

# Vinfam India

News Bulletin of the Vincentian Family in India



Volume 17

(For Private Circulation among members only)

July- Sept. 2016

## Message

### The face of St. Vincent de Paul in St. Theresa of Kolkotta (Mother Theresa)

Month of September is very dear to all Vincentians world-wide, because of the feasts of St. Vincent de Paul, St. John Gabriel Perboyre, Bl. Frederic Ozanam, Bl. Louis

Joseph Francois, Bl. John Gruyer, and Bl. Peter Rene Rogue. Besides, this year, the month of September is something very special for the Universal Church. On September 4, 2016 Pope Francis officially declared Mother Theresa, who heroically put into practice in her life the teachings of Jesus Christ, the evangelizer



of the poor, as St. Theresa of Kolkotta and acknowledged her sanctity. There is no exaggeration in saying that there is the face of St. Vincent de Paul in Mother Theresa.

St. Teresa of Kolkotta, by blood was an Albanian, by citizenship, an Indian and by faith, she was a Catholic nun. Small of stature, rocklike in faith, she perfectly did well the mission entrusted to her of proclaiming God's thirsting love for humanity, especially for the poorest of the poor. She was born on August 26, 1910 in Skopje as the youngest child of Nikola and Drane Bojaxhiu. She was known Gonxha Agnes who at the age of eighteen, moved by a desire to become a missionary, left her home in September 1928 to join the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, known as the Sisters of Loreto, in Ireland. There she received the name Sister Mary Teresa after St. Thérèse

of Lisieux. In December, she departed for India, arriving in Kolkotta on January 6, 1929. After making her First Profession of Vows in May 1931, Sister Teresa was assigned to teach at St. Mary's School for girls. On 24 May 1937, Sister Teresa made her Final Profession of Vows, becoming, as she said, the "*spouse of Jesus*" for "*all eternity*." From that time on she was called Mother Teresa. She continued teaching at St. Mary's and in 1944 became the school's principal.

On September 10, 1946 during the train ride from Kolkotta to Darjeeling for her annual retreat, Mother Teresa received her "*inspiration*," her "*call within a call*." On August 17, 1948, she dressed for the first time in a white, blue-bordered sari and passed through the gates of her beloved Loreto convent to enter the world of the poor. On December 21 of the same year she went for the first time to the slums. She visited families, washed the sores of some children, cared for an old man lying sick on the road and nursed a woman dying of hunger and TB. After some months, she was joined, one by one, by her former students and that was the origin of the congregation of Missionaries of Charity. It was erected into a diocesan right on October 7, 1950 and of pontifical right on February 1, 1965. In order to respond better to both the physical and spiritual needs of the poor, Mother Teresa also founded the Missionaries of Charity Brothers in 1963, the contemplative branch of the Sisters in 1976, the Contemplative Brothers in 1979, and the Missionaries of Charity Fathers in 1984.

During the years of rapid growth the world began to turn its eyes towards Mother Teresa and the work she had started. Numerous awards, beginning with the Indian *Padmashri* Award in 1962 and notably the *Nobel Peace Prize* in 1979, etc., were the recognition of her indescribable service to the poor. On September 5, 1997 Mother Teresa's earthly life came to an end. Her tomb quickly became a place of pilgrimage and prayer for people of all faiths, rich and poor alike. Mother Teresa left a testament of unshakable faith, invincible hope and extraordinary charity. Her response to Jesus' plea, "Come be

My light,” made her a Missionary of Charity, a “mother to the poor,” a symbol of compassion to the world, and a living witness to the thirsting love of Jesus. She was beatified in October 2003 and was canonized on September 4, 2016 by Pope Francis.

St. Teresa of Kolkotta had Vincentian Roots in her endeavour to evangelise the poor. I am very glad to learn from Fr. Cherian Kariankal CM that it was he who was the confessor of St. Teresa from 1996 till the day of her departure to the heavenly abode. Fr. Cherian still remembers the time of hearing her last confession. It was on September 5, 1997 at 5.30 p.m. and that evening by 9.30 p.m. she passed away. Sr. Theresa Marillac DC recalls that when she was in Philippines in 1963-1964, St. Teresa of Kolkotta visited the Daughters of Charity in Philippines to learn about the conferences and holy rules of St. Vincent de Paul. She stayed with them a few weeks. Sr. Julia Denton DC in her sharing with Sr. Ann Betty Ann McNeil DC on December 28, 1993 at Emmitsburg said, “It has just come to my mind that Mother Teresa has always said she was very influenced by Saint Vincent de Paul”. Her mission to the most destitute mirrors the Spirit of Saint Vincent in seeing Jesus Christ in the person of the poor.

