the seminaries of **Ávila** (1922) and **Orense** (1930); Vincentian formation centers at **Espluga de Francolí** (Tarragona) (1909), **Guadalajara** (1910), **Las Rehojas (Canaries)** (1917) and **Cuenca** (1922); and the schools of **Ramales (Santander)** (1917) and **Marín** (1926).

A detailed analysis of the activities of these foundations gives us the following results. *Missions* were still very important; the *Formation of the Clergy* underwent a small reduction, less so in the Direction of Seminaries but more so in giving Retreats and Ordination Retreats (in fact, in Madrid, the main center for this work, it was set aside in 1906 since the new seminary was opened); assistance for the *Daughters of Charity* took on a special importance; *Education* began to occupy a large number of confreres, both “extern” teachers as well as teachers belonging to the local house; *Vincentian parishes*, nonexistent in Spain, began to appear.

**Three characteristics demonstrate the vitality of this period:** the concern to form confreres, principally from Castile, Navarre and Galicia, both in our own houses and in universities; the beginning of the first mission *ad Gentes* (Cuttack, India, 1921) and a feverish interest in the study of our own history, of its works, rules, etc. It would not be right to omit mentioning the work of Fr. Benito Paradela, the publication of *Anales*, and other internal publications, such as *La Milagrosa*.

## 5. The crisis of the Republic and the Civil War (1931-1939)

This growth was cut off with the coming of the **Second Republic** and then the **Civil War**. The various restrictive laws, the anticlericalism manifested in attacks and outrages against Church property and personnel, and social instability slowed down enormously the activity of the Congregation. The circulars of the Superiors General reflect, once again, the tragic situation that touched several houses and confreres.

The outrages perpetrated against our houses and personnel were many, as they were elsewhere in the nation. The reports contained in the *Anales* describe them in all their raw detail. The official figures of those assassinated in the years 1936-1939 list 37 priests and 19 coadjutor brothers.\* Twenty-five Daughters of Charity were

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\* Cf. *Vincentiana* 43 (1999) p. 39 ff.

likewise assassinated. Also, in the “Asturias Revolution” of 1934, two priests and one brother died violently.

**The Vincentian houses and apostolates resumed** as the Franco troops took over the territory controlled by the Republican government. Also, in those years, there were founded the houses of **Salamanca** [1938, *missions*], **Melilla** [1938, *parish*], **Valencia** [second time: 1939, *parish* in 1941], **Huelva** [1939, *parish*], **Vall de Uxó-Castellón** [1939] and **Hortaleza** [1939, *parish*]. As a result of the civil war, the confreres left the houses of Alcorisa (Teruel), Rialp (Lérida), Guadalajara and Madrid (Lope de Vega).

#### **6. Summit and worldwide extension (1939-1975)**

The Concordat of 1953 and the vocational “boom” favored not only the recovery of the Congregation, but also its foundation in places where it had never before been present. Some characteristics of this period are: 1) the gradual leaving of houses dedicated to popular missions (5 in 1974) in favor of parishes (38) and works of education (23) and the disappearance of houses dedicated to the formation of clergy; 2) personnel dedicated preferentially to popular missions, to the formation of candidates and to missions *ad Gentes* (in the traditional works of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Peru, the United States, as well as the Philippines and the recent mission of Cuttack, India, and the newest mission of Madagascar, 1966); 3) the international repercussion of the Major Missions, that is, missions conducted in entire cities or rural districts (Pamplona, Valencia, Sevilla, etc.) or in entire dioceses (such as Valencia, Ávila, Cáceres and Logroño); 4) the creation of the Mission Brotherhood (an association of Vincentian priests and diocesan clergy to give missions wherever the bishops might need them).

Despite not a few polemics and plans, the province of Madrid was reorganized in 1969. This gave rise to the present division into four provinces: **Zaragoza**, **Salamanca**, **Madrid** and **Barcelona**. The new Visitors were named on 25 December 1969.

Along with the division of the province, there began a period of deep crisis, coming both from new social and religious issues (democracy, Vatican II), and from the decline in the number of candidates.

The evolution of the houses and personnel in the most important moments of this period are shown in the following table:

Years	Houses	Priests	Brothers	Scholastics
1876	5	35	18	20
1902	20	140	121	220
1931	44	297	119	217
1939	42	255	74	133
1970	61	482	81	274
1975	66	434	67	91

### 7. Maturity and crisis (1975-2000)

The division of the province in 1969 was the occasion for a broadening of activities and a maximum use of resources. The new provincial councils brought new life to local communities and broadened their works. These were years of organization and contentment with a dash of utopian idealism. We find examples of the latter in the various provincial norms, in the formation options offered to their scholastics, in the mission dynamic, and in the search for resources. These were years of beginning works in priest-poor areas: **Sierras de Albacete, Almería, Huesca, Teruel**, etc.

Nonetheless, at the same time, a new problematic emerged: the need to adjust to the new breezes flowing in from the Council and the palpable vocational crisis. Changes in theology and in the Church wreaked havoc on some confreres who had already lost their way. The formation given had not been the best suited to respond to new challenges. The ministries, especially the popular missions, did not find their new place in the scheme of things; parishes were experiencing the dialectic of maintenance of old works versus new evangelization; and new experimental lifestyles began.

On the other hand, the demographic pyramid was showing a notable narrowing at its base. The number of students did not assure the replacement of the previous generations; add to this more departures from the community, fewer entering candidates, progressive aging of the confreres, and the closing of the majority of the apostolic schools (Esplugá, Los Milagros, Murguía, Pamplona, Teruel, Villafranca del Bierzo) and higher formation centers (Cuenca, Hortaleza, Salamanca), etc.

All this brought about a period of imbalance and frustration that only became evident beginning in the decade of the 90s, when, as far as possible, solutions were being offered. This chart illustrates these changes.

Years	Houses	Priests	Brothers	Members per house	Scholastics	Median age
1975	75	510	63	7,64	70	49
1980	77	492	58	7,14	33	52
1985	78	468	48	6,61	41	55
1990	76	456	46	6,60	35	57
1995	73	433	38	6,45	24	59
2000	69	383	33	6,02	23	62

From these figures, we can deduce a few realities: a significant lessening of the number of confreres and of candidates, the reduction in the number of local communities, and the aging of the personnel. As a result, the replacement of personnel in the next generation has been stifled. In addition, an examination of each of the four provinces will demonstrate a similar profile, although with some significant differences.

The ministries to which the confreres basically will dedicate themselves are not going to differ much from the previous generation, such as, especially, parish ministry (in more than a hundred of them). Popular missions, assistance to the Daughters of Charity, Vincentian movements (especially in the revitalization of the Vincentian youth, JMV), and schools will all continue to be important. The systematic abandonment of our educational centers, those destined to the formation both of future confreres and of laity, will begin. Nevertheless, as much as possible, the presence of the confreres will increase in Madagascar, Mozambique and Honduras.

## 8. Perspectives (2003)

### a) *The data*

Province	Houses	Priests	Brothers	Scholastics	Median age
<b>Barcelona</b>	10	45	2	7	60
<b>Madrid</b>	17	114	16	4	64
<b>Salamanca</b>	20	91	12	4	64
<b>Zaragoza</b>	20	122	3	5	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>63</b>

**b) Commitment**

The fundamental commitment of the active population of the confreres (two-thirds of the total) is to parishes (in round numbers, 70) for the most part established in urban areas, whether in the central city or the suburbs. Non-parochial churches, chaplaincies, assistance to the Daughters of Charity, Vincentian movements, and educational centers occupy about one-third of the active personnel. A significant group is dedicated to the popular missions and to the missions *ad Gentes* (Honduras and Mozambique). A dozen confreres serve in the “new poverties,” such as the prisons in Donosti and Albacete, the immigrants in Pamplona, Teruel, Níjar, England, United States, Germany and elsewhere. Evidently, our infirmaries are daily becoming increasingly crowded.

**c) The new realities**

Together with these figures, valid for the current and future mission, we are in the midst of certain realities which, one way or another, have already begun.

**Intensification and meaning of our work:** just like any business which wishes to be efficient, it seems necessary to insist on these two dimensions. To intensify implies “intensity” despite the numbers. If history teaches us anything, it teaches that situations are cyclical (motives are another question), and that cycles grow shorter and shorter each day. At the same time, our activities have to be meaningful, that is, they have to be recognized and be clear in their content.

**Professional management:** this refers to human and material resources. It is daily more evident that, to maintain a business, it is necessary to be concerned about this dimension. Numbers, age, genuine availability (“a good idea without expertise is a bad one”), economic means, needs analysis — all this will have to be handled professionally.

**Interprovincial collaboration:** any division of a province, whether desired or imposed from on high, brings along a period of identification with the new province. This is what happened and what was experienced in the two divisions of provinces that took place in Spain. Following the last one, several aspects led to collaboration among the provinces, such as assistance to the Daughters of Charity, popular missions and the novitiate. The next several years will be decisive in the establishment of new areas of cooperation.

