

FEATURE

350 Years and the Mission Continues

Presentation

by Julio Suescun Olcoz, C.M.

We present this issue of *VINCENTIANA* in two installments. One can say that the author of one of these is Saint Vincent himself. It is he who speaks to us about himself, he who relates to us about his life. Father Bernard Koch C.M. has done us the favor of putting neatly in the mouth of our Founder some texts of the letters, conferences and other documents that have been handed down to us. He has conveniently chosen these and has verified them as he went through his investigative work in the main archives containing these Vincentian references. What comes out is a kind of short original autobiography, which goes further than a mere anthology of Vincentian texts, giving us an opportunity to see the interior process at work in Saint Vincent.

We could have published this work, in spite of its length, as another article in the usual issue of our periodical. But *VINCENTIANA* wished to join the celebration of the 350th anniversary of Saint Vincent's death, by putting in the hands of our readers this little Supplement to serve as a remembrance of a much-admired life as well as to stimulate our own faithfulness to the mission. It will serve also as grateful recognition of the untiring work of Father Koch, a true Vincentian researcher who will be completing his 80 years on July 30.

In line with our foundational fidelity, *VINCENTIANA* remembers two unique persons from the beginnings of the Congregation of the

Mission: Father Antoine Portail — who also died 350 years ago — an intimate companion and effective collaborator of Saint Vincent and Brother Bertrand Ducournau, the faithful secretary whose work and acumen has provided us with the greater part of our direct knowledge about the saint.

The other installment of this issue of *VINCENTIANA*, in the usual format of the periodical, includes, aside from the Curia's official communications, an exposition on the "Institute" or "Foundational Letter" of our Congregation as it is found in the papal bull, "Salvatoris Nostri," together with the precise notes that this bull makes on the petition letter signed by Saint Vincent. This document points out the basic lines of our identity and it has to be at the basis of our Vincentian fidelity.

This second installment contains the remembrance of Saint Justin de Jacobis, an incarnation of fidelity to our vocation that is much closer to our own time as well as one that is rooted in Vincentian values, such as faith in the mystery of the Incarnation, Eucharistic devotion, and openness to the Church's concerns relative to the unity of all Christians, in obedience to the Lord's bidding. During the 350th anniversary of our Founders' death we also observe the 150th anniversary of the death of Saint Justin de Jacobis which took place on July 31, 1860.

Moving forward to the present time, *VINCENTIANA* presents the call to creative fidelity to the Mission, a call that the 2010 General Assembly wishes to extend to the Congregation throughout the world. The Consultation Document is a means by which the whole Congregation can accompany, with their prayers and reflections, the confreres gathered together in the General Assembly and give echo to their voice.

Finally, *VINCENTIANA* wants to echo the voice of the Brothers who formulated a Declaration during their First International Formation Session in CIF. They speak to us about the ways in which at the present time they can incarnate in their vocation as Brothers, a creative fidelity to the mission.

Translation: MANUEL GINETE, C.M.