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Message

400TH ANNIVERSARY OF VINCENTIAN CHARISM

A few events in 1617 touched the life of St. Vincent de Paul radically. The first event took place in the month of January. St. Vincent was asked to hear the confession of a dying man on the De Gondi Estate. After receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, he made the following remark: "If not for Vincent's pastoral care, I would have died in mortal sin." These words touched St. Vincent and suddenly it made him to realize that there were tens of thousands just like him. This experience made him to accept the request by Madame De Gondi to preach a mission for her employees, the poor peasants, on the need of General Confession at Folleville. This was the next event that took place on January 25. He instructed them, he moved their hearts and encouraged them to approach for general confession. Later St. Vincent himself realized what had happened and by way of summary he stated: "He [God] blessed what I said" (CCD: XI: 4). So many people came forward to confess their sins that St. Vincent had to request the assistance of the Jesuits in Amiens. Yet another event took place in the month of August (20). During the Sunday Mass, St. Vincent called on his parishioners to help a sick family in great need. Many women responded that same afternoon, visiting the family and bringing them aid.

Three days later, on 23rd August 1617, marveling at such generosity, and feeling it necessary to organize this help to make it more effective and long-lasting, St. Vincent led a first group of women to form a confraternity, with the aim of providing spiritual and material help to those most in need.

These events revealed to him that he had been gifted with a unique grace from the Holy Spirit and God had a plan for him. Further, a few Gospel passages such as Luke 4: 18, Mt 25: 35 etc., enthused him to realize that he is called to imitate Christ the evangeliser of the poor. Serving the poor spiritually and corporally became the core of his life and mission. This is the beginning of the Vincentian Charism in the Church. A Charism is alive and relevant when through time it is accepted and adopted by many people. The "Vincentian Charism" has proven to be this kind of charism as it inspired numerous followers through these years. To this day it continues to be embraced, adopted and lived by numerous groups, associations, societies, institutes and movements. Today more than two million members appreciate and live Vincentian Charism around the Globe. It is worth to note that, of the total number of Vincentians, one hundred thousand (100000) members hail from India. What unites and brings us together is the one mission of loving and serving those persons living in various forms of poverty and marginalization.

In-order to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the origin of the Vincentian Charism, we have a beautiful theme for this year 2017: "I was a stranger...you welcomed me" (Mt 25: 35). Vincentians around the world are called to seek and find out who are the strangers for them and take apt steps to welcome them. A few questions are posed before us to reflect, such as: 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?

In our endeavour to answer these questions it is worth to reflect as how St. Vincent welcomed the stranger....the poor? What steps he took? What can we learn from him? The following are some of the common steps that St. Vincent had taken in welcoming the stranger... the poor:

- He noticed the need, like the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 33). He set his eyes to see all those who were poor and found time to listen to them with keen interest.
- He was moved with pity and compassion. This made up his mind to do something concrete to change the lives of the poor. In other words, his affective love became effective and contagious.
- ❖ He saw Christ in the poor and poor in Christ. Therefore, with great respect he served them. He respected the poor as a person created in the image and likeness of God. This led him to consider the poor as his lord and master. Therefore, the service that he rendered was qualitatively par excellence.
- He had clear vision and mission for the integral development of the poor. This made him to undertake both corporal and spiritual needs of the poor.
- He believed in collaboration. He brought together people of good will and together with them he worked so the end result of his services was more effective.

- He motivated others by way of advocacy and networking, by which he got a formidable force to serve among the poor and the needy.
- Finally, not only he responded with the immediate relief but also tried to uproot the causes of poverty. For, he believed in the maxim: "charity seeks to remedy today what justice could have prevented yesterday"

The hunger report of 2015 reveals that 795 million people in the world remain hungry. It is sad to note that India has the highest number of people (194.6 million) remain hungry. Lack of basic needs of life is still a serious setback in India. Are they not strangers who deserve to be welcomed? In India, we have so many 'strangers'. Yes, there are so many to choose from – the refugees fleeing from religious persecution, the migrants seeking a new life outside their own Federal States, the homeless, sexually exploited ones, drug addicts, the unemployed and underemployed, those coping alone with physical or mental illness, those suffering discrimination and exploitation perhaps because of their faith or race or color, the lonely and vulnerable both young and old, those deprived of quality education, etc. Many of these people and issues are already familiar to us and we have been doing relief works. However, can we do more? Why the number of the 'strangers' in steady growth instead of diminishing?

