

Volume 02

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News Bulletin
of the
Vincentian Family in India



(For Private Circulation among members only)

MESSAGE

To articulate a clear and definite vision for Vincentian Family in India (VFI), was the main proposal given in the third annual gathering of the Major superiors/heads of various branches VFI. The vision of the VFI which was articulated read as follows- “To empower people who live in poverty to realize the reign of God in their lives”. In other words, the purpose of VFI is to evangelise the poor in an effective manner. The ever growing poverty, a major source of misery for the common mass is to be checked. This is the need of the hour.

Owing to economic disparities in the society, a greater part of the humanity thrive on meagre scraps and many do not even have the basic needs for survival , only a few have access to riches where as others do not even have dignified jobs to sustain themselves.

Poverty and the poor are, at present, manipulated concepts. The media expose realities with impressive images. Political parties use them as weapons to make the opposition look guilty and responsible for this disastrous situation. False promises are made but not fulfilled once they come in to power. The progress of science and technology too has not helped to eradicate poverty and it's after effects. Majority of the Indian population lacks food, clothing and shelter. Hence we repeat ad nauseam –‘the rich get richer and the poor get poorer’.

This poverty can be interpreted in two ways: absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty is the inability to secure the minimum requirements for life, health and efficiency. Relative poverty refers to the difference in the living standard of two persons or two groups of persons. Relative poverty hence exists when the consumption standard of one person falls behind the consumption standard of the other. This is found in all developing and developed countries. Poverty also connotes helplessness when faced with the demands of life: ignorance, weakness, bondage, desolation of heart, a sense of having a meaningless life, isolation, defencelessness against injustice, dreaded and incurable diseases etc, is more or less relative poverty. Other than material poverty, we often find deprivations of various demands of life which can be termed as ‘new forms of poverty’, found more or less in all the countries.

Even though, in the Old Testament often represents wealth as a blessing and poverty as divine chastisement, the prophets and post-exilic thinkers magnify the poor as specially favored by the Yahweh. In the New Testament with Christ the poor have a special place who were blessed and should have their fill. Poverty can never be abolished, despite all efforts made and progress in technology. It is marked that, each development brings new problems and dangers. Pope Benedict XVI in his recent encyclical letter dated 30th November 2007 says, “We can try to limit suffering, to fight against it, but we cannot eliminate it”. (*Spe Salvi* 37). Jesus in his discourse with the Judas said, “The poor you will always have with you” (Jn 12:8).

Material poverty and other forms of poverty must be interpreted as a kind of longing for redemption and love. The appalling poverty in various parts of the world demands an enormous extension of Christian love. Particular works of mercy alone can no longer cope with world-wide poverty. Rational planning is necessary. No effective help can be given in modern mass societies without soundly organized, well directed co-operation. Despite technical achievements, there is lack of ultimate security in human life.

I wish to recall the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI: “The time has come to ensure, for the sake of peace, that no man, woman and child will ever be hungry again” (Pope Benedict XVI, address to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization on 22nd November 2007). In his first encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI says, “The Church is God’s family in the world. In this family no one ought to go without the necessities of life. Yet, at the same time caritas-agape extends beyond the frontiers of the Church. The parable of the Good Samaritan remains as a standard which imposes universal love towards the needy whom we encounter ‘by chance’, whoever they may be”.

A high percentage of rural populations live below the poverty line in India. Any person consuming less than 2,400 calories per day is considered to be below the poverty line. It has been marked that 65 percent of the country’s population lives in rural areas and every three of the four people survive on less than US \$ 1 a day. Hence all of us being aware of the causes of poverty, imperative to focus on means and methods to alleviate the chronic condition. Collaboration and co-operation is the need of the hour. The Vincentian family although being a drop in the ocean, has to meet the challenges and overcome the hurdles to remove the major causes of poverty.

I wish to conclude these few lines with the words of St. Paul and St. Vincent - “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Gal 6:10). St. Vincent says, “if there are any among us who think they are ...to preach the gospel to the poor but not to comfort them, to supply their spiritual but not their temporal wants, I reply that we ought to assist them and have them assisted in every way, by ourselves and by others.” It is hence the duty of the entire Vincentian family to join hands together to efface the root of poverty from the earth.

Rev.Fr.Francis Puthenthayil CM
National Coordinator
Vincentian Family

NEWS - NATION



Participants in the third National Formation Programme

The third National Formation Programme for the members of the Vincentian Family in India

1st to 5th MAY 2012

ST. VINCENT'S SEMINARY, HALLEHALLI, BANGALORE,

The third National formation programme for Vincentian Family India, was held in St. Vincent's House, Hallehalli, Bangalore from May 1 to 5, 2012. It was a great joy for the community of St. Vincent's House to welcome 36 participants from 8 branches of VF from the various parts of India. The participants hailed from the following branches: Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary

(SCJM), Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary (SCSM), Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (SCN), Sisters of Charity of Vincent de Paul (SCV), Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP), Vincentian Congregation (VC), Congregation of the Mission (CM) and Daughters of Charity (DC). The theme of the seminar was on Systemic Change.

