



Vincentian Solidarity Office

March 2008 Bulletin

Comments from the Director

Dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with us!

Since the publication of our last bulletin, the VSO financed two more VSF Micro-Project Grants with monies from the Vincentian Solidarity Fund (VSF). The VSO awarded a VSF Micro-Project Grant to: (1) the Province of Fortaleza in Brazil to purchase computer equipment for presentations at meetings of young men discerning a vocation to the Vincentians; and (2) the Tanzania Mission of the South Indian Province to purchase furnishings for Phase 5 (a ground floor extension with seven bedrooms and common toilets and showers for students) at De Paul Seminary in Morogoro, Tanzania. On behalf of the beneficiaries of these and the many previous VSF Micro-Project Grants, I wish to thank our confreres for their ongoing generosity in contributing to the VSF.

This month we celebrate the Easter Triduum. Every year at this time I am especially moved by the Liturgy on Holy Thursday. We commonly refer to this Liturgy as the Mass of the Lord's Supper where we commemorate the institution of the Eucharist. While the second reading from St. Paul on Holy Thursday recounts the first Eucharist, the Gospel passage from John instead depicts Jesus washing the feet of his disciples and commanding them to love as he has loved. Holy Thursday provides a vivid and powerful coupling of humble service and the New Covenant – and one central to the charism of our Congregation. Let us each strive to love as Jesus loved. Let us also keep each other in our hearts and prayers this Lenten and Easter Season – especially our confreres humbly serving the very poor in developing lands.

Fraternally in St. Vincent,

Brother Peter A. Campbell, C.M.

Mechanizing a Farm in Bafoussam

Cameroon is a struggling nation in western Africa with a population of 18 million people. Most Cameroonians survive by subsistence farming. Nearly 50% are very poor; life expectancy at birth in the nation is under 46 years. The works of the Cameroon Region of the Province of Paris target the very poor. No work generates substantial net revenue. Consequently our confreres in Cameroon and in Paris face an ongoing challenge to finance the ministries, administration, and formation program of the Cameroon Region.

To help their Region become more financially self-sufficient, our confreres operate a farm project outside the City of Bafoussam in western Cameroon. The project has multiple objectives: to create revenue to support the operations of the Cameroon Region; to employ local impoverished women and young adults; and to train local farmers in more sustainable agriculture.



The Superior General tries out the new tractor and rotary tiller during his visit to Cameroon

Father Jean Paul Nsanzimana, C.M. started the farm project in 2006 on two hectares of land to provide income for his local community house at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish. Father Jean Paul grew up on a

family farm. He also studied agriculture for two years at a technical school before entering the seminary. Father Jean Paul hired and trained ten local women and young adults to prepare the farmland, plant corn and white beans, and harvest the produce. Father Jean Paul sold the corn as feed to livestock farmers in the region and exported the white beans (that are not part of the Cameroonian diet) to foreign markets in the Congo, Gabon, Chad and Equatorial Guinea. Father Jean Paul also began to teach the local Cameroonian farmers to use the more productive farming practices he was employing in the farm project.

Because the initial harvests and sales from the farm project were so successful, the Cameroon Region decided to expand the project to include additional hectares to generate more income in support of its Region-wide activities. A lack of adequate farming equipment, however, prevented the Cameroon Region from expanding the number of hectares in the farm project. The farming was being done manually and needed to be mechanized. Expanding the farm project required a tractor equipped with farming attachments.

The Cameroon Region brought this need to the VSO. The Cameroon Region then obtained a grant from the Loyola Foundation to purchase a 4-wheel drive, TS 304 tractor. The VSO matched the grant with monies from the VSF to purchase farming attachments for the tractor, including a furrow disc, rotary tiller, and seed drill.

Computerizing CM Houses in South India

Recently the South Indian Province requested the assistance of the VSO to purchase 10 computer packages for 9 of its community houses. The houses included 5 formation houses, 3 parish rectories, and the Priest Home and Retreat Center in Belwadi. A total of 118 confreres and seminarians reside at the 9 houses. All 9 houses lacked computers.

Three pressing needs inspired the project. First, the 9 community houses are widely dispersed across 4 different states in India. Travel between some of the houses is expensive, time consuming, and impeded by poor roads. This situation made intra-provincial communication difficult. Installing computers at the 9 community houses promised affordable and rapid communication and sharing of documents by e-mail. Secondly, the lack of computer equipment at the 5 formation houses hampered the studies of the

seminarians. Thirdly, the priests and brothers residing at the 9 community houses needed computer equipment to support their formation work and pastoral ministries.



Confreres and seminarians at St. Vincent's Mission House in Aluva, India with new computer equipment

The VSO obtained a grant from the Hackett Foundation, which it matched with monies from the VSF, to enable the South Indian Province to purchase 10 Compaq computers and monitors, 10 Hewlett-Packard printers, and 10 uninterrupted power supplies to be distributed to the 9 community houses.

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

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