



Vinfam India



News Bulletin of the Vincentian Family in India

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MESSAGE

Evangelii Gaudium, the apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis is highly appreciated by everyone. Many dioceses and institutions have already conducted and still continue through seminars, study classes, etc., on the theme elaborated in the document. Perhaps this is one of the most read apostolic exhortations by the Catholics. It has been also translated into many vernacular languages. Many cherish to make deeper studies and explore the possibilities of its implication. As Vincentians, we should have a special admiration of this document as it highlights much of Vincentian Spirit, *evangelization of the poor*.

The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus; thus begins the Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium", by which Pope Francis develops the theme of the proclamation of the Gospel in the contemporary world, drawn from among other sources, the contribution of the work of the Synod held in the Vatican from 7 to 28 October 2012 on the theme "The new evangelization for the transmission of the faith". Pope Francis sets forth a vision for giving the entire Church, at every level, a missionary thrust. First, Pope Francis calls for renewal and rethinking the way every person and every institution live their faith, and focus their energies.

Pope Francis sees the Christian life as being based on knowing and experiencing God's love, mercy and salvation offered to all through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Evangelization programs and catechesis must be designed to help people return to the basic knowledge and experience, and help them understand Church's teaching in the light of God having revealing Himself as loving and merciful.

Pope Francis says that the heart of the Christian moral message is "love for one another", which must motivate Christians to share the Gospel, help the poor (the marginalized and abandoned), and work for social justice and equality. For the construction of a society "in peace, justice and fraternity" he indicates four principles: "Time is greater than space" means working "slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results". "Unity prevails over conflict" means "diversified and life-giving unity". "Realities are more important than ideas" means avoiding "reducing politics or faith to rhetoric". "The whole is greater than the part" means bringing together "globalization and localization".

He warns of "spiritual worldliness" which leads apparently good Catholics to be concerned almost exclusively with power or appearances or judging others rather than recognizing their own sin and reaching out to others with the same mercy God offers them. The Pope finally highlights Mary not only as a model of faith and fidelity, but as a strong woman and mother who shared many of the joys and sorrows facing people today and, therefore, understands the challenges they face. The Exhortation concludes with a prayer to Mary, "Mother of Evangelization".

In the seventeenth century, St. Vincent viewed similar challenges in the Church of France. Most of the Christian faithful were thrown into the ghettos of spiritual and material miseries. It was not because Church of France lacked clerics or institutions or structures that caused the deplorable state of the Christian faithful but there were no appropriate measures to proclaim the Word of God. The evangelization works lacked "new in its ardour, methods, and in its expressions".

St. Vincent had a dream of a new way of evangelizing the poor. First and foremost he realized the importance of conversion and renewal in his own life. It was in 1617 he took a firm decision to consecrate his entire life in dedication to God and to the poor. He profusely experienced the mercy and forgiveness of God. The evangelization programs and catechesis were designed to help the rural people return to the basic knowledge and experience of the merciful God. His various programs were "new in its ardour, methods, and in its expressions". In fact, the "newness" of the "new evangelization" lies in enthusiasm and strategies which St. Vincent would call them zeal and creative love.

According to St. Vincent's writings and actions, mission and charity are two parallels, but complementary ways the Church travels through the road to evangelization. St. Vincent therefore, united the mission of the Church with the love of God and poor, and had seen them indissolubly united.

Taking into consideration of the steady growth of the poor, - the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous people, the elderly (who are increasingly isolated and abandoned), migrants, the victims of trafficking and new forms of slavery, - it is not possible for Vincentians to be insensitive. Following the paths of St. Vincent, other Saints of our Vincentian Family, we can adequately respond to the call of Pope Francis.

Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil, CM
National Coordinator, VFI

NEWS – NATION



Participants in the 5th National Seminar of the Vincentian Family in India held at St. Vincent's Seminary, Hallehalli, Bangalore

1. Seminar: Social Dimensions of Vincentian Charism

The fifth Formation Programme for the members of the Vincentian Family was held at St. Vincent's Seminary, Hallehalli, Bangalore from May 1 to 5, 2014. There were 32 participants from various branches of the VFI. The theme of the programme was: "Social Dimensions of Vincentian Charism". The following were the topics and the resource persons who dealt with:

1. Social Teachings of the Bible : Bishop Simon Kaipuram CM
2. St. Vincent and the poor of his time: Sr. Rose Chirayil DC
3. Social Teachings of the Church: Sr. Roselyn SCN
4. Relevance of Vincent's Outlook on service of the poor to day: Rev. Fr. George Vattakuzhiyil VC
5. Vincentian Quiz: Sr. Maria DC

Rt. Rev. Msgr. Simon Kaipuram CM, the bishop of Balasore presided over the inaugural Eucharistic celebrations and the inaugural address was delivered by Sr. Rose Kidengen DC the Visitatrice of South Indian Province. She underlined the relevance of the theme as well. The participants highly appreciated the input sessions and actively participated in the workshop. On the fourth day, the participants went for an outing to Kengari and had the dinner at Kengari, the formation house of VC fathers. After thanking Fr. Varghese Pudussery VC and his community VC fathers at Kengari, the participants returned to the venue. On the fifth day there was a quiz competition on the life and mission of St. Vincent de Paul. Those who bagged first, second and third prizes were offered to the respective winners.

Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM, the National Coordinator summarized the theme. As it follows:

I. Why is the theme?

1. As a follow up of the seminar on systemic change
2. To know the mind of the Church on social teachings - "The best kept Secret in the Church"
3. To know that Social teachings are also "essential part of the Catholic faith"
4. To reemphasis on Vincentian Charism
5. To give a brief idea on different outlook that we should take into consideration
6. Explore the possibilities of collaboration for common action

II. Biblical Perspective

Four main principles of Biblical Social Teaching:

1. Human Dignity: Every Human being is created in the

image and likeness of God.

2. Solidarity: Two illustrations of solidarity- from the story of Ruth and Good Samaritan.
3. Subsidiarity: It is for respect by larger set-ups for the freedom of the smaller set-ups.
4. Stewardship: Men and women are the custodians and care-takers of the goods of creation.

III. Ecclesial Perspective

Seven principles of Church's Social Teaching:

1. The Life and Dignity of the Human Person
2. The Call to Family, Community, and Participation
3. Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person
4. Option for the Poor
5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
6. Solidarity
7. Care for God's Creation

IV. St. Vincent's Approach

St. Vincent's vision on the social dimensions of the Church: Church is

1. People of God (Clichy 1613) - Promotion of human dignity
2. Church of the poor (Folleville 1617 January 25) - poor has a special place in the church
3. Open Church (good Samaritan- Chatillon 1617 August) - Solidarity
4. Ad Gentes - Missionary (Madagascar 1648)- Mission
5. servant of the world (service to the poor) - Charity
6. Participatory Church (the role of lay people both men and women)- Collaboration and Networking

V. Our Approach

Present urgent needs:

1. Promotion of human dignity: marginalized, illiteracy, inequality etc.
2. Prevention of environmental degradation: pollution, deforestation, population growth etc.
3. Networking: NGOs, collaboration with agencies of similar goal, VFI
4. Promotion of religious harmony
5. Relief and rehabilitation: Natural and man made disasters and calamities
6. Checking the growth of anti social elements
7. Checking the price rise

VI. As Vincentians what can we do?

1. Animation and creation of awareness among the people regarding their rights
2. Know the realities and organize ways to overcome them
3. Taking Vincent as our role model
4. Adapting his methods
5. People led process of development: we need to be only the catalysts
6. Checking the flow of wealth from poor to rich, from village to cities

Conclusion

To create a new heaven and a new earth, to transform the world, to make all valleys straight, to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives, new sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, let us join our hands together as members of one big family - Vincentian Family.

Bro. Sebastian Philip, President of Pathanamthitta Central Council of SSVP proposed the vote of thanks. His thanks was a special to Sr. Rose Kidengen DC, Visitatrice of South Indian Province and her sisters who made all the necessary arrangements and facilities to conduct the seminar. He also extended thanks to all the resource personnel for their brain storming input sessions.

2. Seminar: "Wise Asset management, Planning and Writing of Grant Proposals":

The Congregation of the Mission is organizing a four day workshop on "Wise Asset Management, Planning and Writing of Grant proposals". The resource persons for this workshop are Fr. Robert Maloney CM, Fr. Joe Augustino CM and Sr. Marge Clifford DC. It is open to all the branches

of the Vincentian Family and this workshop will be a further way for the Vincentian Family in India to collaborate, work together and walk side by side with those we serve as they seek to emerge from poverty. Since it deals more on the administration of temporal goods, the participants are to be preferably those on the leadership team, Treasures, School bursars, Finance committee members, Fund raisers etc. It will be conducted in two different places.

The first workshop: **It is meant for all those who work in North India.** The venue of the workshop is at St. Vincent's Retreat Centre, Gopalpur-on-Sea, Odisha. It begins on September 30, 2014 morning and ends on October 03, 2014 evening. (Arrival on September 29 evening and departure on October 4 morning). The contact persons are: Fr. Jose Nazhianpara (E-mail: jnazhianpara@hotmail.com; Mobile Phone: 09437207853) and Fr. Babu Oonnukallinkel (E-mail: bbsbbscm@gmail.com; Mobile phone: 09437060034). Those who intend to participate in this workshop should inform the above mentioned contact persons latest by July 15, 2014 .