**Coordination with Vincentian associations:** the efforts to come to understand the meaning of each of the organizations with a

Vincentian character has to bring the Congregation of the Mission, acting out of the deepest respect, to set up joint activities based in practical units. In our days, it seems more convenient to speak of a Vincentian presence or activity rather than of this or that precise organization. Doubtless, this effort will bring with it a large dose of soul-searching in the groups and their activities.

**Concrete projects** (national or international): to be moved by ideals is absolutely required if we do not wish to end up wasting our time in useless endeavors. Ideals can be brought into being. One way or another, planning can open us to new realities and forms of collaboration. In this way, the future will come about: plans jointly made, jointly developed, jointly financed and jointly evaluated.

(JOHN RYBOLT, C.M., translator)

# 150 Years of the Province of Chile (1853-2003) <sup>1</sup>

by David Herrera Henríquez, C.M.

*Province of Chile*

On 17 November 1853, the *Magallanes* weighed anchor at the French port of Bordeaux, capital of Aquitaine, at the mouth of the Garonne. Among the ship's passengers were two Vincentian priests, Felix Claude Vence and Raphael Dominique Sillere, along with Brother Joseph Marie Liegeois. These confreres were traveling with 30 Daughters of Charity, whose white cornettes were whipped about by the wind blowing over the water. Sr. Marie Bricquet was the Visitatrix, and Srs. Stephanie Pirot, Josephine Gavary and Louise Panes were the Sister Servants. Their ship would make its slow way along the coast and at last reach the Chilean port of Valparaíso, known as the Pearl of the Pacific.

The arrival in Chile of these Vincentian and Daughter of Charity missionaries had been in the planning since 1844, when the Minister of the government, Manuel Montt, during the presidency of Manuel Bulnes, began asking for Daughters of Charity to offer their services for several hospitals in Santiago. Only at the end of nine years was a contract signed between the Congregation of the Mission and the Government of Chile. Signing for the Congregation was Fr. Jean-Baptiste Étienne, Superior General; for the Church in Chile, Rev. Joaquín Larraín G., and for the Chilean government, Antonio Varas, Minister of the Interior of President Manuel Montt. The date was 27 June 1853.

This contract laid down the obligations of both parties in 20 articles. We cite here only the three most significant: Art. 8: "The Vincentians agree to offer spiritual aid to the Daughters of Charity." Art. 9: "The Government of Chile agrees to provide a freestanding and furnished house in Santiago for the Vincentians." Art. 10: "Each of the Vincentians will receive the amount of 500 francs yearly." The other articles dealt mainly with the Daughters of Charity.

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<sup>1</sup> This article also appeared in the Provincial Bulletin, *Vicentinos - Chile* (January-April 2004, pp. 2-10), under the title "Celebremos 150 años. Mirada histórica (Celebrating 150 years. An Historical Look)."

The passage to Chile was somewhat stormy, with strong winds and high waves rendering travel difficult. Prayers were offered, and a few medals were tossed into the sea, but these did not produce the miracle of Jesus calming the Sea of Galilee. Only after four months, and thanks to quiet seas, did the group reach their goal of Valparaíso. The day was 15 March 1854. On the same date in 1660, the soul of Louise de Marillac arrived at the gates of eternity; now, in the person of her daughters, she was arriving at the “happy homeland of Eden” (*patria feliz del Edén*) as we sing in our national hymn. As they left the boat, a tremendous welcome awaited them, offered by religious, civil and military authorities, and especially by a delighted population.

A period of a few days spent in recovering their forces was necessary after such a long and painful journey. Besides, Santiago was still awaiting them, 119 km away, along a winding unpaved road, which they took in stages, as if going from Nazareth to Bethlehem through Jerusalem. When the travelers reached Santiago, they realized that the “freestanding and furnished house” stipulated in article 9 of the contract was still being repaired, and so the Vincentians and the Daughters were forced to spend four months together. They used this time to assimilate the language of Cervantes. When the problem of their lodging was resolved, each group began to occupy its own house, and so the contract was being implemented.

Besides the obligation of giving spiritual aid to the sisters, the Vincentians added a spiritual service to those whom the sisters were helping. This is the explanation of why, on some occasions, the priests were hospital and school chaplains of institutions run by the Daughters. And, perhaps imitating St. Vincent, who took care of galley prisoners, his sons began a ministry as chaplains for the Santiago prison at the request of the Chilean government.

Later on, Fr. Delaunay, second Visitor of Chile, pointed out that during the seven years that his confreres were ministering in the prison, they were receiving a monthly sum of \$ 25, which barely allowed them to cover the costs of the horse that they were using to transport them to their post. He added that during the War of the Pacific, which Chile was waging against the Peru-Bolivia Confederation, the Vincentians had had to take charge of the military ambulances as chaplains at their own expense. Chile, at least, gained two provinces for its territory.

Even though the apostolic work of the confreres was already more than enough, they were able to find time to preach missions to the poor in areas around Santiago: Ñuñoa, San Bernardo, Maipú, San José de Maipú, San Roque, Lampa and, a few kilometers further, Codegua, Quillota and Curacaví.

When the Daughters of Charity opened new works in the provinces, the Vincentians would try to found a mission work in the same area: Concepción and Talcahuano (515 km south of Santiago), Chillán (403 km south), La Serena (472 km north). All these evangelized areas came to know the mission work of the Vincentians and the charitable work of the sisters. Of course, good reinforcements had already arrived, but the harvest was still great and the laborers few. For this reason, the province had to keep looking for reinforcements and to begin vocational promotion. The first vocations that God sent to bless the province went to France for their studies. In 1911 Fr. Figueroa was ordained; the following year, Fr. Troncoso; and in 1913, a vocation arrived from the sisters, Fr. Emilio Caracuel Ossa, who would later die in a house of the Daughters at the age of more than 90.

With these new members and others, foundations could be laid for our own seminary, the fondly remembered and famous seminary of Ñuñoa, on Avenida Ossa, a road full of both religious houses and “sporting houses” or brothels. The date was 12 March 1917. The last living graduate in Chile of this seminary is Fr. Teófilo Navarro, dean of the province. He is the pastor of the church of St. Vincent, the same parish that the first Vincentians began in 1854. This seminary took on an international character with the creation of the Province of the Pacific, since it welcomed and formed young confreres from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru. It would close its doors in 1942 for lack of vocations.

The work of the Congregation of the Mission in Peru and Bolivia focused on the formation of native clergy, and from this apostolate there arose figures both clergy and lay, important in the history of those two nations. The First World War entailed the return to France for military service of the majority of French missionaries teaching in those seminaries. Since the vacuum they left could not be filled, the seminaries passed into the hands of the Province of Madrid, which already had a vice-province in Peru. One by one the houses of Peru and Bolivia closed, and the Province of the Pacific thereby became history. After 1965, it was only the Province of Chile.

Nevertheless, mission work in Chile was intensifying. In 1944, the double mission of Abarca-Lagos was formed, destined to play an important historical missionary role in the geographical provinces of Colchagua and Rancagua. Over time, it spread even to distant China, since Fr. Pierre Hahn (a French confrere who had worked in China) extended his mission outreach among the indigenous people living around Temuco (673 km to the south), sharing with them their language, their rough dwellings, their meals, and even their ferocious bugs, famous for their bite.

As they went through the countryside, the Vincentians began noticing vocations to the priesthood. This made an apostolic school

necessary, to be established in San Francisco de Limache, some 42 km from Valparaíso, by Fr. Manuel Godoy, the Visitor at the time. In its 15 years of life, 1946-1961, only five reached the priesthood, each one the fruit of the vocational work of the sisters, directly or indirectly. The school was moved to Macul, but it lasted only five more years, without offspring.

When Fr. Enrique Padrós Claret left office as Visitor in 1964, the Superior General, William M. Slattery, asked the Visitor of the Western Province, USA, James Fischer, to “lend a hand” to the province of the Pacific (cf. *Vincentiana*, 1964, p. 141). As a result, there arrived Frs. Ray Francis Ruiz as Visitor, Stephen Ganel as superior of the central house, and Gerald Brown, to be pastor of the Church of San Vicente.

Popular missions were in the new Visitor’s plan. His mission project involved taking on several adjoining rural parishes to make of them a “Mission Zone.” In this way, the province undertook the parishes of Pichilemu, La Estrella, Rosario Lo Solís, each one with a director, who all had frequent meetings. They all now participate in an eternal meeting in the glory of God. Lack of personal, however, led to the closure of this project. May it, too, rest in peace.

New Visitors and workers for the vineyard then arrived to open new mission fields. They took on mission parishes at Los Ángeles, Teno, Perquenco, Collipulli, Sucre (Bolivia), San Columbano (in Santiago), and Puerto Montt, each one with dozens of rural chapels. The cry of bishops was heard to arrive from various dioceses asking for a Vincentian presence in their areas, but their requests could not always be fulfilled. Confreres cannot be spread around without at least a minimum of three in each work for community life.

