



Vincentian Solidarity Office

March 2012 Bulletin

Comments from the Executive Director

Dear Confreres,

Believe in the Gospel!

As we are coming to the end of the micro-project grant funds, a breath of new life has been given to the program by a matching challenge grant from a private foundation. For every dollar donation up to \$25,000, the micro-projects program receives another dollar! Please consider donating to rebuild these funds during Lent. Most of the available funds were consumed by recent grants for prison ministry in Cuba, a car in Cameroon, materials to promote the Vincentian Family in the Ukraine (SS Cyril and Methodius), and an outboard motor for our confreres from Zaragoza working in Honduras.

Now we have entered Lent. Our Superior General, Fr. Greg Gay, has reminded us that this is a time of reflection, connection and action. I encourage you to respond by inviting others to join you in that reflection, connection and action. I recently presided at the Eucharist at the home of a man whose days in the seminary with the Congregation have given him a deep connection with the Vincentian charism. This man now seeks a path to join in the Mission as a father and husband. He invited friends and family to a pre-Lenten (so we could eat meat on Friday!) evening of reflection and meal.

At the Eucharist we used the readings of the day with some added materials from Lumen Gentium (#1) and Evangelii Nuntiandi (19, 21, 22). The call to solidarity is incredibly clear, beckoning us to change and to promote change. In the context of this call I presented our Congregation of the Mission as one response. I invited the group to consider supporting the Patrimony Fund Project as one option for promoting the mission of the Church. All were invited to reflect daily on the mission as a way to motivate their participation. All were also given the DVD from DePaul University "Vincent de Paul--Charity's Saint" to aid in their reflection, and materials to promote the

Patrimony Fund Project. Reflection, connection and action! We are planning another gathering to share what we learned during Lent.

In St. Vincent,

Father Miles Heinen, C.M.

(information in English on the patrimony fund can be found at www.cmglobal.org/patrimony-en/.)

Passage for Women Prisoners in Lebanon

One of the ministries of our Province of the Orient focuses on the needs of Ethiopian women living in Lebanon. Thousands of impoverished women migrate from Ethiopia to Lebanon to find work. The Lebanese government authorizes the women to stay for three years. Many remain in the country beyond this authorization illegally so they can continue to work. When discovered, these women are imprisoned by the government--often in oppressive conditions. Our confreres have been collaborating with the



A pastoral visitation of Ethiopian women in prison

Daughters of Charity and the Vincentian Family in Lebanon to provide pastoral and social services to over 50 such Ethiopian women in four prisons.

One of the most pressing needs of the women is funding for transportation back to Ethiopia, where they can return to freedom at the end of their prison terms. The Province of the Orient applied to the VSO

for a micro-project grant to cover these costs. The monies awarded by the VSO financed passage for twelve imprisoned women back to Ethiopia.

Seminary Improvements in Kabgayi

St. Vincent's Seminary in Kabgayi houses 19 seminarians, 2 brothers and 3 priests of the Rwandan Mission of the Province of Colombia. The house was in pressing need of improvements. The old stove in the kitchen worked inefficiently and gave off heavy smoke. The seminarians provide care to 20 street children as part of their pastoral experience. The seminary needed a wash closet to provide a place for the children to shower. The seminarians also needed internet access to support their studies.



The new wash closet and shower under construction

The Rwandan Mission applied to the VSO for assistance with these needs. The VSO was able to match funding from the African Appeal of Fr. Sy Peterka, C.M. with monies from the Vincentian Solidarity Fund (VSF), to finance the purchase of a new stove, the construction of a water closet with a shower, and the installation of internet access for the seminary.

Computers in Periyakulathupatty

Through one of its licensed charities called the Social Organization for Non-Formal and Technical Healthcare, Education and Mission (SONTHEM), our Province of Southern India offers an array of social services to the remote and impoverished villages of Periyakulathupatty, Mukhavanur and Pothapatty in the Trichy District of Tamil Nadu State. Confreres involved in SONTHEM observed that the poorest village children were excluded from taking computer

courses at local schools because their families could not afford the required course fees. In response, the Province applied to the VSO for funding to purchase 5 computers and furnishings to start a free computer training program for the poorest village children.



Village students working at the new computers

The VSO used donations from individuals in the USA, which it matched with monies from the VSF, to fund the purchase of the computers and furnishings. SONTHEM now provides computer training to nearly 50 village children who would otherwise not have access to computers and instruction on their use.

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Our goal: To assist the Congregation of the Mission with obtaining funds for its evangelization and service of the poor.

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