

INTRODUCTION

Editor's Note

This edition deals with a theme that has been presented from various other perspectives. In the present edition we highlight “the missions and the Missionaries” of the Congregation. We do this from the perspective of the missionary experience in specific ministries and from the perspective of the witness of some Missionaries who have dedicated their life to the service of those men and women in great need.

As the result of an interview we present the witness of five Missionaries who celebrated thirty-five years of priesthood and who, during their celebration, shared reflections on their ministry. This news was first reported in NUNTIA but here, in this article, we present the reflections of each confrere with regard to the meaning of their priesthood in the Congregation.

Father Patrick Collins develops the theme of Vincent de Paul and prayer and presents his reflections in light of article #40 of our Constitutions. This article coincides with the reflections that the members of the Curia have shared on this section of our Constitutions.

The central theme of this edition is developed in the article that was written by Father Israel Arévalo. Father uses as his starting point Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, and deepens our understanding of itinerancy as one of the aspects that we must be mindful of when speaking about mission. In another article, Father Muleta Mekkonen presents us with a detailed description (historical and geographical) of the mission in Ethiopia. Popular missions have always been part of our tradition as Vincentians and Father Tomás Lunot offers a new vision with regard to these missions. For some years the Vincentian presence has had an impact on the Philippine Church and the presence of the community in Adamson University has been most significant. On the fiftieth anniversary of the Vincentian presence at this institution of higher learning, Father Teodoro Barquín recalls the history behind this academic and missionary experience. From the Philippines we then move to Indonesia where Father Armada Riyanto presents a brief biography of the formator and missionary, Father Emile Victor Bieler. Our missionary journey concludes in India with an experience of the Vincentian Family. Father Francis Puthenthayil presents us with a brief history of the Vincentian Congregation which originated in India and describes the relationship of that Congregation with the Congregation of the Mission.

With regard to information about the General Curia, we present the statistics of the Congregation for the year 2014, the report of the June *Tempo Forte* meeting, the decree with regard to the suppression of the Province of Holland which will become dependent on the General Curia, and the decree establishing the new province of Germany-Austria (the result of reconfiguration). In this section we also include circular letters and other information.

In the next edition of *Vincentiana* we will present material dealing with the preparations for the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the origins of the Vincentian charim, which has inspired the worldwide service of the distinct branches of the Vincentian Family as their members minister with and on behalf of countless poor men and women. Therefore, we have decided to dedicate the last edition of the year to the development of this theme which we have entitled: *400 years of service to the Poor in the Vincentian Family*. We have asked each branch of the Vincentian Family to share the ways in which they have lived and adapted the Vincentian charim as well as the significant elements and the challenges that our Founders' heritage presents to them.

FROM THE GENERAL CURIA

Tempo Forte Circular

June 15-19, 2015

Dear Confreres,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your heart now and forever!

We began our *Tempo Forte* meeting with our second Domestic Assembly meeting in preparation for the General Assembly. We then discussed the following matters:

Gathering of CM Bishops. This will be the first in the history of the Congregation. At this time, we are expecting 20 Bishops from the Congregation, who will gather on Via Ezio in Rome, for three days, from 23-25 June, in order to speak about their role as Bishops in the context of being members of the Congregation of the Mission and in the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul. We have a total of 34 Bishops in the Congregation of the Mission and we consider the participation of 20 out of 34 to be very positive.

Meeting of Mission Superiors. We did further planning for this meeting, which will be held from 14-18 September and is obligatory for all superiors of international missions. We have also invited the superiors of regions and of missions of provinces to participate, if they so desire. Because the mission superiors are being invited, we had to update our present superiors on the international missions. Father Aidan Rooney has been confirmed for another three-year term in Bolivia. Father Marcos Gumieiro has been named superior of the Angola mission. Father Marcos is from the Province of Curitiba, Brazil, and has been in Angola for a number of months. For our newly formed mission in Alaska, we have asked Father Andrew Bellisario, former Director of the Daughters of Charity and former Visitor of the Province of the West of the United States, to assume the responsibility of superior. With regard to the Solomon Islands, Father Mathew Kallammakal, Assistant General, will be making a visitation of the mission and will do a consultation for superior, because the present one, Father Jose Manjaly, is leaving at the end of this year.

Meeting of New Visitors. This is scheduled for 10-20 January 2016. The Commission named to plan this event is composed of Fathers

Giuseppe Turati, Secretary General; Stanislav Zonták, Assistant General; and Eli Chaves dos Santos, Assistant General.

General Assembly. This is scheduled for 27 June - 15 July 2016. We have agreed to a proposal from the coordinator to include in the segment on the Vincentian Family a video of an example of collaboration in one of the provinces of the Congregation. The General Council is proposing two postulates to be considered at the General Assembly. They have to do with already existing Statutes; that is, Statute 68, § 1 and Statute 89, § 2. We also planned another day of formation for the General Council in preparation for the General Assembly to discuss the matter of evangelization, especially in Europe. We likewise considered the cost of the General Assembly, which will be assumed in part by DePaul University, in part by the provinces of the United States, and in part by the other provinces assisting at the General Assembly.

Reconfiguration. Father Turati took part in the official celebration of the coming together of the Provinces of Austria and Germany and also participated in the Provincial Assembly of the new Austrian-German Province.

Permanent Deacons in the CM. We received a letter from a confrere on this topic. We directed him to the Province of Paris, as well to a confrere of that province, who is doing his thesis on the possibility of married permanent deacons being members of the Congregation of the Mission.

General Curia House. We are holding a consultation for a new superior/administrator of the General Curia House because, for reasons of health, Father Mario Di Carlo has been relieved of this responsibility.

We also discussed the arrival of a new member of the community, Brother L'ubmoír Žemla, who previously worked in the Curia House, has graciously offered to return. He will join us in August. At the same time, we wish to offer our deepest and most respectful thanks to Father Vincent Zonták, from the Province of Slovakia, who has generously given of his time to assisting us in the kitchen during the one-year sabbatical he took. His presence, not only in the kitchen, but also in the community, was very much appreciated and the members of the Curia House have shown him how grateful they are. We will be welcoming another confrere to the Curia House, Father Álvaro Mauricio Fernández, who will be responsible for *Vincentiana*, replacing Father John Maher. We are grateful to the latter for the service he has provided to the Congregation of the Mission as he now returns to his Province of Origin to take up a new apostolic ministry. Father Álvaro Mauricio will assume the responsibility of assistant to the Secretary General too.

Communications. We treated the report from the former Director of Communications, Father John Maher. Father Jorge Luis Rodriguez will become Director of Communications and will do the transition while waiting for Father Álvaro Mauricio to prepare the next issue of *Vincentiana*.

The FamVin website has now assumed, in the new strategic plan, a different title, “FamVin: Connecting, Collaborating, and Evangelizing.” We discussed the report that was sent to us by the new soon-to-be coordinator of the Vincentian Family Website, Father Aidan Rooney. He is in the process of transitioning with Father John Freund and will formally begin his responsibility in September, but will continue to be based at the international mission in Bolivia. The core team of FamVin, along with Father Rooney, is comprised of Beth Nicol, Monica Watson, and Toma Zielinski. Also collaborating with FamVin will be Javier Chento from Spain. They hope to involve other members of the Vincentian Family from different parts of the world. I think the core team, which has collaborated with Father John Freund, who will continue to be a consultant, has worked very hard in developing FamVin and we hope that it will continue to move the website forward into the future.

Inter-Religious Dialog. We studied a report from Father Claudio Santangelo, coordinator of the Inter-Religious Working Group, regarding his responsibility as coordinator, as well as the research that he is doing to help us prepare a project for the General Assembly as a way of celebrating our 400th anniversary. For this occasion, we hope to expand the presence of the Congregation of the Mission in Muslim areas of the world. Claudio also included a report on the Commission for Interreligious Dialog of the Union of Superiors General. He represents the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission on this Commission.

Presidents of Vincentian Universities. We also received a report from Father John Maher who represented the Superior General at a meeting of the Presidents of Vincentian Universities. The four presidents, three from the United States and one from the Philippines, were joined in this meeting by the presidents of a college in our Province of South India and one of the colleges of the Sisters of Charity in the United States. Others have been invited and we hope to increase participation. Those who met have assumed responsibility for this annual meeting and are calling themselves the Vincentian Conference of Presidents. The first coordinator of the Conference is Father James Maher, President of Niagara University. An article describing this newly formed Conference will be written and published.

Vincentian Solidarity Office. We reviewed the report from the VSO Director and are happy to announce that the Vincentian Endowment Challenge Campaign has ended after a five long years of raising US \$5 million, which was matched by a donor, to help support a number of provinces in developing countries and the branches of the Vincentian Family under the responsibility of the Superior General. Special recognition should be given to Father Miles Heinen, Director, and Mr. Scott Fina, Assistant Director, for the fine work they have done over the years in working on this campaign, along with a former coworker, Theresa Niedda. A team of consultants, led by Father Donald Harrington, also graciously supported and assisted the VSO team in reaching this goal. This Campaign showed huge solidarity with mission among the members of the Congregation of the Mission, because even all of the beneficiaries contributed to the cause. Over 80% of the funds came from CM sources: the General Curia, provinces, confreres, and their wills. The Superior General has recommended to the VSO that it increase the provinces that actively support the VSO with yearly funding for matching funds and micro projects. In the past, the VSO has relied heavily on the provinces of the United States, but has received other donations from some provinces in the Congregation. The Superior General hopes that all provinces, including many who are beneficiaries of the VSO's efforts, will also contribute. In their responses to a letter he sent them, they have led the Superior General to believe they will do so. In the absence of the former member of the VSO team, Father Heinen has told us that he has been receiving help from Mrs. María José Pacheco, who has volunteered her time supporting the different efforts of the VSO Office. She is fluent in both English and Spanish. We thank her and welcome her to the VSO team in her capacity as a volunteer.

CM Representative at the UN. The confrere selected for this role will transition with Father Joseph Foley, who has served in this capacity since the administration of our former Superior General, Father Robert P. Maloney. Father Foley has done a fine job in these years of representing the Congregation and working together with other religious, particularly members of the Vincentian Family.

Financial Matters. We discussed the house on Via della Nocetta, the house on the property of the General Curia, which sits behind the main building, and our plans to renovate this with the hope of either renting or selling it in order to provide further income to sustain the operational costs of the General Curia.

Together with the Treasurer General and the Assistant General for the Missions, we discussed the amounts of financial support that will be dispersed from the Mission Distribution Fund. All the provinces that receive monies from the Mission Distribution Fund will be getting a letter from the Assistant General for the Missions.

International Missions. We began with the mission in **El Alto, Bolivia**. For the past 20 years, the Congregation of the Mission has been present in the mission in El Alto. There have been many changes. Lots of missionaries have come and gone. Today we have three missionaries there and we are asking for a fourth member from the Congregation of the Mission to volunteer to be part of this most important, and yet poor and difficult, mission, very much on the periphery, as Pope Francis would say. The language, obviously, is the local language of the people, plus Spanish. The Superior General shared with the Council his report on the visit he made to Bolivia. Both the community of El Alto and that of Cochabamba came together for Easter Week with the Superior General and celebrated their annual retreat. They also had the opportunity to meet as individual communities and individual confreres with the Superior General, as well as the two houses together throughout the course of the week.

We then had a long discussion on our mission in the **Solomon Islands**, which has been undergoing some radical changes in personnel, with the possible departure of four confreres at the end of this year. We received positive responses from several provinces for confreres to replace those who are leaving. We are most grateful for the assistance offered by the Province of Indonesia, as well as the Provinces of North and South India, and the support that we hope to continue to receive from the Province of Oceania. One of the confreres from the Province of Indonesia, who is returning to his home province, is Father Thomas Christiawan. We want to take this opportunity to thank Father Thomas for his years of contribution to the seminary apostolate in the Solomon Islands. As mentioned previously, Father Jose Manjaly, the mission superior, will be returning to his native Province of North India, sometime in November, to assume the role of Director of the Daughters of Charity.

We mentioned above that we named Father Marcos Gumieiro as superior of the mission in **Angola**. We learned that Father Roberto Perea, from the Province of Mexico, has returned to his home province after his request was considered and accepted by the Superior General.

Both the Superior General and Father Zonták, Assistant General, visited the missions of **Chad** and **Benin** a few months ago. We had a brief interchange on their impressions of both these missions. The mission in Benin is manned by three confreres from Poland. Father Lawrenz has returned to his Province of Poland, after having given a year of service to the mission for which we are most grateful.

The mission of **Punta Arenas** will now be expanded to include **Punta Arenas and Tierra del Fuego**. The team of three confreres presented the Community Project, which was approved by the Superior General and his Council. Plans were made for the visit of the Superior General to this international mission from 23 June until the end of the month.

Finally, we discussed the mission in **Alaska**, which now has a new superior. When Father Andy Bellisario arrives, he will join Deacon Arnoldo Hernandez of the Western Province and Father Pedro Delgado from the Province of Colombia. They are still awaiting the arrival of another confrere from Colombia, who is working on the difficult paperwork required to enter the United States. Father Bellisario has made a temporary visit to the mission and will be discussing further hopes and plans for the mission with the Archbishop of Anchorage.

We updated our list of volunteers and the times that they may be available to go to one of our international missions or to another mission or province of the Congregation that is in great need of personnel, such as Cuba and Mozambique. So before the Mission Appeal Letter in October, I put out this call again for any confrere who may be willing to work in the Province of Cuba or the Vice-Province of Mozambique.

We sent a letter to two volunteers, asking them to consider the possibility of one of the three missions that are in need of a missionary confrere. We are awaiting their replies. Another confrere-volunteer, who has been mentioned previously, is Father Ricardo Pradhan, from the Province of North India, who has generously offered to go to our mission in the Solomon Islands. He does so with the approval of his Visitor and Council. Father Antony Punnoth, from the Province of South India, has arrived there and has begun serving as a professor of philosophy, among other responsibilities. Another volunteer who has been working in our mission in the Solomon Islands, Father Teclmicael Tewolde from Eritrea, the Province of Saint Justin De Jacobis, will be transitioning from the Solomon Islands to the seminary under our responsibility in Papua New Guinea. In that transition period, Father Teclmicael will be taking a one-year course in seminary formation at the Gregorian University. He will live at the Leonine College with another confrere from the Papua New Guinea mission, Father Justin Eke, who is finishing his studies and will be returning to Papua New Guinea within a year.

Vincentian Family. We presented a number of candidates as International Moderator of AIC to replace Father Eli Chaves, who has served in this capacity for the last five years.

We received a report from the Commission for the Promotion of Systemic Change through its coordinator, Father Giuseppe Turati. He presented the Strategic Plan, as well as the visits planned for further implementing the systemic-change method in a number of provinces and countries where the Vincentian Family has requested this.

We also received and studied the report from the representative of the Congregation of the Mission on the Board of Depaul International, a Family branch member. This representative is Father Patrick Murphy, from the Western Province of the United States.

Conferences of Visitors. We then discussed the reports from the Conferences of Visitors. We received the minutes of the last General Assembly of **CEVIM (Conference of European Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission)**. We reviewed its Statutes and approved them with a slight modification of one part. In the report, we were informed that there is a new member on the coordinating team, Father Giuseppe Guerra, the Visitor of Naples. He will be succeeded by the future Visitor of the new Province of Italy. The President of CEVIM, Father Pavle Novak, was reelected for a second term. The Vice-President, whose term has not yet expired, is Father Ziad Haddad, Visitor of the Province of the Orient. CEVIM has also organized new formation team for the international seminary. The Director will be Father Guerra. He will be joined by Father Georges Maylaa, from the Province of the Orient, a former missionary in Papua New Guinea, and Father Antonio Ruiz García, from the Province of Madrid.

With regard to **CLAPVI (Conference of Latin American Vincentian Provinces)**, we received a report from CLAPVI-South and the Visitor of Chile, as well as a letter from the International Mission Team, composed of members of the Provinces of Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador. The new coordinator of this project is the Visitor of Ecuador, Father John Prager.

We received a report from the General Assembly of **COVIAM (Conference of Visitors of Africa and Madagascar)**, which welcomed, for the first time, the superior of the mission of Chad. It had extended that invitation also to the other international missions in Africa, Angola and Benin, hoping for their participation in the future. Tunisia was present because the Executive Secretary of COVIAM is a member of the mission in Tunisia. COVIAM may come to a decision to establish a common formation program for theology. The proposed site is in Enugu, Nigeria. Their proposal was sent to the Superior General and his Council for consideration and recommendations.

Then we studied the minutes of the meeting of the **NCV (National Conference of Visitors of the United States)**, sent by its president, Father Raymond Van Dorpe. They speak of the preparation for the 200th anniversary celebration to mark the arrival of the Vincentians in the United States.

Council Calendars. The Superior General was in the International Mission in Punta Arenas and Tierra del Fuego, Chile from 23-29 June. From 2-5 July, he will be in the Region of Kenya, which belongs to the Western Province of the United States. From 6-10 July, he will be in Tanzania, participating in a Vincentian Family gathering and the ordination several members of the Province of South India, which is responsible for the mission in Tanzania. From 21 July and the week that follows, he will be in Salamanca for the General Assembly of the

Vincentian Marian Youth. He will be on vacation from 6 August to 4 September. From 5-6 September, he will be in Panama for a Vincentian Family gathering. From 13-17 September, he will participate in the meeting of superiors of International Missions and superiors of missions of provinces to be held at Via Ezio. On 18 September, he has a meeting, along with Father Heinen, with one of the agencies in Switzerland that supports our VSO projects and on the 19th they will participate in the CIF program on the Vincentian Family. From 20-25 September, he will be in Pallanza in Milan for the annual retreat of the members of the General Curia House. On the 26th, he will make a visit to Como, Italy, with the General Curia Community. On the 27th, there will be a meeting with the Vincentian Family in Milan and on the 28th, he will be in Naples for a celebration of the 200th anniversary of the province. On 29 September, also in Naples, he will be present for the opening of the Internal Seminary.

I close with a wonderful thought from our Holy Founder: "Oh! what great hidden treasures there are in holy Providence and how marvelously Our Lord is honored by those who follow it and do not try to get ahead of it" (CCD I, 60).

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

The Gestures and Teachings of Pope Francis and Questions he Poses to Members of Institutes of Consecrated Life

Reflections by the Assembly of the Union of Superiors General
Rome – May 27-29, 2015

1. Gift and responsibility for the present day Church

Pope Francis is a gift to the Church and especially, a gift to the Institutes of Consecrated Life. With regard to religious life, the Pope has had direct experience of that reality. His exercise of the Petrine ministry is helping the whole Church to know and value consecrated life. At the same time the Pope gives hope to the members of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and is helping them to move out from their isolation and from being their own point of reference.

Many have viewed consecrated life as dead, or at least it was seen as marginalized in the Church. The difficulties that consecrated life had to confront (and still faces) seemed to confirm that reality: aging communities, lack of vocations, rigid structures, abandonment of works, reconfiguration... the risk of discouragement and isolation was very real.

After a period of relative marginalization, Pope Benedict XVI initiated a process which called attention to consecrated life and its value. Now that the Church has a Pope who was (and is) a member of a religious congregation, there is greater recognition of the specificity of the consecrated vocation. The Pope has not forgotten that he is a religious and he invites all the members of consecrated life to a conversion of heart.

The witness of Pope Francis assists the Superiors General in motivating their members to live their consecrated vocation in a more radical manner, in a manner that is in accord with the gospel, in a joyful manner. He also supports the heads of religious congregations as they urge their members to place their relationship with Jesus and the following of Jesus at the center of their life. The Pope reveals a fascination with consecrated life and is able to place vocational questions before young men and women.

At this moment in history, consecrated life can make a specific contribution to the Church. Consecrated life is helping the Church to discover ways to proclaim God's mercy, ways to overcome a worldly

spirit, ways to give witness to a more fraternal lifestyle, ways to move out to the peripheries, ways to give preference to being with and accompanying people on their journey through life, ways of living a simple lifestyle and ways of serving those who are poor.

The language of Pope Francis is our language: simple, direct, understandable. It is the language of the people and therefore, it is a Christian language. He speaks to and guides the Church not just from the perspective of his role in the Church but more importantly he does this with his person, with his presence. He reveals himself as one who is close to God and his humanity reveals to us a God who is close to all people, but especially those excluded from participation in society. Francis' style is spontaneous and direct, not programmed or formal. He lives what he believes.

Pope Francis expects much from consecrated life and he sends us forth "to awaken the world". For some the image of the healing of the crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17) seems out of place in today's world and yet consecrated life runs the risk of becoming crippled as a result of its isolation. Today, the Pope calls the members of religious institutes to a new and committed responsibility. Like the blind man from Jericho, we are invited to rise up and to walk.

2. Spiritual experience of the consecrated life

Pope Francis invites us to return to our first love, to give a primary place to God in our life, to follow Christ, to give witness to the gospel. The identity of the consecrated life is to be a sign and a reflection of Christ's life. The Pope insists on cultivating an intimacy with Christ, recognizing that such a relationship changes everything. The Pope's writings are a source of inspiration and encouragement for conversion; they provide assistance to the Superiors General; the Pope invites us to live our lives from the perspective of this fundamental option of life. The spirituality that the Pope places before us is the concrete spirituality of daily life, a spirituality that is lived with simple and authentic gestures, gestures charged with love and tenderness. The Pope refers to a spirituality that places us in the midst of the real world and not in some parallel imaginary world. Such a spirituality is revealed in courtesy toward others, in the manner in which we greet one another, ask permission, express our gratitude and ask to be excused... such spiritual experiences are not meant just for specialists in this area but are intended for everyone; they are a common and a popular reality. It is impossible to live the Christian life without a strong spirituality.

The Pope invites us to overcome the spirit of the world that is grounded in the search for power and privilege, in manifestations of prestige and superiority and ostentation and pride, in a desire for positions of prominence, in climbing the ladder of success, in a hunger for

money and comfort and ease. The concrete signs that indicate that one has engaged in the struggle to overcome that spirit are simplicity, humility, poverty, moderation and authenticity.

The Pope insists on spiritual discernment as an attitude toward life. Such an attitude involves developing an ability as a spiritual guide and being attentive to what is happening in one's surroundings, thus giving credence to his belief that reality is more important than ideas. Discernment helps members of consecrated life to listen, interpret situations, and point out alternatives that prove to be prophetic. Discernment leads us to the conversion that is demanded of us as a result of the freedom that has been bestowed on us through the "exodus event".

All of this allows the Holy Spirit to be free and creative and allows us to be open to God's surprises. At times there is a tendency in the Church "to domesticate" the Spirit. Yet if we are open to the Spirit then we must also allow ourselves to be surprised by God and this means that we must allow our own lives to be a surprise. The fruit of such openness to the Spirit is revealed in our attention to others, especially our attention to unexpected and/or inopportune visitors. The fruit of that openness to the Spirit is also manifested by maintaining calmness in the midst of unforeseen situations and by maintaining a joyful disposition.

3. Building up the fraternal life through means of the consecrated life

The Pope insists on the fact that we, as religious, ought to collaborate in building up the Church as a *house and school of communion*. The Pope's ability to listen to and to accept advice from others is an encouragement for the Superiors General to build up the community. It is more important to care for the person than to provide for the organization and its structures. It is most important to care for all people, especially young people, the elderly and the infirm.

The *service of authority* in consecrated life is to gaze upon the cross of Christ and to serve even when that involves the offering of one's own life. Patience is a virtue that superiors need in order to build up community. The ability of those who exercise the service of authority to recognize themselves as sinful and with limitations facilitates the building up of a fraternal life and also facilitates fraternal correction. One must know how to speak to the heart of one's brothers and sisters: *cor ad cor loquitur*.

The *culture of the encounter* ought to promote communication. For this to happen a mystique of fraternity and a spirituality of communion are necessary... these in turn will facilitate a sharing of life and a sharing of one's experiences, a sharing of true friendship and dialogue, acceptance of differences, an ability to overcome divisions and

to engage in a search for reconciliation, an openness to the possibility of fraternal correction. Without an *encounter* it is impossible to travel through life as brothers and sisters.

The witness of fraternity in consecrated life is the first service of the mission. This demands that we work together, that we plan and evaluate as members of a team. Fraternity implies an ability to reach out to others in a common apostolate. Fraternity that is learned and built up in the community reaches out and ultimately becomes communion/union with the laity who share our spirit and mission, communion/union with the local church, a network of communion that extends to people living in the same area. Such fraternity implies the possibility of establishing new relationships, mutual relationships.

We have not been *formed in fraternity*: that requires time, commitment, proper attitudes and abilities. The religious community is an *apostolic community* and our conversations often revolve around our apostolic ministry... but we must also admit that we frequently have time to create fraternal bonds. Pope Francis (look at his lifestyle in Saint Martha's House) teaches us the importance of community and of relationships. The fifteen diseases of the Roman Curia see https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco_20141222_curia-romana.html could also be applied to the General Councils of our congregations. We must overcome gossip and slander.

4. The service of consecrated life on behalf of the mission

Pope Francis invites us to engage in our mission and to put aside those structures that do not respond to present day demands. We are to avoid the danger of identifying the mission with our works. The Pope evangelizes with gestures and words. He knows how to be with people because he views the *encounter* as a privileged means of evangelization. Francis invites us to go to those places where we will encounter the most fragile people in the world... and there we are exhorted to heal them with the medicine of acceptance and mercy.

The charism is not packaged or bottled and thus preserved; it must be frequently renewed. The spirit of the origins of an institute cannot be viewed as encompassing the totality of the charism. The charism has to be developed and implies growth but there can also be a sclerosis and a decline. Nonetheless, we are invited to give new life to the charism, to reach out, to put behind us our habitual routines and to go beyond our acquired positions.

This tension between pastoral ministry, community life and prayer can only be overcome through a *mystique of service* and a spirituality of apostolic mission. When this occurs the members are able to live in union with one another and in harmony with the identity of conse-

crated life. For this to happen we need to build up communities for the mission that do not close in upon themselves, communities for the mission whose members are able to put aside their own comfort and thus allow themselves to be questioned by the needs of the people.

Witness is a fundamental form of service on behalf of the mission. Pope Francis invites us to reveal the fact that it is possible to live the gospel on a daily basis and in the midst of our daily life. In this way the gospel becomes contagious and attractive. *It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but "by attraction"* (*Evangelii Gaudium*, #14). Witness that rises up from the depths of the interior, witness that is beautiful and creative makes consecrated life visible and meaningful... the variety of its forms gives witness to the richness of the gospel.

Members of the Institutes of Consecrated Life should place themselves in situations of the greatest and most urgent need, especially among those who are most poor. The movement toward the peripheries gives new meaning to consecrated life and implies the need for reinvention. Members of religious congregations must go out to the peripheries and become involved with the laity and young people and families. It is often difficult to find confreres who are willing to move out from their comfort zones and minister to people on the peripheries. Today religious life is maintaining the western churches and is creating inter-cultural communities.