This calls us to change the strategy that we were applying so far. If we really love the poor and want to arrest poverty, we need to replicate the steps taken by St. Vincent. Our existence and identity as Vincentians will have a real meaning when we respond together to address the shocking issues in and around our society. Let this year of 'Welcoming the Stranger' be an opportunity to think together and work together as members of one family for the noble cause of alleviating or even eradicating poverty from the face of the earth.

Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM National Coordinator of Vincentian Family

News-Nation

The Eleventh Annual Gathering of the Vincentian Family

The Eleventh Annual Gathering of the Vincentian Family was held at 'Niveditha' Aluva, Kerala from 11 to 12 March 2017. There were 41 participants from 9 branches. Br. Johnson Varghese SSVP the hosting head welcomed the Gathering. Rt. Rev. Msgr. Thomas Thiruthalil C M the Bishop Emeritus of Balasore gave the inaugural address.

The key note address was presented by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Simon Kaipuram CM, the Bishop of Balasore. Since this year marked the 400th anniversary of the origin of the Vincentian Charism, the theme for the key note address was on 'Vincentian Charism: Yesterday and Today with a special emphasis on the relevance of Systemic Change'. Bishop Simon presented in three points: 1 Bible and Systemic Change: 2. Vincent De Paul and Systemic Change.

After the Tea Break, Br. James Claffey SSVP, the Secretary of International Systemic Change Commission continued the session. He emphasized that Systemic Change need not be a huge project. But it has to be the project of the people.

Holy Mass was celebrated by Mar Mathew Vaniakizhakel V C, the Bishop Emeritus of Satna. In the homily he appreciated the vision and mission of St. Vincent de Paul.

Br. James Claffey continued the session in the afternoon and stated that poverty is man-made and poverty is not inevitable. People in poverty have rights.

After evening prayer and supper, the Executive Body meeting with the Regional Coordinators took place. 14 members attended the meeting. After evaluating the functioning of VFI at regional level, suggestions to be presented before the General Body were discussed.

The Second Day of the Annual Gathering was fully devoted for various official business meetings.

Rev. Fr. Mathew Vattakuzhy V C led the opening prayer. Rev.Fr. Francis Puthenthayil, National Coordinator of VFI was on chair and welcomed the gathering. Br. Tomy Varghese, National Secretary of VFI presented the Report of the previous Annual Gathering. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil presented the Finance Report and it was approved.

Report from the Regions: Of the 9 Regions, 5 co-ordinators presented brief reports on various activities taken up by the regions. The participants appreciated reports, and in a special way lauded the collaborative works in the Karnataka region.

Commission Reports: Rev. Fr. Shajan Puthussery C M presented the report of the Formation Commission. Sr. Roselyn SCN presented the report on Women Commission and endorsed the need for giving more role for Women.

To strengthen the Collaboration in the 400th anniversary of Charism, various projects were discussed and considered. Mega projects including construction of houses were suggested. 400 to 500 houses at national level could be the target.

Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil gave a briefing on the four decisions of the Vincentian Family in the International Level. a. During this special year of Charism, the Vincentian Family decided to take the Heart of St. Vincent to different countries; b. A Symposium on Vincentian Charism will be organised in Rome from 13 to 15 October 2017; c. As a response to welcoming the stranger, the Vincentian Family is thinking of a Mega project on housing for those who do not have; d. There shall be video clips competition on Vincentian charism. The participants can prepare 20 minutes programme and send it to the International office of Vincentian Family.

Another programe proposed was 'A DAY OF PRAYER AND FASTING'. The date proposed was Friday prior to the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul that is September 22.

Another project proposed was 'AWARENESS PROGRAM' to make known who St. Vincent is? Articles, Essay competitions, Quiz programs etc. could be

conducted. The Commission for Formation was asked to take up this project.

To form local units and zonal units in each region, Rev. Fr. Tomichan suggested the idea of 'Each one Catch one' which could radiate oneself. To disseminate the concept of systemic change and gender equality it was proposed to have systemic change programs in formation houses. It can be also planned for Regions/Branches/Units etc. Every member, Father/ Sister/Brother must attend a workshop on Systemic Change.

