

Vinfam India

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Message

Laudato Si: Vincentian Family

We are slowly entering into summer time. Many predict that this year is going to be hotter than last year. In fact we do feel hot even at the beginning of the month of March. This made me to reflect about the Pope Francis' call to all of us. Pope Francis is known for his simple and practical approaches in addressing and handling ecclesial and social issues that affects humanity and the universe. This is obviously proved in the long-awaited encyclical letter of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': on care for our common home*. It was released on 18 June 2015. The title comes from the canticle of Saint Francis, "LAUDATO SI', mi' Signore" – "Praise be to you, my Lord", and sets the theme for a lengthy addition to Catholic Church teaching that addresses both the environmental challenges facing the world and persistent poverty, weaving the two themes together as aspects of the same spiritual illness facing the world today. The letter is framed as an integrated systems perspective on the material and spiritual challenges, and the need for spiritual solutions.

The encyclical letter, which has 246 paragraphs, opens with a sixteen-paragraph introduction. It follows six chapters starting with where we are in our treatment of our planetary home and ending with the type of spiritual education needed to come in terms with environmental challenges and poverty. Each chapter has in between three to nine subsections. The encyclical concludes with a prayer for our earth and a Christian prayer in union with creation.

Through this encyclical Pope reminds us that the earth, our common home "is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us". We have forgotten that "we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters."

Laudato Si, elaborates extensively the urgent challenge to protect our common home. He invites the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development. Through this encyclical Pope Francis reviews the "present ecological crisis" based on the "results of the best scientific research available today"; highlights the "principles drawn from the Judaeo-Christian tradition" related to the commitment to the environment; considers the symptoms and causes of the crisis "to provide an approach to ecology which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings; offers broader "proposals for dialogue and action" for both individuals and international public policy; and finally he proposes guidelines for human development based on the Christian spiritual experience.

Several main themes run through the text that are addressed from a variety of different perspectives, traversing and unifying the text: the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of

power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policies, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle.

In his encyclical letter, Pope Francis expresses his main concern, that is, the sufferings of the poor due to ecological crisis. Pope Francis' concern for the poor once again revealed. He says that deteriorations of the human and natural environments are connected, and both disproportionately hurt the poor. To fix environmental problems there is an urgent need to fix "human and social degradation." Pope Francis expresses his sadness due to the weak international political responses to tackle the ecological crisis.

What would Saint Vincent de Paul do about today's ecological crisis which deteriorates the situation of the poor? Certainly Vincent de Paul would have responded to the call of the church urgently and very positively. Since it affects the poor directly he would have accomplished those works which would promote healthy, sustainable and livable environment.

We the members of the Vincentian Family who are champions to evangelize the poor must whole heartedly welcome the call of Pope Francis. Certainly the pollution, climate change, the issue of water etc., are getting acute these days. The first one to suffer is the poor ones. Therefore our Vincentian work at present cannot address only the disastrous consequences that compromise the life of the poor, but also and principally, their causes especially the ecological crisis.

Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM
Coordinator of Vincentian Family in India

News - Nation

The Tenth Annual Gathering of the Vincentian Family-



The Tenth Annual Gathering of the Vincentian Family was held at Gopalpur-on-sea from 12 to 13 March 2016. There were 45 participants from 11 branches. The National Coordinator, Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM in his introductory remarks called for solid deliberations during the meeting and to come out with concrete ways of establishing strong collaboration among the branches. Sr. Grace Moolan DC welcomed the Gathering and Sr. Kumari Singh DC, Visitatrice of North Indian Province and also the hosting Superior gave the inaugural address.

The first formal session was presented by Bishop Simon Kaipuram CM on the theme, Collaboration in Vincentian Family: Biblical Perspectives. Bishop Simon emphasised the need to improve the skills in collaborative action and leadership. After the Tea Break, Bishop Simon continued the session. Interaction followed in which some of the members shared their experiences. Three relevant and inter-related questions were presented for group discussion and five Groups were formed for the same.



Since Rev. Fr. Mathew Onatt CM, the Visitor of South Indian Province was stepping into Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee Year, he was requested to preside over the Holy Mass along with the Bishop Thomas Thiruthalil CM, Bishop Simon CM and Vincentian Fathers present there for the meeting. Bishop Simon preached the homily.

The next session was presented by Br. Prof. Joseph Pandian, the International Territorial Vice-President of SSVP on the theme: Collaboration: A lay perspective. It was a touching, challenging and powerful talk. He asserted with many examples that lay organizations are closer to the poor. Two pertinent questions were thrown open to the participants for further discussion. The day was concluded with group discussion and with presentation of the outcome of the group discussion.

The second day began with the Holy Mass presided over by Bishop Thomas Thiruthalil CM, the Bishop

Emeritus of Balasore. He called the participants to be genuine Vincentians. The General Body Meeting



began at 9 a.m. , to plan for the development of the Vincentian Family in India. Sr. Sangeetha SCN, the General Councillor was requested to chair the session. In the absence of the National Secretary who was ill, Br. Tomy Varghese of SSVP was asked to present the Report of the previous Annual Gathering. Matters arising out of the report were discussed in detail. The participants pointed out the absence of the National Secretary and Fr. Francis Puthenthayil conveyed the desire of the National Secretary to be relieved from his office. The floor accepted the request and unanimously elected a new secretary in the person of Br. Tomy Varghese of SSVP. And Br. Mathew M C of SSVP was elected as the Joint Secretary.

Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM presented the Finance Report and it was approved. It was followed by the presentations of Regional Reports by the Regional Co-ordinators. Of the 9 Regions, 6 regional coordinators presented brief reports on various activities took place in their respective regions. After that, the three Commissions' (Systemic Change, Women Empowerment and National Formation) chairmen - Br. Joseph Pandian, Rev. Sr. Roselyin, and Rev. Fr. Shajan Pudussery - presented their reports on various activities, programs and seminars organized by them.