The second: It is meant for all those who work in South India. The venue of the workshop is at Priest Home, Belwady, Mysore. The workshop begins on October 6, 2014 morning and ends on the evening of October 9, 2014 evening. The contact persons are: Fr. Davis Kachappilly CM (Mob. No. 09449628126, e-mail: daviskcm@yahoo.co.in); Fr. Biju Scaria CM (Mob. No: 09731430044, e-mail: bijuscariacm@yahoo.co.in); and Fr. Roy Kochappilly CM (Mob. No: 09449279860, e-mail: roykochacm@gmail.com). Those who intend to participate in this workshop should inform the above mentioned contact persons latest by August 10, 2014.

NEWS - VARIOUS BRANCHES

1. SSVP Brain Storming Programme for the SSVP in Odisha



Participants in the workshop for the office bearers of SSVP in Odisha held at St. Vincent's Retreat Centre, Gopalpur-on-Sea (Odisha)

Formation Programme: In view of strengthening and activating the SSVP in Odisha, a "Training cum Capacity Building Programme" was organized by Sr. Gwendolene Menzies, SSVP the Regional Coordinator, North East Region. The programme was held at St. Vincent's Retreat Centre, Gopalpur-on-Sea on 1st and 2nd June, 2014. The programme was meant for the Presidents, secretaries and treasures of Central Councils and Area Councils in Odisha. Accordingly, 44 leaders from 15 Area Councils of the three Central Councils participated in the

programme. Bro. V. Rajeswara Rao, Chief Editor REACHOUT and Bro. John Baptist Behera, Extension Officer for North and North East Regions attended the seminar and shared their valuable ideas on different works of SSVP. The resource person who played the key role in guiding and conducting the programme was Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM, the National Coordinator of the Vincentian Family in India. The topic for the seminar was, "SSVP: Its Vision and Mission". The members were enlightened with the subject. On the final day, Rt. Rev. Dr. Sarat Chandra Nayak, DD, Bishop of Berhampur Diocese offered a special Mass. During the Homily, Bishop Sarat exhorted the participants to be authentic witnesses in witnessing Vincentian Charism. After the Holy Eucharistic celebrations, the participants made an evaluation of the presence and works of SSVP in Odisha. The hurdles in exercising Vincentian activities were shared freely by the members and remedies were also drawn up. Action Plan consisted of a short term and long term plan. The main areas of concern are: Relationship among the members and with

others especially with the Hierarchy, proper communication, Intellectual empowerment, spiritual empowerment, leadership, transparency, local fund raising, expansion and the manner of evaluation. All the members resolved to follow it with maximum sincerity and effort. The vote of thanks was proposed by Bro. Pascal Guru SSVP. He thanked all especially to Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM, the resource of person, Sr. Gwendolene Menzies, the Regional Coordinator of Eastern Region, Bro. Rajeswar Rao, the Chief Editor of REACHOUT, Bro. John Baptist Behera, the Extension Officer and to Rev. Fr. Jose Edathil CM, Director of the Retreat Centre, Gopalpur for the accommodation and food and other amenities provided. At the end, Sr. Menzies expressed her whole hearted support to empower the SSVP in Odisha. She also assured the continued support and guidance of the National President, Bro. V. M. J. Balaswamy.

Sr. Gwendolene Menzies SSVP

OUR VINCENTIAN SAINTS & BLESSEDS

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774 - 1821)



Elizabeth Ann Bayley, one of two daughters of a prominent Episcopal family, was born in New York on August 28, 1774. She was a charming little girl, small-boned and dainty, with great brown eyes. Having lost her

mother at the age of three, she was deeply attached to her physician father and used to sit beside her schoolroom window watching for him on the street. When he appeared, she would slip out quickly and run for a kiss.

Beautiful, vivacious, fluent in French, a fine musician, and an accomplished horse-woman, she grew up and became a popular guest at parties and balls. Long afterward she wrote of all this as quite harmless, except for distractions at night prayers and the bother of fussing over dresses. Small wonder young William Seton fell head over heels in love with her. She returned his love adoringly and they were married, surely to live happily ever after.

It began felicitously enough in a gracious home on Wall Street; William busy at his family's shipping business, Elizabeth with the beginnings of a family. Anna Maria was born, then young Willy, and then came a thin thread of worry in the form of William's ill health. With the death of his father, their fortunes began to decline. William was tormented by visions of debtor's prison, while Elizabeth was certain that God would help them to survive. "Troubles always create a great exertion of my mind," she wrote, "and give it a force to which at other times it is incapable... I think the greatest happiness of this life is to be released from the cares of what is called the world."