The member of the institutes of consecrated life are called to situations of lesser security, called to live closer to people, called to embrace an ethic of compassion and relatedness which involves listening to people, allowing the humanness of people to question us, being slow to propose and define moral behavior. We are to identify ourselves with Christ's way of ministering, a style of life that gives new meaning to the encounter between people and that fills our own lives with joy and meaning.

5. The encouragement of the General Council regarding the life of the Province

The challenge of this call is to participate fully in the renewal of the process of evangelization and this, in turn, should lead the members of the institutes of consecrated life to develop new strategic plans. This is a call to develop a "spiritual" approach in order to confront the challenges and the risks of present day evangelization. It is an invitation to develop a creative spirituality that is grounded on the hope for communion. It is a spirituality derived from the generous gift of self and from the courage to accept risks (preferring to accept defeat rather than embrace the false security of immobility).

[A] *Some final observations*

- The diversity of institutional forms, the history and the traditions of Institutes and the diversity of its organizational modalities resulting from the number of members that belong to the institute should make each person question himself in a different manner.
- Nevertheless, it is also recognized that an historical process has led to a very clear autonomy of provinces with regard to the central government. On the one hand, this has been determined by the need for a central government that is more charismatic and inspiring, but it also reveals the risk of fragmenting the unity of the institute.
- Various experiments have been undertaken in order “to reduce the distance” between the central and the provincial offices: meetings of the general council with the provincials, meetings of the general council with the provincial councils of a region, participation of the general councilors in the gatherings of a province (retreats, assemblies, etc.), organization of thematic forums, and international meetings and collaboration.
- Value has been placed on various forms of communication including utilizing modern technology in this area. At the same time, primary importance must always be given to a personal relationship with the confreres and with provincial superiors.
- If it is true that the “messenger is the message”, it is obvious that unity and co-responsibility experienced and lived by the members of the General Council will become a point of reference for the Provincial Council and a model for the life of the institute.

[B] *Present day priorities for the members of the general council of the institute*

- To guard and to insure the growth of a sense of belonging to the Institute as an international community, and to do this through maintaining a focus on the charism (or as Pope Francis reminds us, “the whole is more important than the part”).
- To give priority to the building up of a community spirit among the distinct parts, always respecting, however, the autonomy and the differences present in those sectors. The various forms of autonomy ought to serve the communion of the body.
- To build up a culture of encounter by maintaining an open and permanent dialogue with the provinces (especially, Visitors and their Councils).
- To keep the vision alive; to help the members read and interpret the present moment in light of inspiration provided by provincial

and general assemblies. Thus, the institute is able to offer its charism and its mission as a service to the Church and the world through its unique perspective as an institute with an international character.

- To encourage provinces to reach out and extend themselves: to courageously look beyond merely sustaining their existence and to persevere by embarking on new paths, despite the fragility of its resources.
- To help the members read and interpret the present information and to then project themselves into the future as a result of a clearer, global, transparent understanding of the available resources, thus promoting and strengthening co-responsibility.
- To promote and sustain new projects on the peripheries, and to do so with the participation of the provinces.
- To always make more visible and effective the sharing of the goods of the institute: ideas, personnel, financial resources, etc.
- To give prominence to the international character of the institute as the globalization of fraternity.
- To offer unified lines of initial and on-going formation.

Translated from Spanish by CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M.

Suppression of the Province of Holland

On July 15, 2015, the Superior General signed the decree suppressing the Province of Holland and placed the Province and the canonical house of Paninguen under the direct control of the General Curia. Father Harry Jasper was appointed superior of the house and he will take on those responsibilities as of August 1st, 2015.



CONGREGAZIONE DELLA MISSIONE
CURIA GENERALIZIA

Via dei Capasso, 30 – 00164 ROMA

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DECRETUM SUPPRESSIONIS PROVINCIAE HOLLANDIAE

G. Gregory GAY, C.M.

Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission

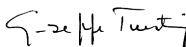
After duly consulting the province of **THE NETHERLANDS**, with the unanimous consent of my council and in respect of our Constitutions article 107§3, I, the undersigning Superior General,

DECLARE

the **TRANSFORMATION** of the Dutch Province (**HOLLANDIAE**) into a **CM CANONICAL HOUSE AT PANNINGEN**, starting August 1st, 2015.

Given in Rome, at the General Curia on July 15th, 2015


Gregory GAY, C.M.
Superior General


Giuseppe Turati, C.M.
Secretary General



Erection of the New German-Austrian Province

On November 10th, 2014 the Superior General, Gregory Gay, CM, signed the decree establishing the new Province of Germany-Austria, which Province resulted from the reconfiguration of the former Austrian and German Provinces. The new Province, officially erected on January 1st, 2015 is led by the Visitor, Franz Kangler, who had been the Visitor in Austria. The motherhouse of this Province will be located in Kaiserstrasse – Vienna. At the present time the Province is composed of thirty-two confreres and seven canonical houses that are located in three countries: Austria, Germany and Turkey.

Dekret zur Errichtung der neuen Provinz

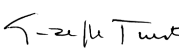
Von den ehemaligen Provinzen Österreich und Deutschland
zur neu vereinten Provinz Österreich-Deutschland

G. Gregory Gay C.M.


Generalsuperior der Kongregation der Mission

Im Einvernehmen mit den Mitgliedern des Generalrates - gemäß Artikel 107,3^o unserer Konstitutionen - errichte ich hiermit zum 1. Januar 2015, die neu vereinte **PROVINCIA AUSTRIAE-GERMANIAE**. Die hiermit neu errichtete Provinz wird mit allen vorgesehenen Rechten und Pflichten ausgestattet, gemäß unserer Konstitutionen und Statuten, wie eine offizielle Provinz der Kongregation der Mission.

Rom, den 10. November 2014.


Giuseppe Turati, C.M.
Segretario Generale




Gregory Gay C.M.
Superior General



Changes in the General Curia

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

Fr. John Maher, C.M.

“After laboring four years as the Editor of *Vincentiana*, and Director of Communications and Publications at the General Curia, I have returned to my home, the Eastern Province USA for a new assignment. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve in this capacity, and a rare opportunity to view the Congregation from both international and historical perspectives. This has been challenging and enriching experience, one for which I will always be grateful.

I wish to offer my thanks to the Superior General and General Council for this opportunity, along with the Editorial Board of *Vincentiana* for their ideas and support. I also wish to pay tribute to our previous editor, Fr. Julio Suescun, C.M., who was a wise mentor as I learned the many details of producing *Vincentiana*. One last group I want to pay particular tribute to is our translators, who have been so incredibly generous in their service to *Vincentiana*. The selfless example of confreres, Daughters of Charity, and laity in the Vincentian Family who generously gave of their time and talent to translate is the real success story behind *Vincentiana*.

I leave the editorship grateful for this opportunity, (although slightly exhausted!), and I thank you, our faithful readers and subscribers for your interest and patronage of *Vincentiana*. As for my own words of farewell, Lacordaire, a French priest and contemporary of Frederic Ozanam, said it best: “All I know about tomorrow is that God’s Providence will rise before the sun.”



**Fr. Álvaro Mauricio Fernández
Monzalve, C.M.**

Father Alvaro is a member of the Colombian Province and the superior general has appointed him as Director of *Vincentiana* (a position that falls under the responsibility of the Communications Office) and as an assistant to the Secretary General of the Congregation of the Mission.



Father Fernandez was born on October 8, 1971 in Yarunal - Antioquia (Colombia) and is a member of a large family (parents and 14 brothers and sisters). In February 1990 he began his philosophical studies in La Milagrosa (Medellin) and studied theology for two years at Villa Paul in Funza. In 1995 he volunteered to go to Cuba and there completed his theology at the National Seminary, San Carlos and San Ambrosio in Havana. He was ordained to the diaconate in Cuba and in 1997 was ordained to the priesthood in Colombia. He ministered in Cuba for three more years and returned to Colombia in 2000 and there served as a formator in the Seminary Indígena Paez.

Father Alvaro then ministered as a formator at the major seminary of Nuestra Señora del Carmen (the archdiocesan seminary of Villavivencio) and while there had the additional responsibility of general treasurer of the archdiocese. Father also ministered in the major seminary, San Pedro, located in Santo Domingo de los Colorados (Ecuador).

In 2006 he received his graduate degree from the Universidad Pontificia Javeriana in Bogota and in 2009 he received a double master's degree: in Church History (from the Catholic Institute in Paris) and in Modern History (from the University of Paris, the Sorbonne). From 2010-2012 he was at the Berceau where he was responsible for welcoming visitors.

In September 2012 he returned to Colombia where he ministered as a member of the Vocational Promotion Team. In 2013 he was appointed treasurer at the Apostolica (the present Internal Seminary). In 2014 he was assistant provincial treasurer and treasurer at the provincial house. The Nuncio in Colombia appointed him treasurer-administrator of the Apostolic Nunciature in Colombia. In recent months he has served as a formator and treasurer in the major seminary, La Milagrosa in Medellin.

2014 ANNUAL STATISTICS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

MINISTRIES

Number of confreres involved in the ministries listed below. Each confrere is counted **only once**, considered under his principal ministry, as of **31 December 2014**.

MINISTRY	BISHOPS	PRIESTS	DEACONS	BROTHERS	STUDENTS
1. Parish (popular) Missions to the faithful	1	121	1	3	
2. Parishes	4	957	9	23	7
3. Pilgrimage sanctuaries		54	1	5	
4. Seminaries and clerical formation		265	12	6	12
5. Missions Ad Gentes	2	215	1	10	
6. Missions for long term	2	56	3	3	
7. Daughters of Charity (Director, chaplain)		88			
8. Schools (primary, secondary, superior; professional)		166	1	6	
9. Social Communications (publications, radio, television)		22		4	
10. Special studies		67	8		16
11. Chaplains (military, immigrants, hospital, associations)		114		1	
12. Chaplains (Vincentian Lay Groups)		70			
13. Direct Service of the Poor		38	3	6	
14. Manual work		2		13	
15. Administration	1	129		8	
16. Retired, ill, convalescing	7	292		27	
17. Other	18	143	8	26	8
18. Absence from the Congregation		161	7	2	5
TOTAL	35	2960	54	143	48

P R O V I N C E S	HOUSES & INCORPORATED MEMBERS BY PROVINCE - 2014							ADMITTED MEMBERS & ASPIRANTS BY PROVINCE - 2014								
	HOUSES	Bishops	Priests	Deacons	Permanents	Brothers	Students with Vows	TOTAL MEMBERS	ADMITTED MEMBERS				MEMBERS OF THE INTERNAL SEMINARY		ASPIRANTS	
									CP	CB	P*	PD*	TOTAL	CP		CB
GENERAL CURIA	11	0	9	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AFRICA – COVIAM	54	6	331	9	0	14	2	362	156	4	0	0	24	0	59	
Congo (Dem. Rep.)	13		60	4		2		66	11							
Ethiopia	5	3	44			3		50	9				2		6	
Madagascar	10	2	77	2		7		88	44	4			8		21	
Mozambique*	8	1	16	1		2	2	22	3				3		19	
Nigeria	11		90	2				92	89				11		13	
St. Justin de Jacobis - Eritrea	7		44					44								
AMERICA LATIN – CLAPVI	141	11	687	21	0	35	22	776	60	2	0	0	31	1	129	
Argentina	8	1	39	1				41	4	1			5	1	1	
Brazil - Curitiba	7	2	68			2		72					0		7	
Brazil - Fortaleza	5	1	40					41	1				1		8	
Brazil - Rio de Janeiro	10	2	52	5		8		67	10				10	6	7	
Central America	11	2	45			2	2	51	2	1			3	1	12	
Chile	7		22	1		2	1	26	3				3	1	3	
Colombia	25	1	135	7		10	8	161	9				9	9	53	
Costa Rica*	4		10	1		2		13	2				2	2	1	
Cuba	4		8				1	9	1				1	1	5	

PROVINCES	HOUSES & INCORPORATED MEMBERS BY PROVINCE - 2014							ADMITTED MEMBERS & ASPIRANTS BY PROVINCE - 2014										
	HOUSES	Bishops	Priests	Deacons	Permanents	Brothers	Students with Vows	TOTAL MEMBERS	ADMITTED MEMBERS					MEMBERS OF THE INTERNAL SEMINARY		ASPIRANTS		
									CP	CB	P*	PD*	TOTAL	CP	CB			
Ecuador	6		30	2			3	35										
Mexico	20	1	88	2		4	2	97	3						2			11
Peru	11	1	51	1		1		54	11						4			3
Puerto Rico	14		59	1		2	5	67	14						3			13
Venezuela	9		40			2		42										5
AMERICA U.S.A. - NVC	46	2	264	6	1	25	9	307	18	0	0	0	0	18	9	0		13
USA - Eastern	20	2	109	1		8	2	122	6					6	6			
USA - New England	6		20			1		21						0				
USA - Western	20		135	5	1	16	7	164	12					12	3			13
ASIA - APVC	79	6	592	11	0	18	11	638	202	1	4	0	0	207	45	1		231
China	3		29					29			4			4	4			3
Indonesia	11		93			1	8	102	35					35				
North India	15	2	86			2		90	57					57	12			64
South India	15	1	135	6		2		144	55					55	13			81
Oceania	8		41			3	2	46	15	1				16	4	1		
Orient	8	1	31	1		2		35	5					5				
Philippines	14	2	106	3		5		116	8					8				
Vietnam*	5		71	1		3	1	76	27					27	12			76

EUROPE – CEVIM	181	10	1077	5	1	51	4	1148	26	0	0	0	26	14	0	33
Austria	4		16			2		18					0			1
France - Paris	18		95			9		104	5				5			14
France - Toulouse	7		47			5		52					0			
Germany	3		14			1		15					0			
Holland	1		25					25					0			
Hungary	3		9					9					0			
Ireland	9		49					49					0			1
Italy - Naples	11	2	48			1		51	8				8			9
Italy - Rome	7	1	37	1	1	1		41	1				1			
Italy - Turin	12		58	2				60					0			
Poland	27	2	254	2		3	4	265	1				1	10		
Portugal	10	1	44					45	1				1			
Slovakia	6		34			4		38	4				4			2
Slovenia	8	2	38			2		42	1				1			1
Spain - Barcelona	6	1	37			2		40	1				1	1		
Spain - Madrid	13		86			11		97					0			2
Spain - Salamanca	13		62			8		70					0			
Spain - Zaragoza	16		96			2		98	1				1			3
SS. Cyril and Methodius*	7	1	28					29	3				3	3		
TOTAL	512	35	2960	52	2	143	48	3240	462	7	4	0	473	123	2	465

CP = Candidates to the Priesthood; CB = Candidates to the Brotherhood; P*/PD* = Priests/Permanent Deacons coming from a diocese or another Institute; * = Vice-province.

FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Letter on the Vincentian Family Office

Rome, 23 May 2015

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your heart now and forever!

After having reflected on recommendations from the Vincentian Family Executive Committee (VFEC), along with the responses of the Commission for the Promotion of Systemic Change and the Vincentian Family Collaborative Commission, I have arrived at the following decisions I believe will help move the Vincentian Family forward.

Vincentian Family Office

The first matter is about the establishment of a new Vincentian Family Office. It will be located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA in offices provided by the Eastern Province of the Congregation of the Mission. This Vincentian Family Office will be 'ad-experimentum' for a period of three years. I made this choice because there is space available free of charge and personnel to staff the office. The other option presented was the creation of a Vincentian Family Office in Paris, but I cannot accept that recommendation until the concept of Vincentian Family is better understood and actualized in France.

I will recommend to my successor and to the VFEC that this project in Philadelphia be evaluated after three years. At that time, they might consider moving the Vincentian Family Office to Latin America to further develop its international outreach. Another option would be to establish an office in India where the Vincentian Family is taking root. My rationale for moving the Vincentian Family Office out from Rome is to establish a greater independence from the Congregation of the Mission, and to encourage wider participation of the worldwide Vincentian Family in its operation. I trust that will happen.

This brings me to the second point: Fr. Joseph Agostino, C.M., will be the coordinator for the Vincentian Family Office in Philadelphia. He is quite experienced in a number of international Vincentian Family activities, including the Vincentian Family Collaborative Action Program, the Vincentian Family Haiti Initiative, and Wise Money Man-

agement workshops. Fr. Agostino has assisted Vincentian provinces and groups in the Vincentian Family to develop strategic planning initiatives for better use of their resources. His appointment will also be 'ad-experimentum' for a period of three years.

In time, it will be desirable to involve other members of the Vincentian Family in this Office, (either in volunteer or salaried positions), but funding is always a challenge. Thus, grants and other funding sources must be developed to make this a reality. It is my belief that the more people from the Family involved in the office, the greater our success in expanding the Vincentian Family by sharing our charism with others.

"Fam-Vin" website

Thirdly, the official web site of the Vincentian Family (<http://famvin.org/>) will become the responsibility of the Vincentian Family Office under the guidance of the VFEC. From its inception almost two decades ago until now, this web site has been the sole responsibility of the Congregation of the Mission, with limited financial support from a few branches of the Family. It is our hope that in time, the Family will assume greater responsibility for this official Vincentian Family website, especially as it implements its strategic plan to expand coverage of events, activities, and collaborative efforts in the Vincentian Family. It is timely and important that this new direction begin in time for our "Year of Collaboration in the Vincentian Family." This change will also be 'ad-experimentum' for a period of three years.

Expansion of VFEC membership

In addition to the matters regarding location, staffing and web site for the Vincentian Family Office, I have decided we should expand the Vincentian Family Executive Committee to include three more branches of the Vincentian Family. For now, the standing committee will remain the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and an assistant; the Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity and an assistant; the international President of the AIC and an assistant; and the international President of the Society St. Vincent de Paul and an assistant.

As we discussed in our meeting in January, I will ask that the President and/or Superior General or Superioress General participate in these meetings with the accompaniment of an assistant of their choosing. Once they accept the invitation, they would participate in the Vincentian Family Leadership workshop in Rome in January 2016. At that meeting, we will discuss simple by-laws regarding terms of office and other like matters.

I made these decisions in light of the information I received from the members of the VFEC and from Commissions of the International Vincentian Family. It is my firm belief the actions we will undertake will enhance the work of the VFEC and ultimately strengthen the Vincentian Family.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

Letter to Leaders of the Vincentian Family

Rome, 2 June 2015

To: The International and National Leaders of the Vincentian Family
From: Fr. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Re: International Meeting in Rome, January 22-24, 2016

Dear Vincentian Family Leaders,

May the grace and peace of Christ fill your heart now and forever!

As you know from my Pentecost letter (May 24, 2015) there have been significant changes made to the organizational structure of the Vincentian Family. You can find it on [famvin.org](http://famvin.org/en/2015/05/23/significant-changes-for-the-vincentian-family/) at: <http://famvin.org/en/2015/05/23/significant-changes-for-the-vincentian-family/>

I would like to thank Fr. Jorge Rodriguez, C.M., who has so generously served us in the office in Rome over the past few years. He will now assume the role of Director of Communications for the Congregation of the Mission. Please join me in gratitude and in prayer that the Lord will bless him in his new ministry. I also want to thank Fr. Joseph Agostino, CM for assuming the coordinator's role of the newly constituted Vincentian Family Office based in Philadelphia, Pa., USA. Please join me in prayerful support for him as he begins this new work on our behalf.

I wish to take this opportunity to welcome the three new branches of the Vincentian Family who will be serving on the newly expanded Vincentian Family Executive Committee: Sisters of Charity Federation, Strasbourg: Sisters Blandine Klein and M. Veronika Häusler; Brothers of Mercy: Bro. Lawrence Obiko, CMM (and another to be determined); Sisters of Charity Federation, North America: Sr. Julie Cutter (and another to be determined).

We thank them for their willingness to help us strengthen our collaborative efforts for the sake of those living in poverty. Every two years, the leadership of the international Vincentian Family gathers for fellowship, formation, mutual support, and information sharing. Our next meeting will be in Rome, Italy from Friday evening, January 22 to Sunday afternoon, January 24, 2016 at Casa Maria Immacolata, Via Ezio 28, Rome

Our theme follows that of this year celebrating Vincentian Family Collaboration: *Together in Christ we Vincentians make a difference!*

In light of this focus on our mutual collaboration, we also extend an invitation to the national leaders of the Vincentian Family. It is especially on the local and national levels of the Vincentian Family where collaboration is most evident, as we join arms in our common battle against many forms of poverty rampant in our world. There is much to learn from each other and more to do together to make a difference. More information will be coming to you shortly. I hope you can join us in Rome next year.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

Superior General Appoints Fr. Claudio Santangelo, C.M. to New Interfaith Initiatives



Fr. G. Gregory Gay, C.M., Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, has appointed Fr. Claudio Santangelo, C.M. to several new interfaith initiatives for the Congregation of the Mission and the Vincentian Family. First, Fr. Claudio will serve as Coordinator of an Interfaith Working Group to promote dialogue and outreach among various religions. Along with other group members, Fr. Claudio will seek to raise consciousness in the Vincentian Family on practical ways of promoting interfaith dialogue by offering a Christian and Vincentian way to respond to current conflicts. Composed of members of the Congregation of the Mission, this Working Group will promote mutual understanding through education and dialogue.

Secondly, to prepare for the 2016 General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission, Fr. Claudio has also been tasked by the Superior General to investigate possible ways to increase the presence of the Congregation of the Mission in predominantly Muslim countries in North Africa and Turkey. The goal of this initiative would be to promote dialogue and collaborative service projects, especially among the poor. Both the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity have a pastoral presence in several countries in North Africa, along with Turkey.

Finally, Fr. Claudio has also been appointed by the Superior General as his representative on the Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue,

which is sponsored by the Union of Superior Generals in Rome. Fr. Gregory expressed his gratitude to Fr. Claudio for his generous willingness to assist in these new initiatives, noting that in undertaking these new responsibilities, he will remain Rector at the Leonine College in Rome. Fr. Gregory said, "I am confident that because of Fr. Claudio's prior experiences and his desire to promote interfaith dialogue, the Congregation of the Mission will be poised to move in new, innovative directions on this important, timely issue."

Ordained in 1997, Fr. Claudio is a member of the Province of Rome. He has been engaged in priestly ministry in a variety of settings, including serving at St. George's School in Istanbul for several years, and as Secretary General in the Curia of the Congregation of the Mission. He was founding chair of the Congregation of the Mission Commission on Interfaith Dialogue, which sponsored the Vincentian Family Symposium on Dialogue with Islam in Indonesia in 2011.

Finally, Fr. Gay noted that while these initiatives are sponsored by the Congregation of the Mission, they are ultimately meant to benefit members of the worldwide Vincentian Family, which consists of religious and laity who follow the charism of St. Vincent de Paul.

Homily of the Superior General at the General Assembly of the Vincentian Marian Youth

July 27, 2015

Evangelized, We Evangelize!

My brothers and sisters in Jesus and St. Vincent;

It is good to be together in Salamanca for the Vincentian Marian Youth General Assembly. Our theme *“Evangelized, we evangelize!”* is most appropriate, for it reminds us that we are about a great work—the very one begun by the Son of God when he was here on earth. In Paris, through the appearances of Our Lady to St. Catherine Laboure at the Chapel of the Miraculous Medal, we find the first stirrings of what it means to be an evangelizer. In confiding the details of the apparition of Our Lady to her, St. Catherine told her director, Fr. Aladel that “The Blessed Virgin wishes to give you a mission. You will be the founder and the director of a Confraternity of the Children of Mary.” Two centuries later, we see the effects of that first fervor in the Vincentian Marian Youth Association which is present in 66 countries with over 100,000 members.

However, we do not gather to view statistics or hear impressive reports from regions or local councils, but to reflect and act on how we may evangelize in the way of Jesus and St. Vincent de Paul, through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother. The International Statutes state it simply:

“The members of the Association commit themselves to following Christ. They discover Mary in the Gospel, as model of all believers, accepting in faith the presence of God in her Son Jesus, listening to and acting on his word. Likewise, they see in Mary, Mother of the Lord, the inspiration that helps them, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk through life in faith and with an effective charity that generates justice” (No. 5, *Nature*).

The Vincentian Marian Youth Association is a movement of the heart, mind, and will, calling forth a personal commitment to give witness to one’s faith in Jesus Christ. You act together as members of a prayerful and serving community as you reach out to those in need.

This Eucharist, a key moment in our General Assembly, is a graced time for us to reflect on what it means to both evangelize and to be evangelized.

Our Scripture readings present a stark contrast in the ways we can witness to a revealed faith. In the first reading from the Book of Exodus, the Israelites, God's chosen people whom he rescued from slavery, behave in a most troubling way. After communicating with God to mediate on their behalf, Moses returns and finds his people worshipping an idol. They have so easily forgotten the God who gave them life and freed them. Moses' brother Aaron, acting in his place, rationalizes their idolatry. "Let not my Lord be angry. You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me 'Make us a god to be our leader; as for the man Moses who brought us out of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him'" (Ex. 32:21-23).

It is amazing to see how shortsighted and ungrateful the Israelites appear to be, sacrificing all God has generously given them for the relief of a temporary distraction. Despite God's personal intervention on their behalf, the Israelites refused to live up to their covenant as God's chosen people. They turned away from God. Their actions are the 'antithesis' of evangelization.

But before we judge the Israelites any further, let us stop and reflect on our own personal salvation history. How many times have each of us ignored or neglected the call of Christ to be his disciples? How often have we put our own personal projects or interests before discerning what the Lord is calling us to do? How often have we neglected prayer, worship, and service in the name of Jesus and Mary to do what seems more pleasurable or convenient? In today's world, idolatry has many other subtle forms than the golden calf the Israelites worshipped in the desert.

That is why today's Gospel is so encouraging. Jesus shares two short, well-known parables: the growth of the mustard seed and the yeast with leavened bread. Both parables have the same theme: God's strength and power takes our small, singular efforts and transforms them in accord with his plan. Out of our humble, hidden efforts can come great works of grace if we accept the challenge of being evangelizers in word and deed. The theme of for the JMV General Assembly is not a clever play on words, but a creed for life: "***Evangelized, we evangelize!***" That was the reality the apostles and early disciples encountered after Jesus' Resurrection. Those who denied and deserted Jesus in his Passion were welcomed back into the fold when they affirmed Christ as the center of their lives. Those who were cowardly were filled with the Holy Spirit and became courageous evangelizers and servant-leaders forming the first Christian communities.

How does this reality touch our lives today? Once again, I refer to our International Statutes:

“Through our birth in the Family of St. Vincent de Paul, it is inspired by the Vincentian charism, and makes evangelization and service to the poor distinctive characteristics of our presence in the Church. Its members commit themselves to be missionaries, witnessing to the love of Christ by word and work” (No. 5, *Nature*).

For St. Louise de Marillac, it was her “Pentecost experience” that led her to become a convinced believer in Jesus Christ in order to serve the poor. In our time together at this Assembly, we must prayerfully and joyfully discern the Lord’s presence and seek the help of Mary our Mother to find ways to evangelize and share the Good News. It is in the two-fold dynamic of proclamation and action that we grow in our discipleship with the Lord Jesus.