She also learned about the effective intercessory power of the Miraculous Medal. In 1974, while she visited the diocese of Berhampur in Odisha, she happened to see at the scarcity of the Cathedral the beautiful statue of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal belonged to the Daughters of Charity. On request the then bishop presented her the statue which is still found in the mother house of Missionaries of Charity. She cherished to have a very special devotion to Miraculous Medal. Therefore, she and the members of her religious communities began to distribute Miraculous Medals to everyone especially to the sick. Many miracles were attributed because of the use of this medal. The power of Miraculous Medal helped her to reach at the peak of her sanctity. That is why she recommended the devotion to Miraculous Medal to her followers and to all whom she met. Even one of the two miracles that propelled Mother Teresa towards sainthood is of Monica Besara, who claims that, a picture of Mother Teresa and wearing of the miraculous medal had cured her ovarian tumour.

What was unique in St. Vincent de Paul was that he always looked at the human person as a whole – as much a spiritual, moral, political, social, cultural entity, with aspirations that include also the economic. Therefore all his service mainly directed for the integral and sustainable development of a person. But in St. Teresa of Kolkotta she concentrated more on to provide immediate relief for the suffering poor. What is common in both of them is that both not only committed themselves for the service of the poor but also had tremendous belief in collaboration for effective service to the poor.

As Vincentians let us be proud of St. Teresa of Kolkotta, who really lived the Vincentian charism. She is a role model for all of us as how to articulate Vincentian charism in a concrete manner in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Good many of us really committed to work among the poor but perhaps if the missionary virtues like simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification and zeal for souls are added there is no doubt we can be like St. Teresa of Kolkotta. Certainly we can expect the powerful intercession of St. Teresa of Kolkotta for our perfection and also for all our endeavours to change the lives of the poor in a sustainable manner.

**Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM**  
Coordinator of Vincentian Family in India

## NEWS – NATION

### **1. Father Tomaz Mavric the new Superior General**



Father Tomaz Mavric was selected Superior General by the General Assembly 2016 of the Congregation of the Mission for a period of six years. He is the Twenty-fifth Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

Father Tomaz was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 9 May 1959. His mother, Leopoldina, and his father, Joze, were born in Slovenia. They left the country, which at that time was Yugoslavia, in May 1945, when the Communist regime came to power, fleeing to a refugee camp in Austria and then, in 1948, they left with their families to Argentina. They got married in 1957. They had five children, two girls and three boys. Father Tomaz’s father died in 1989 and his mother continues to live in the south of Argentina in the city of San Carlos de Bariloche. His brothers and sisters live with their families: Monika in the USA, Alenka and Marjan in Argentina, and Martin in Brazil.

Father Tomaz attended primary and secondary school in Buenos Aires. For the final three years of primary school and secondary school, Father Tomaz attended the school founded and run by the Vincentians in Remedios de Escalada, Province of Buenos Aires. During those years, he stayed in a boarding school, which was located next to the school he attended every day, also run by the Slovenian Vincentian Fathers, which has produced a number of priests and lay missionaries. After high school, he joined the CMs in Slovenia. He made his Internal Seminary in Belgrade, Serbia and entered the seminary in 1977. Father Tomaz was ordained to the priesthood on 29 June 1983 in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

During his ministerial life, Father Tomaz has served in many diverse ministries of the CM internationally: Canada, Slovenia, Slovakia, Russia, Ireland, and Ukraine. He has been assistant pastor, vocation promoter, formator, counselor, retreat director, and he has given parish missions. Father Tomaz also has the experience of working with the poor in Russia. Since 2009, he has been the Vice-

Visitor of the Vice-Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius. Father Tomaz speaks Russian, Spanish, English, and Slovenian. Father Tomaz's exposure to diversity and multicultural ways of life is going to be a blessing for the ongoing internationalization of our very multicultural Congregation.

Father Tomaz being the Coordinator of the Vincentian Family world- wide, let us have the joy of expressing our sincere appreciations and congratulations to him. May St. Vincent de Paul be close to him at this time of dispensing his duty as the Successor of St. Vincent de Paul and Coordinator of Vincentian Family as well.