Gender Equality: Formation Programs should be planned and conducted especially for the younger ones. Modules will be prepared and given with-in a year. It was appreciated and encouraged to celebrate International Women Day.

Formation Programs: Appreciated the Commission for conducting effective formation programs. As it is inconvenient for laymen to attend residential five day programs, it was suggested to think of shorter programs at different venues.

It was decided to conduct an Essay Competition for the members, in connection of 400th anniversary of Vincentian Charism. Also suggested to conduct 'Script for Skit competition' and 'Video Clip competition'. It was also suggested to document and share success stories.

Directory: Hard copies of the draft Directory were distributed among the members. Members were requested to send the corrected copy within a month.

Action Plan: Effective Implementation of the Common Projects discussed above.

Next AGM: Last Saturday and Sunday (24th and 25th) of February 2018.

Sr. Teressa Pegado proposed the vote of thanks.

Our next Executive Body meeting of the VFI is scheduled to be held on 2nd July 2017 at St. Vincent's Provincial House (DC), Banaswadi, Bangalore.



Workshop on Systemic Change

Two day workshop on Systemic Change was conducted at 'Niveditha', Alwaye, Kerala on 13th and 14th of March 2017. Br. James Claffey SSVP, the Secretary of International Systemic Change Commission and Sr. Roselyn were the renowned resource persons. 25 members from different branches participated in the workshop. The various sessions discussed in detail the different aspects of poverty and addressing its causes. The pertinent questions raised were: What would transform the lives of those I minister with and whom can I help? What one aspect of Systemic Change can I implement upon my return to ministry?

On the session on Social Analysis the approach suggested was SEE – JUDGE – ACT. As an exercise, the Migrant Problem in Kerala was analised. A short film on People's Power Vs Government was screened. Discussing on projects, it was cited that we may not require a new project. The concluding session on the second day highlighted the need of collaboration and the need to be good Networkers. What can we do concretely to foster greater collaboration? We

National Secretariat

VFI Secretariat: Secretariat for VF were one of the major agenda in the various VFI annual meetings. In 2011 it was decided to have the secretariat in Bangalore. But it was in 2014 Very Rev. Mathew Onatt CM, the then Visitor of South Indian Province of the Congregation of Mission invited to locate the said

Secretariat in Mysore and to this effect he offered half acre of land for this purpose at Belwadi. The formal declaration was made during the annual gathering held at Mysore in the presence of Very Rev. Fr. Gregory G. Gay, the then Superior General of CM and DC. But due to some unforeseen reasons the project could not be realized in Mysore. At the given situation, many felt the need of shifting the plan to Bangalore. The Daughters of Charity of the South Indian Province expressed their willingness to allot land in Bangalore at Hallehalli. Considering the advantages the venue shall be shifted to Hallehalli, Bangalore. However, Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil was asked to acquire the land for this purpose and make necessary contracts with the Visitatrice of South India.

Vincentian Family in India, a Registered Trust

The General Body also reiterated the need of building the office at the earliest and the need of Registering of VF as a Trust for the reason of transaction of the funds.

Seminar on Vincentian Charism



"Vincentian Charism: Gaudium in Minsterium (Joy in Serving)

In-order to mark the 400th anniversary of the origin of Vincentian Charism, the Commission for Formation of the VFI organized a five-day seminar from 1 to 5 May 2017 at St. Vincent's Seminary, Hallehalli, Bangalore. The theme was on "Vincentian Charism: Gaudium in Ministerium, (Joy in Serving). The inaugural

session began with invoking God's blessings by a prayer dance by the Candidates of the South Indian Province of the Daughters of Charity. The session was chaired by His Excellency Bishop Simon, the bishop of Balasore in the presence of Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM, the National Coordinator of VFI and Sr. Rose Chirayil DC, the Visitatrice of South Indian Province. Fr. Shajan CM, the Chairperson of Commission for Formation of VFI, welcomed all the participants and the resource persons for the seminar. He also introduced the theme and the resource persons to the participants. There were 27 participants from 5 different Vincentian Family branches.

Bishop Simon in his first talk dealt the biblical perspective of "Vincentian Charism: Joy in serving". At 11 a.m, Bishop Simon presided over the Eucharistic celebration. In the afternoon session Simon introduced the profile of St. Vincent and his conversion to a man of high spirituality and dedication. He was the conscience of the 17th century France. He pointed out as how St. Vincent worked for the social justice. Vincent promoted justice with love and compassion. The session was concluded with enumerating a few qualities of Vincentian charism of service.