Whether or not we have a similar “Pentecost experience” to that of St. Louise is not for us to decide. Ultimately, conversion and inner transformation are the work of God. As St. Vincent discovered, God’s handiwork is subtle and gradual, often manifested in our Lords and Masters, the poor. This is why our time together is crucial. As a community with a common cause, we can pray, reflect, and discuss how to evangelize and inspire others to do the same. Use this time well!

The “idols” and “golden calves” of our modern era will always try to draw us away from what the Lord Jesus is calling us to do with the intercession of his Mother Mary. United in this Eucharist by the love of Jesus and Mary, we pray for the strength to accept the challenge of evangelization. Pope Francis said “To evangelize is to make the Kingdom of God present in our world” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, No. 176). As leaders of the Vincentian Marian Youth, let us strive to “go beyond ourself to make our life a gift to humanity as prophets and witnesses of God’s love, committing ourselves to give testimony by words and actions” (International VMY Triptych: <http://www.secretariadojmv.org/jmv/en/about-us/international-vmy-triptych/>).

SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW

175 Years on Mission... and Counting!

Turin Confreres Offer 35th Anniversary Reflections



John T. Maher, C.M.

Five confreres from the Province of Turin, ordained priests in 1980, met together on their anniversary to thank the Lord for the gift of their priestly vocation in the Vincentian Community and to share their reflections on the past thirty-five years of ordained ministry. Pictured above are Giampiero Artitzu, Bursar at Cagliari-College; Fr. Giovanni Luigi Colombi, a missionary in Albania; P. Francesco Gonella, Superior of the Mission of Como, Italy; Father Mario Grossi, Superior of the Mission of Turin; and Giuseppe Turati, Secretary General of the General Curia of the Congregation of the Mission. They gathered in Rome on April 27, 2015 for prayer and the Eucharist at the Sanctuary of Mentorella in the Prenestini Mountains outside Rome, a place dear to Pope St. John Paul II. It is staffed by Polish priests of the Congregation of the Resurrection.

At the time of the homily, each confrere shared with simplicity some reflections on his own experiences as well as with his hopes for the future. We are pleased to present in *Vincentiana* the reflections of these confreres.

1. The encounter with the poor

FRANCESCO GONELLA, C.M.

In these years of priestly ministry, what has been my encounter with the poor? I believe that this is a question and a challenge that cannot be avoided by any confrere in the Congregation of the Mission. This, then, is my reflection: I am also “poor” – inadequate to fulfill the mission that has been entrusted to me! I ask myself: have I always been attentive to the “cries” of the people whom I have met? My first experience in ministry was that of living with a group of young men enrolled in a vocational training school. This was a challenge because I had to assist them in their studies and also has to help them develop study habits as well as assist them in completing their workshop projects.

At another time I accompanied young people whose lives were battered as a result of psychological problems: mental illness, depression, and other “demons” that make everything seem futile. Despite all the challenges involved in accompanying people with such complex problems, I could not resist caring about them as a friend and as a Vincentian priest.

Now I assist women who, after a period of incarceration, engage in a process of social reintegration into the community (they look for work and housing). The goal of this process is to free these women from having to endure a second incarceration, that is, a “social incarceration” resulting in some form of marginalization (so many people continue to believe that “once a criminal, always a criminal”). The Gospel command “to liberate the oppressed” is not simply some ideal! People who suffer severe marginalization come together and I am challenged to approach them and enter their world. But how can I respond to their needs? What more can I give them beside the Gospel of Jesus Christ, evangelizer of the poor!

Collaboration

In every experience, I found a profound richness in efforts of collaboration with confreres, Sisters, and laity, especially members of the Vincentian Family. No confrere can avoid confronting the challenges of collaboration and therefore, I must continually ask myself: how do I collaborate with others in ministry? St. Vincent set a standard that still applies today: without collaboration between the those who evangelize and those who are evangelized, very little can be accomplished.

True collaboration requires good communication skills, mediation, and a willingness to share. This is a most challenging, important aspect of evangelical conversion: we must remember that we are not omnipotent; we are merely an instrument of communion and positive transformation of the reality around us. Alone, we are nothing and therefore, we need to reflect, study, and develop our own method of collaboration; otherwise there will be no systemic change. Through collaboration we will discover that many different charitable works can be integrated into our pastoral ministry. In planning and implementing projects, we learn to share our ideas and we see such a process as an opportunity for renewal.

The Animation of Charity

I would also like to reflect on the words: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*. After 35 years of priestly ministry as a Vincentian I have come to realize that my ministry must be focused on being a “leader in charity.” We are simply “entertainers” who spend time with the poor but do not become involved in service. As Blessed Paul VI said, “We only become masters when we become witnesses.” I have often experienced difficulty in organizing different forms of social ministry, but I find it even more challenging to organize authentic works of charity! I still believe that the true value of voluntary charity for a Vincentian is to encourage and to train others to be bearers of the charism, to encourage and to train other to carry on the Vincentian mission which is none other than continuing the mission of Jesus Christ.

At this time in my life, I want to devote time and energy to develop my leadership abilities in being an apostle of charity because such charity is able to transform society.

2. The Lord has sent me to proclaim the good news to the poor: Mission ad Gentes

GIOVANNI LUIGI COLOMBI, C.M.

I thank God, my family and the Congregation for the gift of being called to serve Christ in the poor. After 35 years of priesthood, I wish to share some reflections on my various experiences.

1. I have been able to care for and educate children and I have also been able to serve and to participate in the life of the poor with meaningful gestures and personal witness (workshops, meetings summer camps, etc).
2. From the time that I was a young seminarian, I was educated in the Mission with concrete and timely experiences of service. My love for the poor was not some sudden impulse but rather resulted from

visiting the poor and learning from others who served marginalized persons, especially those who were passionate about such service. I was also able to study and reflect upon those matters that will be helpful in my service on behalf of the poor. I realized that I had to offer people by various gifts and talents.

3. The process of evangelization is a participation in the daily life of the people with whom one lives. This has forced me to reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation which in turn has heightened my awareness of the importance of inculturation without which there can be no true evangelization.
4. It is important to avoid theoretical discussions about the poor and it is much better to dirty one's hands while serving and interacting with those who are marginalized. I have tried to bring people together while remembering that only the poor can be the protagonists of their salvation.
5. At the same time I have seen an advantage to investing financially in the service of the poor while encouraging others to do the same. It is important that the poor can eat every day and equally important to allow the poor to be evangelizers.
6. We must all remember that we are not bureaucrats but Missionaries in the Congregation who have been sent forth to evangelize with many works and few words the poor (just as Jesus did). St. Vincent said, "Charity is creative unto infinity."
7. The more difficult the task means that we must be convinced that God and the Spirit are guiding and inspiring our ministry. Our Congregation will always be relevant if we are faithful to Christ who lives in the poor.
8. Love, peace and joy must characterize our service on behalf of the poor and must give witness to the fact that all that we are and all that we do comes from God.
9. Creating a network through the process of collaboration highlights the gifts and abilities of all involved in such a process. In the end, when we have done all that could be done on behalf of the poor, we can then say that we are just useless servants and just did what we were called to do.

3. Community life

GIAMPIERO ARTITZU, C.M.

In recent years, there were few opportunities to dialogue about the question of our priestly vocation in general and more specifically, our vocation as members of the Congregation. The ministries and duties I exercised in various houses (seven to date), at times with confreres

with very different mindsets, has often led me to question the meaning of my vocation in its relationship with the Vincentian charism. This is especially true today when we often fail to find a certain convergence of ideas, for example, look at how long it took us to discuss something like parishes: yes, no, maybe, poor, a mixture, or something else?

For me, during my years of formation, there was a temptation to make community life a lower priority because of the difficulties I had with my studies. But I had so many wonderful experiences of community life and those experiences led to a deepening conviction that it is better to do a little less together than much more on one's own. Since then I have matured in another conviction: the obligation to offer my views and to express myself, but to do so in the right place and at the right time. I have come to appreciate the need to respect the many differences in community.

It was because of this belief (perhaps misguided to some), that when I was asked (before perpetual vows) about possible future ministry, I expressed a desire to go to the missions *ad gentes*. However, I never presented a written request (which was the proper manner to make such a request). I just wanted it to be known that I was available! As a result, I began my ministry in a parish and taught religion in a public school. Looking back now, I believe that the experience of those years was not much different from what I might have done in certain *missions ad gentes*.

After those first nine years, I became the bursar in Sassari and even this task, which I first felt to be very routine and ordinary, taught me something. For example, I participated in the CNEC conference in Rome, which helped me to understand more fully provide the service that I was providing for the other confreres. Although I did not expect it, I found this ministry to be very rewarding and it helped to prepare me for my ministry in Terramala... a ministry with young people.

I was then asked to take up ministry in a parish in Milan where I again served as the treasurer. From there, I went to Verona where I spent three years before returning to Sassari for another seven years as superior. Now I am presently at Cagliari and serve as an adviser to the members of the Vincentian Family. Over the years, there have been various situations, different problems, different people, various ministries and responsibilities. As you can imagine, all of this required considerable effort to adapt to each new situation... and community life, with all its ups and downs, was not always the easiest to live.

Let me give you some examples: arriving in a community where everything has been done a certain way for years and I was asked to bring change into the midst of such a community; – then, being sent to another community where everyone went their own separate way and I was asked to find ways to bring the confreres together! Imagine

that you are the youngest trying to discover the lifestyle that is proper for a Vincentians. Personally, I am more than ever convinced of what I said at Monte Oliveto Maggiore during a retreat in preparation for perpetual vows: we choose the Community for the gifts that it offers us but we always have to engage in a search in order to find them... but when you do find those gifts it is essential to rejoice in them! If this were not so, I would probably still out looking... but I think I can honestly say that in learning to reflect on and control my enthusiasm, I have also learned to better control my disappointments. After all, even the shortcomings of others have been helpful for my growth and development in community.

In conclusion, I am still convinced that, despite all the human limitations, the lifestyle of a religious community gives witness to a fuller, richer quality of life. For example, we may complain of having to endure some specific situation something which, while not the best, is certainly possible to survive as a result of the grace of God and God's love for all of us. I learned this in community life and I thank the Lord for this, but most of all I thank God for having kept me faithful.

4. From Vocational Promotion to the Care of the Elderly

MARIO GROSSI, C.M.

Looking back, I now want to express my gratitude for the many years of ministry and for the countless gifts that I have received during this time, beginning with the gift of health. At the same time, I am aware that I have not done as much as I could have done, but I leave all of that to the mercy of the Lord. Mindful of that reality I recall the words of Fr. Ronchini with regard to consecrated life. In quoting Cardinal Martini he said, "If you can keep the glow forever, you can preserve the memory of incandescence when the memory is fading."

All of this reminds me of the zeal that must be a part of my life. In the early years of my priesthood, I was involved in the ministry of vocational promotion, but now I am charged with caring for the elderly and sick confreres. With regard to the matter of vocations, I recall the words of Vincent who was not overly concerned about the number of vocation but greatly concerned about the quality of those vocations: *Our Lord's work is accomplished not so much by the multitude of workers as by the fidelity of the small number whom he calls* (CCD: III: 66-67) and on another occasion: *the Company does need men; but it would be much better to have fewer men than to have a number of difficult individuals and deeds of that sort. Ten good men will do more for God than a hundred of those people* (CCD: II: 421).

Now that I am also one of the confreres approaching my elder years, I must keep in mind that the men I serve are "the poor" who have been

entrusted to me. Thus, I do not have to go looking for the poor they are very near to me! And are not these poor “our lords and masters”? It is also true that we advance in years, each one of us will become poor in some way! Thus it is with gratitude and faith that I ask the Lord to accompany us with his grace as we journey through life and minister on behalf of God’s people.

5. Our Role in the Congregation and Church

GIUSEPPE TURATI, C.M.

If the Congregation of the Mission suddenly ended its service, how would that change affect the universal Church? It would probably be in need of having to replace staff in many parishes and there would be little impact with regard to the formation of the clergy. But assistance to the poor and human promotion would suffer a serious setback. This should make us reflect since the apostolic purpose of the Congregation is for “the evangelization of the poor, especially the most abandoned” (C .1.2) and to help “the clergy and laity in their formation” (C. 1.3).

From the time of St. Vincent to the present, there have been many changes in both society and the Church. Civil society, which in the 17th century was unable (or unwilling) to respond to the many existent needs (i.e., education, health care, land reform), has slowly become more organized, creating an efficient system of social protection. Here it is important to recall that during the more recent centuries the Congregation and the larger Vincentian Family have given witness to their concern for the less fortunate members of society by engaging in activity on their behalf.

The training of clergy in the Church had a great impact and it has resulted in high levels of theological competence, at least in many Western countries and we, as Vincentians, played an important role in bring about that change. We can therefore conclude that the Congregation, having played a significant role for centuries in the Church, can stand on its own merits today. On another note, the Dutch Province decided that as of August 1, 2015, they will transition from being a province to a region dependent on the General Curia for an indefinite period.

Personally, I do not think this is the inevitable fate of the Congregation in Europe, even though some groups have made that choice. I think that the Congregation in Europe (as well as in other Western countries) has become weaker, but has not totally lost its identity. In some ways the Congregation reflects what is happening in the larger Church, especially in terms of its institutional commitments. An example of this is seen in the number of confreres who serve in parishes, the largest single ministry of the Congregation.

This shift is more serious from an apostolic view when we consider the reality of poverty and the relationship of that reality to the question of migration, the economic crisis and the ever widening gap between those who are rich and those who are poor.

Thus we can consider the current needs from not only an academic or theological perspective, but must also view this situation from the perspective of pastoral ministry. We need a profound rethinking of our sacramental theology which was developed from the perspective of a society that was profoundly Christian. Today, we are challenged to meet the religious needs of a society that is markedly secularized (for example, consider the sacrament of Reconciliation which is so much a part of our Vincentian tradition).

Another important aspect as I reflect on the Congregation in which I have ministered for 35 years is "a sense of belonging". The growth of the Congregation over the years led to the formation of many provinces now present on five continents. Today, in many of these provinces we see a dramatic decrease in the number of confreres and at the same time we see an aging of their members. It is clear that the formation of the provinces was the result of missionary effectiveness in those areas.

Today, many provinces we are in decline. Yet proposals for reconfiguration, (proposals intended to achieve a more effective apostolic outreach), meet much resistance, a clear sign that confreres feel more attached to an institutional form (a particular province), than to the charisma (mission). Just a quick look at some data. Today, more than half of the provinces of the Congregation have under 50 members (27 of 50 provinces), and four provinces have under 15 members. In a province with a small number of members, a lot of energy is being diverted away from apostolic needs in order to maintain the province as such.

A weakened sense of belonging is evidenced in the fact that during the past 15 years, nearly a hundred confreres have asked for a dispensation from vows in order to be incardinated into a Diocese (an average of 5-6 confreres per year).

One last issue I would like to mention in this brief reflection is the place of the Congregation within the universal Church and here I refer to the characteristic of its internationality. In the Congregation of the Mission there are two types of missions *ad gentes*: the missions that some provinces take on and as a result send their missionaries abroad (e.g. the Province of Turin in Madagascar) and the International Missions, begun in 1992 by the Superior General. There are currently twelve such missions that receive confreres from various provinces. In a quick comparison between these two forms of missions *ad gentes*, it is obvious that the International Missions are the weakest, because they are dependent on volunteers from the various Provinces and, once

again, because confreres feel attached to their Province they often find it difficult to appreciate and understand the international needs and concerns of the Congregation.

A comparison with other missionary congregations (such as Camboni and Scalabrini Fathers) clearly shows that we, as a Congregation, need to hone our skills in the mission field. This includes improving our preparation and our understanding of inculturation, and deepening our sense of belonging to an international congregation.

In conclusion, there are three areas for growth by which the Congregation should be measured: a sense of identity in the Church, a sense of belonging to the Congregation, (not just as a Province), and an appreciation of the international nature of the Congregation of the Mission.

OF CURRENT INTEREST

Vincent de Paul on Divine Guidance in Prayer

Patrick Collins, C.M.

It seems to me that paragraph 40 of the *Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission* is not only insightful, but extremely relevant today. It says,

“Christ, the Lord, remaining always in intimate union with the Father, used to seek his will in prayer. That will was the sole aim of his life, mission, and giving of himself for the salvation of the world. He likewise taught his disciples to pray always in the same spirit, and never to lose heart. We too sanctified in Christ and sent into the world, should try to seek out in prayer the sign’s of God’s will and to imitate the responsiveness of Christ, discerning everything according to his mind” (C. 40).

In this essay, I will discuss what St. Vincent de Paul said, and did not say about the subject of divine guidance in prayer.

Christocentric Focus

When asked what was the chief virtue of St Vincent de Paul a colleague who knew him well replied, “It was undoubtedly the imitation of our Lord, Jesus Christ, for he always kept him before his eyes to serve as his model. Christ was his light and mirror, and in him he saw everything else. If in some particular case he doubted how he should act, to be perfectly agreeable to God, he reflected on how our Lord acted in similar circumstances, or what he said, or what he taught in his various sayings.”¹ Bishop Louis Abelly, Vincent’s first biographer, described the Saint’s spirit by saying that he was motivated by the imitation of Christ.² That point is evident in a particularly eloquent passage in a letter Vincent wrote to his friend Fr. Portail:

¹ LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, vol. III (New York: New City Press, 1993), 88.

² ANDRE DODIN, C.M., *Vincent de Paul and Charity* (New York: New City Press, 1992), 49.

“Remember that we live in Jesus Christ by the death of Jesus Christ and that we ought to die in Jesus Christ by the life of Jesus Christ and that our life ought to be hidden in Jesus Christ and full of Jesus Christ and that in order to die like Jesus Christ it is necessary to live like Jesus Christ.”³

Toward the end of his life, in 1656, Vincent appointed a young priest, Antoine Durand to be the superior at Agde seminary. In the course of encouraging him, Vincent wrote,

“There is no human element in Christian activity; it is not a human work but God’s. It is to continue the labors of Jesus Christ. And hence, human effort here is of no avail unless God is intimately united with it. No, neither philosophy, nor theology, nor talks influence souls. It is essential that Jesus Christ be intimately united with us or we with him; that we operate in him and he in us; that we speak like him and in his spirit as he himself was in his Father and preached the doctrine taught him by the Father. That is what holy scripture teaches us. It is therefore, essential for you to be empty of self in order to put on Jesus Christ.”⁴

St John Gabriel Perboyre C.M. composed a prayer in which he expressed St. Vincent’s Christological focus in these profound words:

“O my Divine Savior, transform me into yourself. May my hands be your hands. May my tongue be your tongue. Grant that every faculty of my body may serve only to glorify you. Above all, transform my soul and all its powers, that my memory, my will, and my affections may be your memory, will, and affections. I pray you to destroy in me all that is not of you. Grant that I may live but in you and by you and for you and that I may truly say with St. Paul, ‘I live now – not I – but Christ lives in me.’”⁵

It is worth noting that paragraph 521 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* echoes that same sentiment when it says, “Christ enables us to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us” (CCC, 1992, No. 521). While this principle applied to the outward activities of Christ it also applied to his inward activities such as praying.

³ VINCENT DE PAUL, *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, vol. I (New York: New City Press, 1985), 276.

⁴ DODIN, *Vincent de Paul and Charity*, op. cit., 81.

⁵ Quoted by Charles Edward Miller in *Mass on Sunday: And Other Ways of Being Catholic* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 45-46.

The Nature of Prayer

In one of his talks to the Daughters of Charity, St Vincent described the nature of prayer in simple terms: “Prayer is an elevation of the mind to God by which the soul detaches itself, as it were, from itself, so as to seek God in himself. It is a conversation of the soul with God, an intercourse of the spirit, in which God interiorly teaches it what it should know and do, in which the soul says to God what he himself teaches it to ask for.”⁶ The phrase, ‘prayer is an elevation of the mind to God’ is reminiscent of a well-known saying of St. John Damascene (676-749) who said, “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.”⁷ While this is a classic description, it could be argued that it is inadequate insofar as it is too one-sided. While it describes what the praying person does, it says very little about the all-important role of God, who wants to communicate with us. But as we saw, St Vincent said that in prayer, “God interiorly tells the soul what he wishes it to do.”⁸ Notice how this description sees prayer in relational terms and how it puts the emphasis on what God does.

Dispositions Needed for Divine Guidance

When one reads what Vincent says about prayer, it is clear that although he thought God can communicate the divine will in many ways (e.g. through providential events, properly constituted authority, the teachings of scripture etc.), he also thought that Christians can receive direct inspirational guidance in prayer. For a number of reasons he thought that some people were more likely to receive it than others. For this to occur, the praying person needed to have a wholehearted desire to know God’s will. In this connection, he referred to Our Lord’s words, “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and added, “For our Lord put these words in the daily prayer because he wants us to ask every day for the grace to do his will.”⁹ He also believed that God favored the simple and the humble. Speaking about them, he said:

“It is into hearts without worldly knowledge, who seek God in himself, that he is pleased to pour forth the most excellent lights and the greatest graces. He manifests to those hearts what all the aca-

⁶ ST VINCENT DE PAUL, *The Conferences of St Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of Charity* (London: Collins, 1979), 373.

⁷ De fide orth. 3, 24: PG 94, 1089C.

⁸ *Correspondence, Entretiens documents*, ed. Pierre Coste (Paris: Gabalda, 1920-1925), vol. IX, 583.

⁹ VINCENT DE PAUL, *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, vol. XII (New York: New City Press, 1985), 135.

demical schools have not discovered, and develops in them mysteries that the most learned fail to have the least sight of.”¹⁰ Thirdly, he maintained that those who had a spirit of detachment from worldly things and who mortified themselves were better disposed to hear God’s voice. Speaking about this he said, “Mortification is a means which will be a great help to you when you pray... Learn to mortify yourselves. He will have regard to the humility of his servants, for mortification springs from humility, and in this way he will make you partakers of the secrets he has promised to reveal to the little and the humble.”¹¹

Desirability of Divine Guidance

Here are a number of representative quotations in which Vincent talked about the desirability of divine inspiration and guidance in prayer. Speaking to Daughters of Charity in 1648 he stated, “We learn in prayer what is the will of God.”¹² Later in the same conference he added, “It has been said that God lets us know in prayer what we should do, and what we should avoid. Now that is true, for there is no action in life that makes us know ourselves better, or shows us more clearly what is God’s will than prayer.”¹³ When speaking to Antoine Durand, he said,

Prayer is the reservoir in which you will receive the instructions you need to fulfill the duties on which you are now about to enter. When in doubt, have recourse to God and say to him: ‘O Lord, you are the Father of light, teach me what I ought to do in this circumstance. I give you this advice not only for those difficulties which will cause you pain, but also that *you may learn from God directly* [my italics] what you shall have to teach, following the example of Moses who proclaimed to the people of Israel only that with which God had inspired him: ‘The Lord says this.’¹⁴

A year before his death, Vincent said in the course of a conference on prayer, “There is another way of knowing God’s will, and its by inspiration: for often he enlightens our understanding and gives impulses to our heart to be inspired by his will.”¹⁵ That sentiment was

¹⁰ DODIN, *Vincent de Paul and Charity*, op. cit., 375.

¹¹ *The Conferences of St Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of Charity*, op. cit, 380.

¹² VINCENT DE PAUL, “Conference on Prayer,” *Conferences of Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of Charity* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1979), 364.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 372.

¹⁴ ANDRE DODIN, C.M., *Vincent de Paul and Charity*, op. cit., 82.

¹⁵ VINCENT DE PAUL, *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, vol. XII, op. cit., 133.

reiterated when he said, “Whenever there is a question of doing a good work, say to the Son of God: “O Lord, if you were in my place, what would you do? How would you instruct the people?”¹⁶ On yet another occasion he said, “God communicates many and excellent lights to his servants. In prayer, he enlightens their understanding with many truths incomprehensible to all save those who give themselves to prayer.”¹⁷

Contemplation and Guidance

Although I cannot remember St Vincent referring explicitly to *Lectio Divina*, he advocated a method of prayer similar to it. He said that it begins with meditation. The process of reflection and praying is arduous, like men rowing by their own efforts against the tide. But when grace touches the soul with its inspirations and promptings, there is no more need to row because the sail of the soul is filled with the gentle breeze of the Spirit. On another occasion, Vincent used a another homespun image to get across the distinction between the reciprocal role of human effort and divine grace. “When at nightfall a man wishes to illumine his room, what does he do? He takes his flint and steel, strikes a spark and lights his candle. When he has done so, he does not go on striking the flint, he does not go looking for another flint and steel to strike a light, for he does not need it; the light he has suffices for all his needs.”¹⁸ On another occasion he said, “The thoughts and considerations which come from our own reflections are feeble lights, showing us only the outside of things, and nothing else. The light of grace which the Son of Justice shines into our souls penetrates to the very depths of our heart, bringing forth marvelous fruits. We must ask God to enlighten us himself and to inspire in us what pleases him.”¹⁹

In reviewing these statements, it may be inferred that Vincent was describing contemplation. Speaking about that subject to the Daughters of Charity he said, “The other sort of prayer is called contemplation. In this, the soul, in the presence of God, does nothing else but receive from him what he bestows. It is without action, and God himself inspires it, without any effort on the soul’s part, with all it can desire, and far more.”²⁰ He added, “God communicates many and excellent lights to his servants. In prayer, he enlightens their under-

¹⁶ ANDRE DODIN, C.M., *Vincent de Paul and Charity*, op. cit., 85.

¹⁷ *The Conferences of St Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of Charity*, op. cit., 374.

¹⁸ ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, vol. III, op. cit., 66.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁰ *The Conferences of St Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of Charity*, op. cit., 374.

standing with many truths incomprehensible to all, save those who give themselves to prayer.”²¹ No doubt the truths which Vincent referred to included, not only truths about the divine mysteries, but also about the purposes and will of God. On one occasion he went so far as to encourage the sisters to become like Teresa of Avila.²²

When one takes into account how practical a man Vincent was, it is surprising, not to say a little disappointing, to find that apart from saying that God can and does inspire and guide people inwardly, he does not say a great deal more about the precise ways in which such guidance occurs. Catholic spirituality would maintain that there are normal and charismatic ways in which that can happen. Vincent does refer to some of the ordinary means of receiving divine guidance such as the scriptures, such as promptings, through other people, and providential events. However, because of his misgiving about mysticism and a lack of interest in the charisms mentioned by St Paul in 1 Cor. 12:8-10 he had few positive comments about the more unusual ways that God inspires and guides a person, such as through dreams, visions, apparitions, locutions, words of knowledge and prophetic revelations. (as we know, some of these were experienced by St. Catherine Labouré.) Anyone interested in these more unusual forms of guidance would do well to read Poulain’s classic, *The Graces of Interior Prayer: A Treatise on Mystical Theology*.²³ It can also be mentioned in passing that I have written a book entitled, *Guided by God: Ordinary & Charismatic Ways of Discovering God’s Will* which seeks to describe, in some detail, how these forms of inspiration can be experienced.²⁴

God’s Will Expressed in Providential Events

There can be little doubt that Vincent de Paul had great devotion to the providential plan and provision of God. He believed that whatever the Lord allows to happen, good or bad, is an expression of either God’s active or permissive will. As he said in a letter to St Louise de Marillac, “Follow the order of providence. Oh how good it is to let ourselves be guided by it.”²⁵ This is a big subject which deserves to be examined at length. Fortunately, others have already done this, such as Robert Maloney, C.M. in his “Providence Revisited,” in *He Hears the Cry of the Poor: On The Spirituality of Vincent de Paul*.²⁶ I want to propose just

²¹ *Ibid.*, 374.