### **1. Thanks to Father Gregory G. Gay CM**



On July 15, 2004 at the General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission, Fr. Gregory G. Gay was elected Superior General. He was reelected for another six year term on July 8, 2010. During the last 12 years, he was becoming familiar with the various works of the Vincentian Family which was given a top priority. He gave a strong foundation to Vincentian Family which was systematically initiated by his predecessor Fr. Robert Maloney. He was also pleased to find time to be in India for a few occasions. In 2015 he took the chance to meet and address all the major superiors and delegates of Vincentian Family in India. In doing so, Fr. Gay has sought to give support and encouragement to all who share his love for the Charism of St. Vincent de Paul. Fr. Gay has encouraged young people to avail themselves of Vincentian spirituality and service through involvement in the Vincentian Marian Youth and the Association of the Miraculous Medal.

Vincentian Family in India is immensely grateful to the contributions of Fr. Gregory. We thank him and wish him all the best for his new undertakings.

### **3. A Global Initiative of the Vincentian Family to Celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism in 2017**

#### **“I was a stranger and you welcomed me...”**

In 2017 we celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian charism. It was in 1617, while preaching in the parish church of Chatillon, that Vincent exhorted his congregation to take responsibility for a poor family from the parish that had taken seriously ill and were in need of food and comfort. The family was saved by the overwhelming response to this call to action and Vincent as a result had his great realization that for charity to be effective it must be properly organized – an event which has changed the world for the last 400 years.

This story also brings to life a gospel text at the heart of our shared Vincentian calling - *Matthew 25:35* “*I was a stranger and you welcomed me*”. By reaching out and helping the strangers in our midst we are showing solidarity with that event at Chatillon and we are as one with our Vincentian calling - we model the example of the Good Samaritan in our community.

Who are the strangers in our midst today? There are so many to choose from – the refugees fleeing from oppression and poverty, those internally displaced within their country due to civil war, the migrants seeking a new life, the homeless, those coping alone with physical or mental illness, those suffering discrimination perhaps because of their faith or race or color, the lonely and vulnerable both young and old. Many of these people and issues are already familiar areas of work to members of the Vincentian Family globally. However, can we do more? Are there new poverties emerging that we are being called to respond to?

To celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian Charism the leaders of the international Vincentian Family would like to invite all members of the Vincentian Family around the world to consider how we might better welcome the strangers in our communities by making it the focus of the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism.

The year of welcoming the stranger will run from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2017. It was launched formally by Fr Gregory Gay, the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2016– the Feast of Pentecost.

This date is especially significant for our Vincentian Family. It also marks the end of the Year of Collaboration, issuing a call to action and inviting us to discover concrete ways to reach out to the strangers in our midst. It also connects us more deeply with the Universal Church, which under the

guidance of Pope Francis is celebrating the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

From May 15, 2016 onwards, the international leaders of the Vincentian Family will take responsibility for developing a reflective process of consultation with their particular branch of the Family, working closely with their regional and national bodies. We invite them to focus on the following questions:

Who are the strangers in our midst?

How are we currently supporting them?

What new needs are emerging?

How might we respond to these needs?

Might we be the strangers in need of welcoming?

This consultation and the ideas emerging from it will allow each Vincentian Family branch to develop a work plan by October 2016 to be rolled out in 2017. These work plans will then be forwarded to the Vincentian Family Collaboration Commission who will co-ordinate and support activities globally through the production of materials for reflection and celebration as well promoting the year and the activities generated on the Famvin website. The commission will also collate a final report on the outcomes and impact of this initiative by mid-2018 so that we can judge the result of our actions at a global level.

Where the Vincentian Family has strong connections on the ground, we encourage the Family to collaborate at either a local, regional, national or international level. As Vincent de Paul himself recognized - we are at our best and most effective when we work together.

Welcoming the strangers in our midst should also be seen as an invitation to everyone who shares (or might be interested in) our Vincentian values, mission or spirituality. The people we currently serve are as capable of welcoming strangers as we are - if we invite them to do so. It is not dependent on power or wealth or hierarchy. This is an opportunity for everyone to be part of our family and to share in our celebrations over the course of the year.

#### **4. National Executive Body Meeting: July 20, 2016.**

The National Executive Body Meeting of Vincentian Family in India was held at Provincial House of C M, Belwadi, Mysore on 20 July 2016. The members present were: Rev. Fr. Mathew Onatt C M, Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil C M, Rev. Fr. Mathew Vattakuzhy V C, Sr. Rose Chirayil D C, Sr. Ancita S C V, Dr. Johnson Varghese SSVP, Br. Jose Mathew Olicken Fiat Mission and Dr. Tomy Varghese SSVP.

