

# Opening Rite of the 4th Centennial Celebrations

## Clarifying notes:

1. *The opening rite of the Holy Door is usually done at the beginning of a jubilee year or time. Here we propose it as the beginning of a time of preparation for the celebration of the 4th Centenary of the Foundation of the CM; and the commemoration of the first four missionaries being “associated” to the CM.*
2. *What you have before you is the **Opening Rite for the Celebration of the 4<sup>th</sup> Centenary of the Foundation of the Congregation of the Mission to be presided by the Superior General on April 17, 2023 at the Leonine College in Rome.***

*In case you prefer to do the Rite in your Province, Vice-Province, Region or International Mission, you will find that some of the parts may not be applicable to you. Kindly adjust the Rite according to your own circumstances.*

## FIRST STATION

### GREETING

*When the song is finished, the celebrant stands and faces the people, and says:*

**C. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

P. Amen.

*Then, extending his hands, he greets the people:*

**C. The Lord, who comes to save us, be with you.**

P. And with your spirit.

*OR*

**C. The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the merciful love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

P. And with your spirit

### SONG OF PRAISE

*You can recite the following formula or sing one of the psalms proposed below)*

**C. (Cf. Ps 135, 4) Blessed are you Father: for only You have done great wonders.**

P. For your love is everlasting.

**C. (Cf. Ap 1, 5c) Blessed are you the only begotten Son: because with Your blood you have freed us from our sins.**

P. For your love is everlasting.

**C. (Cf. Pentecostal sequence) Blessed be the Holy Spirit: because You are comforter of the soul and sweet relief.**

P. For your love is everlasting.

### **Psalms or equivalent songs.**

✚ Psalm 117: Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his mercy is everlasting.

✚ Psalm 135: Sing to God

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## **PROCLAMATION**

**L. Dear brothers and sisters: With our eyes fixed on Jesus, who shows us the merciful love of the Father,** I will open the door of \_\_\_\_\_, a sign that we are beginning a *"time of preparation in the spirit"*, to give thanks for that memorable day--April 17, 1625-- the day when the noble Gondi family, in the presence of two official notaries, signed a contract donating *"to Mr. Vincent de Paul, and his first "associates": Fathers Antonio Portail, M. Belin, Francis de Coudray and John de la Salle,* a financial grant to found and maintain a group of ecclesiastics who would be permanently engaged in the evangelization of the rural poor.

In 1925, three hundred years after that day, and in response to the exhortation of Fr. Verdier, Superior General that year, the centenary of the founding of the CM was gratefully remembered for the first time with a solemn triduum, graced by the presence of some ecclesiastical dignitaries, in this same chapel of the Leonian College in Rome. As a continuation of that initiative, we shall highlight on **"April 17, 2025"**, the 4th centenary of the Foundation of the Congregation of the Mission, and in the following year, **2026**, we shall remember *"the association"* of the first four missionaries who joined God's project through Saint Vincent.

Today, **April 17, 2023**, we begin a process of conversion and revitalization to get ready to celebrate with dignity the founding of the *"Little Company"*, a gift from God to his Church and to the world. Celebrating is remembering, *"remembering"* is bringing to the heart -more than to the mind-, that spirit full of apostolic zeal that moved the Gondi family and Vincent de Paul to found *"the little Company"*. The Spirit is urging us to *"walk together"* towards a new Pentecost. The phrase *"Put on the spirit of Jesus Christ"* will be the motto behind the related group of activities to be carried out during the next three years (2023-2026). The slogan is to *"return to Jesus Christ"*, our Center, Rule and Model, and to follow him, in a special way, as disciples in evangelizing the poor. We aim to achieve a lofty goal, before which we cannot be discouraged or fall behind. We have to advance in the hope of *"returning to the spirit"* of our roots. It is our most sincere wish to prepare ourselves for this celebration by examining ourselves: *are we being "what we have to be" today?* and, in continuous discernment, to decide *how to respond to God's will* for us in this new era that we have begun.

Let us place the Congregation of the Mission in the hands of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His Holy Spirit, so that the Holy Trinity may lead us to “*re-incarnate*” Jesus Christ, evangelizer of the poor, in the world in which we live.