²² *Ibid.*, 377.

²³ (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1910).

²⁴ (Luton: New Life, 2014).

²⁵ ST VINCENT DE PAUL, *Correspondence, entretiens, documents*, ed. Pierre Coste (Paris: Gabalda, 1920-25), 241.

²⁶ (New York: New City Press, 1995), 52-72.

one thought. The late John Lennon of the rock band The Beatles wrote a song about his son entitled, "Beautiful Boy." It contained a very perceptive line: "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." I suspect that St Vincent would have identified with this observation, because he was aware that we tend to be in control when we make our own plans. But God is more likely to be in control when our plans are disrupted by unexpected, but providential events. He believed prayer could enlighten one through the Spirit to recognize the hand and purpose of God in those events.

Writing on this point, Bishop Abelly said that Vincent, closed his eyes to all human considerations, abandoned himself to the designs of his divine master, and said in his heart, 'Lord, what would you have me do?' In this spirit of dependence, he never undertook an enterprise of his own accord. He waited instead for divine providence to show him the work to be undertaken, either by the orders of those he regarded as his superiors, by the advice and persuasion of those he recognized as virtuous persons, or by contemporary conditions and needs that manifested the will of God to him, which he always followed but never anticipated.

Speaking about Vincent, Abelly added, "The will of God is known in two ways : either in those events we have no control over, those which depend solely on God's good pleasure, such as sickness, losses, or other accidents of life, or those which his commandments or his counsels reveal to us."²⁷ Vincent said on another occasion, "Divine providence will never fail us in those things we undertake by its direction."²⁸ I have reason to believe that he would have agreed with this quotation from a 1981 document entitled, *The Contemplative Dimension of the Christian Life*, published by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes. It states that,

"The contemplative dimension is the real secret of renewal for every religious life. It vitally renews the following of Christ because it leads to an experiential knowledge of him... The more open a person is to the contemplative dimension, the more attentive they will be to the demands of the Kingdom... because they will look on events with the eyes of faith. This will help them discover the divine will everywhere" (The Contemplative Dimension of the Christian Life, 1981, No. 30).

²⁷ ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, vol. III, op. cit., 181.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

Discernment of Spirits

As with other saints, Vincent de Paul felt that discernment of inspirations and promptings was necessary to establish whether they were the genuine voice of the Lord or not. He said that, "A supernatural enlightenment from God is necessary in order to discern true insights from false ones."²⁹ It is simply naïve to think, as some Christians seem to do, that every pious thought or scripture text that crosses their minds was inspired by God rather than their own imperfect human nature or even the evil one, who can appear as an angel of light (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14). As William Shakespeare reminded us in Act 1, Scene 3 of the *Merchant of Venice*, "The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose."

St. Vincent said, "Among the multitude of thoughts and inspirations that come to us, some are apparently good, and yet they don't come from God and are not according to his pleasure."³⁰ He proposed four main guidelines in a conference entitled "Illusions and Genuine Inspirations" (October 17, 1659). First: ask yourself is the prompting contrary to the commandments of God, the Church or State law? Is it contrary to ones solemn obligations e.g. marriage or priestly vows? Second: is there an element of superstition present? (e.g., that an action has to be performed so often in a certain way?) Third: is the prompting persistent and troublesome so that it makes one uneasy? "The Spirit of God," observed St. Vincent, "is a Spirit of peace, a gentle light which infuses itself into the soul without doing it any violence. Its action is sweet and agreeable."³¹ We will know an inspiration is from God "if it instills itself gently into our souls and inclines us to seek whatever concerns the greater glory of God."³²

St. Ignatius of Loyola said something similar in his *Spiritual Exercises*. Those "who go on earnestly striving to cleanse their souls from sin and who seek to rise in the service of God... it is characteristic of the good spirit... to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace. This He does by making all easy, by removing all obstacles so that the soul goes forward in doing good" (*Spiritual Exercises*, No. 315). Fourth, Vincent said, "we should take advice. If a person is graciously, peacefully and quietly receptive to the advice given to him (e.g. by a confessor, spiritual director, or a person exercising legitimate authority), and takes account of it, that is a sign that there is no illusion whatever in what he does."³³ But if a person receives a

²⁹ ST VINCENT DE PAUL, "Illusions and Genuine Inspirations," *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, vol. XII (New York: New City Press, 2010), 286.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 285.

³² *Ibid.*, 285.

³³ *Ibid.*, 285.

prompting which he or she is unwilling to share with anyone for discernment it is a bad sign. Vincent said, "The Spirit of God inclines those it animates to submission. The Spirit of the gospel is a spirit of obedience."³⁴

Vincent concluded his talk by saying that he had spoken to experts who knew much about the rules for discernment of spirits. Others could be added, he admitted, but he thought that these four would suffice. "All the others," he said, "were connected with those I have mentioned."³⁵ He felt that if a person used a more elaborate method he might be tempted to become overly introspective. Vincent practiced what he preached. In 1653, one of his priests wrote to him to say that he wanted to leave the Congregation in order to join the Capuchins. In a letter dated June 4, Vincent discerned that his desire had not been prompted by the Lord. To begin with, Vincent thought that having put his hand to the plough in the Congregation of the Mission, the confrere was not being led to join another religious community, no matter how good it was. "Another sign," he added, "which makes me think that God has not called you to the Capuchins, is that the desires which have come to you about this matter, trouble and disturb you by their insistence, as those suggested by the evil spirit generally do; while on the contrary the inspirations of God are gentle and peaceful, inclining us in a loving way to the good he desires of us."³⁶

Practical Resolutions and Action

Because of the teaching of Scripture, Vincent was convinced that once a person received divine guidance, it was important to carry it out. He warned, Sentiments of love of God, of kindness, of good will, praiseworthy as these may be, are often suspect if they do not result in good deeds. Our Savior said that his Father is glorified in our bearing much fruit. We should be on our guard, for it is possible to be well mannered exteriorly and filled with noble sentiments toward the Almighty in our minds and stop there. When the occasion for action arises such people fall short."³⁷

This is typical of Vincent's practical, down to earth approach to the Christian life. The person listens to God in order to express what he

³⁴ *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, vol. IV (New York: New City Press, 1993), 569.

³⁵ *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul* (Philadelphia: Vincentians, Eastern Province, 1963), 472.

³⁶ VINCENT DE PAUL, *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, vol. IV, op. cit., 569.

³⁷ LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, vol. I, op. cit., 106-107.

or she has heard in the form of loving acts of evangelization and service. Not surprisingly Vincent stressed the importance of making practical resolutions at the end of one's prayer time. They should flow from one's contemplation of the presence and purposes of the Lord. He said, "Making resolutions is one of the most important parts of our prayer, and perhaps *the* most important... The main fruit of prayer consists of personal resolutions strongly and firmly made. They should be resolutions which you are convinced of and which you are prepared to undertake, taking into account the obstacles to be overcome."³⁸

Conclusion

Following the pioneering work of Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., some modern authors use models theory to study theological and spiritual topics. For instance John C Haughey, S.J., has suggested that there are three models of spirituality operating in the contemporary Church, programmatic, pneumatic and autogenic.³⁹ It wouldn't be appropriate to describe them here, but I have done so elsewhere.⁴⁰ It seems clear from what Haughey says that St Vincent de Paul's spirituality was mainly programmatic.

However, as Haughey points out, although one model predominates in each person's spirituality, it can and should incorporate good elements from the other two. Arguably, St Vincent's understanding of divine guidance in prayer is quite pneumatic in nature, while his insistence on the importance of expressing divine guidance firstly, in the form of resolutions that are single, precise and possible, and secondly in practical action, is typical of an autogenic approach. The net result? "Whoever conforms himself in everything to the will of God," says Vincent, "and takes his pleasure in it, leads a truly angelic life upon earth. He can even be said to be living the very life of Jesus Christ."⁴¹

³⁸ LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, vol. III, op. cit., 68.

³⁹ JOHN C. HAUGHEY, S.J., *The Conspiracy of God: God's Spirit in Us* (New York: Image, 1976), 97 ff.

⁴⁰ PAT COLLINS, C.M., "Models of Spirituality," in *Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Dublin: Columba, 199), 13-36.

⁴¹ LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, vol. III, op. cit., 40.

THEME:

Missions and Missionaries of the Congregation

Itinerancy as a Characteristic of the Mission

Israel Arévalo Muñoz, C.M.

“They set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and curing diseases everywhere” (Luke 9:6).

1. Introduction

The Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, written by Pope Francis, is a document that addresses the issue of the proclamation of the gospel in the midst of today’s world. That document once again places the itinerant mission of the Church before us: “I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 1). It is clear that the Church’s mission is an itinerant mission and that evangelization is a task for itinerant men and women and indeed, is determined by those itinerant individuals. The word mission implies mobility because it actualizes Jesus’ command when he sent forth the disciples on their mission: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15). The itinerant missionary gives witness to a Church that is in movement, a Church that is focused on Christ, a Church that makes people question themselves, a Church that is at the service of the Kingdom.

Mobility is a characteristic of the People of God; it is a lifestyle that was proper to Jesus and his disciples; it is also the manner in which Vincent de Paul viewed and conducted the various popular missions that he preached. Mobility is a demand of the present post-modern culture and, as such, implies “a path”, a journey with well-defined stages and concrete instructions, attitudes, and content. This idea is made very clear in the above referenced words of Pope Francis: “I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked with joy” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, #1). Such mobil-

ity is a characteristic of joyful people, of men and women who are committed to Jesus' cause and who are not wedded to any one specific methodology or place or ministry or group of people or role. Rather they are individuals whose "hearts and lives are filled with joy because they have encountered Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew" (EG, 1).

Every step of the itinerant missionary is a conquest of freedom and creates a possibility for the rebirth of joy in the individual missionary and in the members of the community that is accompanied by that missionary. The itinerant journey of the missionary reveals the gospel's openness to different cultures and implies a commitment to transform the world in the dynamic of the Good News. This journey is an interior strength that is communicated to others when the individuals involved understand that the action that they are engaged in and the plan they have accepted is actually an inspiration of the Spirit and is in accord with the divine will.

In the second part of Francis' program, we see that the objective is "to point out new paths for the Church's journey in the years to come" (EG, 1). Itinerant missionaries open paths, explore new realities and/or deepen their understanding of realities that they have already experienced. They do this in order to formulate new proposals. Indeed, this forward movement cannot be halted, nor can one's search or commitment cease. The Pope understands the reality of those missionary trips as individuals visit far distant towns and villages. He is familiar with that reality through his encounters with itinerant missionaries from religious orders and societies of apostolic life who constantly reflect on their mission in light of the insights of their Founders and the Second Vatican Council. They are missionaries who reflect on their ministry in light of new situations and the demands of their ministry to remain faithful to their charism. The pastoral lines of the document of the Bishops of Latin America at Aparecida (2007) and the Pope's language are symbolized by use of the word 'peripheries'. They are addressed to various interested groups: the poor, those suffering, immigrants, and the alienated.

Thus, we are exhorted to move out and encounter all people: believers and non-believers, men and women living in the city, those living on the peripheries and those in rural areas. The Pope invites us to imagine new paths so that the Church might be a community attractive to others because of its love, and might continually minister with the convictions expressed in the Aparecida document: communion in love, a missionary pastoral approach, living witness, pastoral conversion, encountering those living on the peripheries, the maternal dimension of the Church, the People of God as the common house but especially the house for those who are poor. The Aparecida document calls us to

a pastoral conversion, so that we might engage in a missionary encounter with all people¹. We know that Vincent de Paul lived as an itinerant missionary. This meant placing one's whole life at the service of God for the purpose of evangelizing the poor².

2. The importance of mobility

2.1. *The mobility of the People of God*

Carlos Mesters and his biblical studies team, in a booklet entitled "The Formation of the People of God" affirms that the Bible ought to be read "with the head, the heart, and the feet". The feet are important! The Bible came into existence as the result of a journey. Only when we begin to travel along the road can we begin to understand the totality of the message that the Bible communicates to us. The journey of the people of God could be described in the following manner: as a result of their faith in God the people, who were oppressed by the Egyptians, became involved in a process of liberation which led them to create a human community in which people could live as equals... thus, they fulfilled the plan of God, the will of God³. To show that mobility was characteristic of the chosen people, the Pentateuch revealed God, and also shows us essential characteristics of people who were God's beloved, thus enabling them to fulfill God's saving plan. The narrative of events have a unity and are centered on a specific geographical area where we find people who traveled from Syria in the North to Egypt in the southeast; who traveled from the lands of Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean and from the east to the Arabian Desert.

In this geographical area the patriarchs and Moses served as protagonists, and they have transmitted to us the memory of important events, such as the flight from Egypt, their years in the desert – moments of crisis and other situations which the people lived through in their desire to become a nation. Their history is marked with both a prophetic and a wisdom orientation. In a parallel history of salvation, they arrived in the desert, which represents the youthful love between Israel and its God. That divine love, almost always misunderstood, helped the people, and led them to the land promised by God to the patriarchs

¹ C.M. GALLI, "El viento del sur de Aparecida a Rio. El Proyecto misionero latinoamericano en la teología y el estilo pastoral de Francisco," in *Seminarios LX* (May-August 2014), p. 211.

² V. TSANGANDAHY, "La misión popular en el contexto de una iglesia joven. El Caso de Madagascar," in *Vincentiana*, volume XLI, # 4-5 (July-October 1997), pp. 399-404.

³ CARLOS MESTERS, *La Formación del pueblo de Dios*, Navarra, Verbo Divino, 1997.

(the celebration of the Passover of liberation and the establishment of a new covenant).

This is the land through which Israel traveled, the place where its journey took place and this in turn enabled the prophets to make their history a theological "locus". This history made the people question themselves and it became clear that this history that was not meant simply to inform, but that this very history contained in itself a proclamation of the good news of salvation. The events of this itinerary of the People of God became like a hymn to divine justice, a call to conversion, and an open door to hope. If punishment came after sin, then after sin and punishment must come conversion and liberation. Thus, biblical history is a pilgrimage of faith and, at the same time, it is a proclamation of faith. In such kerygmatic history, where the articles of the faith of Israel are not abstract truths, but realities that give witness to the interventions of God on behalf of the people, Israel came to understand and know its God not only with its head and with its heart, but also with its feet.

Israel is basically "a pilgrim people". Their God is the God of their nomadic ancestors... a God not limited by time or place but a God who, throughout the ages, accompanies the people wherever they may be.

Therefore, it is not strange that the concept of "the people of God" or "my people" is used frequently in the more ancient tradition of the Exodus (Ex. 3:7-10; 8:16-19; 9:1,13; 10:3). The God of Israel is "the God of the exodus"; thus, the people of God are people of the exodus, "people who are united because they are followers of the one God". This characteristic of the people of God is rooted in their nomadic (or semi-nomadic) origin. The biblical account of the Exodus offers us a paradigm of the problems people had to confront as they journeyed toward the Promised Land. To travel through the desert meant to confront hunger and thirst, enemies, and all realities that could provoke a negative reaction and doubts of faith. Such a journey also supposes the possibility of meeting some friends. Therefore, in light of all of this it was logical that different tasks and responsibilities would be distributed among the people⁴. This schema, which unfolded in events surrounding the Exodus, helps us understand the importance of the itinerant situation of Israel as they became established as the people of God.

From a theological perspective, the path through the desert highlights the reality of a people on a journey whose life, death, salvation, and condemnation is accomplished while on the road. In the desert, Israel experienced what it means "to walk with God" (Micah 6:8).

⁴ J. ALFARO, *Mysterium Salutis. Manual de teología como historia de la salvación. La iglesia* (Vol. IV) Madrid, Cristiandad, 1984.

God (I am who am) accompanied and led the people without curtailing their freedom or depriving them of the opportunity “to search”. Without abdicating their responsibility and therefore, always with the risk of being mistaken, Israel had to make a choice. Repeated mistakes meant that one generation of this people had to carve out their burial place in the desert... only a new generation would enter into the Promised Land⁵.

2.2. *Jesus, the itinerant prophet*

“To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent” (Lk. 4:43). Various texts of Saint Luke’s Gospel present Jesus moving about as an itinerant missionary⁶. José Antonio Pagola presents Jesus as an itinerant prophet who did not move back into Nazareth, but went on to the region of Lake Galilee and took up residence in Capernaum. This was a strategic setting for his activity as an itinerant prophet. The people of Capernaum lived modestly. Many were peasants who lived from their farm produce and nearby vineyards, but the majority were engaged in fishing. Jesus apparently was able to identify immediately with these families. They let him use their boats to go across the lake and to preach to the crowds gathered on the shore. He wanted to spread the news of God’s reign everywhere.

We know that he went from town to town along the lakeshore: Capernaum, Magdala, Chorazin or Bethsaida. He visited the town of Lower Galilee: Nazareth, Cana, Nain. He went to other places around Galilee: Tyre and Sidon, Caesarea Philippi and the Decapolis. He stopped in the surrounding villages or on the outskirts of the city. There he met the most marginalized people, the travelers and vagabonds who slept outside the walls. His mission was to visit the villages and to do this in the company of a small group of followers.

When he came to a town, Jesus went looking for people. He walked the streets, and would stop at a house, wishing peace to the mothers and children. He joined people in their synagogue or wherever they met. There they prayed, sang psalms, debated the town’s problems, or shared information about recent local events. Jesus took advantage of those opportunities to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God. During his travels, if he had to spend the night outside his house, he looked for people willing to give him food and a simple place to sleep⁷.

⁵ F. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, *El Pentateuco*, Navarra, Verbo Divino, 2003.

⁶ J. SCHMID, *El Evangelio según san Lucas*, Barcelona, Herder, 1968.

⁷ JOSÉ ANTONIO PAGOLA, *Jesus: An Historical Approximation*, translated by Margaret Wilde, Convivum Press, Revised Edition, 5th Printing, Miami, 2014, pp. 95-97.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is presented as one who continually moves from place to place, traveling through the whole region of Galilee⁸. Evidently, this was not a casual approach, but a well thought-out strategy. The people no longer had to go out to the desert to prepare for God's imminent judgment. Jesus himself walked through villages, inviting everyone to "enter" the reign of God that was already erupting in their lives. Their own land had become the place to accept salvation and this was made clear in the many signs that invited the people to enjoy the fullness of life as sons and daughters of God.

In those Galilean villages lived the poorest and most marginalized people, dispossessed of their right to enjoy the land God had given them. There more than anywhere else, Jesus found the sick and the suffering of Israel, abused by the powerful; there is where Israel felt the harshest effects of oppression. The reign of God could only be proclaimed as the result of a close, direct contact with the people who most needed breathing space and liberation⁹.

"Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there... Then they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the good news and curing diseases everywhere" (Lk. 9:3-4.6). The itinerant mission of Jesus among the poor men and women of Galilee is a living symbol of his freedom and of his faith in the Kingdom of God. Jesus did not sustain his life with a salary that he received for his work... he did not have a house or land; indeed, he had abandoned the security of the system so that he could enter into the Kingdom of God. Jesus' itinerant mission on behalf of the poor makes it clear that the Kingdom of God is not one specific power center but is visible in places where good things are done for the poor.

Anselm Grün defines Jesus as "God's pilgrim". For Jesus, the road to Jerusalem is the path that leads to death and the resurrection. Luke presents that path as an example of the road we must travel. Therefore, our task is to follow Jesus, the One who is the Way and who will lead us to true life. Jesus has come down from heaven in order to walk with men and women; to be one who lives in their midst. In the person of Jesus, God himself becomes present to humankind in order that people might be able to see themselves from the perspective of God's plan.

Jesus lived in the midst of people and shared with them "his food". During the meals that he shared with people he taught those who were gathered around the table and revealed God's special concern

⁸ J. FITZMYER, *El Evangelio según san Lucas*, volume II, Madrid.

⁹ PAGOLA, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98

for sinners (Luke 5:27-32; 15:1-2). After the resurrection, Jesus once again appeared to his disciples while they were eating. Jesus was on a journey and accompanied the disciples and shared a meal with them (Lk. 24:30-35). The Risen Lord also walks with us; at times he is unrecognized, but when we share our bread with others he is present in our midst.

From the most ancient of times, people viewed life as a journey. In varied spiritual traditions, we see that distinct paths lead people to God. Men and women, as human beings, are always on a journey. They cannot cease to travel and are transformed by traveling along the road. Jesus viewed his life as an on-going journey: "I must continue on my way today, tomorrow, and the following day" (Lk. 13:33). Therefore, the Christian life is also a journey and should be viewed from the perspective of "following Jesus". Yes, our task is to follow Jesus, and this means that we will never have some particular place that we can call our own (Lk. 9:57-62). The path that the disciples must travel along implies they are free from every human bond and from all human projects and plans. They can view God as "their true home". This implies that they know how to revitalize their journey in order to accept the challenges of the cross that they encounter on a daily basis (Lk. 14:27). In this way, life leads us to God and the cross is the key to life¹⁰.

2.3. *The Vincentian mission, an itinerant mission*

"God is the one who calls us and who, from all eternity, has destined us to be Missioners, since He didn't bring us to birth either one hundred years earlier or later but precisely at the time of the institution of this Company."¹¹ For Vincent de Paul, popular missions were the most important ministry of the Congregation, the inescapable ministry, and

¹⁰ A. GRÜN, *Jesús, imagen de los hombres. El evangelio de Lucas*, Navarra, Verbo Divino, 2007.

¹¹ VINCENT DE PAUL, *Correspondence, Conference, Documents*, translators: Helen Marie Law, DC (Vol. 1), Marie Poole, DC (Vol. 1-13b), James King, CM (Vol. 1-2), Francis Germovnik, CM (Vol. 1-8, 13a-13b [Latin]), Esther Cavanagh, DC (Vol. 2), Ann Mary Dougherty, DC (Vol. 12); Evelyne Franc, DC (Vol. 13a-13b), Thomas Davitt, CM (Vol. 13a-13b [Latin]), Glennon E. Figge, CM (Vol. 13a-13b [Latin]), John G. Nugent, CM (Vol. 13a-13b [Latin]), Andrew Spellman, CM (Vol. 13a-13b [Latin]); edited: Jacqueline Kilar, DC (Vol. 1-2), Marie Poole, DC (Vol. 2-13b), Julia Denton, DC [editor-in-chief] (Vol. 3-10, 13a-13b), Paule Freeburg, DC (Vol. 3), Mirian Hamway, DC (Vol. 3), Elinor Hartman, DC (Vol. 4-10, 13a-13b), Ellen Van Zandt, DC (Vol. 9-13b), Ann Mary Dougherty (Vol. 11-12); annotated: John W. Carven, CM (Vol. 1-13b); New City Press, Brooklyn and Hyde Park, 1985-2009; volume XI, p. 98; future references to this work will be inserted into the text using the initials [CCD] followed by the volume number, followed by the page number.

everything else was complementary. That reality was revealed to Vincent in 1617 and occurred when he preached a sermon in Folleville; this event was seen as an inspiration of the Spirit. Thus, popular missions and the Confraternities of Charity began. That same event (the sermon in Folleville) would also eventually lead to the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission. Certainly all the missionaries then gave popular missions, as they had entered the Congregation for that purpose. It is with admiration that one reads the list of towns and villages where those early missionaries preached. Later, the missions ad gentes captured the imagination of the Missionaries as the Propagation of the Faith presented a proposal in which the Congregation was entrusted with certain territories where the Church had not yet been established¹².

Vincent did not begin with some theory about the mission, rather as he reflected on the experiences of his life he discovered his calling: "I belong neither here nor there, but wherever God wants me to be" (CCD: IX: 10). Thus, the first and primary ministry that Vincent engaged in and that he wanted the whole Congregation to undertake was that of the popular missions (CCD: XI: 93). "Therefore we should undertake the work of the missions according to circumstances of time and place, searching for all possible means to give this work new vitality, both to renew and to build up a true Christian Community and to awaken faith in the hearts of unbelievers" (Constitutions, 14). The Constitutions point out four itinerant paths the missionaries should follow: adapt the missions to circumstances of time and place, give that ministry new vitality, build up a true Christian community and awaken faith in the hearts of unbelievers¹³.

We are an itinerant people, responding to various historical, ecclesial, cultural, and other circumstances that encompass the people to whom we proclaim the saving message of Jesus. Maintaining our missionary identity within the context of the present culture, and accepting the challenges that the Church places before us demands an itinerant attitude, an attitude of "going forth" (EG, 24). As followers of St. Vincent de Paul, we must make every effort to place ourselves in "the here and now". We often hear or read the following words: have our Provinces lost that missionary and itinerant thrust that characterized Vincent de Paul and the first missionaries? We, then, discover that it is in and through those men and women who are poor that we come to understand the ways in which God wants us to respond to the cries of the poor.

¹² ADELINO ORNELAS, C.M., "Vincent de Paul and the Holy See," in *Vincentiana*, volume LV, # 2 (April-June 2011), pp. 160-162.

¹³ B. ROMO, <http://somos.vicencianos.org/david/san-vicente-de-paul-y-la-mision-2/>

Clothed in the spirit of the Jesus Christ and attentive to the cries of the poor will enable us to recover and deepen our passion for the poor and for evangelizing them. Missionaries must walk along the path that enables them “to make God known to poor persons; to announce Jesus Christ to them; to tell them the kingdom of heaven is at hand and that it is for persons who are poor” (CCD: XII: 71). If we can speak about the mission, it is because God accompanies us, and we are concerned about continuing Jesus’ mission. God is the God of life, and in the person of Jesus Christ accompanies us every day, especially in the most complex moments of our own history.

3. Implications

3.1. *Cultural and pastoral context for itinerant missionaries*

Globalization of the technical-scientific society, religious pluralism, and diverse cultural and ecclesial situations make us actors in the midst of new and complex phenomenon demanding renewed theological and pastoral approaches. The new advances in the area of the social media have connected the world on the level of information, the economy, the markets and culture. It has done this through the globalization of ideas, products, and of financial currents. This reality of globalization, together with urbanization, has made the world “a global village”. These phenomenon have created a new paradigm for our understanding and our interpretation of the world, and they have created a new way of perceiving reality, assessing situations, and acting. All of which leads to the creation of a new culture¹⁴. In light of this new culture, it is urgent to design an itinerant plan to proclaim Jesus Christ in the midst of this new cultural context. Pope Francis has stated: “The great danger in today’s world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades” (EG, 2).