The programme started on May 1, at 7.00 a.m. with inaugural Holy Mass presided by Rev. Fr. Simon Kaipuram C.M. After the Holy Mass there was a special session at 9 a.m. to inaugurate the seminar. Rev Fr. Varghese Puthussery V C, the former Superior General of the Vincentian Congregation officially inaugurated the seminar by lighting up the lamp. Rev. Fr. George Ayalloor CM, the programme coordinator cum the Karnataka Regional Coordinator welcomed the participants. After the self introduction by the participants the discussion on various areas of systemic change began.

The following were the resources persons and the topics dealt with.

Rev. Fr. Simon Kaipuram CM	-	Biblical perspective of systemic change
Sr. Joel Urumpel SCV	-	Social aspects of Systemic change.
Rev. Fr. James Chalapuram VC	-	An Indian approach to Systemic change.
Br. Joseph MMB	-	Sharing of life experience
Br. Joseph Pandian SSVP	-	St. Vincent de Paul and Systemic change.
Rev. Fr. Shajan Puthussery C M	-	The Spirituality of Systemic change.

On the final day, Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM the National Coordinator, gave a concluding message and distributed the certificates to the participants.

During the concluding session the participants expressed their joy and happiness for being together as members of one family. They expressed that such gathering really created in them an indelible impression and they expressed their willingness to have better networking for causes of the poor. The input sessions were enlightening and informative.

Sr. Maria Kalloorthottiyil D C

1. NEWS - REGIONAL

Tamilnadu Region

Inauguration of Kumbakonam zonal body

For a better coordination among the members of Vincentian Family, meeting held at Tiruchi during November 2011. The zonal body consists of Dindugal, Tiruchi, Thanjavur and Kumbakonam dioceses. The Zonal body was inaugurated by Very Rev.Fr. Peter Francis, Vicar General of Kumbakonam Diocese on 29th April 2012, Sunday at Kumbakonam. Bro.M.Xavier James Raj, the Regional Coordinator presided over the

inaugural function. After the opening prayer, Sr. Rosario, the Regional Superior of the Sisters of Charity of St. Mary of Good Council (SCSM) and the Coordinator of the Zonal Body welcomed all the participants.

In the inaugural address Very Rev. Fr. Peter Francis appreciated the works of the various branches of Vincentian Family present in the diocese of Kumbakonam and assured the participants his whole hearted support for the continuation of the work of Vincentian Family in Kumbakonam.

In the Presidential address Bro. M. Xavier James Raj, stressed on the importance of the Vincentian Family and its need. Bro. Vincent, SSVP Tamil Nadu Regional Joint Secretary was elected as Secretary of the Zonal Body. The following four local bodies are formed to coordinate the Vincentian Family activities in the local level

1. Kumbakonam
2. Tiruchi
3. Manaparai and
4. Puthukottai.

Bro. Vincent, Secretary of the zone proposed vote of thanks and the meeting ended with the Holy Mass at 1.30 PM.

3. NEWS – Branches of Vincentian Family

Vincentian Congregation

‘Divine Vision’, a new TV channel launched and supported by the Vincentian Congregation in Kerala: a modern means for evangelisation of the poor

Divine Vision was inaugurated at the Divine Retreat Centre, Muringoor on 20th November 2011. Through the Goodness Satellite Channel, Divine Vision programmes reach all Indian Homes through digital receiver. His Beatitude Mar George Alenchery, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, blessed the launch of Divine Vision in India and Hon. Shri. Oommen Chandy, Chief Minister of Kerala, launched the telecast in the presence of many ecclesiastical and civil leaders and a large public. There are programmes both in English and Malayalam. The programmes are available in all cable networks in Kerala. For further information contact No. 09605610550. Divine Vision programmes had been available abroad even earlier.

De Paul SSSMILE Village at Vettikkuzhy in the district of Trichur: A model for empowering the poor and the abandoned

DE PAUL SSSMILE VILLAGE, established in Vettikkuzhy, (Chaipankkuzhy Parish, Irinjalakkuda diocese, Trichur District), is a humble contribution of the Vincentian Congregation in the Catholic Church in India, as a grand Jubilee Memorial of the Holy Year-2000. (SSSMILE means Sacred Scriptures’ Social Message into Living Experience) The SSSMILE Village, meant for the rehabilitation of people wandering in the streets, is the realisation of a dream to become privileged to serve the poor and the abandoned, wandering in the streets, by our loving, caring and healing touch - to keep them smiling, having given them the experience of God's tremendous love for them.

