

Vinfam India

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Message

Misericordiae Vultus (The Face of Mercy) and Vincentian Family

If there is one word that has characterized the Pontificate of Pope Francis, it is the word 'Mercy'. His Holiness never ceases to speak on the Mercy of God. From the very inception into Papacy, all his words and deeds have been centering on the Mercy of God. Pope Francis reminds that Church, at this time of historical change, is called to offer more evident signs of God's presence and closeness. Church need to be vigilant and to reawaken to see what is essential. This is a time for the Church to rediscover the meaning of the mission entrusted to her by the Lord: to be a sign and an instrument of the Father's Mercy (Jn 20: 21-23). Merciful Jesus calls us today much more than ever for a revolution of tenderness in our attitudes and approaches. In fact, Pope Francis himself is trying to model this revolution in his actions, in his words, in his gaze, etc., which captured the imagination of Christians and Non-Christians alike.

The Vatican reporter Andrea Tornielli uncovers the secret of Pope Francis' deep love for the Mercy of God in the recently published book, "The Name of God is Mercy". He enumerates one of the touching experiences of Pope Francis' teenage years, when Pope Francis had his first experience of the Mercy of God. Pope Francis says, "I think of Father Carlos Duarte Ibarra, the confessor I met in my parish church on September 21, 1953, the day the Church celebrates the feast of St. Mathew, the apostle and the evangelist. I was seventeen years old. On confessing myself to him, I felt welcomed by the mercy of God...Father Ibarra died the following year. I still remember how when I got home, after his funeral and burial, I felt as though I had been abandoned. And I cried a lot that night, really a lot, and hid in my room...why because, I had lost a person who helped me to experience the mercy of God". Pope Francis was moved by the interpretation as how Jesus called Mathew (Mt. 9:9) - *miserando atque eligendo* (pitying him, he called), an expression which eventually chosen as his Episcopal motto.

In order to reiterate the faithful that they have to imitate Jesus who is the face of the merciful Father, Pope Francis has called this year as Year of Mercy. It was formally opened on 8th of December 2015. The motto of the year is "Merciful

like the Father" reminds the faithful and the Church to be merciful. Moreover, in order to experience this mercy, Pope Francis also established this year as an extraordinary year of Jubilee. This year will run till 20th of November 2016, on the feast day of Christ the King.

Pope Francis develops three themes in this document. First of all, he elaborates the theological understanding of God's mercy, explaining the role of mercy in the life of people and of the Church, who are both beneficiaries and witnesses of God's mercy in the world. Therefore, Pope Francis accentuates that wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident, and wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy. Secondly, Pope Francis offers practical ways of live well the Holy Year such as to take up the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy with joy and generosity. And thirdly, Pope Francis focuses his attention on the issues of peace and justice and calls everyone to create a favorable atmosphere in the world to promote them.

In the seventeenth century the scenario of the poor in France was indescribable which made the lives of the poor deplorable. St. Vincent de Paul vowed to serve those poor and the needy. There were no areas of the poor where he has not attempted to bring apt remedy. It was mercy as a motivating factor behind each of the charitable works of St. Vincent de Paul. This is equally true in the case of all founders of the various branches of the Vincentian Family. All of them have understood well both sides of the mercy: to be beneficiary as well as to be witnesses of mercy.

The call of the Church as well as the call to be Vincentian today demands us to be 'merciful like the Father'. The situation of the poor in our country is in no way different from the time in which our founders lived. Let us replicate what they have done for the empowerment of the poor. In order to change the lives of the poor, mercy must incarnate in us. As champions of charitable activities, let us whole heartedly take up the message of Pope Francis and commit ourselves for apt action.

Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM
Coordinator of Vincentian Family in India

News - Nation

National Formation Programme

a. Seminar on Vincentian Charism and the Year of Mercy



The National Vincentian Formation Team has organized a summer formation program for the members of the Vincentian Family in India from May 1 to 5, 2016 at St. Vincent's Seminary (Daughters of Charity), Hallehalli, Bangalore. The theme of the seminar was "Vincentian Charism in the Jubilee Year of Mercy". There were 45 participants representing 8 branches of the Vincentian Family.