Our countries have a cultural context which, in the great majority of cases, has been influenced by phenomena such as exclusion, ecological disasters, the multicultural reality, plurality of religions, and violence – all of which demand theological reflection and urgent pastoral proposals. The large multitude of victims, marginalized and the excluded individuals who are angered by their displacement, misery, poverty and overcrowded living conditions, often find themselves

¹⁴ A. CADAVID, *Historia de la Teología, síntesis teológica*, UPB, Medellín, 2011.

poorly represented in the philosophical, theological, social and political systems that are supposed to create a just society in which people can live with dignity.

The cries of the poor, that grow louder and louder, are not responded to with effective channels of inclusion that foster greater dignity. It would seem that the poor, who are often a point of reference in economic models, theological reflections and pastoral programs, are not really heard and/or listened to and as a result not effectively included in decision making processes that affect their lives. We have to admit that we have not always given them an enduring hope or assured them of an authentic and enduring liberation from unjust and oppressive structures. It that not why these individuals are still victims of exclusion perpetrated by current market and consumer systems; is this not why those same individuals are so often condemned to being forgotten, to perpetual poverty and to death.

Today, theology and the Church's magisterium are challenged to: "respond adequately to many people's thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus who demands nothing of us with regard to others. Unless these people find in the Church a spirituality which can offer healing and liberation, and fill them with life and peace, while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness, they will end up by being taken in by solutions which neither make life truly human nor give glory to God" (EG, 89).

The credibility of the Church's spirituality and the relevance of her ideas on the relationship between humanity, God, the cosmos, and the neighbor depends on the quality and authenticity of her preferential option on behalf of the poor. This option has been given to us by Jesus Christ who was born, lived, and evangelized in the midst of poverty and who was thus in solidarity with those who were poor.

It is time that the preferential option on behalf of the poor, purified, referenced, and matured in Pontifical preaching not only hold out the promise of being a fruitful means to enable people to ground their life on a sound spirituality and to live an authentic life in the Spirit, but one that helps us respond to present challenges of globalization, ecology movements, and to be alert to the needs of the ethnic minority groups. This is what is meant by a preferential option on behalf of the poor. It should help theologians, pastors, teachers, historians, anthropologists, scientists, biologists, physicists, business people, and especially Catholics to live out their commitment on behalf of their neighbor and the world. Through participation in liberation movements that confront the situations of inhuman poverty and exploitation, we can make people aware of such situations and promote the integral liberation of those who find themselves in situations in which they must overcome tremendous obstacles in order to live life to the fullest.

Jesus Christ, the Savior, is the person who frees men and women from sin, from that which is the root of all injustice and oppression so that they can live in communion with all people. Therefore, our itinerant process of evangelization should be focused on the person of Jesus Christ and should enable every man and woman to live as a temple of God. Then, as we transform the world and as we encounter one another, we come to understand that we also encounter the person of Jesus Christ. The on-going movement and inspiration of the Spirit challenges us to find new expressions for our spirituality and to apply those discoveries to the themes that have been synthesized by theologians.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Pope describes those realities opposed to authentic Christian living:

“This insidious worldliness is evident in a number of attitudes which appear opposed, yet all have the same pretense of ‘taking over the space of the Church’. In some people we see an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church’s prestige, but without any concern that the Gospel have a real impact on God’s faithful people and the concrete needs of the present time. In this way, the life of the Church turns into a museum piece or something which is the property of a select few. In others, this spiritual worldliness lurks behind a fascination with social and political gain, or pride in their ability to manage practical affairs, or an obsession with programs of self-help and self-realization. It can also translate into a concern to be seen, into a social life full of appearances, meetings, dinners and receptions. It can also lead to a business mentality, caught up with management, statistics, plans and evaluations whose principal beneficiary is not God’s people but the Church as an institution. The mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen, is not present; closed and elite groups are formed, and no effort is made to go forth and seek out those who are distant or the immense multitudes who thirst for Christ. Evangelical fervor is replaced by the empty pleasure of complacency and self-indulgence” (EG, 95).

The Pope continues his reflection and utilizes the same vivid style. In paragraphs that follow the above text, he speaks in an insistent manner that is both unsettling and enlightening, while at the same time presenting us with a synthesis. We cite here the following two examples: “God save us from a worldly Church with superficial spiritual and pastoral trappings... Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the Gospel” (EG, 97). Pope Francis not only presents his theological-pastoral reflections, but gives witness to his words through his ministry, one in which mercy is seen as both a common thread and a point of reference: “The salvation which God offers us is the work of mercy” (EG, 112).

Thus, Pope Francis states that as a result of his experience as a pastor (and with his Latin American heart), he can open the door in a new way as he exercises the Petrine ministry in a manner that provides people with explanations and/or warnings that are more easily understood and that encourage people to see events from the perspective of everyday life¹⁵.

3.2. *Christ, the center of Christian life and the center of the Church*

Authentic believers recognize and accept in their thoughts, words and activities the centrality of Jesus Christ. They know that Christ is the center of creation and of the history of humankind as well as the center of the history of every person. When Jesus is the center of the people's life, including those dark moments, then all the joys and hopes, all the grief and the anguish of men and women can be interpreted by the reality that Jesus is in the midst of all of these different situations.

This centrality is directly related to Jesus' mission. To approach the itinerant proposal of Jesus is to realize that we are in the presence of an extraordinary person who transformed the values of an old world, that of the Jews and the Gentiles. The historical Jesus presents a new paradigm with regard to life and the process of thinking, a paradigm which was given a unity by the Risen Christ and later, in the theology of Saint Paul. Thus, the establishment of the Kingdom of God implies the disappearance of the old world and the birth of a new world. This, in turn, implies a new paradigm that invites us to a new way of thinking¹⁶.

Jesus' contribution represents a transformation of values: a new vision of God and of the human person, freed from submission to nature and cosmic rites; freed from submission to social-political powers, and the myths surrounding political power and certain secular sacred spaces. This new vision involves the unsettling affirmation with regard to the privileged position of those who are poor and marginalized, one that places them over the rich and the powerful. In light of those statements, I want to highlight certain revolutions that were inspired and sparked by Jesus of Nazareth and the Risen Christ in religious, anthropological, cosmic, social, political and ethical areas. In the midst of those situations, we discover the itinerant missionary activity of the Church. In the next sections, I will develop the content of each 'revolution' and hope that this will aid in deepening our understanding of the itinerant character of our mission and provide us with

¹⁵ M. MORONTA, "Francisco, Papa de la Nueva Evangelización," in *Seminarios*, 2014.

¹⁶ A. GALEANO, *Jesucristo un viviente misterioso. Señor y meta de la historia*, Medellín, UPB, 2012.

a means to analyze, interpret and carry out the proposal of the Pope with regard to “the reform of the Church in her missionary outreach” (EG, 17).

3.2.1. *The religious revolution*

The shift in paradigm, from dependence on the cosmos to dependence on history, was not achieved in a brief period of time. The prophets struggled to free Israel from idolatry and from their dependence on the cosmos. Both realities are related to one another since idolatry consists of worshipping powers and the various phenomenon of nature. The Torah was an expression of that dependence on the cosmos. Jesus, however, moved beyond the law because he changed the relationship between men and women and God, modifying it by his assent to the law and grounding it on agape. The struggle between the Pharisees and Jesus was a protest of the religion of law against the religion of love. The Christian paradigm represents a religious revolution because it proposes a new way of living: living in Christ through faith. Christianity does not seek a holy union with the cosmos, but rather a union in the love of agape. In faith, Christians can live in a new way, not dependent on the cosmos nor the law, but rather on the Lord of Glory. Christian salvation is a personalist event, originating in an historical, salvific event. Redemption is also an historical event as is the resurrection.

Pope Francis challenges us to become itinerant missionaries and that challenge implies a true religious revolution:

“In her ongoing discernment, the Church can also come to see that certain customs not directly connected to the heart of the Gospel, even some which have deep historical roots, are no longer properly understood and appreciated. Some of these customs may be beautiful, but they no longer serve as means of communicating the Gospel. We should not be afraid to re-examine them. At the same time, the Church has rules or precepts which may have been quite effective in their time, but no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people’s lives. Saint Thomas Aquinas pointed out that the precepts which Christ and the apostles gave to the people of God ‘are very few’. Citing Saint Augustine, he noted that the precepts subsequently enjoined by the Church should be insisted upon with moderation ‘so as not to burden the lives of the faithful’ and make our religion a form of servitude, whereas ‘God’s mercy has willed that we should be free’. This warning, issued many centuries ago, is most timely today. It ought to be one of the criteria to be taken into account in considering a reform of the Church and her preaching which would enable it to reach everyone” (EG, 43).

3.2.2. *The anthropological revolution*

Christianity provides us with a new paradigm with regard to the human person. It has freed society from a cosmic paradigm, and formulated ideals to create a better future for humankind. Pope Francis writes, “In our time humanity is experiencing a turning point in its history. We can only praise the steps being taken to improve people’s welfare in areas such as health care, education and communications. At the same time, we have to remember that the majority of our contemporaries are barely living from day to day, with dire consequences. A number of diseases are spreading. The hearts of many people are gripped by fear and desperation. The joy of living frequently fades... this epochal change has been set in motion by the enormous qualitative, quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology, and by their instant application in different areas of nature and life. We are in an age of knowledge and information, which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power” (EG, 52).

The Pope also warns us that, “...human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a ‘throw away’ culture, which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society’s underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the ‘exploited’ but the outcast, the ‘leftovers’” (EG, 53).

He further states, “One cause of this situation is found in our relationship with money, since we calmly accept its dominion over ourselves and our societies. The current financial crisis can make us overlook the fact that it originated in a profound human crisis: the denial of the primacy of the human person! We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption” (EG, 55).

Today, as in the past, we recall that the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth are meant to tell us that money, knowledge, and technology are made for the human person and not the opposite.

3.2.3. *The cosmic revolution*

The cosmos is for the human person and not the opposite; men and women are subject to God not the cosmos; indeed, the cosmos is subject to the human person. Pope Francis reiterates this idea as one of the four principles that he proposes in the section of *Evangelii Gaud-*

ium entitled “The Common Good and Peace in Society. The principle he refers to is that ‘time is greater than space.’ Specifically, he says, ‘...giving priority to space means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all spaces of power and of self-assertion; it is to crystallize processes and presume to hold them back. Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces. Time governs spaces, illuminates them, and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain, with no possibility of return. What we need, then, is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events, without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity’” (EG, 223).

In expanding on these ideas further, the Holy Father observes, “Sometimes I wonder if there are people in today’s world who are really concerned about generating processes of people-building, as opposed to obtaining immediate results which yield easy, quick short-term political gains, but do not enhance human fullness. History will perhaps judge the latter with the criterion set forth by Romano Guardini: ‘The only measure for properly evaluating an age is to ask to what extent it fosters the development and attainment of a full and authentically meaningful human existence, in accordance with the peculiar character and the capacities of that age’. This criterion also applies to evangelization, which calls for attention to the bigger picture, openness to suitable processes and concern for the long run. The Lord himself, during his earthly life, often warned his disciples that there were things they could not yet understand and that they would have to await the Holy Spirit” (EG, 224-225).

3.2.4. *The social revolution*

The Gospels point out Jesus’ freedom as he related to people from every social class. He established relationships with those marginalized by the Jews. He held up children as models of openness to God; he rejected the religious discrimination of women and welcomed them into his group. He allowed the lepers to approach him and touch him, and he used his healing power to reintegrate them into society. He spoke to the peasants, men and women who were despised by the Pharisees; he ate with prostitutes and the outcasts of society. All of this indicates an option for social and religious tolerance: It is no longer possible to maintain that religion should be restricted to the private sphere and that it exists only to prepare souls for heaven.

We know that God wants his children to be happy in this world, even though they are called to fulfillment in eternity, for he has created all things for their enjoyment. It follows that Christian conversion

demands reviewing those areas and aspects of life related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good. An authentic faith, which is never fully comfortable or personal, always involves a deep desire to change the world, transmit values, and leave this earth better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and we are all brothers and sisters.

If indeed the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics, the Church cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. Pope Francis notes that, "...All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. This is essential, for the Church's social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change, and it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ. 'At the same time, it unites its own commitment to that made in the social field by other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, whether at the level of doctrinal reflection or at the practical level'" (EG, 183).

3.2.5. *The political revolution*

In a previous era, people were subject to the cosmos because of laws, traditions, and customs of the societal group they belonged to, and as a result of the political organization of that era. But in our present day, political authority, however, cannot pretend to know those realities that belong to God alone. Jesus revolutionized the social order and the State when he said, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (Mat. 22:21). Thus, the Christian affirmation is that "we must obey God rather than human beings" (Acts 5:29), has dethroned the State as the sole arbiter of human rights. Pope Francis said, "I ask God to grant us more politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue aimed at healing the deepest roots – and not simply the appearances – of the evils in our world! Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. We need to be convinced that charity is 'the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)'. I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor! It is vital that government leaders and financial leaders take heed and broaden their horizons, working to ensure that all citizens have dignified work, education and healthcare. Why not turn to God and ask him to inspire their plans? I am firmly convinced that openness to the transcendent can bring

about a new political and economic mindset which would help to break down the wall of separation between the economy and the common good of society” (EG, 205).

3.2.6. *The ethical revolution*

Christianity leads people from an ethical position based on the cosmos to a position that is grounded on human relationships: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength... You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mk. 12:29-31). The new Christian ethic implies a movement toward an way that values the poor over the rich (as seen in the Beatitudes). In the words of Nietzsche: “The gospel is the news that a gateway to happiness stands open to the poor and lowly and that a war is being waged against the noble and powerful... Christianity grows up among outcasts and the condemned, among lepers of all kinds, sinners, publicans, prostitutes, the most stupid folk...”¹⁷

As Christianity presented a new idea of God and the human person when seen in the image of the Crucified, it also created a new ethic based on love and the preferential option in favor of the most vulnerable members of society. Thus, the Crucified is the revelation of that which men and women do not want to be and yet are. The image of the human person in the Crucified signifies the elimination of “superman” and all illusions surrounding such an image. Pope Francis writes:

“...this is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the center of the Church’s pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom, which God wishes to share with us through them” (EG, 198).

Pope Francis also observes that,

“Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programs of promotion and assistance; what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but above all an attentiveness which considers the other in a certain sense as one with ourselves. This loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires me effectively to seek their good. This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life,

¹⁷ FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, Vintage Books, New York, 1968, p. 123.

in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith. True love is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances: 'The love by which we find the other pleasing leads us to offer him something freely'. The poor person, when loved, 'is esteemed as of great value', and this is what makes the authentic option for the poor differ from any other ideology, from any attempt to exploit the poor for one's own personal or political interest. Only on the basis of this real and sincere closeness can we properly accompany the poor on their path of liberation. Only this will ensure that in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the kingdom? Without the preferential option for the poor, 'the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today's society of mass communications'" (EG, 199).

Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care. The Holy Father has a particular concern in this area, as he states, "No one must say that they cannot be close to the poor because their own lifestyle demands more attention to other areas. This is an excuse commonly heard in academic, business or professional, and even ecclesial circles. While it is quite true that the essential vocation and mission of the lay faithful is to strive that earthly realities and all human activity may be transformed by the Gospel, none of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice: 'Spiritual conversion, the intensity of the love of God and neighbor, zeal for justice and peace, the Gospel meaning of the poor and of poverty, are required of everyone'" (EG, 201).

3.3. A missionary church reaching out to others, and animated by the joy of Christ

From the perspective of the Church in Latin America and the Church in general, Pope Francis has united our theological reflections with those of persons from other continents: When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfillment. Here we discover a profound law of reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others. This is what mission means (EG, 10). If the Church and Christian theology have something to proclaim and to offer to the world, it is a new future.

This is not an attempt to discuss who possesses the truth, – the Church or the world – but rather it is an attempt to discover that both

the Church and the world possess something of the truth and the truth of both parties needs to be integrated in a complementary manner. The truth does not exclude but rather integrates. The incarnation of the Church in the post-modern era signifies an incarnation in the midst of pluralism. All of this is one of the achievements that have resulted from the openness created by the Second Vatican Council. Now the Church must confront, accompany and help to guide the People of God who live in the midst of a post-modern society, people who are often disillusioned and helpless, and who experience the temptation to adhere to neo-liberalism or neo-conservatism or religious fundamentalism.

Pope Francis' desire for a poor church, for a church that is a friend of the poor not only echoes the hope of the Church in Latin America, but it is also an invitation to all the faithful to follow and to imitate the Son of God who became man, who being rich opted to become poor so that he might share with all people the richness of his divine condition. Therefore, Jesus speaks and acts in accord with the spirit of the gospel and is able to sense the transformative and salvific power of his words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 5:3).¹⁸ Christ calls the pilgrim church to on-going renewal and reform. The Church, as a human and worldly institution, is always in need of renewal and reform. There are ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelization. Yet even good structures are only helpful when there is someone constantly driving, sustaining and assessing them. Without new life and an authentic evangelical spirit, without the Church's "fidelity to her own calling", any new structure will soon prove ineffective" (EG, 26). The Holy Father also says, "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church that is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security" (EG, 49).

3.4. An evangelization with itinerant elements in formation and in the missionaries

The construction of a new paradigm for evangelization arises as a result of the inability of the present model to respond to the new circumstances in which we live. It is the inability of the present model to embrace an attitude of conversion that leads people to a new way of being church and a new way of evangelizing¹⁹. Just as our mission is accomplished in community and the mission becomes the integrating

¹⁸ B. FORTE, "Sinceridad, sencillez, sobriedad: he aqui Francisco," in *Seminarios*, 2014.

¹⁹ A. BOGATÁ, *El paradigma de evangelización en la arquidiócesis de Bogotá. Fundamentos teológicos y pastorales*, Bogotá, Instituto San Pablo Apóstol, 2014.

element of our life as Vincentians, we can also say the same thing about the itinerant character of our life together and our on-going formation. To journey with another is to be an itinerant missionary, which is one from the perspective of evangelizing the poor in the same manner as Vincent de Paul and from the perspective of our vocation as a response to God's call. Taking responsibility for our on-going formation is a way of becoming an itinerant missionary, because we renew our thinking and our methods.

Realizing that as missionaries we are called to embrace an itinerant condition, it is necessary to strengthen our manner of reflection, to continually update methods we utilize to accomplish the mission, and to revise materials we use. This means we must be aware of the reality of each place where we are called to mission, and we must also be clear about the financial resources that are available for the mission and use the means of communication that are currently in vogue.

Yes, there are risks in all of this but some of those risks can be minimized if we view the mission in stages; if we integrate our plans with the diocesan and parish plans; and if we dedicate the necessary time to our pastoral ministry so people see that evangelization is our primary concern. As missionaries reveal their enthusiasm for the mission, they motivate others to become involved in the mission. Intellectual and spiritual preparation become great tools for the missionary and provide him with security and authority to proclaim the gospel. Missionaries must always be willing to provide for the pastoral needs of the people.

Here I want to present some of the challenges that our itinerant condition as missionaries presents to us, and that should engage us in a process of serious, profound dialogue and discernment:

- the challenge of embracing the new era rather than living in the past;
- the challenge of going out and mingling in the midst of the countless men and women who are poor rather than seeking refuge in our rooms;
- the challenge of walking along unknown but more effective and hopeful paths rather than traveling along known but obsolete paths;
- the challenge of embracing a community project over one's own personal project;
- the challenge of keeping pace with the members of the community rather than asking the community to keep pace with oneself;
- the challenge of maintaining a balance between opening our houses to the faithful and preserving some areas of the house for the exclusive use of the residents of the house;

- the challenge of maintaining a balance between tending to the urgent demands of ministry and setting aside time to be present to the members of the local community;
- the challenge of utilizing modern technology and being faithful to Vincent's demand to use "simple methods";
- the challenge of affirming "the outcasts" as protagonists of history rather than place oneself at the center of attention of every community and/or apostolic event.

Embracing the itinerant mission rather than simply opening new paths is our irrefutable task if we want to follow the path of Jesus Christ and of Vincent de Paul, if we want to respond to the urgent spiritual needs of today's world. To develop missionary methods, to realize that fulfilling the mission is a gradual process and to transform our mission into a hope filled mission... all of this will enable us to avoid missionary burn-out.

Throughout history, the image of the Church has been portrayed using various biblical images (patristic, modern, and contemporary images). The Second Vatican Council spoke of "figures" or "symbols" that reveal the nature of the Church: the people of God, the sacrament of salvation and the community of believers (*Lumen Gentium*, 6). These are images that recover the primitive meaning of communion or *koinonia*. Today, the images that are utilized by Pope Francis affirm not only the meaning of communion but also the meaning of spirituality and evangelization

Pope Francis has stated that from the perspective of a missionary church we must recognize that every experience of evangelization ought to be focused on a spirituality that offers meaning and a clear expression of communion and drawing closer to those on the peripheries. This can only be accomplished with on-going effort so that people become involved in and support the work that has been undertaken by those ministers who are attempting to build up the community and attempting to involve the greatest number of people in the experience of Church. The pastoral activity of the Christian community ought to be focused on and enlightened by the Word of God, especially through direct contact with the Gospel and with the familiar and intimate style of Jesus. As ministers reach out to every family and every person such activity should help men and women develop themselves and should enable the walls of indifference and fear and aggression to crumble while at the same time encouraging communion and the development and sharing of personal, family and community talents.

From the perspective of a missionary church that reaches out to others, the greater part of the evangelization efforts of these ministers should be composed of the following elements:

- listening to the communities and sharing life with people who live in the midst of specific cultural environments,
- interacting with a wide range of people and participating in their activities and meetings,
- creating an environment of closeness and accompaniment through house visits and especially in visits to the infirm and the most vulnerable members of the community,
- sharing and participating in family, educational, community, recreational and street activities (organized by many different individuals and/or groups),
- walking the streets of these communities, availability to all sectors of the community, entering every house, giving witness and promoting intimacy and informal dialogue.

The itinerant missionary, animated by the spirit of *Evangelii Gaudium*, ought to be concerned about such things as the following:

- To minister from the perspective of the signs of hope and to make visible all that is good;
- To plant seeds that reflect gospel values and to recover the value of life;
- To know how to initiate relevant and global projects that can be sustained and replicated;
- To put aside ideas and methods that do not enable the Christian community to move forward;
- To identify those situations that enable people to develop personal, family and community plans;
- To be aware of the beliefs and the religious practices of the people who are being served;
- To identify situations favorable for personal, family, and community accompaniment, and to do such accompaniment in a systemic manner;
- To be aware of situations that allow the missionary to draw closer to all the people in the area he is serving;
- To respect the boundaries of people who have been victimized, but also to reassure these same people by their presence and by their willingness to accompany them;
- To know how to establish relationships, and to recover a sense of team and community;
- To take time to listen to people and to form oneself in this pedagogy that will thus allow people to recount their personal life story;

- To identify possible leaders who are willing to become involved in the process of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ;
- To avoid at all cost any attitude of paternalism and dependency.

4. Conclusions

Pope Francis is asking us to communicate with a new attitude and to pass on to others that which we have received from Christian tradition and our Vincentian charism. “The itinerant character of the Church as she walks with Jesus is one in which communion and mission are profoundly interconnected” (EG, 23). In fidelity to the example of the Master, it is vitally important for the Church today to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear. “The joy of the gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded” (EG, 23). Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a “mystique” of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide, which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage. Greater possibilities for communication can turn into greater possibilities for encounter and solidarity for everyone. If we were able to take this route, it would be so good, so soothing, so liberating and hope-filled! To go out of ourselves and to join others is healthy for us. “To be self-enclosed is to taste the bitter poison of immanence, and humanity will be worse for every selfish choice we make” (EG, 87).

In our day, Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization. All of us are called to take part in this new missionary “going forth”. Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel (EG, 20). In the same way that Jesus often spent long hours at night in prayer to the Father and did this in the presence of his disciples, so also the itinerant missionary, at the end of each day, ought to reflect on the various events of the day, speaking about those experiences in prayer, in community life, and in ministerial discernment.

The vision and the discourse of the itinerant missionary should seek to identify and to extol the numerous signs of hope that they discover: the presence and commitment of so many pastoral ministers, the spirit of solidarity, a concern for the human promotion of men and women, a spirit of hard work and an attitude of communion; a willingness and a freedom that allows people to support the processes and the plans of the larger community, signs of piety, commitment to the present real-

ity and to pastoral ministry in the midst of that reality, the participation of children and adolescents in community and ecclesial activities, organizational processes that are established by the laity, people's trust as seen by their participation in the sacrament of Reconciliation and by their willingness to request counseling and spiritual direction, frequent participation in the Eucharist. This fundamental, yet discrete presence, becomes a school of life to continue the mission and to build community.

In closing, this reflection on the importance and the implications of mobility on the mission, I simply want to refer to what Antonio Rodríguez Carmona calls the theology of the prophetic and saving path: God the Father established a saving path. In past, he made a promise for salvation, one fulfilled in and by Jesus, prophet and only Savior. Now the Church, as a prophetic people, has to give witness to that salvation and its instrument until the end of time. That path has four stages: promise, fulfillment/Christ, fulfillment/Church, and fulfillment/consummation²⁰.

Translated by CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M.

²⁰ A. RODRIGUEZ CARMONA, *Predicación del Evangelio de san Lucas*, Madrid, Edice, 1985.

A Tour of the Vincentian Mission in Ethiopia

Muleta Mekonnen, C.M.

In the history of the Congregation of the Mission in Ethiopia, there are two important events: the coming of the Vincentians in 1839, and the return of the Vincentians after an absence three years (1895-1898). I recently visited these missions of the Congregation. My main purpose in visiting was to walk in the footsteps of our Missionaries and to talk with some of the people with whom they shared their faith experiences. This tour took me two weeks, and here I want to share with you what I saw and experienced.

Among the first Vincentians who came to Ethiopia was an Italian missionary, St. Justin de Jacobis (1800-1860). After sending his two companions, Montuori and Fr. Sapeto to Gonder and Showa, respectively, he stayed in Aduwa in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia. After some time, he went to Guala and Alitena, where he laid the foundations for the future of the Catholic Church. St. Justin de Jacobis is also a founder of Catholic Church in Eritrea, but by 1880 that mission had been handed over to the Italian Capuchins.

One year before the battle of Adwa in 1895, as the Italian army was moving to the Tigray region, the French Vincentian missionaries were chased out. After a few years, they returned in 1898 to their original mission in Guala and Alitena. In order to arrive they had to travel in a round-about manner because they were not allowed by the Italians to come through Massawa (which is about 300 km from the mission). Thus, they traveled through Djibouti and from Djibouti, they walked some 2000 km in a period of five months. They passed through Addis Ababa and were well received by King Minilik II. There these heroic confreres, Fathers Coulbeaux, Gruson, and Br. LePriol received permission to go to their former mission.

