

2 From the Superior General

Letter for the Closing of the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism

Rome, 25 January 2018

“ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE FIFTH CENTURY
OF THE VINCENTIAN CHARISM”

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens” (Ephesians 1:3).

To all the members of the Vincentian Family

Dear sisters and brothers in Saint Vincent,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be always with us!

As we officially end, on this 25 January 2018, the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, with exuberant hearts we can repeat Saint Paul’s words written at the beginning of his letter to the Ephesians. Heaven has given us blessings on many different levels: on the personal level, on the level of each branch, and on the level of the Vincentian Family as a whole. May this experience remain for us a source to keep deepening, developing, and extending the Vincentian Charism to produce ever more new fruits.

During the Jubilee year, the Vincentian Family organized so many wonderful initiatives, projects, and celebrations on the local, national, and international levels. On the international level of the whole Vincentian Family, we organized:

- a) The International Vincentian Family Symposium in Rome from 12-15 October 2017.

The day after the closing of the Symposium, the synthesis committee gathered to review the input of the participants from the six language groups. The reflections, suggestions, ideas, and plans will be shared soon with the worldwide Vincentian Family with the goal to keep building, sharing, watering, and growing the seeds sown during the Symposium.

- b) The Vincentian Family Global Initiative on Homelessness (Vincentian Family Homeless Alliance).

This project of the worldwide Vincentian Family, officially launched during the Symposium in Rome on 14 October 2017, will help us deepen our collaboration in order to respond more effectively to persons without a place to live.

- c) The Vincentian Film Festival, called “Finding Vince 400,” also officially launched during the Symposium in Rome on 14 October 2017, will be held from 18-21 October 2018 in Castel Gandolfo.

The preparatory committee soon will provide more details through the different media: webpages, social media, YouTube, printed media, news agencies, and other media. The Film Festival hopes to be an instrument to help “Globalize Charity.” Participation in the Festival is open to anyone, belonging or not to the Vincentian Family, from any country. The Festival will have three competitions: 1) for persons up

to 18 years of age who will participate by submitting poems, drawings, writings; 2) for those who will submit screenplays for possible future films; 3) for those who will submit short films. The unifying theme is the life and charism of Saint Vincent de Paul.

- d) The Pilgrimage of the relic of the heart of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The pilgrimage of other relics will continue throughout Europe and, God willing, later on to other continents.

As we now begin the fifth century of the Vincentian Charism, I would like to suggest as first steps on this path the following two initiatives:

- a. To renew and deepen our relationship with the Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God of the Vincentian Family around the world as models of the Vincentian charism and spirituality by taking the following steps:
1. Reviving the veneration and invocation of the Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God by starting from their place of origin, where they were born, lived, served, died, where they are buried or their relics are kept, through different initiatives to deepen our relationship with them. Renewing that closeness with them on a local level will encourage and help to spread veneration and prayer through their intercession with renewed strength to other parts of the world.
 2. Organizing meetings to make them known to those who do not know them, or do not know them well; organizing pilgrimages; developing prayer services for children, youth, and adults; printing new booklets; preparing PowerPoint presentations; using different media.

3. Praying incessantly to ask Jesus for the grace that all the Blessed and Servants of God or possible new candidates for sainthood be canonized by the Church. Engaging on the level of the specific branch of the Vincentian Family to which she or he belonged, as well as on the level of the whole Vincentian Family, to put all our efforts into the process of getting official recognition on the part of the Church.

It is about linking our lives, efforts, service, projects, initiatives, plans, and common dreams as closely as possible to those who have gone before us and are now in heaven interceding for us. They will respond if we ask for their intercession before God. They are our role models for how to live the Vincentian charism and Vincentian spirituality. It may be easier to present to the people those Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God of recent history. Nonetheless, all of them speak or can speak to children, youth, adults, all people of today, at this time in history as role models of holiness. They are also one of the resources for new vocations to consecrated life or active lay involvement in the different branches of the Vincentian Family, in the mission of Jesus, in the mission of the Church.

- b. To renew and deepen the “Culture of Vocations.”

When we look for reasons for the decline in vocations to the consecrated life, in active participation of youth and adults in the life of the Church, and in faith in some parts of the world, we often hear the following reasons: consumerism, materialism, individualism, egoism, systematic laicization of society, etc. We can call this an “Anti-Culture of Vocations.”

I would like to invite us to unite all our efforts at showing the children, youth, and adults of today, who are caught in this “Anti-Culture of Vocations,” the beauty, attractiveness, and life-giving meaning of responding with a resounding “Yes” to Jesus’s call! I call us to demonstrate to the children, youth, and adults that it is normal to respond affirmatively, with a loud “Yes,” to Jesus’s invitation and not abnormal. We must strive together for a renewed Culture of Vocations.

Our call in life goes back to the source of our existence, for God had us in mind even before the foundation of the world, before our conception.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you” (Jeremiah 1:5).

“He chose us in him, before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4).

“I will make you a light to the nations” (Isaiah 49:6).

The Culture of Vocations means an environment in which all people can discover and rediscover their reason for being on this earth, the meaning of life, the mission they are called to fulfill, the call they are invited to answer. The Culture of Vocations puts Jesus in first place, no matter if it is as a layperson or a consecrated person.

We carry in our hearts a deep desire to pass on to future generations the charism and spirituality we have been given. Prayers for new vocations are brought incessantly before God, along with so many initiatives and efforts. The beginning of the fifth century of the Vincentian Charism gives us another opportunity to make renewed efforts toward

a Culture of Vocations. This is also very much in tune with the theme of this year's Synod of Bishops, which will take place in October in Rome, "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment."

Putting all in the hands of Providence, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, the Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God of the Vincentian Family, we repeat the encouraging word to each other, the word Saint Vincent de Paul used when he was asked what else could he do in life, and he responded "more."

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General