



# Vinfam India



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## DIGNITY OF WOMEN

The seventh Annual Assemblage cum Seminar on Systemic Change conducted by the International Commission for Systemic Change at Ranchi was a significant event in the annals of the Vincentian family in India. The Plenary Session focused on the agenda of achieving radical transformation in the lives of the marginalized by lifting them out of poverty, the down trodden out of their misery, thereby heralding in a systemic change in our society. The main point in the seminar however was to expedite efforts to restore the dignity of women.

The Holy Bible applaud man and woman as human beings of equal dignity since God created man in his own image. In the creation story we read that God created human beings in the image and likeness of God. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Gen 1: 27). Man and woman are seen as human persons of equal dignity. Both are entrusted with stewardships over goods of the earth and are called to attain true personhood through sincere gift of self. In the Gospel of John we read, "To all who received him, who believed him, he gave them power to become chil-

dren of God" (Jn 1:12) again the same Gospel, St. John highlights the word Jesus used to address his disciples. It is read, "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends..." (Jn 15:15). According to St. Paul, the Christians are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6: 16), "there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3: 28). The Holy Bible fosters gender equality and upholds the sanctity of womanhood.

The status of women cannot be conceived as monolithic or static – it has many facets and is in a state of constant flux in the manifestation and perpetuation of the cycle of violence. The harsh truth is that the society has not recognized woman as its bona-fide member. She is still a second grade citizen, inferior to man. Amidst verbal threats and physical torture, and the age old degradation, the dignity of women is a sad chronicle of violence and trauma as they are always vulnerable. Despite the fact that India has a strong written constitution proclaiming laws of equality and welfare of women, barbaric and savage practices still continue to haunt women. Hence, there is an urgent need to break the vicious circle,

the age old shackles of silent submission and usher in a marked metamorphosis in women's destiny and their sense of dignity.

The Church, since the early 1960's has steadfastly strived to scale up women's empowerment, as a part of its effort to achieve sustainable development in the Church and in the society as well. All the documents of the Church, various Papal letters and Messages, and the CBCI conventions of 2008-09 reiterated the necessity to promote gender power through ways that would widen and sustain woman's opportunities.

The members of the Vincentian family in India urged by conscience and compelled by the need of the times, felt the genuine need of addressing the issue of restoring the dignity of women have decided on making every effort towards attaining this goal in the coming few years. We as members of Vincentian Family both individually and jointly with CBCI believe that women's empowerment is central to achieving Gender equality and thereby eradicating poverty in our country.

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

# NEWS - NATION

## Common Formation Programme

The fourth Formation Programme for the members of the Vincentian Family was held at St. Vincent's Seminary, Hallehalli, Bangalore from May 1 to 5, 2013. There were 35 participants from 9 branches of the Vincentian Family. The theme of the seminar was "New evangelization in the Year of Faith: Vincentian Perspective." The following were the topics and the resource persons who dealt with them:

1. Faith & Evangelization: Scriptural perspectives : Fr.Simon Kaipuram, C.M.
2. Role of Women in Evangelization: Sr.Rita, S.C.N.
3. New Evangelization & Popular Mission: Fr. Paul Parekattil VC
4. Role of Charity in New Evangelization : Sr.Grance Moolan, D.C.
5. New Evangelization–New Methods : Sr. Roshini Barla S.C.J.M.

Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil, the National Coordinator presided over the inaugural Eucharistic Celebrations. During the homily, he said, St. Vincent de Paul was a forerunner of New Evangelization which the Church speaks of today. As members of Vincentian Family, we are called to imitate the good example of St. Vincent. The inaugural address was delivered by Sr. Ann Palatty SCN, the Provincial of Bangalore Province. She too underlined the relevance of the theme. The participants very much appreciated the input sessions. Above all the participants were extremely happy to meet the brothers and sisters of the same family and to be together. Indeed it was an enriching experience! On the last day Sr. (Dr.) Johnsia SCV, one of the participants proposed the vote of thanks. VFI is immensely grateful to the Visitatrice and the sisters of South Indian Province of the Daughters of Charity for providing all the facilities for conducting the seminar in Bangalore.