After they reached their destination, they and their successors made great efforts to open missions in the center of the country, especially Addis Ababa and its surroundings area. Traveling by way of Djibouti, they opened four missions during the period of 1918-1930: Addis Ababa, Mendida, Dessie, and Gonder.

1. Addis Ababa

I started my visit on August 3rd from the community house in Addis Ababa. Addis Ababa is 2400 m above sea level. It has also been the seat of the African Union since 1963. The house in Addis Ababa was founded in 1918 by Fr. Sournac Etienne, a French Vincentian. He came to Addis

Ababa (which means new flower,) by traveling from Alitena to Asmara on foot, from Asmara to Djibouti by ship and from Djibouti to Addis Ababa by train. In Addis Ababa, he bought some land and built a small house there... a house which evolved into a large compound that now serves as the Provincial house for Vincentians in Ethiopia. Ministry in this area includes caring for the some 100 family in St. Mary Sion Parish. The Vincentian major seminary is also in Addis Ababa and there are eighteen students in philosophy and theology, students from the Congo, Burundi, and Uganda. There is also an elementary school and a high school where some 800 students are studying. Most of these students are from poor families.

In the local community there are ten confreres including the Visitor. The confreres are engaged in the schools mentioned above as well as in different pastoral and social services.

2. Mendida

Afterwards, I took the bus to Debrebrihan, a town which is 151 km northeast of Addis Ababa. The fields are green and the farmlands are full planted with various forms of wheat and grain. The first Vincentian missionary who went to this same area after Fr. Coulbeaux was Fr. Joseph Beateman (September 1921). He came from Guala (the first Vincentian house in Ethiopia that was established by St. Justin de Jacobis in 1844). Like Fr. Sournac, he came through Masawam and from Djibouti he took a train to Addis Ababa and then walked to Ankober, a mission founded in 1864 by Cardinal Massia. His primary objective was to seek out those Catholic families who were abandoned. He went directly to a village which was for the former seat of King Minilik and a place where Catholics had been prominent.

I stopped in Derbrebrehan, a town said to have been founded in the 15th century. From there I took another bus. I then traveled on foot along the road, since there was a lack of transportation. After 27 km, I reached a small town called Mendida. The local people speak both Oromiffa and Amharic. Amharic is the official language in Ethiopia. Fr. Baeteman spoke both of these languages and he also spoke Tigregn and Irobigna when he was in the north. It was here in Mendida that Fr. Beateman founded the Catholic mission in 1923. Because of severe persecution of the Catholics at that time, he could not continue his priestly ministry in the area around Ankober. That was why he entered that area not as a priest but he disguised himself as a merchant.

He met Catholics in secret at a place called Ambo, a very small village about a three hours walk from Ankober, where he administered the Sacraments at night. In his book titled "Le Camouflé Le bon Dieu" he recalled those events, and said that when the Catholics recognized that he was a Catholic priest, they cried tears of joy.

As previously noted, the mission in Ankober was founded in 1864 by the Capuchin friar, Cardinal Massaij. The Cardinal and his confreres were chased out of Ethiopia in 1879, and local Catholics were persecuted. Many of those who were exiled went to Harar in Eastern Ethiopia, where they remained in hiding. Fr. Baeteman went there to search for those scattered sheep. On his second visit, he met the local chief of Mendida called Mr. Metaferia who invited him to settle in his village.

At Mendida, this local chief gave him a piece of land near his house. There Fr. Baeteman opened a small store and arranged for medical services for the people. Slowly, people identified him as a man of God, and not as a merchant. They began to call him Abba Zinabum (which means 'Father of Rain') because when he arrived, it rained. It took him an extended period of time to build a chapel. He started his real mission with a very small group and remained there for seven years. When he left Ethiopia in 1928 he had established Holy Savior Church and a school, both of which are still active today.

The Vincentians left this mission during the Italian military occupation (1935-1941), but the mission had been entrusted to the pastoral care of Cistercian Monks. They administered the parish with the help many families and young people. There were many vocations to the priesthood and the sisterhood, including Daughters of Charity. The Cistercians also administered a technical school, as well as their own novitiate. After the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, which was celebrated in Ge'ez, the beautiful Ethiopian rite, I took a long walk with the superior, Fr. Kidane. In the afternoon, I played volleyball with the young people.

The next day, early in the morning I accompanied Fr. Mekonnen Zewde, my classmate in theology, and together we went back to Debrebrihan. From there we took a bus and went to Ankober, the place where J. Baeteman first went to look for the Christians who had remained there and who had not seen a priest for many, many years. Ankober is a very small village located on a hill some 3870 meters above sea level. In 1839 Justin de Jacobis sent Fr. Sapeto, one of his first followers, to this place in 1839. We went direct to the palace, where the kings of Showa had lived before they moved to Addis Ababa, the city where King Minilik lived. There one can see both the current palace and the one that was destroyed. From the palace, one can see clearly in every direction (this site had been chosen by the kings because of its strategic location).

Because of the distance and a lack of transportation, we could not visit Firkre Ghimb and Ambo, the places where Fr. Baeteman once served the Catholic community in secret. We were told that there are no more Catholics at these places. So the next morning, I took the bus to Debrebrihan, where I stayed with the Cistercians before going on to Dessie.

3. Dessie

Dessie is 641 km distant from Addis Ababa. In this town, there is a Catholic Church founded by the Vincentian Fathers on May 11, 1930. The founders of this mission were Fr. M. Bringer and Fr. Yoseph Gebru (an indigenous priest). Since 1937, this mission has been under the care of the Capuchins. There on finds Kidane Miheret Catholic Church, elementary school and high school. Like the parish in Mendida, this parish has also been a source for many vocations to the priesthood and to various congregations of women religious. The current Capuchin provincial, Fr. Yohannes, is originally from this parish and he was the one who warmly welcomed me. I spoke at length with Mr. Indris, a 93 year-old man who knew the first confreres who served there as missionaries. He told me that originally the land on which the church was first built had belonged to his family. Although Mr. Indris' father and brothers converted to Catholicism, he remained a Muslim. He served as watchman for the confreres, and knew the first group of confreres who founded the parish. He told me about Br. Alphonse Blande CM who is the only Vincentian buried here. At the present time there are two missionary chapels connected to this parish: one in the town of Kombolcha, and the other in the town of Kobo.

4. Mekelle

The next day, Fr. Begashew, the superior, took me to the bus station and I traveled to Mekelle, 785 km from Addis Ababa. It is the capital city of the state of Tigray and the local language is Tigrigna. a Vincentian community house has been located in this town since 1999. It has no direct relationship with my visit, but it is noteworthy because of the two confreres, Fr. Lukas Gebre Meskel and Fr. Desalegn Welde Kidan who live there and administer the school and a youth center that provide services to over 1000 students. The school is named after Abba Gebremichael (1791-1855), our Ethiopian martyr, and the youth center is named after St. Vincent de Paul. This center provides many services to the local youth (library services, tutoring, as well as various cultural and sports activities). The priests provide religious services for the university students. In Mekelle there are also two houses of the Daughters of Charity and another Church which is administered by diocesan priests (nevertheless, our two confreres there minister closely with them). I visited an Orthodox Church near Wukro, 45 km north of Mekelle, a church that was built from a single rock in the fourth century by two brothers, King Abreha and King Atsibia.

5. Gu'ala

My next destination was Adigrat, which is 120 km from Mekelle, and the Seat of the Adigrat Eparchy. The Daughters of Charity brought me there and I was able to meet Tesfasilasie Medhin, Bishop of Adigrat, who is originally from Alitena (my next stop). He has a great need for the Vincentian presence in his Eparchy. Fr. Tihum Tesfaye, the pastoral coordinator, showed me where St. Justin de Jacobis built the first Vincentian house in Abyssinian land in 1845.

In the time of St. Justin, there was much persecution of Catholics in this area. It was here that Justin started a house of formation (a house which still stands). The house is now used as retreat center. It is our first and only "shrine" in Ethiopia and in 2010 it was there that the community celebrated the 350 anniversary of the deaths of Saints Vincent and Louise. This is also the place where the confreres make their annual retreat. In the compound, there is the statue of St. Justin de Jacobis that was erected by Mgr. Tesfassilassie in 2008 (the anniversary of the Ethiopian millennium). This shrine is now administered by the Salesians and they are aided by some Sisters.

A parish record book indicates that Frs. Sournac and Baeteman spend some time here before going to Addis Ababa and Mendida. This mission was handed over to the diocese in 1941.

When Justin de Jacobis went to Alitena, he departed from here, Adigrat. He had been invited to go there by the people and soon after arriving he bought land, settled there and opened a new mission. In his memory, I did what many other Vincentian missionaries and faithful of this area have done, namely, I decided to make a "pilgrimage" to Alitena. Therefore, after Mass, I started my pilgrimage and stayed that night at the Cathedral compound, where I was warmly welcomed.

6. Alitena

The next day, early in the morning, I continued my pilgrimage to Alitena, which is 50 km from Adigrat. On the way, I was invited by some people to rest and take time for "coffee and cactus". The local people say it was St. Justin de Jacobis who brought this plant to this country. One can easily eat ten of them at once, because they are so sweet. On the way, I passed many soldiers in uniform but things appeared to be peaceful. The Sebia church was the last one built by the French Vincentians before they left the country in 1937 because of the Italian military occupation. Along the way, I saw many Orthodox churches on the various hills (the Orthodox are the majority in Ethiopia). In my travels I noticed that Catholics, despite being in the minority, work together with other people in order to improve the lives of their brothers and sisters. An example of this is the installation of an

irrigation system to help farms better manage water resources, especially during the dry season.

After walking the entire day, seeing beautiful sights, taking pictures, greeting people, stopping for coffee and lunch, and crossing valleys and hills, I finally reached my destination, Alitena. As one enters the village, the first thing seen is the Nativity Church which originally belonged to Orthodox community. Many years ago, due to a lack of Orthodox priests, this community invited St. Justin to be their shepherd, and they promised to be his faithful flock. So this church is the sign of the promise between St. Justin and Irob people of Ethiopia.

The people of Alitena are called Irob, and they have their own language (Irobigna) which is rooted in the Cushitic family. Like many other languages in Ethiopia (except Ge'ez, Amharic and Tigreña), the Irob dialect was not a written language. Many of the early Vincentian missionaries of that era spoke this language. It was in 1845 that St. Justin de Jacobis came to this place for the first time. The current church was renovated many times (the previous church had been pillaged and on one occasion was burned to the ground).

It was in this particular church that Blessed Gebremichael was also ordained by St Justin. In this Church there ten Vincentians are interred, including Fr. Edward Gruson, one of three early confreres. He was seen as heroic by the people because he walked 2000 km on foot to reach Alitena. It was after Fr. Gruson became superior of the mission that the French Vincentians were able to expand the mission to southern Ethiopia. He instructed and assisted the confreres in opening up a mission in the center of Ethiopia. However, he loved the mission in Alitena and he died there in 1934 and is buried in the midst of his beloved people.

In this compound where St. Justin and his followers lived, there is a statue of St. Justin which looks like the one I saw in Gu'ala. The archives found in the school are a first-hand resource of Vincentian history in Ethiopia, especially the years following 1897, a time when Alitena was the center of the mission. These archives give witness to the dedication of the confreres in their ministry of forming the clergy as well as their own on-going formation. The Church is alive and active because of the efforts made by those first confreres to translate books into the local language and because of the readiness of the confreres to share the word of God with their people. In the Ethiopian Catholic Church, most bishops, priests and sisters are from this area where the Vincentians have generously served.

Near the priests' house there is a community house of Sisters, founded in 1885 by the first group of the Daughters of Charity, who provided many services to the community as well as to Dessie and other outlying areas. However, after one hundred-twenty five years of pres-

ence and generous service, it was recently closed, due to a lack of vocations.

According to a custom begun by people, the feast of St. Justin de Jacobis is observed monthly on the eighteenth day of each month by an Association of the faithful named after him. Each month they come together from the surrounding parishes for prayer. I just happened to be there during for the monthly day of prayer, (coincidence or Providence?) when the members of this Association had a retreat. They were very happy to have a Vincentian priest among them and on that day I too, felt as though I was blessed. In the area around Alitena, St. Justin de Jacobis is revered and greatly loved for his zealous presence and for the apostolic activity that he initiated.

I met the son of Delibis Wolde Giorgis, whose father had been a catechist and guide for many years with the missionary confreres in Ethiopia. From between 1920-1932, he wrote many letters to the Vincentian seminarians in Panningen who were being formed for the Province of Holland. In those letters he encouraged them to come to Ethiopia and evangelize the people. He told them about the mission, the people, and shared with them the successes and the difficulties encountered in this mission. His dream that the confreres from Holland would come to Ethiopia was made real in 1958 when the Dutch took over the mission from the French confreres. His letters and notes with regard to the mission were sent to Panningen by a Dutch confrere, Fr. Cornelius de Wit, where they were eventually compiled into a book entitled *Brieven uit Abessinië*. Fr. Cornelius is one of the confreres buried in the historical church of Alitena.

7. Gondar

After passing a number of lovely days in Alitena, I went to Adigarat with the Sisters and reached the border town of Shiraro which is located to the west of Tigray. I passed through the town of Aduwa, the first town where St. Justin stayed after arriving in Ethiopia. It was also in this town that he delivered his famous homily in Amharic. I then arrived in Gondar, which is 721 km from Addis Ababa. Gondar is one of the oldest towns in Ethiopia, founded in 1630s by King Fasiledes. The beautiful palace that was built by this king is still standing. It should be noted that it was here that the Jesuits spread Catholicism in 16th and 17th century (1557-1633). They converted King Sesinuos, father of King Fasiledes to Catholicism and as a result, Catholicism became the state religion (from 1626-1633). There are still some ruins of the Catholic churches from that era.

It was in this town that two Capuchins, Fathers Agathange and Casien, were martyred on August 7, 1638. It was also in this particular town that Justin de Jacobis sent out one of his first missionaries, namely,

Fr. Montuori. It was also in this same town that Blessed Gebremichael was first arrested on July 15, 1854 and began his journey toward martyrdom.

At different times, Vincentian missionaries made many attempts to come to Gonder. Even the catechist, Delibis, was once imprisoned after it was discovered that he was Catholic. Finally in the late 1920's, two Catholic priests came to this town. One was Fr. Sournac, founder of the house in Addis Ababa, and the other was an indigenous priest, Fr. Abba Kassa. They established a Catholic mission outside of Gonder in a place called Arbarba of Kerker. This was verified by Mrs. Abeba Belay Kassa, a lifelong resident who said she received her First Communion from Fr. Sournac. The town received this unusually long name (Arbarba of Kerker) because of a local legend that claims that forty cows in the town all gave birth to calves on the same night. So the local people named it "Arbaba" which means forty. Presently, this mission is administered by a community of Sisters who have an eye clinic, elementary school, and a church (that is now under construction).

There are a few Catholic families left. In Gonder the people speak Amharic. Yet in this particular area, the people have their own language, known as Kemmatigna. In Gonder, there are three different religious communities: the Missionaries of Charity, Saint. Hanna Sisters and the Cistercian Monks. I stayed two nights with the Cistercians who live in the town and administer a school and a parish. After this I went to Gorgora, which is 60 km from Gonder to visit an area where the Jesuits had worked. The next day, two confreres, Fathers Lukas and Iyasu Tesema arrived and together we drove to Bahirdar, 120 km from Gonder.

8. Bahirdar

Bahirdar is a very beautiful town and is the capital city of the Amhara region. One can relax on the lake or move about the lake in boats or simply stand in awe at the Nil waterfall which is located some 30 km from the town. Here the Vincentians have a community house, which is under the jurisdiction of the Mekelle house. There are two confreres living here: Fathers. Alemayehu Haile and Iyasu Tesema, both of whom are involved in pastoral ministry. They have small, but active Christian communities, and I was invited to participate in their weekly prayer service. The confreres also minister as chaplains to the university students in Mekelle. They also administer a well-known high school in the region. They are attempting to start a kindergarten for the members of the Negede Weto tribes, who are often excluded from participation in society. They received a small land grant from the government and at the present time an elementary school is under construction. Actually, the mission in Bahirdar was started in the early

1990's by Eritrean confreres. At the end of the Ethiopian-Eritrean War, this house went to the Ethiopian Province. There is also a community house of the Daughters of Charity in this area.

My visit made me tired but I must also admit that I was greatly edified. I felt blessed in being able to visit the places where our Vincentian ancestors lived, and served. It was truly wonderful to see the establishments (past and present) of the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity as well as the establishments of other religious congregations. The blood, sweat, and tears of our founding Vincentians was not in vain! It was fruitful, and it continues to be so!

From this short visit, one comes to understand the past and the present history of these missions. In the northern part of Ethiopia, most the missions which were founded by our French confreres have been handed over to other religious communities or dioceses. But in the southern and western parts of the country (in the Apostolic vicariate of Nekemte and Jimma-Bonga), the Vincentian presence is active, and even though we are handing over some parishes to local clergy, the Holy See continues to seek confreres to serve as bishops and apostolic administrators. But this is part of our Vincentian charism as missionaries! Even still, there are requests from many bishops to send confreres to work in their dioceses and the Province of Ethiopia is ready to go wherever the mission calls us to "preach the Gospel to the poor."

An example "par excellence" of missionary inspiration to the confreres in Ethiopia is Fr. Francois Brillet, the last living French confrere who worked as a missionary in Ethiopia for many years. Now at 91 years of age, he lives in Paris at the Maison-Mere, but he still inspires all of us in Ethiopia with his dedication and fervor for the Vincentian Missionary spirit. *Merci, cher Pere!*

Long life for our Province of Ethiopia!

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The Popular Missions: A New Missionary Effort

Thomas Lunot, C.M.

The year 2014 was marked by many events, including one that greatly pleased the Church: the canonization of Popes John XXIII and John-Paul II. For my part, I went to this unforgettable celebration more for John-Paul II. The saintly “Polish Pope” was for my generation (I was born in 1975) the only one that we experienced since our childhood over two and a half decades... in other words, he was not only a Pope but also a father in faith. One of his initiatives I found most beneficial was World Youth Day. (WYD) I had been to Czestochowa (1991), Denver (1993), and Paris (1997). I was able to discover how important a WYD gathering of just ten days could be in strengthening my faith and love of the Church, a community of many nations, faces and cultures. The WYD helped me to live my baptismal promises within a French society in full de-Christianization; even more, it was instrumental in my vocation as one consecrated to the Lord. As I enter my fortieth year of baptism, I have a conviction that important moments are necessary to allow the baptized to remain faithful to the promises of their baptism, and to create in others the desire for baptism! I believe that the time of pastoral preparation for the sacrament remains relevant, particularly in societies increasingly marked by secularism. However, many people are unable to take advantage of these sacraments and participating in a large gathering such as WYD is often problematic especially those with limited financial resources motivation. Yet, there is still a need to help people live their baptismal promises in a fuller manner.

An Important time at home

How can we help bridge this gap? Why not organize an important faith event at home? This is what St. Vincent de Paul did while working with teams of confreres in villages where parish missions were preached and these missions continued for several weeks. Today, this reawakened missionary approach in reviving the parish mission is an important development. It brings the mission of Jesus and the Church to people from all walks of life, making it relevant, particularly within societies without spiritual depth, and where the Christian community struggles to survive. John Paul II understood this well when he said:

*"I wish to point out in particular the importance and effectiveness of the old-style popular missions for the purposes of such catechesis. If adapted to the specific needs of the present time, such missions can be, today as yesterday, a useful instrument of religious education also regarding penance and reconciliation."*¹ On another occasion, the Holy Father said with determination: *"Then there are the traditional missions, often too hastily dropped but irreplaceable for the periodic and vigorous renewal of Christian life – they should be revived and brought up to date."*²

How can we Vincentians meet this challenge in the era of the New Evangelization? Pope Francis knows how this missionary revival can be achieved: by the renewal of parishes! As he said in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*:

"In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented"³.

As priests of the Mission, we cannot remain indifferent to this call and desire of Pope Francis which consist in completely redirecting parishes towards mission! In our countries and respective cultures, we have different and varied experiences with regard to the administration of a parish. We know that it is not an easy task to direct a parish toward being mission-oriented. That is why outside help can assist an anxious Christian community to renew and carry out its missionary vocation. However, those outside helpers must prepare and animate the mission with the local people of the parish.

This idea was already present in the missions preached by Saint Vincent, particularly during the establishment of the Confraternities of Charity. The Ladies of Charity were a lay group organized to support the work of the Vincentians after founding a Confraternity of Charity in a given parish. St. Vincent had the genius to generate good will on site to meet local needs. Some parishioners, fresh from the parish mission, became ready to support their own parish after its conclusion. Thus, the Vincentians systematically sought to establish Confraternities of Charity wherever they preached missions, and this became an important network of charity throughout the French Kingdom.

¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Réconciliation et Paenitentia*, n° 26.

² JOHN PAUL II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, n° 47.

³ POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n° 28.

In our time, we know the Church seeks to develop co-responsibility and teamwork between priests and the laity. It is obvious this additional dimension exists in parishes where a mission may be needed. Therefore, it is natural that missionaries will integrate the laity of the parish in achieving the parish mission while leaving the responsibility of coordination to the pastor. The role of the pastor is essential before, during, and especially after the mission; I think it would be dangerous to undertake a mission where the pastor and other parish priest(s) would not be involved, or in a diocese where the bishop would not be supportive of such activity.

A way of doing a parish mission

In this essay, I will outline a way of doing parish missions in a French context four centuries after St. Vincent and our first confreres began to “walk in this way.” Obviously, many things have changed, even if the message of salvation remains the same and the pursuit of goodness and God’s grace still lives in the heart of humanity. As Vincentians, in addition to the Gospels and fascinating stories of the first missionary endeavors in the Acts of the Apostles, we have a great source of inspiration in a proven tradition of parish missions that has existed for centuries. In the past several years, I have taken the time to go back to this source through numerous readings, an approach that has recently led to my authoring a 190-page Compendium: “*Parish Missions According to Saint Vincent de Paul*.” In this fascinating study, I tried to locate a specific fundamental model of the Vincentian Parish Mission, one that could be updated for contemporary French society.

This led to the formulation of a new way of doing mission (only after having participated in various field experiences during the course of several years). Indeed, as a son of St. Vincent, I think we must favor a pragmatic approach over a theoretical approach, although the two are complementary. What I present here is also summarized and illustrated on the website www.missionparoissiale.net. Indeed, when I present the “MP-3D” (the Parish Mission in 3 Dimensions) I have the image of the Miraculous Medal on the publicity papers because the symbols on the back of the medal are a summary of the major stages of this missionary journey! The term “missionary journey” seems more appropriate than the term Mission.

Indeed, when speaking about mission, we easily think of a short and isolated event, while the word journey refers to an experience that lives in time and moves forward in stages. This is the process employed by the MP 3D. Why 3D – three-dimensional? The answer is found in the words of the great missionary St. Paul of Tarsus when he wrote to the Ephesians: “You may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of

Christ” (Eph. 3:18). Thus, the first stage of missionary path honors the height; then, a few weeks after, the depth is experienced through the 9 days of Mission; and finally, the length takes place in the days and months after the Mission. This involves animating the parishioners to persevere for the long term. How can the symbols of the Miraculous Medal reinforce and support these dimensions? Let us look at that issue now!

The Miraculous Medal, a symbol of Mission in 3 stages

On the Miraculous Medal we see the Immaculate Heart of Mary pierced by a sword. As we know, this reminds us of the prophecy uttered by the aged Simeon to Mary, a young mother who had borne her first child. It was in her arms that Jesus was physically closest to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Christ grew in relationship with this Heart in a mysterious and unfathomable manner. It is in the Heart of Mary that Christ’s love flowed most abundantly and it is the Heart of Mary who welcomed this love. Thus, the Heart of Mary seems to be the safest vehicle to be flooded with the love of God. In the Catholic Church, there is a practice that allows people to dedicate themselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary so that through her intercession they might open themselves to God’s love. This practice is still relevant and was used by Pope Francis on May 13, 2013 when he consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This consecration can also be experienced on a parish level.

This is what is proposed during the first stage of MP-3D: a weekend with Mary. The parish is invited to a new movement while being taken into the arms of Mary and being drawn closer to her Immaculate Heart. More concretely, it is a question of putting oneself at the service of others in the School of Mary. First of all, we ask to live like she did at the time of her Visitation. During the preparatory novena for the act of dedication, the missionaries, accompanied by the parish volunteers, spend time visiting the sick and shut-ins who have requested such a visit. Thus, the first people visited when the Mission begins are the sick and poor so dear to Our Lady. They will receive moral and spiritual help, because in France most people already have access to medical care. Generally, those who are visited ask for one or more sacraments and are happy to receive the Miraculous Medal. This week of visit can be the occasion for parishioners to discover and join this apostolate of charity, or to found a Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Thus, the relationships created by these visits will continue until the arrival of those who will come to speak. It is important that all are kept informed of the Mission program so they can feel integrated into this missionary journey, especially interceding through their prayers and

sufferings which are offered for the many intentions that were entrusted to them. The Marian Weekend takes place after the week of Visitation. The goal is to start the mission with the Virgin Mary, as this is how Christ. Thus, the relationships created by these visits will continue until the arrival of those who will come to speak. It is important that all are kept informed of the Mission program so they can feel integrated into this missionary journey, especially interceding through their prayers and sufferings which are offered for the many intentions that were entrusted to them. The Marian Weekend takes place after the week of Visitation. The goal is to start the mission with the Virgin Mary, as this is how Christ wanted to start his earthly mission and did so through his Mother Mary. The mystery of the Incarnation, so dear to St. Vincent, is the focus of the next weekend. And as the Nativity concerns the Holy Family, the programs for this weekend will be inter-generational. First, every Saturday morning will be dedicated to the children who will be expected to participate in the "rosary" workshop. In France, the majority of children do not know what a rosary is, so this is a fun activity, during which they make a multicolored rosary, which allows them to discover a new way of praying while becoming familiar with the Word of God summarized in the various mysteries.

Back at home, they are proud to show off their handmade rosary, and explain what it means and how they made it. As a result, some children succeed in creating a time for praying the rosary with the family, which is a great innovation in homes where often all forms of family prayer are absent. On Saturday afternoon, the children and youth are invited to be part of a sound and light show on the mystery of the Incarnation, which takes place during an evening Marian prayer service. At 8 pm, a Marian evening prayer service is held. Young and old are invited to pray together and to prepare for the next day.

On Sunday, during Mass, the parish will be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart, after which a commemorative plaque is put in place and a bouquet of flowers is presented at the Marian shrine of the diocese. At the conclusion of this Marian Weekend, the parishioners become aware of the fact that they have begun a missionary journey with Mary Immaculate as their guide. During the weeks of waiting for the second stage of the MP-3D, a statue of the Virgin with the globe under her feet will circulate from home to home so that families can pray for their neighbors who will be visited later by the missionaries.