**May our Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, under the title of Our Lady of Evangelization, intercede for the revitalization of the apostolic zeal of the servants of God among the poor.**

### **C. Let us pray:**

**Oh God, origin of true freedom and you want that all men constitute a single people free from all slavery, You that now you bless us with this time of preparation to commemorate the 4th Centenary of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission, grant us that when crossing this holy door our hearts also open, so that in a continuous conversion we may be free from everything that prevents us from putting on Jesus Christ, so that full of apostolic zeal we give ourselves more and more to the evangelization of the poor. May this portion of your people “walk together and in communion” so as to be presented to the world as a universal sacrament of salvation, and manifest and perform before men the mystery of your merciful love.**

*Join your hands together.* **Through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

P. Amen.

## **Reading**

### **The Foundational Contract of the Congregation of the Mission**

*DOCUMENT 99 (COSTE X, Pages 237-241) [59, XIII. 197-202]*

### **17 April 1625**

Present in person before the undersigned notaries and attorneys of our the King at the Châtelet of Paris were the noble and powerful Lord Messire Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigny, Marquis des Iles-d'Or, Chevalier of the Orders of His Majesty, Councillor in his councils, Captain of fifty men-at-arms of his guards, his Lieutenant General on the Seas of the Levant, and General of the Galleys of France; together with his wife, the noble and powerful Lady François-Marguerite de Silly, Baronne de Montmirail and other places, etc., authorized by the said Lord her husband for the implementation of this document. They willingly, freely, and voluntarily have unanimously and jointly stated and declared that some years ago God had given them the desire to

have Him honored on their own estates and in other places, and they reflected that, since His Divine Goodness has provided in His infinite mercy for the spiritual needs of the inhabitants of the towns of this kingdom through a large number of Doctors and religious, who preach, catechize, and exhort them and preserve them in the spirit of devotion, only the poor people of the rural areas remain, as it were, abandoned.

They thought, therefore, that this situation could be remedied to a certain extent through the pious association of some priests recognized for their knowledge, piety, and ability, who would be willing to renounce the conveniences of the said towns as well as all benefices, offices, and dignities of the Church, so that, in accord with the wishes of the Prelates, each within the limits of his own diocese, they could devote themselves entirely and exclusively to the salvation of the poor common people. They would go from village to village, at the expense of their common purse, to preach, instruct, exhort, and catechize those poor people and encourage all of them to make a good general confession of their whole past life, without accepting for this a remuneration of any kind or manner whatsoever, so as to distribute freely the gifts they have freely received from the generous hand of God.

And to accomplish this, the Lord and Lady, in gratitude for the goods and graces they have received and receive daily from God's Divine Majesty, and to contribute their part to His ardent desire for the salvation of poor souls, to honor the mystery of the Incarnation and the life and death of Jesus Christ, for love of His holy Mother, and also to try to obtain the grace of living the rest of their days so well that they and their family may hope to attain eternal glory, they have resolved to constitute themselves as patrons and founders of this good work. For this purpose the Lord and Lady, by this document, have donated and given as alms and do donate and give as alms the sum of forty-five thousand livres. Of this amount there has now been handed over in cash to Messire Vincent de Paul, priest of the Dax diocese and Licentiate in Canon Law, thirty-seven thousand livres, counted and reckoned in the presence of the undersigned notaries, in sixteen teston coins, demi-francs, and douzains, all valid legal tender. With regard to the remaining eight thousand livres, the Lord and Lady have promised and do promise to pay and hand them over to the above-mentioned M. de Paul, in this city of Paris, by one year from today, mortgaging each and every one of their goods now and in the future, in accord with the following clauses and duties:

*A moment of silence. Next, the celebrant, moves to be at the front of the procession which is to begin in order to lead it... And he says:*

**C. Let us begin our journey in the name of Christ: He is the way that leads us in this time of grace and mercy.**

**PROCESSION** (*The choir begins the litany*)

**Litany to Saint Vincent de Paul**

<p>God the Merciful Father God the Son, sacrament of love God the Holy Spirit, source of charity Holy Trinity, model of fraternity and communion</p>	<p><i>Have Mercy on us</i></p>
<p>Saint Vincent, adorer of the Father: Saint Vincent, follower of Jesus Christ who was poor and evangelizer of the poor: Saint Vincent, always attentive to the illumination of the Holy Spirit: Saint Vincent, faithful follower of the will of God: Saint Vincent, imitator of the Virgin of Nazareth: Saint Vincent, chosen as an instrument of God's charity: Saint Vincent, universal patron of works of charity: Saint Vincent, restorer of the Church: Saint Vincent, who made a clear option for the poor: Saint Vincent, who loved God with all his being: Saint Vincent, who worked to make the gospel effective: Saint Vincent, organizer of the apostolate of the laity: Saint Vincent, founder of the Congregation of the Mission: Saint Vincent, friend and counselor of Saint Louise de Marillac: Saint Vincent, co-founder of the Daughters of Charity: Saint Vincent, restorer of the clergy and of the consecrated <u>life</u> : Saint Vincent, multiplier of vocations and pastoral agents: Saint Vincent, who read the signs of the times as the word of God: Saint Vincent, who taught us to be available for the mission of evangelization: Saint Vincent, great exemplar of Charity: Saint Vincent, messenger of God's tenderness and mercy:</p>	<p><i>Pray for us</i></p>