## Meeting of the committee for Promotion of the dignity of Women

In the 7<sup>th</sup> annual gathering of the General Body of the Vincentian Family in India, there was a strong proposal to decide upon an action plan for promoting the dignity of women. The general body chose a four member committee to prepare an action plan regarding this. Accordingly they came together on 30th

April 2013, at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity in Bangalore. All the members except Fr. George Varekulam CM were present for the meeting. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM, the National Coordinator and Sr. Rose Kidangen DC, the hosting Visitatrix attended the meeting. The team selected Sr. Clara Fernandes SSVP and Sr. Roselyn SCN to be the Chairperson and the Secretary respectively. The following is the report of the said meeting:

## Restoring the dignity of women

### Vincentian Family commitment- Ranchi meeting

#### INTRODUCTION:

At the conclusion of the Vincentian Family gathering at Ranchi (Feb. 23-27, 2013) for the workshop on Systemic Change, the members chose to address the issue of women and decided to focus their attention on Restoring the dignity of Women. Accordingly a committee was set up consisting of four members to carry on this mission forward. This topic was chosen as many members felt that our society has gone far away from the Biblical and theological understanding of gender equality. In Genesis 1:26 the Scripture says that man and woman are created "in the image and likeness of God" Man and woman are seen as human persons of equal dignity. Both are entrusted with stewardships over goods of the earth and are called to attain true personhood through sincere gift of self. The Constitution of India grants equality to women and empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. However, cultural impact, marginalization and exclusion which dominate our ideas, values, traditions, rules, norms, and ideologies have over the years placed women in a state of disadvantage and vulnerability. The members of the Vincentian Family in India urged by their conscience and forced by the recent happenings, felt the genuine need of addressing the issue of restoring the dignity of women and decided on making every effort towards attaining this goal in the coming few years. We, as a family believe that women's empowerment is central to achieving Gender equality.

#### VISION

The Vincentian Family envisions a society where equality and dignity of all human beings are upheld and are free to grow in the image and likeness of God.

#### MISSION

1. To acquaint the Vincentian Family with the necessity of creating a gender just society
2. To Commit itself to work towards restoring the equality and dignity of women at all levels

#### OBJECTIVES:

1. To facilitate change in the mindset of women and men so that they would conduct themselves with mutual respect and dignity.
2. To make them realize that men and women are complementary to one another and there by strengthen family life leading to a better society
3. To ensure that all Vincentian Family policies, structures and programs are gender sensitive and gender balanced.
4. To promote capacity building of Vincentian family members to work against any forms of discrimination and violence against women and children

#### Target group :

1. Vincentian Family
2. Extended family- beneficiaries

#### Implementation -Areas

1. Within the Vincentian family
2. Our Beneficiaries

#### Within the Vincentian Family

- Build a team (including experts both men and women) in each region to facilitate gender awareness program
- Net work with like-minded agencies, women's groups, regional forums to achieve the objectives
- Disseminate relevant materials, documents both civil and church based among the Vincentian Family members
- Collect , analyze, and disseminate data on violence against women and girl children

### **Our Beneficiaries:**

- Enhance women's educational and economic empowerment
- Making Justice accessible to women and girls
- Making basic health facilities available to women and children
- Encourage women's participation in decision making processes in families and in the Church and Civil bodies

### **Some Suggested activities**

- Organize seminars, workshops at the regional level to discuss / deliberate on issues affecting the dignity of women.
- Create awareness on Laws related to the protection of women.
- Gender sensitivity to be part of the school curriculum
- All the institutions within the Vincentian Family to have a Gender Policy developed by 2014
- Introduce Gender equality as a subject in our formation curriculum
- Get actively involved in the diocesan pastoral plan/diocesan commissions for women
- Publish articles on various themes related to women in our bulletins, web site.
- A study of women empowerment in the Vincentian tradition (Like Fredric Ozanam, Vincent de Paul, Louis de Marillac, Rosalie Rendu, and others.)

### **Implementation Mechanism**

The above formulated plans are to be carried out at Regional/Provincial/Equivalent/local bodies of the Vincentian Family

### **Budget**

Any expenses towards carrying out the above activities are to be met through the locally generated funds.