The second step of the Mission starts with an afternoon in a monastery of the diocese with the pilot team, composed of a dozen parishioners who took responsibility in preparing the mission. These include people who have expertise in logistics, media, youth ministry, pastoral care for the sick, music ministry, and home visitation ministry. The goal is to have a final team meeting and to give the monastic com-

munity the statue of the Virgin and the globe. The monastic community is asked to pray for the success of the Mission. This spiritual sponsorship is a powerful Church experience, not only for the parish, but also for the monastery which renews its missionary impetus in the tradition of St. Therese of Lisieux, the Patroness of the Missions. Then begins the “Nine days for God.” The meaning of this phrase is that it includes two weekends during which people are most available. Also, “nine days” refers to the experience in the Upper Room.

Indeed, before going on a mission, the apostles took the time to prepare and to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Two millennia later, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, said “*We must first evangelize the evangelizers.*” This is consonant with what St. Vincent believed and also spoke about as well:

“Well, if it is true that we are called to bring far and near the love of God, if we must inflame the nations with it, if our vocation is to go spreading this divine fire in all the world, if it is so, I say, if it is so brethren, how much I should be kindled myself with this divine fire.”⁴

Thus, these nine days are an opportunity to deepen the faith, to use one of the dimensions St. Paul referred to his letter to the Ephesians. Parishioners are able to live at home and yet live as if they were on a retreat in which they would seek to be renewed in the gifts of the Holy Spirit so they can give witness to their faith. To do this, morning prayers – Lauds and Eucharistic adoration – have a special importance.

Returning from school, children and young people can go to the Church to prepare for the Evening Mission, which starts at 8 pm. During these nine days, seven evening presentations will be given at the Church where different themes will be developed (e.g., “Where is God in my time of distress?”, “Should we always forgive?” “How to find inner peace?” and “Joy or fear of testifying to his faith?”). These themes should be based on the result of a questionnaire that is filled out during the time of the parish mission. After the evening session, hot chocolate is offered, which can attract people who do not usually come to the Church.

Indeed, this kind of evening gathering can touch some non-practicing Catholics or even non-believers because the language used is accessible and the beauty of the sound and light is magnificent. You notice the important place given to children and young people during our evening gatherings as they act out the drama of the Word of God. These biblical sound and light shows are like a new “Little Method” to use the language of Saint Vincent de Paul who said,

⁴ S.V. Conferences for CM’s, Conference 207, p. 583; COSTE XII, pp. 262-263 (French).

“That is why I say that our method is a virtue because virtue we have to do, and this method also has us for good because by observing, we preach usefully for everyone and we adjust the capacity and scope of our audience. Our method is still a virtue, because she is daughter of charity, who is the Queen of virtues. Charity makes us accommodate everyone, to become useful to everyone, and the method, which takes this lesson of charity... does the same thing...”⁵

In this same spirit, the light and sound shows are not only beneficial for those who are viewing them, but are also beneficial for the young people who participate in them. Indeed, from ages 7 to 20, children and young people can find a role that is appropriate for their age (and there is no text that has to be memorized since the voice and the music were pre-recorded at a professional studio). Their performance is akin to a mime show in fancy dress. The result is impressive because young people are looking to excel, and some prove to be good actors, while at school they have difficulties in learning and/or find difficulties mixing in a social situation.

This was the experience that we encountered during missions in poor neighborhoods in Paris. The parents were so proud to see their children’s success affirmed in a public way! In this case, the little method is not only in the service of evangelization, but also in service of the education for the whole person, body and soul. The advantage of engaging the young is that it allows parents, grandparents, and friends (often without an actual spiritual motivation), to come and see their children in this setting. After having seen and heard the word of God spoken and acted out by their children, they return home, their minds and hearts touched by the experience of the goodness of the Lord.

In our missions, young people are the first to proclaim the Good News by Evangelical through mimes, while at the same time being prepared to take to the streets to give public witness of their faith. In fact, on the last Saturday evening, we organize a candlelight procession in the streets led by someone raising high the crucifix and followed by the statue of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. Children and youth are dressed with albs, candle in their hands, followed by parishioners who give witness to their faith in public space through their song and prayers. Because we do not place ourselves in a such a situation in some triumphant manner, but rather we want to give witness to our joy and to the fact that we are a family. Those who see and watch these processions are most often pleasantly surprised. It is true that in many places of France, there has not been this type of process for over fifty years! That is why, prior to this event, the missionaries, accompanied

⁵ S.V. XI, p. 274.

by parishioners, knock on the doors of the residents to inform them about the procession. It is also an opportunity to meet people outside the Church context... and continue the process of evangelization. People will often invite us into their home for a time of deep sharing!

The nine-day Mission ends on Sunday with a Mass presided by the Bishop, during which the anointing of the sick is administered to those who have been able to come to the Church move (those residing in nursing homes received the sacrament during the visit of the Missionaries to said institution). At the conclusion of the Mass, the Bishop leaves the church to bless the Mission Cross, and we know that the cross of Christ is at the center of the Miraculous Medal with the letter "M" which can also stand for "mission" as well as "Mary". Thus, the second step of MP-3D is symbolically represented by the M and cross of the medal.

The 'Nine Days for God' Mission represents a large parish investment. That is why it is necessary to wait several months before returning to parish for the third and final stage of the MP-3D. In addition, it is important to give sufficient time to the pastor and the parishioners to assimilate the significance of this event in the life of the parish and in their own personal life. After several months, the desire to share what was received during the "Marian weekend" and the "Nine-day Mission" becomes more rooted in the heart of many parishioners. This means the time has arrived to give a more intense witness to one's faith. Thus, we come to the third dimension: the width, which refers not only to what wrote Saint Paul to the Ephesians but also to what Christ said to his Apostles: "Put out into deep water" (Lk. 5:4). During the "Marian Weekend" and the "Nine-Day Mission" many home visits were made, but in this new phase it is important to "do more" (*davantage*) to quote Saint Vincent de Paul.

The purpose of these meetings on the steps of some house, during a meal, in the market, or on the street, is to bring together as many people as possible. This is why the "Return of the Mission" will end with an act of consecration of the whole parish to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. During Sunday Mass, all those encountered during the home visits are entrusted to the mercy of God that flows from the Heart of Jesus. This third stage of the MP-3D is placed under the sign of Heart of Jesus, which is also engraved on the Miraculous Medal. During these nine-days of the Mission, we also distribute holy cards of the heart of Christ, the image of merciful Jesus (revealed to Saint Faustina) which uses the same symbolism as that of the Miraculous Medal, namely, showing forth its rays. The Medal and its image are excellent ways to evangelize during home visits.

Indeed, people are most often touched when we offer them some-symbolic gift. In France, 60% of the population have been baptized, so when we knock on a door, there is a high probability that the person

knows something about Jesus and Mary. The vast majority of those baptized are not practicing, but believers, and like “the lost sheep of Israel”, popular devotion often remains the last anchor of their childlike faith. The Mission can be an opportunity to move beyond the stage of devotions, to move to a deeper understanding of their faith.

That is why during all our home visits we invite people to a special gathering on the last Saturday evening for a Sound and Light show which is focused on the life of Christ as the “Prince of Peace.” It is a drama Performed by the youth of the parish and this drama is focused on four decisive nights in the life of Christ: the night in Bethlehem, the night of Holy Thursday, the three hours of darkness on the cross, nightfall as the disciples journeyed to Emmaus. This drama presents some of the key Christian moments of the “kerygma”... and does this by utilizing the small method of sound and lights.

After a brief time of prayer adapted to non-practitioners, those present can meet over a hot drink and enjoy the presence of one another. In general, participation varies between 250-500 people of all ages, which in France, for a local church event, corresponds to a modest participation rate. When visiting the homes there is the hope that these individuals will in turn invite others from their immediate area (such as neighbors, colleagues at work, friends, etc.). During the mission, the deceased members of the parish are not forgotten. Indeed, on the morning of last Saturday, a celebration in honor of the deceased takes place in the Church. Illuminated by tea light candles on this occasion, the beauty of the celebration helps the participants become more open to Christian belief in the hope and promise of eternal life.

A missionary gives a clear and simple instruction on the meaning of life after death, something rarely done today. The issue of salvation is explicitly addressed as did St. Vincent in his time, but here the focus is on the communion of saints. During home visits, the people are invited to write the names of their deceased in a book and we promise to pray for those individuals during the celebration to which they are invited. Sometimes, this leads to a discussion of the meaning of life after death, a subject about which our contemporaries have little understanding! At the end of the discussion, it is also possible to invite them to the show “Prince of Peace” where the question of the resurrection of the dead is explored! During the time of the mission, some begin to participate in the Eucharist where the risen Christ brings people together every Sunday.

Perspectives

Thus ends the presentation of the Parish Mission in 3 dimensions, the MP-3D, which is based on this passage from the Letter to the Ephesians. These three dimensions of height, depth and breadth have

only one goal: to better know the love of Christ which in turn enables people to better live, serve, and give witness. St. Paul spoke of a fourth dimension: length. The three stages occur in the course of a year, so that there is strong impact on the life of the parish. It is possible to return later to the parish in order to assess the status of the three foundations established during a mission.

What are they? First, concerning the sick and homebound: it is to establish a conference of St. Vincent de Paul – if it does not exist in the parish in order to continue this apostolate of reaching out to the poor of the parish. The second foundation is to establish a group of young actors to continue to provide the “Sounds and Lights”, particularly on Christmas and Palm Sunday, to reach out to “occasional parishioners”. The third foundation would be to establish a formation program for adults. Such a program should be open to all those who want to rediscover the fundamentals of their faith.

With these three foundations, it is easy to see the three groups of people that become a priority for the process of evangelization during the Mission: the sick, young people, and non-practitioners. Therefore, we can summarize the three-fold purpose of the Mission as exposure to three realities: to provide the possibility for a personal encounter with the merciful Jesus, to help the Christian community live a strong spiritual life and to help to transform a parish into a missionary parish. In order to achieve this triple objective, we take as our model the three Novenas summarized artistically in the symbols of the Miraculous Medal.

At the beginning, I did experience the traditional mission with the Lazarist team from Bondue of three continuous weeks especially in rural areas. Then I took part in Mission weekends in the region of Paris with youth from the Chapel of the rue du Bac. From these experiences came the idea of “nine day missions” as a campaign with several confreres. Finally, a missionary journey developed as the result of numerous discussions with priests and laity after the missions. It is true that the French context is difficult because of the indifference toward the Church and a growing marginalization. During a Mission to the island of Réunion (a French Department in the Indian Ocean), it was easy to fill the church every day for more than one week. But in France, it is necessary to be infinitely inventive to achieve even modest results. A former confrere, who had known full churches in the 1950s and who, after the 1970s, had the courage to continue the popular missions in France said that Christianity is on the decline (and today less than 3% of the Catholics are practicing their faith). Then he said, “In the past, missionaries were fishing with nets, now they fishing with rods, but the important thing is that we to continue to fish!”

He then ended by quoting the words of St. Paul, “*I have become all things to all in order to save some at any price.*” It is true that one of

the great joys of the missionary experiences is found in the discretion of a confessional where a person engages in a profound act of conversion. Unfortunately, today, people rarely participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation. This is true in France – but I believe it is also the case in other countries. That is why during the mission we focus on this beautiful sacrament of mercy so dear to St. Vincent de Paul. So as we continue to move forward with these new popular missions, we can then heard resounding in our midst the powerful words of Jesus, *“There is joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

The Congregation of the Mission and the Vincentian Congregation in India

Francis Puthenthayil, C.M.

The landing of a group of four Spanish Vincentian Missionaries in Orissa, India on January 10, 1922, was something of a miracle. The group consisted of Frs. Jose Maria Fernandez, Ramon Ferrer, Valerian Gumes and Rey Coello. Due to the previous efforts of other French missionaries present there from 1845-1922, the confreres found a Christian presence in the area, but a weak one, and rapidly deteriorating. Armed only with their goodwill for the kingdom of God, the Vincentians began their work in a land foreign to them. With wisdom and great zeal, they saw an immediate need to harness their energies and resources to rekindle the fading light of faith in order to rebuild the Christian Church and its communities. They understood that without a catechist, a missionary could do little to effect conversion among the people; whereas a well-trained catechist, even if left alone, could do a great deal for the spread of the Gospel. Their first task was to identify helpers for the important role of Lay Catechist. This was the start of the successful story of the Vincentian Orissa Mission.

The first part of the missionary enterprise was to orient the preaching of the Word of God to those yearning for God, to plant the Church where it had not taken root. For the second stage, the missionaries were given more time and resources for pastoral care of those who embraced Christianity, which made it possible to establish parishes. Faith formation programmes were successfully launched to strengthen the faith of those in the Christian faith and proclaim the Word of God to thousands eager to accept Jesus as Lord and Master.

As a next step to strengthen the faith of the baptized, volunteers were selected and trained to teach the basic truths of the faith to adults and children. However, the formation of the laity was a great concern of the missionaries. While the various parish ministries had been developed, lay formation had been neglected. Finding a place where the lay faithful could come together was still a distant dream. It was hoped that a training and resource center for lay catechists would be established so that the ministry of forming the faithful could be done in an on-going way. This dream became a reality with the establishment of the *Nava Jeevan Dhyana Kendra Centre* on November 21, 1999.

What makes *Nava Jeevan Dhyana Kendra Centre* so effective is the selfless service, sacrifice, prayers, and fasting of our confreres,

Fr. George Pareman, Fr. Francis Kannampuzha, Fr. Joseph Palayoor, and Fr. Ramesh Bishoi who work together with a group of lay volunteers. In addition to these, other confreres have taken on retreat ministries for priests, religious, and lay people. There are also attempts to revive the '*Popular Mission*', which has not been a focus of the Province for a quite long time. Indeed, there is still much to be done with regard to the process of evangelization in India, and the hope is that new evangelization methods will result in the desired fruits.

THE VINCENTIAN CONGREGATION OF SYRO-MALABAR RITE (VC)

Founder, History & Presence in India and Abroad

The Vincentian Congregation had a very humble beginning, founded on November 20, 1904 at Thottakom by Fr. Varkey Kattarath together with three diocesan priests (Frs. Joseph Karapurayidam, Mani Paramkulangara and Kusumos Kaattezhath), and with the approval of Louis Pazheparampil (1896-1919), first Vicar Apostolic of Ernakulam. This new community was modelled after the Congregation of the Mission. Therefore, the community members accepted and followed the Common Rules of the CM. From 1938 onward, it was officially known as the **Vincentian Congregation**. Presently, it has three provinces, three dependent regions and two missions comprised of 2 bishops, 486 priests, 1 brother and 170 professed seminarians.

Ministries of the Vincentian Congregation

The mission of this Congregation is accomplished by the preaching of the Word of God, missionary works among non-Christians, and the educational, social and charitable apostolates that support the poor in their integral development. In places where the Gospel has not yet been preached or where the Church is not yet well established, the Vincentians share the missionary responsibility of preaching the message of Christ and of planting the seeds of faith. As St. Vincent dedicated himself to serve the poor materially and spiritually, we too shall regard the poor as our pre-eminent lot in the work of evangelization so that we may proclaim to them the mystery of salvation and help them in their needs. All three provinces of the Congregation are engaged in mission work in the different states in India as well as in Africa.

Pastoral Ministries – Popular Mission

In the seventeenth century, to alleviate the deplorable spiritual degradation of the faithful working on the estates of the feudal lords and villages in France, St. Vincent de Paul initiated a program of spiritual

renewal and the popular mission was most important and effective element of this program. Understanding the importance of the popular mission for the Church in Kerala (an area that was being influenced by Marxism in 1950s), the Vincentian Congregation took up the Popular Mission as one of its main works. The main thrust was threefold: individual renewal, family renewal, and parish renewal. Since 1950, the Vincentian Congregation had been conducting popular mission retreats in parishes in Kerala. The effect was overwhelming, as it brought about a dynamic spiritual transformation in the lives of the people. The first popular mission was conducted in 1952 at St. George Forane Church, Angamaly.

Distinctive features of Popular Mission

- The retreat is not preached in the parish church alone. The parish is divided into small units, and in each unit, the same program is conducted simultaneously.
- The preaching and other common services are done during early morning and evening hours, (this is done in order to maximize the participation of people who work and students in school.
- It is called a 'popular mission' because it is for the people. Their participation is not limited to just listening. They have an active and vital role during every stage of the mission.
- No fee is charged for conducting the popular Mission. The expense of the team members are covered by the Congregation.
- The teachings are based on the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church.
- Renewal of baptismal vows and Marriage vows, invitation to receive the Sacrament of reconciliation, and solemn celebration of the Holy Eucharist are intended to revitalize of the Sacramental and family life of the faithful.
- The retreat is concluded with a penitential procession. The participants holding wooden cross from the respective centres, come to the parish church for the concluding session, which comprise of singing hymns, a short preaching, and adoration.

So far, Popular Mission has proved to be the most effective form of Evangelization. The Popular Missions are highly appreciated and supported by the ecclesiastical authorities. There is a growing demand in India and especially in Kerala for Popular Missions. It really satisfies the call of the Church for 'New Evangelization'.

a) Residential Retreat Programmes at Potta and Muringoor

In 1977, a community at Potta was established as the centre to direct and to co-ordinate Popular Mission retreats. Full time preachers began to stay there in order to pray and prepare together. Large crowds began to flock to the centre – the sick, the broken hearted, and those seeking spiritual deliverance from vices including alcohol and drug addictions. God's compassionate love was poured out in abundance and many were healed many, as the Good News of salvation was preached to all. The facilities at Potta centre became inadequate for the large number of people converging for the weeklong residential retreats held in Malayalam. A sprawling residence was acquired at Muringoor, on the banks of Chalakudy River, six kilometres away from Potta – it was named Divine Retreat Centre. The mighty works of God spread far and wide, all over the world, and the pilgrims poured in. New sections were opened up and retreats began in six other languages – English, Konkani, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil and Hindi. Retreats are conducted in every week and for different groups. In each group hundreds of people attend and especially for Malayalam service, thousands of people attend.

This centre was entrusted to the care of the Mary Matha Province of the Vincentian Congregation. In the Provincial Assembly of the Mary Martha Province held in 1990, the activities of the Potta community and Divine Retreat Centre were discussed at length. This was the time when the Holy Father Pope John Paul II made an urgent plea for a new evangelization in the Church. "I see the dawning of a New Missionary Age. The urgency of the new evangelization demands... to stay in the very vanguard of preaching." Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Provincial Assembly decided that the Potta-Divine Retreat Ministry would be the response of the Vincentian Congregation to this call of the Church.

The Divine Retreats begin with the joyous proclamation of the forgiveness and salvation from the Heavenly Father, who "so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16). Salvation in Jesus is experienced through a radical turning away from sin and turning to God in repentance. This offer of salvation was also the first message preached by Jesus Christ as well. "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mt. 4:17).

In the Sacrament of Confession, the retreatants are convicted of their sin by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:8). They experience that their sins are forgiven by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:8). They believed in the power of the same Holy Spirit through the ministry of the Church (Jn. 20:22-23). They experience joy as they are given a share in the victory of Jesus over sin (Jn. 16:11).

From the resulting radical conversion, people are led to a total self-surrender, that results in an intimate union with Jesus in the Holy

Spirit, as experienced in the Eucharist. “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (Jn. 6:56). In this intimacy, the love of God is “poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5). The heart melting under this overwhelming outpouring of love opens up in turn to love and forgive everyone.

This intense experience of love heals all wounds and soothes all the strains in family relationships. The bond of marriage is renewed as the Sacrament of Grace is incorporated into the spousal relationship between Christ and His Church.

The charism of healing is exercised through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the sick. Healing is understood not in the narrow sense of bodily well-being, but as the love of God flowing into the brokenness of individuals to make them whole. The leadership given by the priests in preaching and the exercise of the sacraments reveals the importance of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. All the Charisms of the lay leaders such as in counselling, preaching, service and so on, are harmoniously blended and channelized through the Sacramental authority of the priests.

The retreat ends with the renewal of the Sacramental vows of baptism and a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation. This all-transforming experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus. “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This empowering of the Holy Spirit is accepted as a special grace, to withstand the temptations of the evil one and to defend and spread the faith by word and action confessing Jesus Christ as the only saviour of humankind.

The grace of these seven sacraments instituted by Christ as signs of salvation and entrusted to the Church, is experienced afresh by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the renewal of one’s Christian commitment. Today, Divine Retreat Centre is the largest Catholic retreat centre in the world. Since 1990, over 10 million pilgrims from all over the world have attended retreats here. Weekly retreats in seven languages are held non-stop every week of the year. It is truly an achievement made possible only by the grace of God.

b) *Evangelization through Media*

In response to the Second Vatican Council’s degree on ‘Inter Mirifica’ (Communication Media), the Vincentian Congregation uses all possible communication media for evangelization of the poor. Understanding that audio, video and modern electronic media are effective means of evangelization VC uses Media properly and effectively. Some of programmes conducted through the Media are the following:

Publications

Many books and booklets are published for deepening faith. In addition to this, there are also a few magazines. One among the most widely read a magazine is '**Vachanaolsavam**'. '**Divine Voice**' is the monthly magazine published by the Divine Retreat Centre. Its aim is to carry God's Words of forgiveness, love and healing to families worldwide.

Video Programmes: Divine TV Ministry

Jesus commissioned His Disciples to, "Go to the entire world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15). This vision – of bringing the light of the gospel and the comfort of Christ to the whole world – was entrusted to the Church. With the coming of the electronic media, this mission of the Church gains a whole new dimension – to reach every person and every home across the globe through television. This prophetic call has animated the Divine Retreat Centre to commit itself wholeheartedly to the proclamation of the gospel with **Divine TV** – the television wing of Divine Vision Network (DVN). It has programmes in three languages – Malayalam, English and Hindi.

Divine TV first went on air in the UK, Europe and the Middle East on December 24, 2008. This was quickly followed by the launch of **Divine Vision Network** in USA and Canada on May 25, 2009.

There is a great demand from the rest of the world to be able to watch Divine TV, the 24-hour commercial-free television channel of Divine Vision Network (DVN), which is part of Divine Retreat Centre ministry, the world's largest Catholic Retreat Centre. **DVN Online TV** was launched on October 4, 2009. Divine TV is now available on the internet in every country across the globe, at any time, every single day. **Divine Vision** reached Indian homes on November 20, 2011. **Divine Vision** programmes are being telecast through **Goodness TV**.

Divine Vision – as the Divine evangelization partner

The television media production wing of the Divine Retreat Centre – **Divine Vision** – has taken up the challenge to "Go and proclaim the Gospel to all Creation" (Mark 16:15). St. John Paul II, the late Holy Pope had said, "The electronic revolution opens up wonderful possibilities for spreading the gospel". Divine Vision was launched in 2002. It was his inspiration that urged us to take on the challenge to start a television ministry that has now blossomed into a 24-hour commercial free Catholic Gospel channel – **Divine Television**. The aim is to take the Word of God into the living rooms of all homes around the world. *As a non-profit Catholic television ministry, it is supported by free-will donations.*

Other Ministries

Upholding the charism of St. Vincent, the Congregation is organizing several programs and projects for the benefit of the most abandoned. The fundamental principle of our social and charitable activities is the social message of Jesus revealed in the Sacred Scriptures and imitated by our heavenly patron, St. Vincent de Paul. Such activities are not merely humanitarian, but are intended to bring people to the Kingdom of God. The Words of our Lord at the last judgment, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brethren you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40), inspires every Vincentian in this regard.

As part of our social and charitable activities we run Orphanages, Village Development Programs, Vocational Training Centres, Educational Institutions, Hospices for the old and sick and Welfare Institutions for the underprivileged. Specifically, two De Paul care centres are opened to accommodate the poor cancer patients: one centre (SSSMILE Village) is geared toward rehabilitation the '*akasaparavakal*' (*'birds of the air'*), and the other one, for the poor and chronically mentally ill, one for the Aids patients and several houses for the aged as well as poor children.

The educational institutions run by the Congregation maintain a Vincentian focus, making them affordable for the poor and ordinary people. Through this, we are fulfilling the duty of forming worthy children for the Church and responsible citizens for the state. Therefore, our educational institutions distinguish themselves by their spiritual, intellectual and cultural excellence. The Congregation is running many schools and educational institutions all over India, both in rural as well as urban areas, and one such institution in Africa. These institutions give a special focus on the character education dimension of the next generation.

Another important ministry that is derived from the Vincentian Charism is that of helping the diocesan clergy. This is actualized by conducting ongoing formation sessions for the diocesan clergy as well as by providing assistance in those parishes where there is shortage of priests. Some of our priests are rendering service in different parishes in India as well as in Europe, Africa, America and Australia. The Vincentian Congregation faithfully follows in the footsteps of St. Vincent de Paul by evangelizing the poor through mission and charity. The members try to remain faithful to the uniqueness of the Vincentian Charism. The leaders of the local church appreciate the Vincentian ministries because they contribute to the building up of the Church.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CM AND VC

Ever since the arrival of Spanish Vincentian Missionaries (CM) in India, the members of the Vincentian Congregation were seeking support and assistance from them. The Spanish Missionaries provided the initial formation. Even the first popular mission which was conducted in 1952 at Angamaly by the members of the Vincentian Congregation... that mission was done in collaboration with the Spanish Missionaries. Thereafter for years the collaboration between VC and CM was not strengthened sufficiently. Occasionally CM confreres were inviting retreat preachers from VC and vice versa. In fact, the VC Fathers continued to give new life to the Vincentian charism through popular missions and through retreat ministries.

Ever since Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM began to coordinate various branches of Vincentian Family in India, the relationship between CM and VC has been strengthened. There are attempts to undertake common projects both for mission and for charity. Indeed, the members of VC and CM constitute in India a formidable army of champions serving the poor and the underprivileged. The potential good they can do for the benefit of the poor in India is simply enormous!

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Presence of the Congregation of the Mission at Adamson-Ozanam University in Manila

Teodoro Barquín Franco, C.M.

Introduction

With various events, the Province of the Philippines celebrated the Fiftieth Anniversary of the presence of the Vincentian Community at Adamson University in Manila. The opening celebration took place in January 2014, and celebrations concluded in December, 50 years after the Congregation of the Mission signed the initial contract in December, 1964. There was a symposium to celebrate that event. During the symposium, significant events from the distinct periods of the history of the university were highlighted. Different presenters reflected on the past, the present and the future of this institution, including the author of this article, who participated in the beginning of this endeavor and who was involved in some of the discussions with regard to the implications of this new ministry for the Province. Therefore, this article will be limited to a discussion of those events related to the beginning of this ministry: that first period between the years 1964-1977.

Genesis of the celebration

In 2012, there had been a celebration in Manila to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity to the Philippines. On that occasion, there was a presentation of the various apostolic activities of the Daughters and the Vincentians since the time of their arrival. On the last day, there was a brief historical summary of what today constitutes one of the principal ministries of the Congregation of the Mission in the Philippines, the University of Adamson. The commitment that the Congregation made in 1964 seemed to be an abrupt break from the traditional ministry (the formation of the clergy) that the Congregation in the Philippines had developed in such a successful manner for more than one hundred years. The preparatory commission for this celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the University felt that it would be good to explain the reason for this change and at the same time to show that this new ministry was a faithful development of the Vincentian charism.

