

CAMPAIGN: WATER, A DROP FOR LIFE

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Since 2003 the Vincentian Family has gathered together twice a year. Between 2008-2010, all the branches of the Vincentian Family in Italy have been involved in a campaign on behalf of the poorest missions where men and women missionaries from Italy are ministering. This campaign is called: water: a drop for life.

First phase: initial study

We focused on water because we are aware that this is a precious resource that the poor are deprived of. Those involved include the Daughters of Charity, the Sisters of Charity and lay Vincentians who work in the missions of Madagascar, Mozambique, Congo, Nigeria, Eritrea, Albania, and the Ukraine. These missionary and poor lands have presented us with fifteen concrete projects (wells, cisterns, hydraulic operations). Their cost totals 370,000 €.

As this information was gathered, we put together a dossier on the problem of water and printed 12,000 copies. While the dossier was presented in order to obtain grants for these projects, it was also meant to be an educational tool that would help groups become aware of the good that water represents, recognizing that *access to water is a universal right of all people, with no distinction or discrimination (Caritas in veritate, 27)*.

Second phase: beginning of the campaign

Symbolically the campaign: water: a drop for life, began on Easter, 2008. Contact was established with some newspapers and a written communication was given to them so that they could highlight this initiative. Thus the plan began to move forward at the speed of molasses. In 2009, just before the beginning of the Vincentian Year, the campaign was re-launched with three instruments. This missionary calendar of 2009, which was focused on this project, opened paths for the publication of our documents. A flexible

prospectus (40,000 were printed and distributed throughout Italy) provided a synthesis of the fifteen projects. Finally a DVD, which presented a visible illustration of the campaign, was produced and duplicated. The campaign was re-launched under a new slogan: the gift of the Vincentian Family of Italy to the most poor on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of our Founders.

Third phase: development of the campaign

It is truly admirable to see how this campaign has been received by people of all walks of life. Distinct groups, some certainly more than others, have organized themselves to spread the campaign. We have seen schools where students, during Lent and Advent, had their friends commit to this project and the money that resulted from their Lenten or Advent sacrifices were donated to the project. Groups of families made a decision to not buy Christmas gifts and instead donated this money to the project. Missionaries of Saint Vincent organized charitable dinners. We were also able to participate in a group called, *Human Life – Vida Humana*, in Rome where we presented some of the projects. I would say that the Daughters of Charity were always on the front lines: through their works they involved many people. The elder Daughters in the infirmary made articles to sell and in this way raised money for the project. It is impossible to narrate here all the initiatives of the different groups. Contributions have arrived from every part of Italy and at this time, with 350,000 € collected, we are very close to our goal.

Fourth phase: remaining concerns

What remains to be done involves the most delicate step: to make these projects a reality and to continue to inform the donors. At this time we have given money to those projects that have been begun, distributing 160,000 €. The other projects will be gradually accomplished. Our coordination involves giving attention to those projects that have begun and asking for documentation of the work as it is finished. This documentation is then published and circulated through the Vincentian magazine of Italy. On the occasion of the National Congress of the Vincentian Family which will be held in Rome in September 2010 we will have a film presentation of the current situation of the project and will provide all the contributors with the means that will enable them to know the ultimate destiny

of their contributions. Yes, some projects have had bureaucratic problems and others have needed at least a year to bring the campaign to a good conclusion. In any case, donors are willing to become involved in other projects if the original one cannot be accomplished.

We believe that this is a beautiful gift that the Vincentian Family of Italy has presented to our Founders.

Translation: CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M.