Major expenses can be recommended for consideration by funding agency.

### **Time Frame**

June 2013 – January 2014

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation of the above plan will be done by the Commission or the four member committee formed in Ranchi.

### **Conclusion**

The members of the Vincentian family believe that in the divine plan of God's Salvation women's contribution in the

mission of the Church and transformation of the Society. We are aware that despite the many progresses being made by women in the Church and Society much more has to be done to foster mutual respect and the equal dignity of woman and man so as to restore the likeness of the God in whose image we are created. May St. Vincent de Paul, our patron, who believed and practised this ideology in all his ministries to the poor, guide and inspire us.

### **Fr. Varghese Thottamkara CM is elected as Bishop**

The Holy Father Francis appointed Fr. Varghese Thottamkara CM from the Province of South India, as coadjutor bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Nekemte, Ethiopia on 28 June, 2013. Until now he has been one of the General Councillors of the Congregation of the Mission.

Bishop-elect Varghese Thottamkara, 54, was born in Thottuva, Kerala. He holds a licentiate degree in moral theology. He was ordained priest on 6 January 1987. He then went to Ethiopia as a missionary and served in teaching ministry in the Regional Major Seminary in Ethiopia for 11 years. On his return to India he served as director of the theologians and Visitor of the South Indian Province. In the General Assembly 2010 he was elected as one of the five general councilors of the Congregation of the Mission.

Bishop-elect Varghese Thottamkara CM will be ordained bishop on 13 August 2013 in Rome. Cardinal Rode Franc CM will be the Chief Consecrator. Vincentian Family in India expresses sincere congratulations and prayerful wishes to him.

### **Fr. Mathew Kallammackal CM is appointed as one of the General Councilors**

Fr. Mathew Kallammackal CM, the former Executive Body Member of VFI, is appointed as one of the General Councilors in the place of the bishop-elect Varghese Thottamkara CM. He is expected to leave for Rome in the month of September. VFI is immensely happy to offer him our best wishes for his ministry in Rome.

### **Vincentian Congregation (Kerala) reelects their major superiors**

The General Synaxis (Assembly) of the Vincentian Congregation held in the

month of May 2013 reelected Fr. Varghese Parapuram as the Superior General of Vincentian Congregation for the second term. The new team of the General Curia is the following: Fr. Mathew Vattakuzhy (Asst. General and in charge of Mission and social work), Fr. George Vettaparmbil (Finance Officer) Varghese Chakumkuzhy (Education and Media), Fr. Isaac Marippattu (Popular Missions and Retreats)

### **Fr. George Arrackal, Fr. Paul Puthuva and Fr. John Kandathinkara were too reelected**

Provincials of St. Joseph Province – Kottayam, Mary Matha Province – Angamaly and St. Thomas Province Satna respectively. VFI expresses sincere congratulations to all the major superiors of the Vincentian Congregation.

### **Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Elects New Leadership Team**

The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth elected their new central leadership team- Sisters Suzan Gatz, President, Sangeeta Ayithamattam and Brenda Gonzales, vice presidents during their 25th General Assembly which was held from May 26-June 7 at Nazareth Kentucky in the US.

The theme, 'Impelled by the Love of Christ', enabled the Sisters and the Associates to craft a Vision Statement: We will promote the dignity and equality of women and other oppressed people in Church and society.

They also affirmed four Directives which call the Sisters and Associates to:

- Deepen our spirituality through contemplation, dialogue and theological development across cultures and from different perspectives.
- Create vibrant community life and deepen relationships to further the mission.
- Promote the leadership and equality of all in the church especially women through education, dialogue, networking, advocacy and the use of inclusive language.
- Focus on bringing about systemic change as we are present to people in all aspects of our mission.

The new leadership team will assume office on August 31. Sister Sangeeta becomes the third sister from

India to be elected to the central leadership of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth.

*Malini Manjoly, SCN*

### **Executive Body Meeting**

The next executive body meeting of VFI is scheduled to be held at Vijayawada on September 29, 2013. VFI is grateful to the SSVF National President and his team for hosting the meeting.