Saint Vincent, example of the Christian life: Saint Vincent, model of dynamic hope: Saint Vincent, mirror of love and social justice:	
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**C. Merciful and just Father, who gave us Jesus Christ the evangelizer of the poor, grant us by the power of the Holy Spirit to be worthy children and followers of Saint Vincent de Paul, pouring out our lives evangelizing the poor. We ask you through Jesus Christ who was poor and missionary of the poor. Amen.**

## OPENING OF THE HOLY DOOR AND SECOND STATION

**In the \_\_\_\_\_.**

*The Celebrant says:*

**C. Open the doors of justice,**

**P. We will enter to give thanks to the Lord.**

**C. This is the gate of the Lord:**

**P. Through her we enter to obtain mercy and forgiveness.**

*The celebrant knocks on the doors saying:*

**C. Look, Jerusalem, it is written that all will come to you, and that all nations will go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the sanctuary of the God of Jacob.**

**Rejoice, Jerusalem, for the holy people of God are advancing towards you, they are now entering within your walls!**

*The Celebrant pushes and opens the doors of the Church. As the doors open, the following psalm is recited:*

**Psalm 23** *(Can be chanted or recited)*

***Ant.* Lift up your heads, O gates, be lifted, you ancient portals: that the king of glory may enter!**

**L. Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in war. The LORD of hosts, He is the king of glory.**

## OPENING PRAYER

**Lord, God and our Father, who instilled in your blessed priest Vincent de Paul the inspiration to found a Congregation of missionaries, so that, clothed in the spirit of Jesus Christ and practicing his apostolic virtues, they may dedicate themselves to the evangelization of the poor and the formation of the clergy: we beg you, encouraged by his example, they continue the mission of your Son in the world, and to love what he loved and practice what he taught. Through our Lord Jesus Christ...**

## PROCESSION OF THE WORD *(to the altar)*

*The Celebrant takes the Gospel book and shows it to the community saying:*

**C. Christ Jesus, Gospel of the Father, guide and accompany us always...**

*In silence, as a sign of respect and adoration of the Word, the Celebrant continues to lead the procession to the altar, showing the Gospel book. When he arrives at the altar, he places it in its designated place.*

## FIRST READING *From the Prophet Isaiah: (Is. 61,1-3)*

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
Because the LORD anointed me  
To bring good news to the humble;  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim release to captives  
And freedom to prisoners;  
To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn,  
To give those who mourn *in* Zion,  
a garland instead of ashes,  
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,

The cloak of praise instead of a disheartened spirit.  
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,  
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

**The Word of the Lord.**

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (*Ps 95, 1-2a 2b-3, 7-8a: 10*)

**T. Tell your wonders to all nations**

*L. Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord all the earth;  
sing to the Lord, bless his name . . . A.*

*L. Proclaim your victory day after day, tell the peoples your glory,  
his wonders to all nations. . . A.*

*L. Families of the peoples, hail the Lord, hail the glory and power of the Lord, hail  
the glory of the name of the Lord. . . A.*

*L. Say to the peoples: "The Lord is king, He strengthens the earth, and it will not  
move: He governs the peoples with righteousness" . . . A.*

**ALLELUIA** (*Luke 10.3.10*)

**P. (Singing) Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia . . .**

*L. "Go and proclaim the Gospel: The Kingdom of Heaven is near."*

**GOSPEL:** (*the mission of the seventy two*)

**A Reading of the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke: (*Lk 10, 1-12*)**

Now after this the Lord appointed seventy-two others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. And He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go; behold, I am sending you out like lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no money belt, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one along the way. And whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace *be* to this house.' And if a man of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him; but if not, it will return to

you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they provide; for the laborer is deserving of his wages. Do not move from house to house. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is served to you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' I say to you, it will be more tolerable on that day for Sodom than for that city. **The Gospel of the Lord.**

## HOMILY

### PRESENTATION OF SYMBOLS

Sandals:

Cross and Gospel:

Rope with a knot:

### INTERCESSIONS

**C. Animated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, evangelizer of the poor; trusting in the intercession of Saint Vincent de Paul, tireless preacher of the Gospel and faithful servant of the poor; and in communion with all the missionary saints who went before us, let us present our petitions to the Lord:**

A. Hear us, O Lord

- ✚ **For the universal Church:** for Pope Francis, for the bishops and priests, for all the People of God, missionaries by nature, who continue to announce the Gospel in the world: so that they may be strengthened by the spirit of Jesus Christ who animated the life, example and doctrine of Saint Vincent de Paul our founder. We pray to the Lord.
- ✚ **For the Congregation of the Mission,** founded to follow Jesus Christ, evangelizer of the poor (C.1): so that every missionary may be clothed daily with the spirit of the one who called them to be tireless servants of the Gospel and of the poor, and thus, formed in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ, go and form priests, seminarians, consecrated persons,

and lay people who participate in the charism that the Spirit has poured out among us. We pray to the Lord.

✚ **For all the inhabitants of the world**, called by the Father to be his “**children**”, and summoned by Jesus Christ to be “**brothers**” who love each other as He has loved us: so that we may all collaborate to transform the world from within, and with the Gospel, build a more just and fraternal society. We pray to the Lord.

✚ **For the poor: those without work and so many times exploited, marginalized and excluded**; for the people who suffer different types of abuse; for the sick, for men, women, young people and children who are migrants or living on the streets, drug addicts, criminals, prisoners, homeless people... who have grown in number after the pandemic and are experiencing growing difficulties in leading their lives with dignity: so that the missionaries may love them, and care for them with the strength of their arms and the sweat of their brow, and that the poor may have a new and revitalizing encounter with Jesus Christ. We pray to the Lord.

✚ **For all those who suffer the consequences** of violence, war, social discrimination and martyrdom; for the multitude of innocents who suffer dehumanization and rejection in body and in spirit: so that we learn to recognize their dignity as children of God and walk together in the construction of a more humane and fraternal world. We pray to the Lord.

✚ **For the world of young people**: a world that often hides the full meaning of life, but whose hearts are still open, tender and sensitive: so that they may always commit themselves in favor of Life, continue longing for the advent of a new world, and discover in our missionary lifestyle, the inspiration they need, that glimmer of hope that leads them to love you and follow you without reservation. We pray to the Lord.

✚ **For our senior confreres**: living witnesses of the detachment and generosity of a life consecrated to serving God in their brothers, preferably the most needy: so that they may receive the respect and affection they deserve from us; and imitating their example, inspire us continue in the path of following Jesus Christ. We pray to the Lord.

**C. Holy Father: You who, through the incarnation and mission of your Son, knew our human nature well, and despite knowing that we are “the foolish thing in the world” have wanted to choose us to announce the Good News to the poor and serve you in the most needy, listen to our prayer and grant us that, accepting our possibilities and our weaknesses, we can, with Your grace, fully clothe ourselves with Your Son, in the footsteps of Saint Vincent who loved you and followed you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**C. With confidence in being children of God, aware of our need of each other to walk together in the evangelization of the poor, let us turn to our Father who full of love and mercy, by praying together:**

**A. Our Father....**

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

**Oh Holy Father, who continuously feed us with the Bread of Life and the Wine of Salvation, inspire us by the spirit of Your Son, and following the example of Saint Vincent de Paul and of the first and holy missionaries of the Congregation of the Mission, grant us the necessary strength to continue the mission of announcing the Gospel to the poor. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.**

### **SOLEMN BLESSING**

**C. Our Lord and Father, we implore your merciful love to free us from all evil, that we may be likened to your beloved Son whose life comes from you, so that revived by your grace, we may worthily celebrate the 4th Centenary of the Congregation of the Mission. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**A. Amen.**

**C. And may the Blessing of Almighty God, Father, + Son and Holy Spirit, descend on all of you and remain with you always.**

**A. Amen.**

### **FINAL SONG**

Choose any Marian Song or song of that speaks of the mercy of God, such as some song that uses Psalm 117 or song of praise of God for his creation.

### **Cconcluding Prayer**

Oh, distinguished apostle of charity, glorious Saint Vincent de Paul, who extended your zeal for the salvation of others and to remedy their needs; Ask from the divine Apostle of our souls, Christ Jesus, to give us a truly animated

spirit of charity, that will lead us to surrender unreservedly to the practice of works of mercy, in order to be of the number of those of whom it is written: "Blessed are the merciful because they will obtain mercy". So be it. Amen.