



# Vincentian Solidarity Office

## June 2015 Bulletin



### The Congregation of the Mission meets the Vincentian Endowment Challenge!

*The Vincentian Solidarity Office is happy to have Fr. Gregory Gay, C.M. share this good news with you.*

Dear Confreres and Friends of the Congregation of the Mission,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be forever in our hearts!

During my tenure as Superior General, I have been blessed to visit every province, vice-province, and mission of our Congregation. My visits have exposed me to the widely disparate cultures, and geographic, political, and economic environs of our confreres. And yet, no matter where I have been around the world, I have found a striking commonality: a deep commitment to the charism of our founder that threads us together across vast distances, and over many generations. Everywhere in our Community, I find men who live simple lives, work untiringly, pray regularly, and serve the poor lovingly. Indeed, one of the greatest benefits of serving as Superior General, has been to see so clearly, that we are all St. Vincent's progeny, and we are all brothers.

St. Vincent's reference to our Congregation as the *Little Company* originally connoted its humble stature, relatively small membership, and modest pastoral impact. By the grace of God, we have grown much on those measures over the centuries. But from my well-travelled perspective of our now global Community, I find we are evermore a *Little Company* because of the close ties that flow from our shared charism. Our mutual response to the Vincentian Endowment Challenge—a call to raise \$5 million USD to equally match a grant from the Franz Foundation, in building patrimony funds for nine of our developing provinces and certain organizations within the Vincentian Family—is further manifestation of our solidarity as a Community. I joyfully announce, that the contributions collected and pledged for the Vincentian Endowment Challenge have now surpassed \$5 million! We have met the challenge grant, but equally important, is *how* we have done so. All of the sources of the contributions and pledges to meet the challenge grant have been "Vincentian."

First, all nine provinces that are benefitting from the Vincentian Endowment Challenge have themselves made or pledged contributions, even though all are hard pressed financially. In effect, their confreres are investing in missionaries that will come after them to serve the poor in their regions. Then many other provinces contributed major funds to the project. Some of these provinces are also located in developing regions or have missions in such places. Some had previously contributed millions of dollars over the years in building patrimony funds for other provinces not included in the Vincentian Endowment Challenge.

Many confreres around the world also gave generously from their personal resources. A few confreres handed over their family inheritances for the Patrimony Funds. Members of one province located in a developing region agreed to donate part of their monthly stipends, although most have great personal need for them. A number of confreres obtained contributions from their families and friends. Some confreres asked the people they serve to contribute, such as in parishes, schools, and Vincentian universities, or people they had served previously in these and other works. Contributions also came from our former members and seminarians, and their families and friends.

I thank all for their generosity, and for being part of our *Little Company*!

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General



## A Day Care Center in Bahir Dar

In 2009, our confreres in Ethiopia began a day care program for Negede Woyito children. The Negede Woyito are a deeply impoverished, and marginalized minority ethnic group clustered in three villages on Lake Tana outside the city of Bahir Dar, in the Amhara Region of northwest Ethiopia. The children of the Negede Woyito suffer from malnutrition and preventable diseases. Only 25% of the school age children actually attend school; only 10% eventually obtain a secondary education. Most Negede Woyito adults are illiterate and employed in low paying, menial labor. Because of the destitution of their families, the Negede Woyito children have been vulnerable to abandonment and trafficking.



Our confreres' day care center provided Negede Woyito children with an early childhood (kindergarten) education to prepare them for primary school, as well as two daily meals. The program quickly expanded and added a health clinic providing vaccinations, vitamins, and other basic health care services. It also provided tutoring to help primary school students achieve and stay in school. The day care center program was held in a rented house, and quickly reached its full capacity. Many more Negede Woyito families wished to enroll their children in the program, but could not do so because there was no space to accommodate them. There was pressing need to construct a larger, permanent facility.



*Franco Ladavas visits with a Negede Woyito family*

Fortunately, Mr. Franco Ladavas took a special interest in the Negede Woyito people. Mr. Ladavas and his wife, Silvana, established a charitable organization in Italy called the Amici di Marco Onlus, in honor of their deceased son. The Amici di Marco Onlus had collaborated previously with the Vincentian Solidarity Office (VSO) on the Hebo youth center project with our confreres in Eritrea. Franco and Silvana Ladavas--who are truly Vincentians and friends of our Congregation--worked with the Ethiopian Province to plan a new day care center facility for the Negede Woyito children. Our Ethiopian Province asked the VSO to assist in raising funds for the project.



*Site plan for the Dawn of Hope Day Care Center*

The new Dawn of Hope Day Care Center in Bahir Dar became a reality with the completion of its construction in November of 2014. Most of the funding for the construction of the center and its first year operating costs came from the Amici di Marco Onlus, the Vincentian Solidarity Fund, the Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, and the Diocese of Haarlem-

Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Some monies were also raised by students at Vandenberg Middle School in the United States to help purchase playground equipment for the new center.



*The completed Dawn of Hope Day Care Center*

The new Dawn of Hope Day Care Center includes four buildings totaling 1,315 square meters of space, situated on a fenced complex of 4,200 square meters with playing areas. One building has three offices, a clinic, library, and toilets. A second and third building, which have the same floor plan, each have four classrooms and toilet blocks. The largest building has a kitchen, eating area, kindergarten resting room, and maintenance room. The Dawn of Hope Day Care center has the capacity to serve 250 kindergarten age children and 80 primary school students, most of whom come from Negede Woyito families.



*Kindergarten children in the new day care center*

The Dawn of Hope Day Care Center facility also houses other social services organized by our

Ethiopian confreres for the Negede Woyito people. Space in the center is used for instructional support for the parents and other adults, including instruction in sex education, prenatal health, motherhood, personal and household hygiene, infant care and feeding, nutrition, and self-esteem. The new day care center also includes a laboratory-training room to train Negede Woyito women as community health care workers and a computer training center.

Part of the administrative space of the Dawn of Hope Day Care Center is being used to coordinate a micro-credit program. This program promotes cottage enterprises among Negede Woyito women, such as sewing, selling clothing items and raising farm animals.



*Children on the day care center playground*

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**Our goal:** To assist the Congregation of the Mission with obtaining funds for its evangelization and service of the poor.

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