Given the importance that community life has in the province, one more means was established to intensify it, the “Province Day.” During this time, confreres come from all over the nation to share their life and experiences, to participate in ongoing formation, and to receive national and international news. These meetings have a goal of ongoing formation as well as recreation and information. Besides, various committees take advantage of the time. It is likewise important to note that there are yearly meetings of young priests (less than ten years of ordination), annual superiors’ meetings, and meetings of treasurers. All this, in one way or another, helps the province to progress.

The province has demonstrated its commitment to vocational promotion in the establishment of “Vocation clubs” in all our works. These assemble young men with vocational questions in local groups, one weekend a month; and, at least twice a year in longer meetings, these young men come together from all the works of the province. A summer mission is arranged with their help, along with that of

seminarians and some priests of the province. In this current year, 2004, five of these young men have entered the preparatory program in Valparaíso. They must have at least finished their elementary and secondary education.

Since 1977 we have had our own Internal Seminary. We say “our own” because previously we had sent our young candidates to Colombia, Ecuador and Santo Domingo. While the internal seminary was running in Chile, Fr. Jaime Corera twice came from Spain as its director. When the Visitors of Argentina, Chile and Peru began the Internal Seminary of the “Cono Sur,” (the southern triangle of South America), our Chilean candidates joined those of Argentina, Paraguay and Peru for their novitiate. The “Cono Sur” rotates, in the sense that it remains at least two years in each country.

Thanks to the fact that we have had good leaders at the head of the province, we can say that these 150 years of life find us on a good footing. The port of Valparaíso celebrated 15 March 2004 the sesquicentennial of the arrival in our land of the first Vincentians and Daughters, the sons and daughters of Vincent de Paul.\* In the Valparaíso cathedral, there resounded songs and prayers of thanks to the Lord of the mission and Lord of charity. Joining with us, as always, were our sisters, the Daughters of Charity. From Iquique in the north to Punta Arenas in the south, they have been liberally planting the seeds of Vincentian charity in daycare centers, dispensaries, schools, orphanages, hospitals, homes for the elderly, etc., and binding up into huge sheaves merits for the granaries of heaven. Members of the Vincentian Family likewise attended in their different branches, as well as others involved in our works.

The celebration of 150 years is not a sign of old age, but rather a look back with new verve, because we realize that we are heirs of past generations who spent themselves giving luster to the **Vincentian mission and charity.**

We have been encouraged and strengthened by the words of our Visitor in his presentation of our current Provincial Plan. He wrote: *We are at the dawn of the third millennium, in a globalized world that has not yet overcome social inequalities, but that has instead increased them. It is a world that has not put an end to wars, violence and terrorism, but that, on the contrary, is experiencing a surge of new conflicts and the worsening of others; a world, too, in which indifference is growing, where, in some people, the idea has developed that God has no place.... As a province, we are inserted into this reality, with our own Chilean reality.... In the midst of this reality, we are called to proclaim Jesus Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor. We are called*

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\* In the March 2004 issue of *Nuntia* (item 21) a long notice of this event was published.

to “launch into the deep,” and, with the entire Vincentian Family, to “globalize charity.”

*And so we undertake the challenge of these modern times from the perspective of our own proper experience. Although we are a small and poor province, we are at the same time a young one desirous of growing, not only in the number of its members or in material goods, but fundamentally in our commitment to make the charism of St. Vincent real, here and now.*

In the here and now, the Church in Chile, which has in some way imitated the Vincentian charism, is calling us to work for a mission Church, with open doors, which goes out to meet persons and cultures, which offers the pearl of the Gospel to the people where they live. This is a missionary Church, ready to serve and give humble reason for its hope: a Church that forms the laity, which renders the Gospel living and active in families and in society. Such a Church is the right place to be, since it is open to the Vincentian charism, and in this way we understand why the bishops want us to work in their dioceses. Likewise, they are calling us to boldly promote vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. Some confreres are already working along this line with the diocesan clergy in local meetings.

On the subject of the diocesan clergy, although we do not now direct seminaries, as we once did in Peru and Bolivia, we have always collaborated directly or indirectly with the diocesan clergy. Some of our confreres have been professors in the pontifical seminary of Santiago or in that of Valparaíso. Frs. Francisco Sampedro and Carlos de la Rivera have taught in the Catholic University of Valparaíso, where, besides laity, there are men and women religious — all of this in collaboration with the Chilean Church. Fr. Sampedro, an expert in the field of ecumenism, has been called, especially by seminaries, to speak on this topic, not only in our own country, but elsewhere.

The participation of some of our members in mass media, whether in a stable way or sporadically, has allowed us to bring the Christian message to television and radio. In addition, some of our students got into mass media during the recent “Vocation Year.”

As we blow out the 150 candles on our provincial cake, we congratulate ourselves for being a young province, anxious to grow, and for having a hopeful seminary with an increasingly vital community and apostolic life. May Mary, the “Star of Evangelization,” extend her maternal hand over the Vincentian Family always and bring us her powerful intercession with the Father. And may St. Vincent smile on us from heaven.

(JOHN RYBOLT, C.M., translator)

# The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Presence of the Vincentians in Indonesia (1923-2003)

An Historical Reflection

by Franciscus Eko Armada, C.M.

*Province of Indonesia*

## **Prelude**

The year of the beginning of the Vincentian mission in Indonesia was not 1835. Yet it was a time of blessing from which the Vincentian spirit of missionary activities flowed in Indonesia. In 1835 the great missionary and martyr, St. John Gabriel Perboyre, CM, arrived at Batavia, the contemporary capital of Java Island (Indonesia). That same year he lodged for a month in Surabaya, to which the first Dutch Vincentians would be sent almost a century later (1923) by *Propaganda Fide* to announce the gospel.

“We were in Surabaya from 14 July (1835).... We stayed there for three weeks. This occasion was a real blessing for us. It was like a holiday in which we could take a walk and breathe the fresh air of the mountains surrounding Surabaya. Once or twice a week we celebrated the Holy Eucharist. Afterwards, sometimes we walked along the beach of Java or Madura...” (*Letter of St. John Gabriel Perboyre, 9 September 1835*).

The Vincentian Mission to Indonesia has often been considered by the missionaries as a mission of following the “footprints” of the martyr and saint John Gabriel Perboyre, CM. Fr. de Backere, CM, the superior of the first five Vincentians in Indonesia wrote a touching letter on 15 November 1923: *Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre has been an invisible friend and guide for us in our missionary journey to Java.... We are sure that our apostolate in this fertile land will be fruitful as it has been carved and blessed by the “footprint” of our great and blessed missionary.*

In the history of the Vincentian presence in Indonesia St. John Gabriel Perboyre, CM, surely could not be considered as pioneer of the mission. Yet his sojourn at Surabaya for a month before

continuing his journey to China in 1835 became a prelude to the missionary presence of the first Dutch Vincentians in 1923.

Indonesia was a colony of the Dutch. As colony, it was called *Oost-Indië* (the East Indies) with Java as one of the most important islands. The area of the Vincentian mission is the eastern part of Java Island.

### **The call of *Propaganda Fide***

The beginning of the mission was in 1923. Fr. François Verdier, CM, the Superior General, announced the mission to the *East Indies* in his Circular of 1923 as follows: “The Dutch Province in China has already had a vicariate guided with gracious wisdom by Msgr. Geurts, CM.... I do hope that the Java Island may soon be open as the new land of mission of the Dutch confreres.”

Five Dutch confreres were chosen as the first Vincentian missionaries to Indonesia. They were Fr. Dr. Theophile de Backere, CM, Fr. E. E. Sarneel, CM, Fr. Jan Wolters, CM, Fr. Theodore Heuvelmans, CM, and Fr. Cornelius Klamer, CM. The first four left from Holland on 25 May 1923 for Paris (then Rome) and finally they boarded the ship *Johan de Witt* from Genoa on 6 June 1923 for Indonesia. The fifth confrere came from China, as he had been a missionary in the Vicariate of Yung Pingfu. He joined the other four in Singapore. On 6 July 1923 the first missionaries of the Vincentians arrived in Surabaya. They were called by *Propaganda Fide* to set up the mission in East Java that had been initiated by the Jesuits.

At the beginning of the mission there were three regions (Surabaya, Rembang, and Kediri) for which the Vincentians took responsibility. But in 1928 the Vincentians took over the region of Madiun as well.

The three regions altogether encompass 20,000 square kilometers. They are as big as two-thirds of Holland with a population of six million, of whom 60,000 were Chinese and 15,000 were Europeans. The indigenous Catholics numbered only 40. Under such conditions, our first missionaries faced difficult challenges. Aside from that, they also suffered a lot because of the very hot, tropical climate in Java.

