

FEATURE:

The Vincentian Missionary Vocation

Presentation

by Alfredo Becerra Vázquez, C.M.

Editor of "Vincentiana"

We present to you this issue dedicated to *"The Vincentian Missionary Vocation."* The authors represent various cultures, settings, and experiences. Some of the articles describe the religious vocation, or the consecrated life, still others are directly Vincentian. We thank the authors for sharing their reflections with us. Enjoy the reading!

We begin with a provocative article, *"Religious Life and Cultural Challenges,"* by **Antônio Aparecida da Silva, fdp.** He writes of various challenges for religious life in the area of formation. When these challenges are taken up in formation they help to instill a sense of identity within a Congregation. We are invited to open our hearts and minds to consider inculturation and/or the multicultural approach because it is a better way to work in the service of the poor.

Fernando Macías Fernández, C.M., presents his article *"Quality of Life in the Vincentian Missionary Vocation,"* in which he shares a reflection on the importance of the quality of one's personal and communal life. The quality of life is related to faithfulness in living the vocation. It is this characteristic of life that guarantees the gift of self on behalf of the poor and the marginalized. They have a right to discover in us, Vincentian missionaries, men who are happy, enthusiastic, optimistic, and committed to them. He writes with a style that is both colloquial and concrete in order to help us understand the importance of improving the quality of our common life.

José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M., Minister General of the Order, offers the following reflection: "*Option for the Whole Life*," in which he takes up the problematic aspect of perseverance among members in commitment to religious or consecrated life. This article sheds light on the various sources for this problem. The author writes of a few characteristics of our times and of its young people. He presents a profile of our young religious and names the challenges for pastoral work in promoting vocations, as well as the implications for initial and ongoing formation.

What motivates the Vincentian missionary? Why might I want to be a Vincentian? What are the possible inconsistencies of the life which characterize a missionary who abandons the Congregation of the Mission? These are some of the questions that are taken up by **Limus Umoren, C.M.**, in his article entitled, "*The Phenomenon of Departure from the Congregation from a Psychological Point of View: Intrapsychic Dynamics*." The author discusses the Vincentian vocation as a religious calling and the value that it embodies. At the center of his presentation he gives concrete examples so that the reader will better understand the meaning of his arguments.

Finally, **Alfredo Becerra Vázquez, C.M.**, in his article, "*Living Evangelical Celibacy in Times of Crisis*," proposes that we assume the challenge of chastity as "the capacity for directing the sexual instinct for a life of service," and of integrating and harmonizing sexuality in the development of persons. The author refers to the present cultural context with regard to human sexuality (that goes from valuing sexuality to libertinism). This cultural tendency has repercussions upon the living of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom. For this reason, it is necessary to discern our identity as belonging to God and at the service of others. We are chosen for the service of love. Let us deepen some of the positive dimensions of celibacy: the charismatic dimension, the free option and the love of communion and self-giving, its prophetic dimension, its identification with the service of the poorest people of our time.

Dear readers, there remain several other elements for our reflection that we should bear in mind. Permit me to propose a few questions in this regard: What are my motivations for service as a Vincentian? How do we live our Vincentian vocation today? Am I aware of the inconsistencies surrounding my vocation? If so, do I seek means to resolve them? Am I concerned with keeping alive the flame of my vocation? How are we living co-responsibly in our Vincentian missionary vocation? Do we live our evangelical commitment to celibacy in an integrated manner which is positive, joyful, enthusiastic, and which disposes us to the service of the poorest? How do we live out our commitment to the Congregation? Are we building communities that encourage the members to grow in

their vocation? What is our attitude toward a priest or confrere who is going through a time crisis?

Brothers, we carry our treasure in earthen vessels and for that reason we need to maintain a deep and solid spiritual foundation. Celibacy cannot be lived fully and in the perfection of life if it lacks what one would call its mystical dimension, that is, an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Moreover, celibacy presupposes that the love of Christ comes before any other love. Because we speak of a relationship, it is necessary to maintain it through a personal asceticism founded on discipline, abundant prayer, the reception of the sacraments, an intimacy with Jesus Christ, and, finally, contact with and direct service of the poor.

(GREGORY J. SEMENIUK, C.M., translator)