An evaluation of the VFI was followed. Most of the members expressed their satisfaction of the steady progress of the Vincentian Family in India. Some of the branches recently associated with the V F gave a brief description of their branches and main activities. Br. S Pious of SSVP proposed the vote of thanks.

National Secretariat - Project Proposal

To have a Secretariat for VFI has been the long cherished aspiration of the Vincentians. In the previous annual gathering the Visitor of the South Indian Province of the CM expressed their interest and willingness to donate land for the building at Belwadi. The General Body studied the following goals and objectives for promoting the VF in India: They are:

1. To coordinate the VF in India
2. To deepen their knowledge about the Vincentian Charism
3. To build up relationship
4. To provide materials of Vincentian Spirituality
5. To provide long and short term courses on Vincentian Spirituality
6. To conduct retreats and training programs for the Vincentian lay associations
7. To monitor the systemic change common projects of VFI etc.

Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil presented to the floor a project prepared by Rev. Fr. George Varekulam CM. It includes a chapel, conference room, library, 30 rooms and other facilities necessary to operate a resource center. Very Rev. Fr. Gregory G. Gay CM agreed to recommend the project to Vincentian Solidairty Fund and Vincentian Family Office. Certainly half of the fund is to be generated locally. It was proposed that if a Vincentian member can contribute Rs. 100 each and also if possible collect Rs. 100 from a benefactor; the project could be realized soon. A joint Bank Account will be opened in Mysore shortly and the details will be intimated to all the members.

Regional News

Bihar-Jharkhand Region Consists of 6 branches namely, SCN, DC, VC, SCV, SCJM and SSVP. In 2015, four regional gatherings have been organised. Each meeting explored the possibility of working together as members of one family. The members decided to share resources. Food and clothes were supplied to 2000 people during the Christmas. The members have planned several programs and schemes for 2016, like collection and distribution of clothes, common program for novices, sharing of resources, meetings of representatives, zonal meetings, a special project for the poor during the Jubilee Year of Mercy etc.

North Eastern Region Consists of CM Fathers, VC Fathers, DC Sisters and SSVP Brothers. All are distantly located and not easily reachable. Still a combined meeting was held in January 2016. The members were reminded of the Vincentian Charism and reiterated the need to work in harmony for the cause of charity.

Western Region: The region is having general meetings every year and most of the participants are SSVP members. The members are interested to know more about the developments of Vinfam. Members are trying to spread the message of systemic change in the local regions in local languages. The general meeting for the year was held at Manmad.

Eastern Region has formed 5 zones, conducted zonal meetings and also nominated co-ordinators. Regional meetings were organized on 10th May 2015 at Berampur and on 12th August 2015 at Gopalpur.

Tamil Nadu Region: Four zones have been formed in the Tamil Nadu region. Zonal meetings were conducted. To propagate the concept of Vincentian Family, a write-up has been prepared in Tamil. A circular also was issued in Tamil and English.

Karnataka Region: The region has been divided into 5 zones of which 3 are very active. Vincentian Family Annual Meeting was organized on 21st September 2015 and the members really shared the Vincentian Family spirit. With the active involvement of the region, 4 new SSVP conferences were opened in Mysore. A gathering of 80 Vincentians mainly of 6 SSVP conferences were held at Mysore. The region has taken initiative in the release of prisoners.

SAINTS AND BLESSEDS OF VINCENTIAN FAMILY

BLESSED NEMESIA VALLE: HER LIFE (1847-1916)

Giulia Nemesia Valle (1847-1916) was born in Aosta, Italy on June 26, 1847, the first child of Anselmo Valle and Cristina Dalbar. She was baptized that day in the ancient collegiate Church of Saint Orso of Aosta. Her parents were milliners. Subsequent to her mother's death, which occurred when Giulia was four, she and her younger brother Vincent were cared for first by relatives of her father's family and then by her mother's relatives. She was schooled, catechized, and prepared for the Sacraments at home by a priest who was a friend of the family.



At age eleven, Giulia was sent to a boarding school of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Jeanne-Anne Thouret in Besançon, France. There she learned French and gained household skills. Upon her return to Italy at age sixteen,

she found that her father had remarried and was living in Pont Saint Martin. However, the family situation was unwelcoming to her. Meanwhile, the Sisters of Charity of St. Joan Antida Thouret had established a house in Saint Martin. Giulia was able to meet again some of her teachers from the school at Besançon and also had the opportunity to observe their community life, which attracted her. When her father told her that he had arranged a marriage for her, she told him that her wish was, instead, to become a Sister of Charity. On September 8, 1866 her father accompanied her to the order's novitiate at the Monastery of Saint Margaret in Vercelli. During Giulia's formation, she began to pray a prayer that would remain with her for the rest of her life: "Jesus, empty me of myself, let me be clothed in you. Jesus, for you I live and for you I die..." At the end of her novitiate, she received the religious name Némésia, after the Roman martyr Nemesius, a deacon who was beheaded because of his conversion to Christianity.

Sister Némésia was sent to Saint Vincent's Institute at Tortona, where she worked in the elementary school, the boarding school, and the orphanage. At age forty she was elected superior of her community. After 36 years at Tortona, she moved to Borgano, near Turin, to work with novices in a new province of the Sisters of Charity. In the thirteen years before her death, she helped to form about five hundred novices.

She died on December 18, 1916. She was named a Servant of God on July 5, 2002 and was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 25, 2004.

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"Charity is certainly greater than any rule. Moreover, all rules must lead to charity."

St. Vincent De Paul

New Secretaries: Kindly send the articles, news and photos to the following:

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