### **The spirit of the first missionary Vincentians**

They were sons of the times. During the first mission to Indonesia, Pope Benedict XV released an encyclical *Maximum Illud* (30 November 1919) that strongly promoted indigenous vocations and responsibility to mission regions. In addition, the encyclical described missionaries as messengers of Christ. “Leave and forget

your country and family!" Such was the missionary motto promoted by *Maximum Illud*. People outside the Catholic Church were considered as those who did not possess knowledge of salvation. There were three goals of the mission: 1) to propagate the Catholic faith; 2) to build Christian communities; 3) to spread the Reign of God.

The spirit of the Encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* (28 February 1926) of Pope Pius XI also fostered the missionary spirit of the first Vincentians. Our missionaries were inspired to evangelize the indigenous people, rooting the Christian faith into their own culture, and educating children. To learn the Javanese culture became very important for inculturation. In addition, *Rerum Ecclesiae* highlighted the role of indigenous vocations in mission as well.

The concerns of the first Vincentian missionaries in Indonesia were in conformity with both *Maximum Illud* and *Rerum Ecclesiae*. They strived to plant the Christian faith into the hearts of the indigenous people, to build Christian communities in villages, and to promote vocations among the young native men. Vocational promotion was realized in 1933 when two young Javanese were sent to Holland for their novitiate formation as the first CM candidates. They were Dwidjoesastro and Padmosepoetro. The former became the first indigenous Vincentian in Indonesia (priestly ordination in 1940), whereas the latter left his vocation during his formation. During those same periods before the Second World War our missionaries also promoted vocations for diocesan priests. There were two diocesan candidates. One of them, Rev. Dibyokarjono, later became the second bishop of Surabaya (1982-1993).

### **First apostolates to build the Prefecture of Surabaya**

When the first Vincentian missionaries arrived, there were many Europeans in Surabaya. Nevertheless, from the beginning of the mission, our missionaries knew that they were sent first to evangelize the indigenous people of East Java. How did they begin evangelizing the natives? They did home visits wherever Catholic families lived, built chapels and schools in villages, and constructed mission centers, health services, and even hospitals.

"We spend our time doing home visits. We visit families in the afternoon or evening. During the daytime we learn the Javanese language and prepare many things for liturgical celebrations in the evening..." (*Letter of Fr. T. de Backere, CM, March 1925*).

As mentioned above, there were five priests among the first missionaries. They shared the missionary tasks as follows: T. de Backere, CM, was the superior of the mission; Theodore Heuvelmans, CM, was responsible for pastoral service to the Europeans; E.E. Sarneel, CM, served as parish priest; C. Klamer, CM, offered

pastoral service to the Chinese people; and Jan Wolters, CM, the youngest, was assigned to visit towns and villages outside Surabaya, evangelizing the indigenous people of Java. In one of his letters, Jan Wolters described himself as the “missionary of the muddy road,” as he had to walk all the time through villages with bad and muddy roads and only occasionally went by horse when crossing hills or valleys. In the first year of his presence, Jan Wolters complained (in a good sense) about his assignments: “The area of mission in Java is as big as two-thirds of Holland, but there is only one missionary who walks through it.... Who wants to help me to bring these good people to the salvation?” (*Letter of Fr. Jan Wolters, CM, in 1924*).

Under the Dutch colonial government, education of the indigenous in small towns and villages was much neglected. In villages there were no educational institutions for the Javanese children. Education at that time was very expensive and elite.

In 1925 or earlier our missionaries created a Foundation with Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre as its the patron saint. This Foundation would provide financially for all the things necessary for pastoral work in the educational field, health services, building chapels or churches. With the help of this Foundation our missionaries started to construct many school buildings in villages. They were called the *desa* schools. These refer to modest buildings where children of the villages (*desa*) could gather together and learn how to read and write. Our missionaries were inspired by the lack of education to build more and more school buildings everywhere. In just ten years (from 1923-1933) there were more than 40 *desa* schools constructed by the Vincentians. They usually built both schools and chapels in the villages or chapels were also used as schools where the Javanese children could hear of the Christian faith while learning school subjects.

In the same year, 1925, the Vincentians set up a hospital named RKZ (*Roman Katholieke Zieken Huise*) of St. Vincent de Paul. The hospital was handed over to the Servants of the Holy Spirit (S.Sp.S.), since the Daughters of Charity had not yet come at that time. Presently the RKZ St. Vincent de Paul is very developed and has become one of the leading hospitals in Surabaya.

### **Setting up the Prefecture of Surabaya (1928)**

When the first Vincentian missionaries arrived, Surabaya was only a parish that became part of the Vicariate of Jakarta (almost 1000 kilometers from Surabaya). In 1928 the Prefecture of Surabaya was set up. Msgr. Dr. T. de Backere, CM, was the Prefect Apostolic. At that time there were 15 Vincentian priests, 25 religious brothers, 88 Ursuline sisters and Sisters of the Holy Spirit, and 10,345 Catholics.

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The creation of the Prefecture of Surabaya produced a new phase of the Vincentian mission. The missionaries had to distinguish between the “missionary administration” of the CM and that of the Prefecture. Though there were some misunderstandings, they were united in the one intention of building the Prefecture of Surabaya. In 1934 the superior of the mission was Fr. Smet, CM, who replaced Msgr. de Backere, CM, the Prefect Apostolic.

Vincentian presence in the Prefecture Apostolic of Surabaya was dictated more by circumstances and contextual needs than by policy. The Javanese people needed more and more schools and health services, especially for the indigenous peoples. And so the confreres provided these during their first missionary apostolates in Surabaya, Rembang, and Madiun.



Four of the five first Vincentians in Indonesia: From left to right: J. Wolters, T. de Backere (standing), T. Heuvelmans and E. Sarneel, all coming from Holland. A fifth Vincentian, also Dutch (C. Klammer), came from the mission in China.

### **The magnificent inculturation of the “Pohsarang” church building**

The term “inculturation” was not yet available to describe the magnificent church building in a village called “Pohsarang.” Yet there would be no more exact word other than “inculturation” to designate the purpose of such a building. It was built in 1936 by Fr. Jan Wolters with the help of Mr. Maclaine Pont, an architect who had been concerned with the preservation of Javanese archeological artifacts.

The church building of Pohsarang has been very well known since the beginning of its construction. At the present time, it has become the shrine to the Blessed Virgin Mary most frequented by Catholics. The architectural style depicts the sense of the Javanese culture. It creates an atmosphere of a kind of house for the king in the Javanese background. Its gate is narrow so as to offer a personal sense of welcoming given by the king to those who want to come.

### **“The dark nights” of the missionary periods**

By “dark nights” I mean times of persecution during the invasion of the Japanese troops of Indonesia during the Second World War (1942-1945). The Japanese military looked inviting to the Indonesians, since it wished to free them from Dutch or Western colonization. But the fact was this. Upon the arrival of the Japanese troops, new miserable conditions for the Indonesians began. There were numerous victims of the evil violence done by the Japanese. In the meantime, the Dutch missionaries suffered a lot during that time. Priests, religious sisters, laymen — as long as they were Dutch — were all brought to the camps (*internir*), tortured, punished and even killed.

What was the condition of the missionary apostolates? Christian communities, especially in villages, were almost totally abandoned, as there were not enough indigenous priests who could take care of them. Schools, church buildings, chapels, convents, houses of priests (*pastoran*) were damaged or taken over by the Japanese for military operations.

All of our missionaries had particular stories and vignettes that have come down to us to paint a picture of loyalty, fidelity, suffering, imprisonment, love of the people and attachment to their vocation. Fr. Gerard van Ravestein, CM, the *vlootaalmoezenir* (priest who is in charge of the Navy) sank together with the ship bombarded by the Japanese military on the Java Sea. Fr. Gerard Boonekamp, CM, and Fr. van Goethem, CM, suffered a lot because of physical tortures given in connection with false accusations. Fr. van Megen, CM, was best remembered as a sick prisoner who was fed “rat meat” by the Japanese officers.

After the war our missionaries returned to the parishes where they had been before, but due to exhaustion of body and mind from living in miserable camps, they went home to Holland for medical treatment. There were about 12 Vincentian priests who returned home. Providentially there were newcomers among the Vincentian missionaries who just came from Holland. They would restore the mission apostolates that had been damaged and destroyed by the war.

During the war the Prefecture of Surabaya was changed into a vicariate in 1942. Msgr. Michael Verhoeks, CM, was the Vicar Apostolic. He passed away in 1952 from pulmonary illness. Msgr. Johannes Klooster, CM, then inherited the responsibility as the Vicar Apostolic.

#### **The providential start of the minor seminary**

To build a seminary was the great desire of the Vincentian missionaries from the beginning of the mission. As recommended by the encyclicals *Maximum Illud* and *Rerum Ecclesiae*, indigenous vocations were very important to the mission. Due to difficult situations and times of war, there had been no success in initiating seminary formation. In 1948 there was a providential event. Fr. Dwidjoesastro, CM, the first ever indigenous Vincentian, brought with him from Kediri to Surabaya eight young men with one purpose: they wished to be formed in a seminary. There were difficulties in traveling from Kediri to Surabaya due to military conflicts between the Dutch and the Indonesian Republic troops. At that time, Fr. van Megen, CM, was the superior of the mission in Surabaya. He at once became the rector of the minor seminary. Fr. Herman Niessen, CM, took over responsibility for the English and the Dutch.