The Province of the Congregation of the Mission in the Philippines, the members of the university faculty, and the students asked for an explanation of this change and all that this meant for the Congregation of the Mission. Father Joaquin González (Visitor of the Province of Madrid, and responsible for sending personnel to the Philippines) and Father Teodoro Barquin (a member of the Provincial Council during this time) were invited by the Rector and the Board of Directors of the University. They provided much insight as they responded to the many questions that were raised by younger confreres, members of the faculty, and many students during an Open Forum as part of the symposium.

New vision for the future of the Congregation of the Mission in the Philippines

In 1958, a very significant change was made in the administration of the Province when Father Leandro Montañana was appointed Visitor. Because of the various successes he achieved as Visitor, he could be seen as one of the primary historical figures of the Congregation of the Mission in the Philippines. Today, the confreres in the Philippines realize that they are indebted to him. The historical event that the Congregation is celebrating this year is the result of his ministry. Father Montañana saw the need for a new vision and a new horizon for the future of the Congregation in that country. He also realized that for all of that to happen there was a need to make significant changes in the administration of the Province. He understood that those changes would demand much physical energy and a strong determination to confront the resistance and the objections to the proposed changes.

All of this would have to be done with prudent discretion, selecting activities and ministries that the Province should undertake. With the assistance of a new Provincial Council, Father Montañana, in light of the signs of the time, envisioned new perspectives for the future ministry of the Congregation of the Mission. At the same time, he was also aware of commitments the Province had entered into with the various Diocesan Bishops, including the formation of diocesan priests, which had always been viewed as a glorious ministry of the Congregation in the Philippines. The time, however, had come to look toward the future rather than the past.

Father Montañana, with the members of the new Council, established guidelines rooted in the Vincentian charism, guidelines that would give direction to the changes that were to be made in the administration of the Province, such as:

- Promotion of native vocations and establishing formation programs for those vocations;

- Reaching out to the lay Vincentians through the promotion of the principal branches of the Vincentian Family: the Vincentian Marian Youth Association, the AIC, the Miraculous Medal Association, and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul;
- In accord with this new vision for the future, a focus was placed on formation of youth, initially viewed as a primary apostolate of the Congregation their seminaries and schools.

The administration of a university could be considered as an opportune moment to accept a new Provincial commitment, one in which the Congregation would be able to continue to engage in a ministry that had been begun in the schools and the seminaries. This ministry is in accord with the charism of the Congregation. The Provinces in North America, where confreres have been engaged in the ministry of higher education for quite some time, affirmed this reality.

Preparatory steps to acquire the University for the Congregation of the Mission

The Adamson Family was the owner of the university; nevertheless, the buildings belonged to the Congregation of the Mission. In the 1940s, after the Japanese war, the university began to rent the buildings. The lease agreement ran out in December 1964, and as a result, the Adamson Family wanted to renew that agreement. With that purpose in mind, the Family asked for a meeting with the Congregation of the Mission and so Father Leandro Montañana represented the Province in those discussions. Father Montañana went to that meeting with a decision that had been confirmed and approved by the Provincial Council: *it was impossible to renew the lease agreement*. Two options were given to the owners of the university: leave that place and look for another site or negotiate the sale of the university; if an agreement could be reached the Congregation of the Mission was willing to buy the university. The second option, in case both parties could reach an agreement, would be a very difficult step for the Province. Father Montañana and his council would have to prove to the members of the Province that the acquisition of Adamson did not signify some type of institutional escape from the traditional ministries of the Congregation.

Since the acquisition of the university seemed to do just that, that is, seemed to break with the traditional and historical ministries of the Congregation (formation of the clergy), there was a need to clarify the continuity of the institutional apostolate in this new area of ministry, which was about to be accepted and undertaken. In a Provincial Assembly it would have to be demonstrated that the poor and the less favored members of society would have an important role in this new ministry.

Furthermore, it would have to be shown that in accepting this new ministry, the province was faithful to the Vincentian charism. Also, as the financial situation of the province was precarious, means would have to be found in order to purchase the university.

At that time, the Congregation had a plot of land that housed the provincial headquarters of the Philippines and other buildings that were leased to the university. Outside Manila, there was another plot of land where the apostolic school was located. The province had no income except that which the confreres received from religious services and its ministry in the seminary: fifty pesos a month for the rector, and twenty pesos a month for the professors. These revenues were not sufficient to cover the ordinary and necessary expenses of the province. To cover the costs of acquiring a university, other means had to be found. Fortunately, they had recourse to the provinces in the United States who generously came to their rescue. They provided a loan on very favorable conditions. The request for the acquisition of the university showed the importance of moving out into a new area of evangelization, in a direction that was distinct from anything that the Province had previously done. At that time, there were few bright prospects for continuing our traditional ministries.

The acquisition of the university included a series of conditions that had to be fulfilled. The President of the Board of Directors would be the Visitor of the Congregation of the Mission; two members of the Adamson family would have seats on the Board of Directors, which is a lifetime commitment of the Adamson family unless they resign or are removed for some legitimate reason. The executive president at the time of the sale would continue in that position. Three years later, on February 26, 1967, another change in the administration occurred: the Board of Directors elected Father Leandro Montañana as president of the university and the former president was given the title, president-emeritus. Because of that change total control of the administration and the management of the university fell upon the Congregation of the Mission, the Province of the Philippines.

Legal name of the University

From the time, that Adamson University was acquired there were many different opinions with regard to changing the name of the university. The name Adamson was derived from the founding family who came to the Philippines from Greece. Three members of this family were chemical engineers and soon after their arrival in the Philippines, they established a school of industrial chemistry. Research laboratories were set up in this school and those laboratories were highly accredited and were known as the best industrial chemistry centers in the country. Because of the renown that this center of education had acquired, the

National Ministry of Education in the Philippines decided to elevate its status and on February 5, 1941, officially conferred upon this institution the name, Adamson University.

Soon after acquiring this institution, the change of its name became a matter of great concern throughout the Province. Various reasons were set forth to change the name. First, the university had to be given a new name in order to point out the change that had occurred and that name had to encompass in some way the Vincentian charism. Thus, the Province would demonstrate in an external manner that this new ministry was not outside the competency of the Congregation of the Mission. Second, the Province had done the same thing when in 1960 it acquired the Colegio de López Jaena in Jaro; it was renamed “De Paul College”.

Father Leandro Montaña and his council were inclined to keep the name Adamson in order to communicate to the public that it continued as the same university that was esteemed and revered by the Filipino community as a highly qualified engineering center. In order to accommodate the various opinions, the Province agreed to keep the name “Adamson” but would give the name a Vincentian touch by adding the name “Ozanam” – thus Adamson-Ozanam Educational Institution, Inc. Today, that is the legal name of the university.

Why Ozanam was chosen to become part of the legal name of the University

All of us who are familiar with the name, Frederic Ozanam, agree that it is most appropriate that his name should be associated with this center of higher education that is administered by a Congregation that shares the Vincentian charism. A well-known scholar in Vincentian studies, in one of his works on Frederic Ozanam, affirmed that *the Conferences of the Vincent de Paul Society, groups that Ozanam established during the nineteenth century... these conferences were a lay vision of the Congregation of the Mission*. Today, Frederic Ozanam represents a powerful commitment to the Vincentian charism, to make the Church’s social doctrine a reality. As an apostle of charity and who followed the strategies of Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam is seen as one of the best contemporary interpreters of Vincentian spirituality. Therefore, to add his name to the official name of this Vincentian institution of higher education was most appropriate because it gave a Vincentian character to the university. That decision was made in light of the following reasons:

- Ozanam was an exemplary student at the University of Paris and during an age of rationalism was recognized as a defender of the faith;

- During the XIX century he made a significant contribution to the promotion of the lay character of the Church, something similar to what Vincent did during the XVII century;
- As a professor at Lyon and the Sorbonne, he was a defender of the truth;
- As a deep thinker and a man of action, Frederic can be viewed as a model for students with regard to their present and future commitment and also be a model for professors who are called to defend the dignity of the human person.

The selection of the name “Ozanam” provided the new center of higher education with a Vincentian character. Father Leandro Montañana, a great admirer of Frederic Ozanam, is rightly credited with having chosen that name. The generations that followed have expressed their gratitude for this wise move. In the different courses and congresses that have been organized by the university, the innovative spirit of Frederic Ozanam, who during the nineteenth century defended the church and opted for the poor and for youth, has been continued and given new life.

Expansion of the university campus and an increase in enrollment

The first two decades of the administration of the university were extremely difficult. The Board of Directors had to confront many different challenges: an increase in enrollment, which demanded an expansion of the facilities; better university standards; the search for qualified faculty members of the various schools of specialization; appointment of qualified Vincentians to important positions of responsibility; expansion of the university (more buildings); more stable financial base. When the Congregation acquired the university there were approximately 3,000 students. The campus and its buildings were limited in space – half the main building was occupied by the provincial community and the offices of the parish of San Marcelino. The financial situation of the Province was very precarious and, therefore, no thought was given to the necessary expansion of the campus and its buildings.

In 1965, however, the Marian Center, an effective instrument in Vincentian evangelization, constructed a building within the parish complex. This center had a twofold purpose: to spread devotion to Mary and to serve as a residence for the Vincentians who ministered at the university. As a result, the university was able to increase its classroom space, using the area that had been vacated by the members of the Vincentian community.

In the early 1970s the Provincial Council was presented with an opportunity to buy fifty hectares of land outside Manila. The offer was

very tempting because this would provide space for the much desired expansion of the university and the fact that this land was located outside the city presented many possibilities for the future of the university. Nevertheless, this offer was not accepted because there was still a large outstanding debt that had been incurred at the time of the acquisition of the university. Even though Father Montañana and his council felt that the price of the land was very reasonable (it could have been acquired at a very low cost), nevertheless in light of the financial situation of the province, it was viewed as too risky.

Golden years of the physical expansion of the university

When viewing the expansion of the facilities of the university there are two significant milestones. The first occurred in 1972 when the university acquired the building that today is known as the Cardinal Rufino Santos Building. This large building, which stands several stories high, belonged to the National Electric Company (Meralco) and is the present seat of the university's administration and the school of architecture. Two years later, in 1973, another property, adjacent to the university was acquired. There the life of Frederic Ozanam is remembered in a place that bears his name and is also the home of the school of engineering. The chemical laboratories that are famous throughout Asia for their research in the area of industrial chemistry are located in the same building.

The second milestone, which occurred in 1977, was viewed as more significant and transcendent with regard to the future of the university: the acquisition of the complex of buildings and land on which the school of Saint Teresa was located. It was a very profitable acquisition because it allowed for a greater expansion of the university: the complex was composed of 15,000m of land and five buildings. The cost of this property, its location and its prestige as a center of learning – all of these were seen as positive elements that favored the acquisition of that property. Because of the importance of this acquisition, the Province utilized all the available means in order to fulfill the terms of the contract. The owners of the school were the Sisters of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Mary.

In order to purchase this property, the Board of Directors sought the legal and financial assistance of the president of one of the nation's most prestigious accounting firms. The contract of sale was about to be signed when the president of a hospital (who wanted to obtain the buildings in order to convert them into a school of nursing), voiced his intention to use every means in order to purchase that property. Thus, the result of this was the doubling of the price that had been offered by the Congregation of the Mission. Cardinal Jaime Sin, at the request of the Vincentian Community (who were his formators in the

seminary at Jaro), intervened and explained why that property should be sold to the Congregation of the Mission:

The school of Saint Teresa is a prestigious Catholic school with a large number of students and an alumni association whose members have had a sound Christian formation. After graduation, they have continued to give witness to their faith as they establish good Christian families. From the time of its establishment, this school has engaged in an excellent ministry of evangelization through means of education. As this institution enters into a phase of change, it is obligatory to do everything possible so that this institution does not fall into the hands of new owners who are guided by ambition and personal gain. Under the administration and the leadership of the Congregation of the Mission, the original aims of the school will remain in place and will be reinforced with the seal of the Vincentian charism.

Epilogue

With the acquisition of that property, the university was now positioned and gifted with the material means to increase its enrollment to about 20,000 students, to better the quality of the various faculties, and to raise the standards throughout the university. This was a period of much success that was experienced in all areas of the university. When the school of Saint Teresa was acquired, new buildings were constructed, for example, the Father Montañana Center, which today houses the university library. Several other buildings were renovated, buildings which today house the school of pharmacy, the school of business administration, an auditorium, the chapel, a theatre, and an art gallery.

The progress that was accomplished during the period of 1964-1977 (the focus of this presentation for the first part of this symposium) and that continued in later years was due to the administration that followed this period. The material and formal progress of the university can be attributed to the vision, the courage, and the work that was accomplished by the members of the Congregation of the Mission, the various faculty members, the members of the distinct branches of the Vincentian Family, and all the employees of the university.

The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the presence of the Vincentian Community at the university is an appropriate moment to express our appreciation, gratitude, and admiration of all those persons who, through their ministry and dedication, have contributed to this progress. We mention here in a special way those confreres who followed the founder, Father Leandro Montañana and served as president: Father Rolando Delagoza, Father Jaime Belita and Father Gregory Bañaga. All of those confreres, with their unique gifts, gave a Vincentian character to the university and advanced the forward progress

of that institution. In order to perpetuate that work and the work of the Adamson family (the founders of the university), the building that houses the museum was dedicated and blessed on August 25. There, in a very artistic manner, one is able to view much material that presents a history of the university from the time of its establishment.

Translated from Spanish by CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M.

“A Warm Heart, Open to All”: Remembering Fr. Emile Victor Bieler: Missionary and Formator

Armada Riyanto, C.M.

The following is the homily delivered at the Mass of Christian Burial for Fr. Emile Victor Bieler, C.M., a life-long missionary, seminary formator, and a member of the Province of Indonesia.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The day, Wednesday, November 19, 2014, when Fr. Victor Bieler CM passed away should be viewed as that of a time for faith, despite being a sad moment for all of us. Fr. Emile Victor Bieler has now returned to the Source of life, to God whom he was longed for during his whole life. A friend calls him “a light shining for a while that is now going back to the Source of light itself.” Fr. Emile’s friends and I myself were all in tears upon hearing his holy departure for eternity. And yet, in the light of our faith, his departure to God is telling us His immense love in the life of Fr. Emile Victor Bieler.

Although Fr. Emile was 85 years old, yet he was never seen as elderly and aging. He showed us how profound faith in God and philosophical understanding could rejuvenate life and physical performance. Being teacher (or better yet “professor”) to almost all in the Province, he presented himself as a friend with a warm heart open to all. One still remembers his strong hand and firm fingers when shaking hands. It does not just tell us about his physically good stamina, but it also portends of the warmth of his presence and welcoming way.

Fr. Bieler taught almost every subject we were in school to learn: Biblical theology, English, Latin, Patristics, the Social Doctrine of the Church, philosophy, as well as the practical things of life and community. Yet, above all, he taught us not by intellectual eloquence but by exemplary love, perseverance, and diligence. He could travel from the seriousness in sophisticated philosophy to a surprising sense of humor by cracking a joke without losing firmness and assertiveness as a leader. It is not surprising when recalling how he once became rector of two different theological-philosophical institutions at the same time. It happened in the late 1980s. He was about to leave for Papua after

his sabbatical semester. Being known as a man with a beautiful gift for leadership, Fr. Emile was immediately installed as rector of the so-called “Fajar Timur” school of philosophy and theology at Abepura, in West Papua New Guinea (Irian Jaya). But when he was selected as Rector in Papua New Guinea, Fr. Bieler was also still rector at the “Widya Sasana” School of Philosophy and Theology in Malang. He might well be known as the first person in the Congregation who broke the record by holding such a responsibility as rector of two institutions of philosophy and theology at the same time for about a year!

This record does not fit any personal ambition of our confrere, Fr. Bieler. He remained a simple Vincentian. Yes, simplicity was one of the Vincentian virtues, which he loved so much. He suggested the word “Kepolosan” in Indonesian language for that virtue. This word (“Kepolosan”) means more or less nothing to reserve for oneself or giving the wholeness of oneself to God alone. Indeed EVB was the man who accomplished his job with the best effort possible, as he could.

Since he diligently and tirelessly involved himself in priestly formation throughout his life, he became a person whom we, students, have often seen as a role model, someone we wished to emulate. What I mean is that he has been an inspiration to us. Many, many priests, seminarians, Daughters of Charity, Sisters and laity were fortunate to have him in their formation years. We know he touched many hearts of priests and seminarians of Indonesia as well as the Solomon Islands with his simple presence.

In Indonesia, the students came to seminary from different religious congregations and dioceses, whereas in the Solomon Islands, Fr. Bieler’s students were from three dioceses: Honiara, Gizo, and Auki. His love and everything he possessed were meant to work for formation. The Holy Name of Mary Seminary in the Solomon Islands was his last, forever love. He even showed his willingness to come again to the Solomon Islands after recovering from illness in the hospital.

In the words of Bishop Adrian Smith (of Honiara, Solomon Islands), Fr. Bieler was one of the “Founding Fathers” of the mission in the Solomon Islands. He said: “Fr. Victor was the first Vincentian to come to the Solomon Islands when we were seeking help to run our Seminary. He was most encouraging in those early days when everything seemed so uncertain. That is his special gift – he was a person who encouraged others. He was with us when we got the green light from Rome to proceed forward. I am sure the seminarians who knew him will always remember him as a Father who cared for them and who was interested in them. I want you to know that in our three dioceses we will be remembering Father Victor at the Altar of the Lord. His life story is one great story; he was a man of such great experiences and has made a wonderful contribution to building up Holy Name of Mary

Inter-Diocesan Seminary in Solomon Islands. He was part of the foundation, and so I am sure that what he did to develop this mission will remain as a testimony of the man he is in the work of other Vincentians” (*Taken from an e-mail of Bishop Adrian Smith to the Visitor of Indonesia*).

Some tributes posted on the “Facebook” page for Holy Name of Mary Seminary are quite telling in their words of condolence: “I just want to add that Fr. Victor Bieler C.M., was one of the ‘founding fathers’ of Holy Name of Mary Seminary along with the Bishops. He put in a huge effort to bring the Vincentians to Solomon Islands to run the seminary and then gave his last years to this ministry. Thank you, Victor. Rest in Peace, Victor.” “Fr. Victor passed away today in Indonesia. He is a saint in my opinion. If only we had more like him!”

When we invited him to share his mission of the Solomon Islands to the students of Widya Sasana School of Philosophy and Theology at Malang a few years ago, he encouraged each one of us to go to the mission by saying strongly: “Dear students, as you know, I am working in a part of the Pacific Islands called the ‘Solomon Islands’. I would like to encourage all of you to pay attention to the people of these remote Islands. The Church has often forgotten those people; even God himself sometimes may seem to have forgotten those living in remote places there... So, let us not forget them, let’s go there evangelizing those people.” What a love of mission! What a beautiful love!

How do we understand such a wonderful love that Fr. Bieler had for missionary work? I believe that such a beautiful love does not emerge instantly; instead, it comes gradually and has strongly been nurtured in deep faith in God.

Fr. Emile Victor Bieler was born in Surabaya, Indonesia on June 13, 1929. In the time of the Indonesian revolution for independence in 1945, he was sixteen years old. He was in Surabaya with his dear father, a man of Swiss heritage. Despite being European, his father was not exterminated as an Internee by the Japanese troops. He was able to stay alive simply because he was an expert in financial matters. The Japanese employed him to serve in financial field for “PETA” (Pembela Tanah Air), the famous name of the revolutionary movement for Independence from the Dutch. But when the Allies defeated the Japanese in World War II, there was a very chaotic situation in Surabaya. The Indonesian revolutionaries sent Fr. Bieler and his father to jail in Kalisosok, Surabaya. There in prison father and son suffered from Indonesian injustice.

Why did the Indonesians put him in prison while he was helping them in their struggle to gain independence? We are not sure. When the Bieler family transferred to Holland in 1949, Fr. Bieler entered the seminary of the Congregation of the Mission. Knowing that his son might be sent back to Indonesia after ordination, his father began to

disagree with his decision to enter a missionary community. “How is it that Emile Victor is returning to Indonesia to serve and to dedicate his life to those who put him in prison a few years ago?” As a result, Fr. Bieler’s relationship with his father became strained. His classmate, lifelong friend, and confrere, Fr. Wiel Bellemakers CM, said that his return to Indonesia was a “very difficult decision” of which he admired mostly the fearless and flawless love Emile Victor Bieler exhibited for the mission. In other words, it was the profound love of EVB for Indonesians, regardless of the unpleasant experiences in the prison of Kalisosok, Surabaya. As one can imagine, being in prison during war-time creates a daily uncertainty in life. Fr. Bieler’s love of God transcended such an obstacle.

When he arrived in Indonesia, he was immediately assigned to Saint Vincent’s seminary in Garum. He taught philosophy to the students who prepared themselves for theology. From Garum he travelled to Eastwood, Australia, accompanying those in theology. Then, he was called back to Kediri to initiate a new building for the major seminary for the Vincentian seminarians.

The Second Vatican Council was the very pivotal point of revision for the system of priestly education throughout the Church and Indonesia was no exception. Fr. Bieler was among the formators who promoted the so-called “solid collaboration” to establish major seminaries in Indonesia. He worked together with the Carmelite Fathers to prepare a curriculum for philosophy and theology. This “working together” was the providential start of a beautiful collaboration that helped bring the Widya Sasana School of Philosophy and Theology into being. Of course, Fr. Bieler was not alone in establishing such a big enterprise as a school of philosophy and theology. But he was one of the main founders in this beautiful fruit of collaboration between the Carmelites and the Vincentians that brought about the Widya Sasana School of Philosophy and Theology in Malang, where almost one third of the dioceses in Indonesia and fifteen religious congregations have sent their candidates to study philosophy and theology.

Recalling the events of Fr. Bieler’s life may seem to be endless, but I must include my own personal story. The other fruitful period in his life that needs to be mentioned is when Father Richard McCullen C.M., then Superior General, summoned him from the ‘jungle’ of Papua New Guinea to Rome to be Secretary General and then Assistant General in time of Fr. Robert Maloney C.M. Rome was the start of Fr. Bieler’s international ministerial journey. From both Fathers McCullen and Maloney, we heard that Fr. Bieler was a true man of collaboration. He tirelessly dedicated his ability in both fixing practical problems in the house and setting up a vision of the future of the larger Congregation of the Mission. He was the man behind the scene; together with Fr. Robert Maloney, he promoted a shift that led to a new understand-

ing of mission in the Congregation which included a cultural sensitivity he had long championed in doing mission work with the poor. He involved himself in setting up regular meetings for formators in the provinces in Asia-Pacific, Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere, and urged the Congregation to deal with interreligious dialogue, especially with Islam. Several confreres from different continents gladly shared their encounter with Fr. Bieler as a man who inspired them with the virtues of simplicity and practical ability, as well as always providing a warm welcome.

Fr. Robert Maloney CM, former Superior General, remembered Fr. Emile Victor Bieler CM as follows: "He was a great Vincentian and missionary. I was privileged to live with him, pray with him, and work with him for so many years in Rome. We travelled together to China, to Japan, to Australia, to the Solomons, to Istanbul, to Austria, to Holland, to Indonesia, of course, and to many other places. He was a wise counsellor and a tireless worker. He had great practical gifts and endless patience. We used to work together taking computers apart and putting them back together! When we were in Taiwan, we bought new, advanced computer parts and then installed them when we got back to Rome. In his heart, he always remained a missionary. I remember how fondly he spoke of his years in Irian Jaya [West Papua]. Then, after Rome, even though he was no longer young, he served so generously in the Solomons. Priestly formation had a huge place in his life" (*Fr. Robert Maloney's letter to Visitor of Indonesia, Fr. Robertus Wijanarko CM*).

Dear brothers and sisters, let me now say a few last words directly to Emile Victor Bieler:

"Dear Father Bieler, we just want to express our deep gratitude to you for your ceaseless and tireless dedication to priestly formation. We do accompany your last journey toward eternity with our prayers and masses. Eternity simply means 'encountering God' as you taught us in your philosophy class. When you reach there, when you meet Him whom you loved and longed for so much, we hope that you not forget us in your prayers. Please insert us in your prayers that all of us may be as tireless as you were to be faithful disciples of Jesus; that each one of us may diligently continue your beautiful legacies and steps; and that God may bless us always in all our days."

BIBLIOGRAPHIC COMMENT

Mystic Leadership: Reflections on Leadership and the Vincentians Virtues

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LIDERAZGO MÍSTICO

Editorial La Milagrosa, 2015

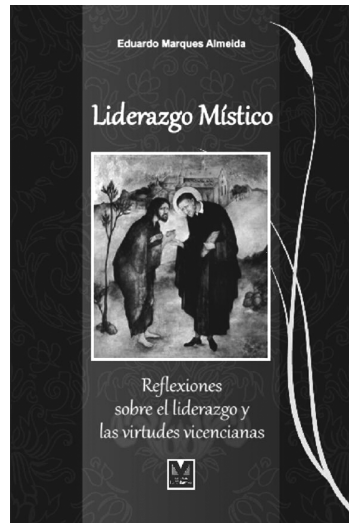
The Prologue of this book was written by the Superior General, Gregory Gay and the author reflects upon the person of a leader, more specifically, “a mystical and virtuous” leader. Those reflections are developed from the perspective of the cultivation of virtue.

Such a leader is not focused on him/herself but attempts to transform reality through service and therefore a Vincentian leader attempts to transform reality through service on behalf of those who are poor.

If one, however, wishes to transform reality one must also be concerned about self-transformation through contemplative prayer which in turn enables the individual to serve and to dream. It is also in this manner that individuals begin to realize that values are much more important than one’s own self-interest.

Confronted with the attempts of “the dictatorship of relativity” to change the world, these mystical leaders assimilate the virtues of Christ in the same way that Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac and Frederic Ozanam and so many others did.

The book is divided into ten chapters. The first nine chapters develop the theoretical principles and elementary definitions and then in the last chapter the author presents a plan for the self-formation of the mystical leader. The book is filled with concrete examples and enlight-



ening commentaries that explain the principles that the author is highlighting.

The whole book is enveloped in a gospel and Vincentian aurora since the purpose of the author is to develop Vincentian leaders through their relationship with God and with reality, a relationship that is developed and deepened from the perspective of God's identification with the poor.

This process of formation is rooted in the cultivation of the cardinal, the theological, and the Vincentian virtues which ought to be the foundation that grounds the activity of the mystical leader.

Relationships are seen as a dynamic component of the learning process and of one's ability to adapt. As a result of this array of virtues, self-esteem is bound up with humility (we are not dealing with a superman but with a weak human person who always needs grace).

Thus, the author presents a process of personal growth that is developed through service. In this process one discovers the grandeur of the Creator, one begins to live a fuller life and one also begins to develop an ability to influence others.

All of this is done in order to be able to change both structures and persons.

Translated by CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M.