### **Venue of the next Annual Gathering**

The venue of the 8th annual Gathering of the major superiors/heads shall be held at the Mary Matha Provincial House of VC in Angamaly, Kerala from 22 to 23 February 2014. VFI is grateful to the Superior General of VC and the Provincial of Mary Matha Province for hosting the gathering.

## **LIVES OF VINCENTIAN SAINTS AND BLESSEDS**

**BLESSED LINDALVA JUSTO OLIVEIRA (1953 – 1993)**



Lindalva was born on October 20th 1953, in a little town of Acu in North Rio Grande State, Brazil. She was the sixth child in a family of 14 children. Her parents were Joa Justo and

Maria Lucia de Oliveira who were devout Catholics and had simple and deep faith.

Lindalva received an ordinary Christian education. A generous child, she often helped her mother in the home. She was very gentle and loving. Attentive to the suffering of otherwise, she would visit people who were lonely or poor in the town, and even gave them her own clothes in a sensitive and discreet way. She began to realize that she was being called to follow Christ by reaching out to poor persons to witness to the Father's love for them. After

completing her studies as an administrative assistant, she took care of her elderly and ill father. After his death, she asked to be admitted to the company of the daughters of charity. She said "I am 33 years old, I come from a simple, honest family. I have felt God's call for a long time but have not been available to serve Christ until now. I am in good health and feel I have endless energy to do good works."

### **HER VOCATION AS A DAUGHTER OF CHARITY.**

On 16 July 1989, she was admitted into the Company of the Daughters of Charity in the Province of Recife. After two years of formation she was sent on Mission in 1991 to Don Pedro II residence in Salvador, Bahia state. She was appointed coordinator for the care of men who were elderly or ill. Sr. Lindalva did this service to the elderly persons as a real apostolate of words, witness and listening as she spiritually prepared those who were ill to live out the final moments of their lives.

### **A JOYFUL AND GENEROUS HEART.**

Sr. Lindalva loved the elderly people in her care with a gentle and humble heart. In a spirit of faith she saw them as her lords and masters. There were 40 of them in her care. Her modest, simple and discreet conduct revealed the purity in her attitudes as she treated everyone with charity. She understood her vocation as a response to God's will. "When God calls no one can hide from this call. Sooner or later God's will is accomplished. Her faith was a simple and complete adherence to life's events, which she welcomed as a gift and a call from God. Her generosity of heart enabled her to overcome all difficulties. She knew how to share her faith with others and support her companions when difficulties overwhelmed them. She once said "the service of the elderly people brings me greater happiness each day and I would rather shed my blood than be separated from this service."

### **HER MARTYRDOM ON GOOD FRIDAY.**

"We will come to know God's love by carrying the Cross "These words spoken by Sr. Lindalva herself have taken on a prophetic meaning. In 1993 there came a new arrival to Don Pedro II residence a 46 year old man named Auguste to be one among the inmates there. He sought out Sr. Lindalva and even made known his intentions to her. She was afraid and tried to distance herself from him as much as possible. She confided this to her sisters and sought refuge in prayer. Her love for the elderly residents kept her at the residence. Energetic, always smiling and available, Sr. Lindalva radiated the presence of God, and she lived her vocation as a servant of the poor in a spirit of justice inspired by love she loved each person without favoritism or discrimination.

One day not achieving what he wanted, Auguste flew into a violent rage and managed to get a sharp knife. On Good Friday, April 9th 1993, Sr. Lindalva made the way of the cross with her sisters and the parishioners in the nearby parish church and when she came back to the house, she prepared breakfast for the residents as she did each day. As she began her work, she was brutally stabbed and murdered by the 46 year old man who was angry with her; for he could not accept the fact that she had repulsed his advances. This Daughter of Charity certainly did not expect to die at such a young age. Having offered her life united to the sacrifice of Christ, after the way of the cross, she gave witness by her death to the words of Jesus "no one has greater love than this than to lay down one's life for one's friends." (Jn. 15:13) Let us pray through her intercession that we may be strengthened when faced with trials and tribulations of every kind in our day to day life.

Sr. Lindalva was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI on December 2, 2007. Her mother was present for the beatification ceremony. Her feast is celebrated on 7th January.

*Sr. Anne Muttathil DC*

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