The start of the minor seminary was indeed by reason of divine providence and unplanned by the confreres. Fr. Dwidjoesastro had not told the confreres before coming to Surabaya. From this time onward, and into the next decades, there would be an increasing number of seminarians formed in the Vicariate. Later on, in 1958, the minor seminary at Surabaya was transferred to a small town called Garum (Blitar), where it still remains.

Besides the minor seminary, in 1958 a Catholic university, Widya Mandala, was also built in Surabaya with the help of our Vincentian missionaries. This university showed the missionary fervor of the Vincentians in offering better human resources to the Javanese people. Fr. Paul Janssen, CM, whose concerns were in the educational field, started to create an institution for forming lay Catholic teachers in Madiun.

### **Toward an autonomous Province of Indonesia**

In 1950 the new phase began. Indonesia became a vice-province of the Dutch Province. There was a minor seminary already built, which had more than 40 seminarians. Many Dutch confreres joined in the work of the Vicariate of Surabaya. There were three indigenous priests (a Vincentian and two diocesan). Schools were established by the religious sisters and brothers. In 1958 Indonesia became an autonomous province. The majority of the priests were still Dutch but there were already some indigenous candidates who would eventually be ready to take over the province.

To build the major seminary land and persons who could take charge of the formation were needed. In 1952 there were some young men who wished to become CM priests. With the blessing of divine providence, our missionaries built the major seminary at Rembang (about 300 kilometers from Surabaya). Fr. Piet Boonekamp, CM, who had been expelled from China due to the Communist Revolution, took the job as rector and teacher of philosophical subjects. After two years of philosophy, the candidates were sent to Holland for theology. Because of a diplomatic conflict between Indonesia and Holland concerning the so-called "Irian Jaya" in 1958, our seminarians transferred from Holland to Italy and USA. In the meantime some candidates were sent to Australia until the major seminary of the CM in Kediri was established in 1962.

The major seminary of the CM at Kediri lasted less than ten years (1962-1971), for in 1971 the CM confreres were invited by the Carmelites to collaborate in the construction of a major seminary (philosophy and theology together). With sacrifices by both the Carmelites and the CM the School of Philosophy and Theology "Widya Sasana" was built and well established in Malang. From this time onward the STFT (School of Philosophy and Theology) has been one of the leading institutions not only in terms of priestly formation (diocesan and religious) but also in the philosophical and theological fields in Indonesia.

### **The erection of the Diocese of Surabaya**

In 1961 the creation of an Indonesian hierarchy began. The Vicariate of Surabaya became a diocese. The first bishop of Surabaya was Msgr. Johannes Klooster, CM. Along with the creation of the Diocese of Surabaya, a new phase of the CM presence in Indonesia began. As the diocesan priests have increased in terms of number, the CM priests have had to hand over some parishes to the diocesan priests.

The Indonesian CM then concentrated more on exploring its original and Vincentian charism than keeping works in parishes. For

instance, priestly formation in seminaries was always one of the characteristic concerns of St. Vincent. It now gained more attention and serious plans for its renewal were developed. Evangelization of the poor has been carried out more convincingly. Handicapped children and poor people have won the heart of Fr. Paul Janssen, CM, who has been so diligently dedicating himself to caring for them. The lepers, who have always been alienated, rejected, and ostracized by society in the absolute sense, inspired Fr. Ernesto Fervari, CM, to build what have been called *Wireskat*, houses dedicated to rehabilitation of the lepers. Parishes that were handled by the Vincentians have been more concerned with helping poor people by distributing necessary things or creating channels of employment for the jobless, etc.

#### **The coming of the Italian and French Vincentian missionaries**

The presence of the Italian and French confreres has depicted the Vincentian characteristic in missionary apostolates. Thanks to the invitation of the Bishop of Surabaya, Msgr. Johannes Klooster, CM, the Italian confreres took over some parishes in the diocese in 1965. They settled in two regions (Madiun and Rembang). With typical Italian style they worked hard in pastoral services for the poor in some towns and villages close to Madiun and built some schools. Later on, some of the Italian confreres dedicated themselves to the mission in Kalimantan that was initiated by the French missionaries.

Our French missionaries first came to Indonesia in 1976. They were only three confreres (Jacques Gros, CM, Gabriel Dethune, CM, and Victor Berset, CM), who had been expelled by the Communists from Vietnam. Unlike the Italian confreres who came to Indonesia at the bishop's invitation, the French Vincentians came to Indonesia with the intention of "continuing" their missionary spirit as carried out in Vietnam. They looked for a place that would be similar to Vietnam (in terms of persons rather than geography). Providentially they found the Diocese of Sintang, which welcomed them to work there. Divine Providence works in daily events. As time passed, the Indonesian Province has paid attention to the missionary activities in Kalimantan. We have considered that such a mission is indeed Vincentian, as the place is poor, isolated, and needs much charitable assistance. When our missionaries have worked hard, indigenous vocations spring up, granted by God. The mission in Kalimantan has indeed required sacrifices from the missionaries and province, but it has always been blessed by God. It has been nothing other than the faithful realization of the Vincentian missionary charism.

In Kalimantan our Vincentian confreres have also set up a practical educational institution for the young indigenous people at

Nangapinoh. Fr. Carlo Karyanto, CM, who has dedicated himself to the mission in Kalimantan for more than 25 years, pioneered the development of missionary activities in educational fields and the building of a place of lodging for the sick. In addition, there have been some educational activities offered by confreres and Vincentian laymen to the children in the interior of the large island of Kalimantan.

### **Rediscovering and fostering the Vincentian charism**

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) engraved a new spirit of renewal in the heart of the Church. A new spirit of renewal flowed into the heart of the Indonesian Vincentians as well. The province began to renew the sense of living community, of doing charitable works, of dedicating itself to priestly formation, of evangelization of the poor, of working in parishes and of being missionary.

In line with the spirit of renewal which sprang from Vatican II, the Vincentians have been rediscovering and fostering some activities characterized by St. Vincent's charism. Just to mention some of them: Fr. van Steen, CM, founded a monthly magazine, *Busos*, that outlined the Social Doctrine of the Church; in addition, he gathered some Christian workers to advance themselves with a new understanding of justice and empowerment. Some young confreres have begun giving attention to street children, empowering employees, developing informal schools for poor children, credit unions for workers and farmers, formation of Vincentian laity, etc.

In the meantime, some confreres who work in parishes have striven to introduce the Vincentian charism into the daily activities of the parishioners. Foundations of social activities and the SSVP (Society of St. Vincent de Paul) have always been main focuses in pastoral services.

Two retreat houses have been built for the formation of the laity. Vincentian confreres who are presently in charge of retreat houses have been actively creating some models of formation for lay people in the spirit of St. Vincent. Our schools of St. Louis and in Surabaya have always asked them to undertake the spiritual formation of their Catholic students and teachers.

Popular mission, an activity much loved by St. Vincent, has been developed into the *provincialis opus* that makes priests, sisters and religious brothers or even laypersons (those of the Vincentian family) unite and get involved actively in evangelizing the poor. The Diocese of Banjarmasin has even made a contract for the Vincentian popular mission for three consecutive years. The Bishop of Banjarmasin hopes that the Vincentians might evangelize the Catholics throughout parishes in his diocese.

Formation in seminaries (minor and major) has been renewed continually. There are actually two minor seminaries that are staffed by the Vincentians (or at least the Vincentians partake actively in formation). They are St. Vincent Seminary at Garum and the minor seminary at Sintang, Kalimantan. In addition, there is a major seminary called School of Philosophy and Theology, "Widya Sasana," Malang with almost 400 students (from different congregations and dioceses) to which the Vincentians dedicate themselves in the field of priestly formation.

### **Toward a missionary province**

Eighty years ago the Indonesian Province was just one of the Dutch missions. Now, it has been transformed into a missionary province. The missionary spirit of the confreres has been realized in three places of mission: in Taiwan (three confreres), in the Solomon Islands (one confrere, as well as one or more others preparing themselves), in Papua New Guinea (three confreres). A new domestic mission has also just opened. It is in the so-called "Indonesian Papua," inside jungle, a part of the Manokwari Diocese. Two young confreres have generously made themselves available to go to this new mission.

On the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first Dutch Vincentian missionaries, we would like to thank God for the missionary zeal granted to our province. This brief overview of the history of the Vincentian presence in Indonesia evokes thanksgiving, pride, joy, and admiration for the zeal to preach the gospel and love for the Indonesians reflected in the lives of our confreres.