Fr. Shajan Pudussery, the Chairperson of the Formation Programme welcomed the participants. Sr. Rose Chirayil DC, the Visitatrice of South Indian Province inaugurated the seminar by lighting the lamp. In her inaugural address, Rev. Sr. appreciated the steady growth of Vincentian Family in India, reminded the participants the teachings of Pope Francis and appealed to deepen the Vincentian Charism.

The Inaugural Holy Eucharist was presided over by Very Rev. Fr. Vijoy Kumar Nayak CM, the Visitor of the North Indian Province. During the homily he invited the participants to reflect on the way we evangelise. He reminded the participants the urgent need for quality service among the poor and the needy.

Fr. Shajan Pudussery introduced the different Modules to be covered during the seminar. Frs. Francis Puthenthayil CM, James Kunniapurayidam CM, Shajan Pudussery CM, Joy Thuruthel CM, Sebastian Vadakumpadan (National Director of Prison Ministry), Srs. Maria Kalloorthottiyil DC, Linte SCV, Sheela SJBC, Thyjasa SD, Tresa Pegado DC and Br. Tomy Varghese SSVP were the resource persons. They facilitated the participants to understand Mercy in different perspectives – Biblical, Ecclesial and Vincentian.

The concluding Holy Mass was presided over by Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM. While thanking and appreciating the active participation of the members he urged to listen keenly to the call of the Church and commit themselves for apt response to the cries of the poor. He also appealed all the participants to own the following action plans prepared at the end of the seminar.

Action Plan of the Participants of National Vincentian Formation Programme 2016

Mission Statement: We, the participants of the Eighth National Seminar 2016 of the Vincentian Family in India, having reflected on Biblical, Ecclesial and Vincentian perspectives of Mercy, moved by the Holy Spirit and

inspired by the Vincentian Saints and Blessed, trusting in the Providence of God and Strength of unity, commit ourselves to imbibe an attitude of Mercy in our lives and ministries, thereby to make visible, the Face of the Merciful Father, a tangible experience to the poor and the needy.

The members took resolution to do the following individually in the year of Mercy:

- a. Reciting Chaplet of Divine Mercy daily
- b. Holy Hour once a week
- c. Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation meaningfully
- d. Meditatively Reading and Studying the Gospel of Luke and Book of Jonah
- e. Visit the sick and Elderly once a week and listen to them patiently
- f. Generate the Mercy Fund
- g. Do any acts of Mercy

The members also took resolution to do the following collaboratively:

- a. Identifying and Prioritizing the urgent needs of the poor and respond positively
- b. Strengthening the relationship with the various branches of VF in order to collaborate effectively
- c. Planning and executing the concrete corporal and spiritual projects favoring the poor
- d. Evaluating and reviewing the said projects.

The participants were grateful to God Almighty, Vincentian Charism, the Planners, Organisers, Meritorious Resource Persons and particularly the hospitality of the Daughters of Charity of the Provincial and Hallehalli communities.

a. National Secretariat at Mysore

The work on establishing the secretariat is running smoothly. The latest developments are:

1. Bishop of Mysore has been informed about the new venture that we are going to have at Belwadi, Mysore. Bishop was extremely happy about it.
2. Fr. Mathew Onatt CM, the Visitor of the South Indian Province assured of the help of the Province in the initial works to establish the secretariat at Mysore.
3. A Bank Account has been opened in South India Bank at Mysore which will be operated jointly. The details of the Account are as follows:
Bank Name: **South Indian Bank**
Branch: **Mysore**
Account Number: *04150530000018219*
IFSC: *SIBL0000415*
4. Next Executive Body meeting is scheduled to be held on 20th July 2016 at Mysore.