In two and a half years, they were bankrupt. Elizabeth spent that Christmas watching the front door to keep out the seizure officer. The following summer she and the children stayed with her father, who was health officer for the Port of New York on Staten Island. When she saw the babies of newly arrived Irish immigrants starving at their mothers' breasts, she begged her physician father to let her nurse some of them since she was weaning her fourth child, but he refused. By summer's end, he too was a victim of the yellow fever epidemic, and Elizabeth was grief-stricken. More and more she turned to the Scriptures and the spiritual life, and in May of 1802 she wrote in a letter that her soul was "sensibly convinced of an entire surrender of itself and all its faculties to God." Then in 1803, the doctor suggested a sea journey for William's health. Against Elizabeth's better judgment they set sail for

Italy to visit their friends, the Felicchi family. To pay for the voyage, she sold the last of her possessions—silver, vases, pictures, all probably inherited from her father. The voyage was pleasant, but arriving at Leghorn they were quarantined in a stone tower on a cane outside the city because of the yellow fever epidemic in New York. There she endured for forty days the cruelest suffering she was ever to know, possibly the key to all that happened during the rest of her life. She wept, then reproached herself for behaving as though God were not present. She tended the racked patient, now coughing blood; amused Anna Maria, who had come with them, with stories and games; and held little prayer services. When the cold numbed them beyond bearing, she and Anna Maria skipped rope. William died two days after Christmas in Pisa, at the age of thirty-seven. Only the laundress would help the young widow to lay out his body.

While waiting to return to America, Elizabeth attended the churches of her Italian friends where she was deeply impressed by the Catholic belief in the real presence. If this teaching about the Blessed Sacrament had been held in the Episcopal church in New York at the time, Elizabeth Seton's story might have been very different, for this doctrine was at the very heart of her conversion. Returning to New York, poor now and living upstairs in a little house supplied by friends, the news of her interest in the church stirred up consternation on all sides. She agonized with indecision about it until finally, on March 14, 1805, she became a Roman Catholic.

Several plans to support her family failed, and finally she opened a boardinghouse for schoolboys; but when her sister-in-law, Cecelia Seton, became a Roman Catholic also, her angry supporters withdrew. Hearing of her need, the president of St. Mary's College in Baltimore offered her a residence with a teaching position in that city. She accepted and left New York for good on June 8, 1808. In March of 1809, she pronounced her vows before Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore, was given some property in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and in June she, her three daughters, her sisters-in-law, Cecelia and Harriet Seton, and four young women who had joined them, began what was to become the American foundation of the Sisters of Charity. For special occasions they wore black dresses with shoulder capes, a simple white bonnet tied under the chin (like Elizabeth's mourning dress); and for everyday they wore whatever else they had. Their temporary abode provided four rooms, two cots, mattresses on the floor under a leaky roof where in winter snow sifted down over them. Vegetables, now and then a bit of salt

pork or buttermilk, and a beverage called carrot coffee was their fare—all flavored with that great zest for survival which had become a habit with Elizabeth. When they moved to their unfinished permanent home they were invaded by fleas which had infested the horsehair for the plaster. Finally the home was completed and they had "an elegant little chapel, 30 cells, an infirmary, refectory, parlor, school, and workroom."

In 1811 Mother Seton adopted the rules and constitution of St. Vincent de Paul, with some modifications, and the institution, having received the sanction of the highest ecclesiastical authority, became a religious order. Afterward a group of buildings, embracing a residence for the Sisters, a novitiate, a boarding-school for young girls, a school for poor children, and an orphan asylum, was erected.

In 1814 Mother Seton sent a colony of Sisters to Philadelphia to take charge of the orphan asylum. In 1817, in response to another application from New York, another body came to that city. At her death there were more than twenty communities of Sisters of Charity, conducting free schools, orphanages, boarding-schools, and hospitals, in the states of Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Delaware, Massachusetts, Virginia, Missouri, and Louisiana, and in the District of Columbia. Although, according to the constitution of her order, no one could be elected to the office of mother-superior for more than two terms successively, an exception was made in her favor by the unanimous desire of her companions, and she held the office during life.

Elizabeth Seton died slowly and painfully of the tuberculosis which had stricken all her family. At the last she was sustained on nothing but a little port wine. She had written to her best friend not long before, "I'll be wild Betsy to the last." The night of her death, January 4, 1821, she began the prayers for the dying herself, and one of the sisters, knowing that she loved French, prayed the Gloria and the Magnificat in French with her. The spirited young woman, who had wanted only to marry a handsome man, be a happy wife, and raise a pretty family, had had adventures beyond her wildest dreams. Loving by nature, she grew in faith and hope because of trial, not in spite of it. And with each trial God revealed resources, strength, and courage she did not know she possessed.

She was beatified by Pope John XXIII on March 17, 1963 and canonized by Pope Paul VI in September 1975 at New York.

SPONSOR

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