The meeting commenced with a prayer led by Sr. Ancita SCV. Rev. Fr. Mathew Onatt C M welcomed the

participants. The members discussed the Agenda in detail in three sessions. The important items included VFI Secretariat at Mysore, Systemic Change Commission, Women Commission, Formations Programme, Regional Coordinators, Formation of local units of VFI, News Bulletin, AGM 2017, Directory and other matters.

Next AGM will be held at Central Kerala, tentatively on last Saturday and Sunday of February 2017 ( 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> ) and the Theme would be: Vincentian Charism: Yesterday & Today.



Br. Jose Mathew Olicken Fiat Mission, Sr. Ancita S C V, Dr. Tomy Varghese SSVP, Dr. Johnson Varghese SSVP, Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil C M, Rev. Fr. Mathew Vattakuzhy V C, Sr. Rose Chirayil D C and Rev. Fr. Mathew Onatt C M.

### **NEWS – BRANCHES**

#### **1. Congregation of the Mission**

#### **General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission**



(From Left) Fr. Aaron Gutierrez, Fr. Zeracristos Yosef, Fr. Miles Heinen, Fr. Toma• Mavriè, Superior General, Fr. Javier Álvarez, Vicar General, Fr. Matthew Kallanmakal

The 42<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission was held at DePaul University in Chicago, IL (USA) from June 27 – July 15, 2016. The motto of the GA2016 was "Let us allow ourselves to be renewed by the missionary vitality of our Vincentian vocation." The agenda included election of the superior general, the vicar-general, and the assistants as well as the deliberation on the issues (postulata) submitted by individual members and by provinces stemming from the provincial assemblies. The General Assembly was conducted successfully and the following are the new team who will guide the congregation of the mission in the coming six years. The Vincentian Family India extends sincere congratulations to all the members of the new team.

## 2. Society of St. Vincent de Paul New International President and Council of SSVP

On the feast day of Blessed Frederic Ozanam and under the gaze of Saint Vincent de Paul, the installation ceremony of the XVI International President and International Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul took place at the Chapel of St. Vincent de Paul in Paris. **Renato Lima de Oliveira** was installed as the new International President, succeeding Dr. Michael Thio, and will lead the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul for a term of 6 years (2016-2022).



New International Board members, pictured from left to right, Front row: Willin Alves – Brazil, Marie Françoise Salesiani-Payet – France, Maria Luisa Tellez – Spain, **Renato Lima de Oliveira** – Brazil, Carmela Addante – Canada, Denilson Cardoso De Sa – Brazil; Back Row: Larry Tuomey – Ireland, Sebastián Gramajo – Argentina, **Joseph Pandian** – India, Bertrand Ousset – France, Joseph Makwinja – Botswana, Graham West – Australia, Karl Hila – Philippines, Alfons Ten Velde – Netherlands, Julien Spiewak – France.

Hearty Congratulations on behalf of all members of the Vincentian Family in India to Br. Joseph Pandian on the new assignment with the International Board as First Vice-President. God Bless.

## NEWS – REGIONS

### **Karnataka Region Vincentian Family meeting, at St. Vincent's, D C Provincial House, Bangalore**

The Karnataka Region Vincentian family meeting was held on July 24, 2016 at St. Vincent's Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity, Bangalore. After an opening Prayer led by Rev. Fr. Devasia Pudussery C M Co-ordinator of Karnataka Region, the meeting discussed the future plan of action and the activities to be carried out during the year of mercy as well as to mark the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the inspiration and Charism of St. Vincent De Paul.

There were 28 participants from different Vincentian family branches such as Daughters of Charity (DC), Congregation of the Mission (CM), Society of St. Vincent De Paul, Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (SCN), and Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul (SCV), Cottelengo sisters.

Fr. Devasia Pudussery C.M., presented the topic of the discussion and reflection for the day. 1. The Year of Mercy and the activities to be carried out by the Vincentian family for the year 2. Celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inspiration and Charism of St. Vincent De Paul

Action Plan: It was decided to work in tie-up with Prison ministry and release the deserving prisoners who need financial assistance to lead a transformed life. After lengthy discussion most of the congregations suggested that if the amount needed is manageable they can discuss in their meetings and come out with positive results. SSVP members informed that they can try and raise up to Rs. 100000. Thus it was decided to carry out this plan of releasing the women prisoners paying their fine and other payments to the court. Everyone was in agreement with the decision and agreed to contribute to their capacity that we may do it by January 2017. Besides it was decided to visit the women jailors in Bangalore Prison on the feast day of St. Vincent De Paul, September 27, 2016, organize a programme with the children and make arrangements to give gifts to mark the Jubilee year of mercy.