NEWS – BRANCHES OF VFI

a. Congregation of the Mission Episcopal Consecration of Aplinar Senapati CM

On April 11, 2016 Pope Francis erected a new Diocese in Odisha, eastern India, and appointed Father Aplinar



Senapati CM as its first bishop. Rayagada was carved out of Berhampur diocese in western Odisha.

It is the 171st Catholic diocese in India and sixth in Odisha, under Cuttack-Bhubaneswar archdiocese. The 39,368 sq km diocese covers the civil districts of

Kalahandi, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Rayagada. It has a population of 5,407,894, mostly Hindus. The languages spoken in the area are Odia, Telugu, Hindi, English, Saura and Kui. The diocese has 50,542 Catholics living in 23 parishes and 377 mission stations. They are served by 42 priests (30 diocesan, 7 priests of the mission and 5 religious priests), 104 sisters (from missionary societies and religious), and 270 catechists.

Fr. Senapati was born on October 28, 1960 at Dantolingi, near Surada in Ganjam district, a parish under Berhampur diocese. He has three brothers and two sisters. He joined the Congregation of Mission in 1984 and was incorporated definitely into the CM in 1990. He studied philosophy at Aquinas College, Gopalpur-on-Sea, Odisha, and Theology at Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. He was ordained a priest on November 28, 1990 at Surada.

On May 28, 2016, Msgr. Aplinar was consecrated during a solemn Eucharist officiated by Most Rev. Salvatore Pennachio, the Apostolic Nuncio to India and Nepal. He was assisted by Most Rev. John Barwa SVD, the Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar and Rt. Rev. Sarat Chandra Nayak, the Bishop of Berhampur. Vincentian Family expresses hearty congratulations to Bishop Aplinar and assures him of prayers and support.

b. Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Br. Renato Lima de Oliveira as the new President General

Br. Renato Lima de Oliveira has been elected, during the General Assembly in Roma, on Sunday June 5th. Renato Lima, 45-years old, has been a member since 1986. He has held various posts within the Society, including posts on the Youth Committee. Since 2008 he has been the Territorial Vice-President (South



America) and during the last 3 years has represented the International General Council for dealings with the Vincentian Family. Journalist by profession, he is also the author of a number of publications, including the “Vincentian Chronicles”.

NEWS – REGION

a. Eastern Region

Vincentian Family Local Unit Gatherings

Rev. Fr. Joseph Palayoor CM, the Zonal Coordinator of Rayagada – Gajapati has attempted to establish local units in the Zone. As a first step, he invited the leaders of the various branches of Vincentian Family in the locality and an input session was given on the relevance of Vincentian Family and collaboration. The presence of Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil C.M., the National Coordinator, helped to have better clarity on the concept of Vincentian Family. We received a very positive response from the leaders. The following are the places where he established local units:

- 1. Allada Local Unit:** It was on 13th of June, Fr. Joseph Palayoor organised a get together of the various branches of Vincentian Family in the locality. There were 15 participants from 4 branches of the Vincentian Family (CM, DC, SSVP and VMY). All the leaders agreed to collaborate in alleviating poverty in the area of their service. In this connection they elected Fr. Subir Behera and Bro. Upendro SSVP as coordinator and secretary respectively. They resolved to adopt one poor village and make a united effort to uplift the village into a model village using systemic change principles.
- 2. Paralakhemundi, Marynagar and Bodapada local units:** It was on 23rd of June 2016, Fr. Palayoor organised a common meeting for the three local units mentioned above. The response was very positive and he motivated the members to unite their hands together in eradicating poverty in their respective areas. The participants promised to support each other in this noble venture.
- 3. Gunupur local unit:** On 25th of June 2016 Fr. Joseph Palayoor organised another meeting for the various branches of Vincentian Family working in the parishes of Gunupur, Sulludi and Jalthar. There were 26 participants altogether. All the participants were very eager to hear about the venture of the Vincentian Family and they assured whole hearted support and help. Fr. Subir Singh CM and Sr. Pushpa DC were chosen as the coordinator and secretary respectively.