The second day of the seminar was opened with the prayer service conducted by SCV sisters. The theme of the day was on "Sprouting of Vincentian charism". Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM, was the resource person of the morning sessions. He briefly explained as how the of Vincentian charism emerged in the 17th Century in France. Fr. Francis also pointed out the fact that St. Vincent never had a direct vision of Jesus explaining about his call to be an evangelizer of the poor. But the events that took place in the life of St. Vincent de Paul, he took as signs of God revealing him of his vocation. St. Vincent had a clear vision and mission for the development of the poor. He tried to uproot the poverty from the society by collaborating with the people of good will. In view of this he had four foundations of which three still exist.

The afternoon session was taken by Sr. Rose Chirayil DC. She gave a presentation on St. Louise

de Marillac. Sr. Rose briefly explained Louise's collaboration with St. Vincent in shaping the Vincentian Charism. If St. Vincent is known as the Father of the Vincentian Charism, St. Louise de Marillac could be called its Mother. The session concluded with group discussion. All participated in the discussion actively and each group presented their views in the general session. After the supper there was an organized recreation, and all enjoyed every second of the recreation.

The third day was opened with the prayer of the church lead by the SSVP members. The theme of the day was on "the emergence of Vincentian charism beyond boundaries." Different branches shared about how Vincentian charism was developed in their respective branches. In first session, the Sisters of Cottolongo, the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary and Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Manathavady presented the development of Vincentian Charism in their branches. In the second session Fr. Francis Puthenthayil presented the emergence of Vincentian Charism in various lay associations such as in SSVP, in AIC and in VMY. In his talk Fr. Francis highlighted that the Vincentian Charism is not a static reality but develops day by day according to signs of the time and to the call of the Church.

The fourth day was opened with the prayer service by the SCJM sisters. The theme of the day was on Vincentian Charism: a leap into the future. The three sessions of the day were conducted by Rev. Fr. Biju Chittuparamban CM. Looking into present struggles, he expressed his anxieties of the future challenges in evangelizing the poor. In the afternoon, the participants were divided into four groups for discussion. The group secretaries presented the outcome of their discussion during the General session.

The fifth day started with thankful hearts. Fr. Shajan Pudussery CM briefly presented the origin and development of Vincentian Family and its relevance today. During the second session the participants felt the need of articulating a few action plans. The action plans were taken in three levels: personal level, each Branch level and Vincentian Family level. Sr. Deepa SCJM, Ms. Veronica SSVP, and Fr. Debasis Mandal CM took the pain to summarize the outcome of the four days discussions. Sr. Beena DC, the Secretary of the Commission for the Formation Programme

proposed vote of thanks. The five-day seminar was concluded with Holy Mass. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM, the National Coordinator of the Vincentian Family was the main celebrant. In his homily he presented Louise de Marillac as a person with brokenness and wounds. But she gave herself to God totally and she experienced the loving touch of God. She could become a saint. Fr. Francis concluded his homily by calling everyone to follow the footsteps of Louise de Marillac. In spite of her brokenness she could be a saint. If so everybody can become a saint by becoming an authentic Vincentian. All the participants enjoyed the enriching and inspiring seminar inputs. The meeting was its conclusion with agape. "We meet to part and part to meet" we all parted for our own destination with a promise that we will meet again.

From Different Branches 1.Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Manathavady Seminar on Systemic Change

The Congregation of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul conducts a two-day seminar every year as part of their ongoing formation. This year the seminar was organized from

May 19 to 20, 2017 at Vincentgiri, SCV Generalate, Mananthavady. "Systemic Change", was the theme of the Seminar. It is an approach which is

very relevant today and was strongly recommended by the Vincentian Family worldwide. The seminar was opened with the Eucharistic celebration, presided over by Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM. While giving homily he highlighted the urgent need of systemic change principles and strategies in the service to the poor.