There are still many challenges to face in the future, such as: to be deeply inculturated into Indonesian culture and to learn well the needs of the poor; to be more fervent in renewing forms of popular missions, priestly formation in seminaries, formation for Vincentian laypeople, pastoral services in parishes, formation of youth, social and charitable activities, and in concretizing the intellectual apostolate, interreligious dialogue, etc. God's grace, however, is our hope, that we may be able to continue our mission in spite of difficulties and failures.

[This reflection is a summary taken from the book, ARMADA RIYANTO, C.M., *80 Tahun Romo-Romo CM di Indonesia (The 80 Years of the Presence of the CM Priests in Indonesia)*, Malang, 2003.]\*

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\* Cf. *Vincentiana* 47 (2003) 369.

# STUDY

## Simplicity Revisited

by Robert P. Maloney

*Superior General*

Everyone needs a guiding star, but the stars in the sky are countless. Saints have chosen different ones. Francis of Assisi fixed on the Divine Presence as he saw it in the gifts of creation, praising God in “Brother Sun” and “Sister Moon.” Jerome focused on the scriptures: “Love the holy scriptures, and wisdom will love you.”<sup>1</sup> John Gabriel Perboyre’s star, I sense, was providence. “I love the mystery of providence,” he wrote.<sup>2</sup> For Catherine Labouré, Mary conceived without sin was the star leading her to Christ. For Vincent de Paul, truth, or what he called simplicity, became more and more, as the years of his life passed by, the star that guided him to know what to say and do.

I have often written about simplicity, sometimes at considerable length.<sup>3</sup> In this article, I will try not to repeat what I have said on other occasions, though I recognize that some repetition is inevitable. Rather, I will describe simplicity as a guiding star, a master key for the entire spiritual journey.

I will not disguise my motive for returning to this theme today: I become ever more convinced of its importance in the Vincentian spiritual journey. “It is the virtue I love most,” St. Vincent wrote to his confrere, François de Coudray.<sup>4</sup> “It is my gospel,” he told the Daughters of Charity.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ST. JEROME, *EP* 130.20; CSEL 56.3.201.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, p. 119. A total of 102 letters were annotated and published by Joseph Van Den Brandt in a very limited edition at Beijing in 1940.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. “Five Characteristic Virtues: Yesterday and Today,” in R.P. MALONEY, *The Way of St. Vincent de Paul* (New York: New City Press, 1992) 37-69; “Simplicity in the Life of the Daughter of Charity,” in *He Hears the Cry of the Poor* (New York: New City Press, 1995) 144-151; “Sencillez,” in *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Vicenciana* (Salamanca: CEME, 1995) 565-570.

<sup>4</sup> SV I, 284.

<sup>5</sup> SV IX, 606.

There are many contemporary ways of describing simplicity: authenticity, integrity, genuineness, realness, passion for the truth. This article will focus first on simplicity as “being in the truth” with God, with oneself, with others, and with the created universe surrounding us. It will then examine some of the dilemmas involved in combining the simplicity of the dove with the prudence of the serpent.

### I. Simplicity as “Being in the Truth”

There is a wonderful freedom in those who live simply. They project joy and wholeness in blending integrity in life’s essential relationships: with God, with others, with oneself, and with the created universe. St. Vincent said, basically, that they are very lovable! One of the most popular hymns in the English-speaking world proclaims:

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,  
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,  
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,  
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.<sup>6</sup>*

Here, in the first part of this article, I will examine the implications of “being in the truth” in the four basic relationships of the human person.

#### 1. *Being in the truth with God*

God is the center of our lives, the beginning and end of our being. Simplicity involves making God our ultimate concern, identifying our will with his. St. Vincent remarked to Louise de Marillac, rather wryly: “How easy it is to become a saint. All that is necessary is to do the will of God in everything.”<sup>7</sup>

For the simple person the Kingdom of God becomes the focal point that orients life, the ideal that integrates all that he or she is and does, the principle that unifies all sentiments, thoughts, words, acts. The simple person’s life finds its center in Jesus and the Kingdom he preached.

Of course, growth in simplicity before God is a lifelong process. Our sinfulness continually fractures, in greater or lesser degrees, our unity with God’s purposes. Limited objectives like power, sex, money, and self-promotion easily intrude on our single-minded pursuit of God’s Kingdom; even worse, they at times substitute for it. In our

<sup>6</sup> JOSEPH BRACKETT, “Simple Gifts” (1848).

<sup>7</sup> SV II, 36.

sinful condition, we are never able to pull our lives completely together as a masterpiece finished once and for all. Even those who seem to have it all together fall often, and at times badly. Our final integrity comes only through God's forgiving, healing love. It is a gift.

St. Vincent strongly emphasized purity of intention, seeking God in all things, and willing only what God wills. He wrote to Louise de Marillac: "Our Lord is a continual communion for those who are united to what he wills and does not will."<sup>8</sup> He tells a priest of the mission: "What shall we do in that regard but will what providence wills, and not will what it does not will?"<sup>9</sup> In the Vincentian tradition, many means have been suggested for growing in being in the truth with God: daily mental prayer and daily examination of conscience are among the most prominent.

In commenting on the simplicity and purity of intention that he had witnessed in the Shaker tradition, Thomas Merton once wrote, "The peculiar grace of a Shaker chair is due to the fact that it was made by someone capable of believing that an angel might come and sit on it."<sup>10</sup> That is a statement which is surely worth meditating on.

## 2. *Being in the truth with others*

The human person is fundamentally social. Human relationships are not just an add-on. They make us who we are, forming us gradually. Having friends, falling in love, building a family, joining a community, being part of a nation, an institution, a movement — all these forms of union with others are possible only if there is truth-filled communication. In fact, the English word *truth* is related etymologically to trust, faithfulness, covenant. Older English-speaking readers may recall the now archaic-sounding marriage promise: "I plight unto thee my *troth*," which we might translate today as: "I pledge to you my truth (my word, my trust, my commitment)."<sup>11</sup>

In this context (being in the truth with others), simplicity has its most obvious meaning: honesty. Trust in the word of another is the condition for life together, for friendship, marriage, community, business ventures, and all sorts of other relationships. The lie brings about the disintegration of communities, the fracture of marriages, even the downfall of governments. Often, lies are not just verbal; they

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<sup>8</sup> SV I, 233.

<sup>9</sup> SV VI, 476.

<sup>10</sup> Cf., Thomas Merton's introduction (p. XIII) to Edward Demming Andrews' *Religion in Wood* (Indiana University Press, 1966). This citation is further developed in a recent publication: THOMAS MERTON, *Seeking Paradise: The Spirit of the Shakers* (Orbis Books, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> We still speak of a promise to marry as "betrothal."

are acted out. Marriages collapse through infidelity. Families break down through covert, competing interests. Friendships unravel through secret betrayal. Being in the truth keeps us together; falsehood tears us apart. To put it tersely: simplicity unites; duplicity divides.

In the Vincentian tradition we emphasize the need to *seek* the truth *with* others in community, and *with* the poor as our brothers and sisters. Today, as a means for being in the truth with others, we often stress the importance of *listening*, which is an aspect of humility. St. Vincent told François du Coudray that simplicity is linked with humility,<sup>12</sup> a virtue about which he stated: “How lovable you will be if God grants you this grace.”<sup>13</sup>

### 3. *Being in the truth with oneself*

Thomas Merton once wrote: “We make ourselves real by telling the truth.”<sup>14</sup> Truth lies at the core of the human person, straining to emerge. When we express the truth, we construct and reveal our true self. When we distort the truth, we damage not just our relationship with others, but the center of our own being too.

Being in the truth with oneself is, of course, vitally related to being in the truth with God and being in the truth with others, since the human person is essentially relational.

Nonetheless, there is an individuality, a distinctive giftedness, a personal vocation from God that we cannot renounce. One thinks immediately of Polonius’ advice to Laertes in *Hamlet*:

*This above all — to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.*<sup>15</sup>

Simplicity in this context calls us to integrity, authenticity. But as we journey in quest of personal wholeness, most of us experience ourselves as rather fractured much of the time. We sense inner contradictions, a broken center, cracks in our personality, and even at times a falling apart. Philosophy, psychology, and sociology have reveled in describing the polarities that the human person senses within: body/mind, feeling/thinking, heart/head, unconscious/conscious.

<sup>12</sup> SV I, 144.

<sup>13</sup> SV XII, 204.

<sup>14</sup> THOMAS MERTON, *No Man Is An Island* (Kent: Burns and Oates, 1955) 166.

<sup>15</sup> *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 3.

Being true to oneself is not as easy as it might seem. Accurate self-knowledge is a rare gift, as Robert Burns so eloquently noted:

*O wad some Power the giftie gie us  
To see oursels as ithers see us!  
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,  
An' foolish notion:  
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,  
An' ev'n devotion!*<sup>16</sup>

Knowing oneself accurately is essential in life. The philosopher Wittgenstein observed: "You cannot write anything about yourself that is more truthful than you yourself are. That is the difference between writing about yourself and writing about external objects. You write about yourself from your own height. You don't stand on stilts or on a ladder but on your bare feet."<sup>17</sup>

St. Vincent recommended regular confession and spiritual direction as very important means toward self-knowledge. A perceptive confessor or spiritual director can be a "mirror," so to speak, reflecting back to us what we are not be able to see on our own.