Vincentian Family in India appreciates the great endeavour of Fr. Joseph Palayoor CM and requests all the zonal coordinators to establish local units in their respective zones.

SAINTS AND BLESSEDS OF VINCNETINA FAMILY

St. Joseph Benedict Cottolengo (1786-1842)

Joseph Benedict Cottolengo was born on 3 May 1786 in a middle class family, in Piedmont, Italy. He was the eldest of twelve children, (six of whom died in infancy). In 1805 he entered the seminary at Asti. Two years later it was closed,



and he was forced to continue his studies at home. Frail health and difficulty in school were obstacles he overcame to reach ordination. Cottolengo was ordained a priest on 8 June 1811. He completed his doctorate in Theology in Turin. He donated all what he had and even the Mass stipends to the poor and the needy.

Turin, at that time, was still recovering from the French occupation, and under the pressure of intense immigration from the countryside, which caused serious social problems and poverty. The city was rife with utter poverty, beggary, illiteracy, recurrent epidemics, numerous illegitimate births and high infant mortality. At the age of forty-one, after reading the life of St. Vincent de Paul, he was moved by the spirit of St. Vincent towards the poor. Finally he came to understand that his true vocation was that of charity like St. Vincent de Paul.

At this time Father Cottolengo attended a family traveling from Lyons to Milan. The pregnant mother was ill and was not accepted at the Maggiore Hospital because she had tuberculosis. Neither could she go to the maternity hospital because she was ill with fever, and the regulations proscribed admitting anyone who might be infectious. Cottolengo gave the mother last rites and baptized her child before death. Affected by the scene and the cries of her surviving children, Cottolengo went and sold everything he owned, including his mantle and rented two rooms. He began his new work on 17 January 1828, offering free accommodation to an elderly paralytic. Before long the premises turned into a hospitality center for people who were not accepted in hospitals. He came to be assisted by Doctor Lorenzo Granetti, pharmacist Paul Royal Anglesio and twelve "Ladies of Charity", under the direction of the rich widow Marianna Nasi, who visited the sick.

When Cholera broke out in 1831, the small hospital was closed by the authorities as a precaution for fear of contagion. Cottolengo then bought a house in Valdocco, on the outskirts of the city, and relocated there with two nuns and a patient suffering from cancer. This was the beginning of the "Little House of the Divine Providence" which served many different groups (the sick, the elderly, students, the mentally ill, the blind). All these were financed by contributions. Popularly called "the University of Charity," this testimonial to God's goodness was serving 8,000 people by the time of Joseph's beatification in 1917.

He slept only a few hours, often on a chair or bench, and then returned to his daily labour, work and prayer. But Cottolengo was exhausting his strength. In 1842, he wanted to pay a visit his brother in Chieri. When he entered the carriage, one of the Sisters cried out in tears: Father, you are sick; what will become of us? Be at peace, he answered. When I am in heaven, where one can do everything, I will help you more than now I do. I will hold to the cloak of the Mother of God and keep my eyes fixed on you. Do not forget what I, a poor old man, say to you today! Father Cottolengo contracted typhoid while assisting his patients and died in Chieri, Piedmont on 30 April 1842. The final word of this great Saint was that of the Psalm: I rejoiced when it was said unto me, *Let us go unto the House of the Lord!*

Father Cottolengo founded communities of priests, brothers, and sisters to continue the Vincentian Charism to serve the poorest of the poor. His works of charity stands today at the heart of Turin city as a sign of what it means to love and serve others in evangelical way. Today Cottolengo Fathers, Sisters, and Brothers still work together in activities primarily geared at communicating God's love for the poorest. They are spread out all over the world: Ecuador, India, Italy, Kenya, Switzerland, Tanzania and United States.

Father Cottolengo was beatified by Pope Benedict XV in 1917, and was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1934. St. Joseph Benedict Cottolengo was enlisted among the saints of charity by Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Deus caritas est*.

" We must love our neighbour as being made in the image of God and as an object of His love"

St. Vincent de Paul