### ARTICLES OF THE MEMBERS OF VFI

#### **St. Vincent De Paul, the Apostle of Charity**

#### **(The Good Samaritan of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century)**

St. Vincent De Paul, a priest of 17<sup>th</sup> century in France was moved by compassion, went about caring and serving the poor as part of his pastoral ministry. The year 2017 marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inspiration and charism of St. Vincent De Paul, which made him a man of charities in the universal Church. In the year 1617, the priest Vincent experienced a twofold conversion. First, he was

being converted to the poor, who were becoming the center of his life. Second, he was also converted to his priesthood, seeing it not as a position of honour and comforts, but as a personal relationship with Jesus. However, his “conversion” does not seem to rest on one spectacular moment, but rather on a gradual opening to the power of God’s grace working in him, and allowing him to see his life and ministry more clearly in the light of Christ. The events made Vincent to organize and motivate people to continue the christen charity and service as an essential way of living the Gospel values in daily life.

In January 1617, the young priest Vincent was on the Gondi estates in Picardy, and heard the confession of a dying man, who told Madame de Gondi that he would have been damned without Vincent’s ministry. She urged Vincent to preach a sermon on general confessions, which produced such a response that other priests were called to help hear all the confessions. This was the humble beginning of the popular mission in the Church which today has become popular and very effective means for renewal and new life. Vincent felt called to a more pastoral ministry and very conscious that the poor were not being evangelized or helped. As he became the parish priest in Châtillon-les-Dombes in the southeast of France, he started ‘Tuesday conferences’ helping his fellow priests to a more faithful way of life, as well as ministering to and teaching the people. The increasing need and response of the common people for renewal and evangelization inspired Vincent to start the ‘Congregation of the Mission’ and organize the priests with Charism of popular Mission and formation of the Priests.

In August 1617, as he was preparing for Sunday Mass, a parishioner brought news of the illness and destitution of an entire family in the parish. He preached on their need, and that afternoon the people responded in overwhelming numbers by carrying them food and supplies. Vincent then called a meeting of interested women, and urged them to put order into their generosity by taking turns. With rules drawn up by Vincent, they established a group which became the first Confraternity of Charity. This was again another beginning of the great networking of global charities and starting of the organization of ‘Ladies of Charities’ and the Company of the ‘Daughters of Charity’ for the material service and spiritual needs of the Poor and destitute people.

In December 1617, Madame de Gondi prevailed in her request that Vincent return to their family by giving him freedom to preach missions in various rural villages and estates, urged by Monsieur de Gondi, King Louis XIII, appointed Vincent chaplain general of the galleys with responsibility for the spiritual well-being of all the galley convicts of France. Thus the year 1617 becomes a year of Grace in the life of Priest Vincent De Paul.

The Year of Mercy reminds all of us the gift of love and life with a heart to love and hands to serve. The Gospel of St. Luke known as the Gospel of the poor is esteemed for its parables of Mercy and compassion. Many are inspired throughout the centuries and throughout the world by the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10, 25 – 37). The call to Mercy urges us to turn to the Gospel and be inspired to change our mind set for the service of the fallen and wounded people of our time.

St. Vincent De Paul in his life was moved by the Charity of Crucified Christ took up the pastoral care of the people with Mercy and compassion. He lived his life with the spirit of a Good Samaritan. He employed five attitudinal steps in his approach and service to the poor. First of all he looked around with sensitivity that he could see the fallen and wounded people in and around. Secondly he reached out himself to the people in their own distressed situations and did not wait for the people to come to him. Thirdly he made use of whatever is available with him for the benefit of the needy without waiting for the projects and benefactors. Fourthly he took them to his house to care as they were his Masters. Fifthly they were no more strangers but he owned them all as they were the incarnate image of God. Today the world is experiencing the famine of love and is estranged by the hatredness and cruelty. The world needs a healing touch of Mercy and compassion more than ever before.

**Fr. Devasia Pudusery C M**

*Kindly Note: Fr. Francis Puthenthayil, our National Coordinator’s email Id [fputhenthayil@yahoo.co.in](mailto:fputhenthayil@yahoo.co.in) has been hacked. He has no accessibility to this e-mail. If you get any e-mails from this ID please do not respond. It has come to his notice that through this email money is being requested. A new e-mail [puthenthayil@hotmail.com](mailto:puthenthayil@hotmail.com) also has been created by the one who hacked. Kindly do not believe in the content of these two e-mails mentioned above. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil’s new Email ID is [puthenthayilfrancis@gmail.com](mailto:puthenthayilfrancis@gmail.com)*