



Vincentian Solidarity Office

March 2006 Bulletin

Comments from the VSO Administrator

Dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with us!

Since December of 2005, the VSO funded three more micro-project grant applications. The Province of Fortaleza in Brazil received a micro-project grant to equip its secretariat office to improve provincial communications and record keeping. The Province of the Congo received a micro-project grant to purchase an electrical generator and technical equipment for its Information Technology Training Program for youth in Bomoko, Kinshasa. The Province of Madagascar received a micro-project grant for the construction of a channel and retention basin for rainwater at its Center for Technical and Professional Formation in Ankandrina. The continuing contributions of individual confreres, community houses, and provinces to the Vincentian Solidarity Fund (VSF) enabled the VSO to finance these worthy micro-projects. Thank you for your kind support of our confreres working in these provinces!

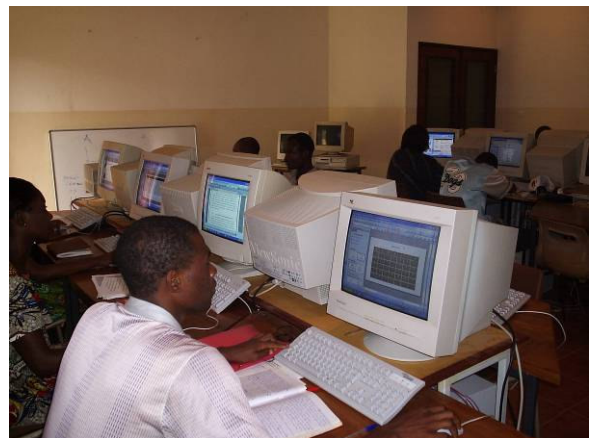
I find the depiction of the Spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness in Mark's Gospel a powerful Lenten image. From the VSO I see that image reflected in confreres working in many distant parts of the world: in heavily forested districts of northern India; in crowded, destitute barrios on the periphery of cities in Latin America; in barren, famine-plagued areas of Sub-Saharan Africa; in vast, boundless regions of Central and Eastern Europe. These are only a few of the wilderness landscapes thirsting for God's love and justice where our confreres toil for, and alongside, the underprivileged. Let us pray for the endeavors of these confreres, and that the Spirit drives us ever more toward solidarity with the poor!

Fraternally in St. Vincent,

Brother Peter A. Campbell, C.M.

Computer Training in Nkol Afemé

In the modern, global economy, computer literacy is increasingly important for gainful employment. It is also a promising avenue for empowering the poor. These facts are not lost on the confreres working in the Mission of Cameroon, an impoverished nation in western Africa. The confreres of the mission recognized the need to provide computer training for local young adults, and adopted a project to establish the St. Vincent de Paul Computer Training Center at the mission's scholasticate in Nkol Afemé. Initial plans called for training 45 poor men and women (15 per year) between the ages of 18 and 27 from the Nkol Afemé area. The program would comprise 700 hours of training on several widely used computer programs, and computer repairs. Program students would not pay tuition, but would commit, after completing the program, to serve 4 hours per week over 35 weeks as "student trainers" for new students.



Computer Training Program in Nkol Afemé

The training project team, led by its coordinator Father Claudio Ojeda y Pérez, C.M., lacked the financial resources to implement the project. The mission approached the VSO for assistance. The VSO submitted a proposal to the Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (Italian Bishops' Conference) for funding for the project. The Conferenza Episcopale Italiana generously provided a sizeable grant. The

grant, along with monies from the VSF, paid for training booklets, professional development for the teachers, computers, printers, a projector, software, networking equipment and other program expenses. The training course commenced in September of 2004 and is in its second year of operation.

Church Repairs in Koithoorkonam

Recently the Archdiocese of Trivandrum entrusted St. Joseph's Church, a parish in Koithoorkonam in the State of Kerala in India, to the confreres of the Southern Indian Province. The parish is constituted by 260 families and 5 substations. Many parishioners suffer poverty and unemployment.



St. Joseph's Church in Koithoorkonam

When Pastor Father Mathew Kuruppusserry, C.M. arrived at the parish he found St. Joseph's Church in need of urgent repairs. Torrential rains and deferred maintenance had taken a toll on the church building. Father Mathew requested that his province apply for a VSF micro-project grant to finance repairs of the church walls and roof. The VSO was happy to fund the micro-project. Church repairs were completed in late 2005. The renovated church was blessed by Archbishop Soosai Packiam on December 18, 2005.

Lay Leadership Formation in Itaituba

Confreres of the Province of Fortaleza in northeastern Brazil are often challenged by great distances and difficult terrain in their ministry. Lay catechetical leaders are critical for maintaining the faith life of people living in remote villages. This was the situation facing Father Arno Longo, C.M. serving in the Itaituba Mission in Pará State. The mission comprises 55 villages situated along 175 kilometers of the Trans Amazonian and Santarém-Cuiba Highways.

Some villages are located far from the highways on poor roads that experience frequent washouts. Father Arno developed a training program to form catechetical leaders for the villages. The program was coupled with a feeding program to address malnutrition among village children. The province sought the help of the VSO to secure funding for teaching materials, bibles, and food and transportation costs for the leadership training, and livestock for the feeding program. The VSO obtained private donations, including contributions from confreres in the Eastern Province of the United States, that were matched with monies from the VSF to fund the training and feeding programs.



Catechists in an Itaituba Mission village

Vincentian Solidarity Office
500 East Cheltenham Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144
United States of America

Our goal: To assist the poorer provinces, vice-provinces, missions, and visitors' conferences of the Congregation of the Mission with obtaining funds for their works and needs.

How to contact us:

Bro. Peter A. Campbell, C.M., Administrator:
Telephone: +1 215-843-9018
E-mail: pcampbell@cmphlsvs.org

Scott Fina, Ph.D., Assistant Administrator:
Telephone: +1 215-848-1985 ext. 248
E-mail: sfina@cmphlsvs.org

Fax: +1 215-843-9361

Our website: www.famvin.org/vso