The De Paul SSSMILE Village has begun functioning in Vettikkuzhy on June 13, 2000 in a temporary shed. June 13th was selected as the day of this informal inauguration since it is the Feast Day of St. Anthony of Padua, who is honored as the special heavenly patron of the SSSMILE Village. The official blessing and inauguration of the first three homes of the SSSMILE Village was done by His Beatitude Mar Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, CSSR, Major Archbishop of Syro-Malabar Church, on September 27, 2000, on the Feast Day of St. Vincent de Paul, the heavenly patron of the Village.

The Village is designed to have twenty homes for four hundred people who would come from the streets to reside in the Village. There will be twenty people in one house. The people from the streets will be of various categories, such as children, young people, elderly men and women, physically handicapped, mentally retarded, the blind, the lepers, drug addicts, mental patients, wandering families, unwed mothers with their children and such others. They are all welcome to the village to live a life of human dignity and decency. At present there are 150 inmates. Fr Antony Plackal VC is the director and Fr Joshy Vallomkunnel VC is the Asst. director and Finance Officer. For further details and for any voluntary services kindly contact:

DIRECTOR

DE PAUL SSSMILE VILLAGE

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4. LIVES OF VINCENTIAN SAINTS AND BLESSEDS

Vincentian Family is blessed with many saints and blessed. In this edition we will see a brief biography of Blessed Ghebre Michael, Priest and Martyr.

BLESSED ABBA GHEBRE MICHAEL (1791 – 1855)

Ghebre Michael (meaning, ‘the servant of St. Michael, the Archangel’) was born at Dibo a suburb of Mertoule – Mariam in the year 1791. When he was quite young he lost the sight of his left eye. His preliminary schooling was done in a local monastery school. He used to spend his free time looking after a flock of sheep. At the end of a six year course of study he received a diploma of graduation. According to the custom of his land, at the end of graduation a student was given a title ‘Aleke’ (Doctor), but those aspiring for a clerical or religious life the title was changed into ‘Abba’. After his graduation he joined the Monastery of Mertoule –Mariam and began his novitiate there which lasted for six years. He was 19 at that time.

Abba Ghebre’s progress in monastic life was disturbed by the absence of “the Book of the Monks”, the monk’s guide to lead a good Monastic life and the ‘Abyssinian heresy’, a

theological controversy known as ‘Monophysitism ‘that Christ had only one nature. If Christ had only one nature, how the divine and human natures can be fused into one remained a subject of debate. Abba Ghebre listened to the various opinions of the theologians, however, did not take particular stand.

In 1815, he completed his novitiate and obtained a degree of “Eminent Doctor”. He was then animated with a desire to revive the ancient spirit of monastic life. For that it was necessary to find missing guide book for monastic life “the Book of the Monks” and he set out to the neighboring monasteries in search of the book. It took him nearly 10 years to find the book. Once he found the book he began to study the book.

The next target of Abba Ghebre was to search for the church which was in possession of the full truth about the nature of Christ. To achieve this target he decided to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and he met the Coptic Patriarch with whom he engaged in discussion on the dispute over the nature of Christ and there he was assured of the authentic Catholic teaching of the two fold natures of Christ and the official teaching in the church under his jurisdiction. Once he was convinced of the two natures of Christ, he challenged the Bishop of Abyssinia for refusing to read the patriarchal decree in the diocesan synod. As a result of it Abba was seized and imprisoned. Later when he was freed, he set out for Adowa, to meet Justin de Jacobis CM, in search of the fullness of truth. St. Justin cleared all the doubts of Abba Ghebre regarding the true nature of Christ.

In February 1844, Abba Ghebre was reconciled with the Catholic Church. He then took up the mission of spreading the Catholic faith among his countrymen. He started to work with Justin de Jacobis at first near Adowa where the former had started a school. He began his apostolic work of teaching and writing catechism. He together with De Jacobis started a seminary at Goudala and built a church and school in honor of Mary Immaculate and their missionary endeavors began to bear fruit. But the bishop of Salama was against the missionaries and the new converts. He arrested Abba Ghebre and put him into the Episcopal jail, but he was rescued from there. Bishop De Jacobis wanted Abba Ghebre to be ordained a priest and finally he was ordained on January 1851 at the age of 60. After his ordination he was sent to Gondar. Abba was imprisoned again on July 15th, 1854 for propagating catholic faith. He had to undergo terrible torture. The pain was excruciating. After a long and valiant suffering Abba breathed his last on August 28th, 1855 contracting plague of cholera. He was 64 years of age. His body was buried under a cedar tree, but his grave was never discovered afterwards.

Pope Pius XI declared him Blessed and Martyr on 31st October 1926 after 71 years. He had not been formally received into the Congregation of the Mission, but St. Justin De Jacobis regarded him a postulant of the Congregation. His feast is celebrated on August 30.

Sr. Anne, DC

Bangalore