#### 4. *Being in the truth with the created universe that surrounds us*

Philosophers and theologians have recognized from the earliest times that human existence is inseparable from matter. We are not pure spirit, but have bodies. The philosopher Merleau-Ponty reminds us: "I am my body." We are also related to and dependent on the earth. In a certain sense (as the book of Genesis states in figurative language in the creation story), we come from the earth. Food, water, air, sunshine, and other elements are the nutrients that flow into our existence. If one adopts a historical or evolutionary point of view, it is all the more evident that we are related to the past and future of the world around us.

If we are to be in truth with God as the Creator, with ourselves as incomplete beings, and with others, especially the poor, we must also be in truth with the created universe that is our home. In other

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<sup>16</sup> ROBERT BURNS, *To a Louse. On Seeing One on a Lady's Bonnet, At Church*, 1786. A modern translation renders the poem as follows:

*Oh, that God would give us the very smallest of gifts  
To be able to see ourselves as others see us  
It would save us time from many mistakes  
and foolish thoughts  
We would change the way we look and gesture  
and to how and what we apply our time and attention.*

<sup>17</sup> LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, *Culture and Value*, edited by G.H. von Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) 33e.

words, being fully human involves caring for the earth. Or, to put the matter in even broader terms, it means caring for the surrounding universe, whose proportions are staggering and, in fact, incomprehensible to us.

Bernhard Anderson, in a recent analysis of Old Testament Theology, writes:<sup>18</sup>

*The picture presented in the Priestly creation story is one of symmetrical order and aesthetic harmony. All of God's creatures, from the sun and moon that measure the times to the animals that creep on earth, have a particular function in the wondrous whole.*<sup>19</sup>

We have not yet fully developed a comprehensive ecological theology, but some of its foundation stones are quite visible and have been set for centuries in Christian tradition:

- the presence of God in all creation
- the goodness of all that God has made
- God's providence in accompanying history and ongoing creation
- the importance of gratitude, wonder, contemplation and care for God's gifts as a response of God's people.

Those who live closest to the land often see its importance more vividly than others. When, in 1851, the President of the United States, Franklin Pierce, proposed to buy two million acres of land from the Indian tribes around Puget Sound in the present State of

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<sup>18</sup> BERNHARD W. ANDERSON, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999) 89.

<sup>19</sup> Another recent Old Testament study, by WALTER BRUEGGEMANN, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997, pp. 528-529), states:

*Creation, the network of living organisms that produces a viable context and "home" for the human community, is an outcome of Yahweh's generous, sovereign freedom.... It is Yahweh's will for this newly ordered world that it should be fruitful, invested with "the power of fertility." Yahweh has authorized in the world the inscrutable force of generosity, so that the earth can sustain all its members, and so that the earth has within itself the capacity for sustenance, nurture, and regeneration. This capacity for generosity is no human monopoly; it is assured that every genus and species of creation can "bring forth" according to its kind. The evident wonder and inexplicable gift of blessing evokes in Israel awed doxology, which is the appropriate response to the miracle of creation that enacts Yahweh's will for life:*

*The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.*

Washington, Chief Seattle (after whom the state's principal city is named) reacted. His famous reflections are one of the most eloquent environmental statements ever made:

*How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?*

*Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist on the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experiences of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man....*

*We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony and man — all belong to the same family.*

*So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us. The Great Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably to ourselves. He will be our father and we will be his children.*

*So, we will consider your offer to buy our land. But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us. This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you the land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.*

*The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.*

Chief Seattle's words were prophetic. Polluted rivers, contaminated air and depleted forests rank high among the problems of modern society. In this matter, as in so many others, immediate gratification often wins out over long-range goals. But when the environment is neglected, society pays a heavy price. Often, it is the poor who suffer most.

## II. On Blending the Simplicity of the Dove with the Prudence of the Serpent

Even for those with a brightly shining guiding star, Christian living is filled with paradoxes: initiative/obedience, flexibility/stability, listening/advising, animating/directing, creativity/humility, trusting/planning, serving/governing, simplicity/prudence. Matthew's gospel recognizes that the simplicity of the dove must cohabit, in the same person, with the prudence of the serpent.<sup>20</sup> In fact, we quickly learn in life that we cannot always speak the unabashed truth.

Human experience teaches us that virtues like truthfulness, charity, and respect for the privacy and good name of others at times "compete" with one another. In moments of apparent conflict, prudence enables us to balance and blend such competing virtues. St. Vincent knew this quite well. He recognized that there was a time for speaking and a time for remaining silent. He was often quite circumspect. In fact, he managed to collaborate for nearly a decade on the Council of Conscience with Cardinal Mazarin, who regarded Vincent as his enemy.

Upon close examination of his life and writings we find many instances where the simplicity of the dove is very much modified by the prudence of the serpent. In a letter written on a Friday morning, probably in 1639, he reproves Louise de Marillac for being over-protective of her son who was running into trouble, but he assures her that he will send someone over to the Bons Enfants, pretending that nothing had happened, to find out what is going on.<sup>21</sup> A year later he tells Lambert aux Couteaux that Louise would like him to take a trip to Angers to make a detailed visitation of her sisters while pretending that he is merely dropping in to say hello.<sup>22</sup> From these and other instances it is evident that Vincent was sometimes not averse to creating or cooperating in a little ruse. He was also quite eager, as experience teaches us is often necessary, to be silent about some aspects of the truth. In 1642 he tells Bernard Codoing, the superior in Rome,<sup>23</sup> that he is sending him some money from the Duchess of Aiguillon, but he cautions secrecy about the source of this money since people in Rome might be prejudiced against the Duchess because of her uncle, Cardinal Richelieu,<sup>24</sup> who had fallen out of favor there.

<sup>20</sup> Mt 10:16.

<sup>21</sup> SV I, 584.

<sup>22</sup> SV II, 66-67.

<sup>23</sup> SV II, 271.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. THOMAS DAVITT, "Some Less-Publicised Facets of Saint Vincent," in *Colloque* N° 5 (Spring 1982) 14-23.

Over the centuries moral theologians have written volumes on the dilemmas that arise in the context of truth-telling. Limitations of space make it impossible for me to provide, in this article, even a brief summary of those materials. Below, I simply offer a few reflections on three of the most common moral dilemmas that those committed to truth-telling face.

### 1. *Telling the truth in the context of other truths*

Truth derives from God. It is related to beauty. But the expression of “truths” can sometimes be ugly, cold, arrogant, angry. Declarations like “I’m just telling you the truth!” can be a facile excuse for harsh words or an escape-valve for pent-up rage.

In the Christian tradition truth and love are inseparable.<sup>25</sup> Growing in love involves penetrating to the truth of the beloved, coming to understand others not just on the surface but in their depths. Conversely, growing in truth involves moving toward deeper communion, overcoming differences, “looking for the larger truth that embraces my little truth and that of the other.”<sup>26</sup> There is a delicate interplay between mind and heart in the search for truth. For those with a highly intellectual formation, Pascal’s corrective can be very helpful: “The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We feel it in a thousand things.”<sup>27</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry expresses the same conviction: “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”<sup>28</sup>

The problem is that people sometimes use “the truth” to massacre others. Under the pretext of being sincere, they destroy truth with “the truth.” In a striking essay, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was himself a martyr for the truth, wrote as follows:

*If it is detached from life and from its reference to the concrete other person, if “the truth is told” without taking into account to whom it is addressed, then this truth has only the appearance of truth, but it lacks its essential character.*

*It is only the cynic who claims “to speak the truth” at all times and in all places to all men in the same way, but who, in fact, displays nothing but a lifeless image of the truth. He dons the halo of the fanatical devotee of truth who can make no allowance for human weaknesses; but, in fact, he is destroying*

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<sup>25</sup> Eph 4:15; cf. Col 3:14, 1 Cor 13:6.

<sup>26</sup> TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE, *I Call You Friends* (New York: Continuum, 2001) 56.

<sup>27</sup> BLAISE PASCAL, *Pensées* (1660), paragraphs 277-278.

<sup>28</sup> ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY, *Le Petit Prince* (Gaillimard, 1943) chapter 21.

*the living truth between persons. He wounds shame, desecrates mystery, breaks confidence, betrays the community in which he lives, and laughs arrogantly at the devastation he has wrought and at the human weakness which "cannot bear the truth."*<sup>29</sup>

We must learn to speak the truth while taking other truths into account: the dignity of other persons, their human weakness and ours as well, the love that must characterize all Christian relationships. Our statement of a truth must blend with these other truths. Speaking the truth is therefore a delicate art rather than the wielding of a blunt instrument.

