



Vincentian Solidarity Office

March 2010 Bulletin

Comments from the Executive Director

Dear Confreres,

May we believe in the Gospel!

Since I last wrote in December, the VSO awarded three more VSF Micro-Project Grants. These include micro-project grants for the Province of Cuba to purchase personal care items for prisoners; the Province of Chile to remodel and equip St. Vincent de Paul Church in Santiago; and the Province of Central America to renovate a meeting hall in Quetzaltenago, Guatemala, for formation of the Vincentian Family. I am ever grateful to the confreres contributing to the Vincentian Solidarity Fund (VSF) since you enable the VSO to distribute these micro-project grants!

One way to think of solidarity is to ask: With whom do we stand? On the eve of Lent, the Sunday reading from Luke's Gospel provided a vivid image of this notion. The passage described how Jesus came down from the mountain to stand on "level ground" among a pressing crowd of people in need. He then began to preach by saying: "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." I find these words, and the imagery of their context, haunting. Jesus comes down from the heights to stand shoulder to shoulder with the poor—and in that place demarks God's kingdom.

At this moment there is no place where Lent is more heartfelt than Haiti and Chile. The suffering in these countries is horrific. But if we hear Luke's Gospel, we must conclude that Haiti and Chile are at the heart of God's kingdom--and stand with their people.

I encourage all of us to join in the efforts of the Vincentian Family to collaborate with Fonkoze—the largest microfinance organization in Haiti—in the project that honors the 350th anniversary of the deaths of St. Vincent and St. Louise. Fonkoze means "shoulder to shoulder" in Creole. The Vincentian Family's component of the collaboration is called Zafen, which is Creole for "it's our business." In supporting Zafen—which will contribute to the

recovery and rebuilding of the Haitian people—we will do the business of God's kingdom.

The VSO will be happy to accept and forward donations toward the seed monies (to be matched with donations from the Vincentian Family) for Zafen. There is also an urgent need to finance a 4-wheel drive vehicle for the new project development office being established by the Vincentian Family in Haiti as part of Zafen. Please visit the temporary website for the project at: www.zafen.org.

Donations for Chile are also urgently needed, and can be made through our Treasurer General in Rome.

Fraternally in St. Vincent,

Father Miles Heinen, C.M.

Playground Equipment and Furnishings in Shera Qeja

The Province of Ethiopia has a mission in Shera Qeja, located near the City of Bonga. The mission director, Abba Mitiku Hambissa, C.M., recently constructed a new building for the kindergarten at the mission with funding from an agency in Malta. The kindergarten



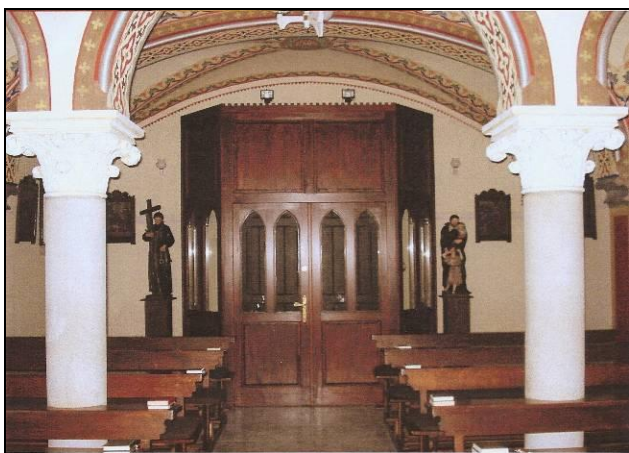
Children play on the merry-go-round in Shera Qeja

serves 89 children from the indigenous Manja and Kaffa Tribes. The school provides the children with basic literacy skills that are required to enter primary school. Once the new kindergarten was completed,

Abba Mitiku struggled to find the funds to furnish the school with desks, chairs and tables. He also hoped to purchase playground equipment. Abba Mitiku then sought the assistance of the VSO through his province. The VSO was able to obtain a grant from the Dorothea Haus Ross Foundation, which it matched with monies from the VSF, to purchase the school furnishings along with a slide, swing set, and merry-go-round for the new kindergarten building.

An Antechamber in Budapest

For four decades our confreres in Hungary suffered greatly under the Soviet-backed regime in their country. The Province of Hungary continues its struggle to rebuild in the aftermath of this suppression. The reclaiming of its provincial house in Budapest marks one of its great successes in this endeavor. The province originally opened the house in 1909. The government confiscated it in 1950. The province then repossessed the house in 1993.



The antechamber at the Hungarian provincial house

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the consecration of their provincial house, our Hungarian confreres decided to construct an antechamber in its chapel. The confreres have increasingly used the chapel for pastoral activities. With monies from a VSF Micro-Project Grant, the confreres created a new entry to the chapel that allows continuous public visitation for prayer and Eucharistic devotion, while keeping the chapel secure and insulated against the weather.

A Minibus in Kimwenza

For several years the Province of the Congo needed a new minibus for its seminarians at the Scholastic of St. Vincent de Paul. The Scholasticate is located in Kimwenza in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

and houses the province's philosophy and theology students. The students travel substantial distances to institutes where they take their classes.



Seminarians with their new minibus in Kimwenza

The existing minibus at the Scholasticate was worn and unreliable. The students were often late for their classes because the minibus would break down. The VSO obtained a grant from Missio Aachen, which was supplemented by donations acquired by Fr. Sylvester Peterka, C.M.--and then matched with monies from the VSF—to purchase a new, 15-seat Toyota Hiace minibus for the Scholasticate.

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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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