## 2. *Protecting private truths*

Very early in life we begin to recognize that it is sometimes harmful to *tell* the truth. Our parents teach us as children that some personal and family matters are private; others have no right to know about them. As we grow up, friends begin to entrust us with secrets. As different problems arise in our own lives, we ourselves sense the need to talk with someone, but only on the condition that what we say is kept utterly confidential. These universal human experiences have given rise to a whole body of ethical and legal literature concerning truth-telling, secrecy, and confidentiality. Confessors and spiritual directors, doctors and nurses, psychiatrists and counselors, lawyers, secretaries, journalists, and many others are bound, in varying circumstances and within various limits, to professional secrecy.

Paradoxically, we have a moral obligation to tell the *truth*, but we sometimes have a moral obligation not to *tell* the truth. So, how does one protect private, even "sacred" truths?

Silence, of course, is often the most effective method. In some cases too, in the face of inappropriate inquiries, we may be able to communicate, with a combination of gentleness and firmness, the delicacy of our situation: "I am sorry, I am really not free to talk about that. I hope you understand." Sometimes too, with a little bit of ingenuity, we may say something that some or all recognize as good-humoredly evasive.

But for centuries philosophers and theologians have pointed out that there are situations, posing a moral dilemma, where silence or evasion simply make matters worse and where the right course seems to be to dissimulate the truth. To resolve such moral dilemmas, Thomists, defining moral truth as correspondence between what we

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<sup>29</sup> DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, "What is Meant by Telling the 'Truth'?" in *Ethics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995) 360-361.

think and what we say, used the “broad mental reservation.”<sup>30</sup> Others, defining truth in relational terms (communication of what is in one’s mind to someone who has a right to know), permitted “false speech”<sup>31</sup> when utterly necessary to put off those who have no right

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<sup>30</sup> The Catholic moral tradition, even from the time of the Fathers of the Church, offered many examples of legitimate “equivocations” or, as they were later called, “broad mental reservations.” These are sometimes so subtle that it is difficult to distinguish them from a lie. But all moralists admitted that they were legitimate in certain circumstances. For example, they stated that when a confessor was asked if he knew whether someone had committed adultery he could respond: “I do not know,” which really means “I do not know about that with a knowledge that I can communicate to you.” Other responses suggested for awkward situations were: “He is not home,” which means “He is not home for you!” Or, in an example used in St. Augustine’s time and re-clothed in modern garb during the Nazi regime, when soldiers are looking for innocent people and come to the door to ask whether you have seen them or if they are inside, you could simply respond: “No!” or “I haven’t seen anybody,” which means “I haven’t seen anybody that I feel I should tell you about.” Some also argue that certain statements receive a special meaning from custom or from the circumstances in which they are uttered. For example, when a prisoner pleads “not guilty” in a court of justice, everyone concerned understands what is meant. When a statesman, a priest, a doctor, or a lawyer is asked impertinent questions to which he cannot respond without a breach of trust and he answers “I don’t know,” prudent people understand what this means too.

<sup>31</sup> Basically those who hold this point of view argue that context plays a crucial role in defining truth and in determining what is a lie. Since the purpose of speech is human communication, it cannot be legitimately forced. Those who make unjust inquiries are engaged in a form of violence. In this context, false speech is not a lie, since a lie is a failure to communicate what is in one’s mind to someone who has the right to know this information. Just as it is lawful to kill someone in self-defense, so in self-defense it is also lawful to disguise the truth. Thus, a false statement made to one who has no right to the truth is permissible. Of course, some are utterly opposed to this point of view. Among the most formidable opponents was Immanuel Kant who in his essay “On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives,” found in *The Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, edited and translated by Lewis White Beck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949) stated:

“Truthfulness in statements which cannot be avoided is the formal duty of an individual to everyone, however great may be the disadvantage accruing to himself or to another. If, by telling an untruth, I do not wrong him who unjustly compels me to make a statement, nevertheless by this falsification, which must be called a lie (though not in a legal sense), I commit a wrong against duty generally in a most essential point. That is, so far as in me lies I cause that declarations should in general find no credence, and hence that all rights based on contracts should be void and lose their force, and this is a wrong done to mankind generally.

Thus the definition of a lie as merely an intentional untruthful declaration to another person does not require the additional

to know. Neither theory is ideal. Each, in fact, has notable weaknesses. But both recognize that at times there is a prevailing moral obligation to “protect” the truth and to put off importunate, inappropriate inquiries, even by misleading the inquirer.

In the end, strange though it may seem, one must “learn” to tell the truth. Each word has its own place, its own time, its own audience. Much depends on who is calling me to speak and what entitles me to speak. One of the most poignant, and wise, lines in American literature is the statement in *The Scarlet Letter* that Hester Prynne makes to her daughter Pearl:

*“Hold thy peace, dear little Pearl!” whispered her mother. “We must not always talk in the market-place of what happens to us in the forest.”*<sup>32</sup>

Statements involve a relationship with the person being addressed and at times also with third parties. The truth must respect those relationships and nourish them. The nosy inquirer seeks to violate truth and to intrude on the relationships that truth nourishes. It is important to learn how to put such inquirers off, and to put them off well.

### 3. *Determining the pedagogy for presenting the truth*

Truths not only have their time, their place and their proper audience; they have their own particular pedagogy. Certain truths have their “moment” in history. Victor Hugo once pointed out that, when an idea’s time has come, not even armies can resist it.<sup>33</sup> But until that time “new” truths enter most minds and hearts slowly. As mothers and fathers instinctively know, the wise teacher must often wait for the right moment and the right place. I once gave a rather pacifist-sounding conference to a group of college students, who loved it. A few days later I gave the same conference to a parish

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condition that it must harm another, as jurists think proper in their definition (*medacium est falsiloquium in praeiudicium alterius*). For a lie always harms another; if not some other particular man, still it harms mankind generally, for it vitiates the source of life itself.”

<sup>32</sup> NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, *The Scarlet Letter*, 1850, Chapter 22 “The Procession.”

<sup>33</sup> VICTOR HUGO, *The History of a Crime* (1877), Chapter 10. The entire text of this work can be found online at [www.gutenberg.net](http://www.gutenberg.net). Hugo’s actual text, often paraphrased or misquoted, comes right at the end of *The History of a Crime* and reads as follows: “Truth is the innermost part of God. What can be done against a revolution which has so much right on its side? Nothing. To love it. That is what the nations do. France offers herself, the world accepts her. The whole phenomenon lies in these few words. An invasion of armies can be resisted; an invasion of ideas cannot be resisted.”

group which hated it. The time and place were almost the same, but I learned rather painfully that a new audience often requires a new pedagogy.

*How* to present the truth is the key question. This question becomes all the more important as we grow in consciousness that our goal in speaking is not merely the transmission of data but communication and communion in the truth. From that perspective pedagogy is not just a clever, pragmatic means of packaging a “truth” well; rather, it is an integral part of communicating a truth to the other.

The often-anguished Emily Dickinson put it this way:

*Tell all the Truth but tell it slant —  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise  
As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind —.*<sup>34</sup>

This lesson is especially important for teachers. Some make the mistake of thinking that they have done their job when they have lectured for an hour, citing all the facts and uttering all the “truths.” But one must ask whether they have communicated truth to others, or whether they have simply uttered it in front of an audience which has not received the message. Method is important. A teacher must often reflect not only on the content that he or she wishes to communicate, but also on the most effective means for communicating it. The same is true of parents, friends, counselors, and many others who must at times communicate truths which they know will be difficult for the hearers to accept.

The Greek word for truth, ἀλήθεια, means “uncovering.” Speaking the truth opens us out. What lies within us comes forth. In speaking truthfully, we disclose what otherwise remains hidden in our depths. In Greek mythology, the goddess of truth who guides Parmenides puts two pathways before him: one of uncovering and one of hiding. It is only by “uncovering” that one’s true self emerges. The New Testament states this very clearly: “Put on a new self, created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness is born of truth.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> EMILY DICKINSON, *Poesie* (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1995) 340.

<sup>35</sup> Eph 4:21.

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*Guía vicenciana de Francia*

(Preface by Robert P. Maloney, Superior General;

Translation by Luis Huerga, C.M.)

CEME, Salamanca, 2004, 499 pages

“This work is conceived as a guide for visitors or pilgrims to the places where Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac had been or where they established foundations for their Congregations. This work emerged from the growing interest that the Priests of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, lay Vincentians, and all their collaborators have shown in the places which concern their founders. This book sets out, in the first place, to describe the places where Vincent de Paul lived, worked and passed, from his birth in Puoy, near Dax, until his death in Paris. Secondly, it records the houses of the Congregation of the Mission which he founded, although some of them he never visited. Thirdly, it includes numerous places where he went and of which we know something specific of his passage. Lastly, it incorporates some places that were of interest to him, even if he did not establish any work in them” (taken from the back cover of the book).

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