The input session as began at 9 a.m. Sr. Ancita, the Superior General, welcomed Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM and all the participants. The first session began with a quotation from St. John Paul II's *Nouvo Millenio Inenute, (No.* 50 January 6, 2001): "in our own time, there are so many needs which demand

a compassionate response...How can it be that even today there are still people dying of hunger? Condemned to illiteracy? Lacking the most basic medical care? Without a roof over their heads?" the tradition of charity which has expressed itself in so many different ways in the past two millennia, but which today calls for even greater resourcefulness. Now is the time for a new 'creativity' in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also be 'getting close' to those who suffer, so that the hand that helps is seen not as a humiliating handout but as a sharing between brothers and sisters". St. John Paul II calls for Systemic Change. It is a process that favors a structural change of a system. It is a change that leads to a radical transformation in the life of those living in poverty through specific strategies needed to produce the change.

Fr. Francis reminded the participants not be content with tiding the poor over the poverty crisis. Rather one who committed to serve the poor must study their condition and the injustices which brought about such poverty, with the aim of a long-term improvement. It is time to go beyond providing food, clothing and shelter to alleviate immediate needs. The most important task or responsibility of the Vincentian call is to facilitate the poor to help themselves. Engage the poor in the identification of the root causes and to create strategies, including advocacy to address those structures that keep them in poverty. Systemic change requires transforming attitudes.

The three sessions on the first day gave a brief notion as well as the five criteria of systemic change. The day's sessions and group discussions ignited in the minds of the participants a desire to know more about Systemic Change.

The second day's programme began with Holy Mass. The first session was on social analysis. It is the first step to be taken in working on a project. Social analysis is like diagnosis of a medical illness; it gives a clear and complete description of the problem and identifies its root causes to prescribe effective treatment. In the process of social analysis various aspects are analyzed to get the root causes of poverty. The second session was dedicated in explaining the 10 principles of systemic change. And the third session dealt with the 20 strategies of systemic change. The participants understanding the relevance of systemic change prepared a few action plans to implement the concept learned. The action plans covered three areas: personal level, community level and Vincentian Family level. The success of the seminar is that the participants resolved to study deeply the concept of Systemic Change. They also showed great interest in sharing this concepts with their own members and with the branches of Vincentian Family especially the lay associations. The seminar concluded with a vote of thanks.

Saints and Blessed of the Vincentian Family 27 Spanish DC Martyrs







On the Sunday, 13 October 2013, 2500 members of the Vincentian family gathered for the celebration of the beatification of the Spanish martyrs in Tarragona, Spain. It was a day of heart inspiring and rejoicing for the Vincentian Family over the beatification of our 42 Martyrs: 27 Daughters of charity, 11 Priests of the mission, 3 Vincentian Brothers and one Child of Mary-Dolores Broseta

"The blood of the Martyrs has been the seed of the church". These words of Tertullian echoed at the years of thousands who had gathered there. All were affected by the religious purification that resulted from 21st July 1936 by the legal decree of the republican government that removed the sisters and the members of all religious communities from health and educational institutions as well as other beneficent agencies. Large numbers of Catholics were butchered like animals

including priests, religious and lay faithful during the 1936-1939 Spanish civil war as they stood firm in their faith. Among these were 27 Daughters of Charity who professed their faith in Christ boldly and witnessed their charity by receiving Martyrdom. They belonged to different communities.

From Elneveral TB Hospital the following were killed on August 12,1936: Sr. Melchora Adoration Cortes Bueno, Sr. Severia dias Pardo, Sr. M Dolores Barroso, Sr. Asuncion Mayoral, Sr. Romana Cao Fernandez, and Sr. Juana Perez Abascal. They were persecuted and shot on the "death train" which they were forced to take.

From **Saint Eugino** Residence in Valencia the following three were Martyred for hiding and participating in the Holy Eucharist: Sr. M Rosario ciercoles, Sr. M Lusia Bermundes and Sr. Micaela Hernan. They were martyred on August 18, 1936. The others such as Sr. Dolores Ursula Caro Martin, Sr. Concecion Perez Giral, Sr. Martina Vazquez and Sr. Andrea Calle González were expelled and brutally martyred on Sep.3,1936.

From General hospital Valencia, Sr. Josefa Martinez took refuge with her family in Alberique. As her family was persecuted, she offered to die in place of her pregnant sister whose husband had recently been shot dead. She died as a Martyr of Charity on 31 Oct, 1936 like St Maxmillion Kolbe gave up her life to save two lives.

The Martyrs of the Eucharist on the Toledo Road: On October 29, 1936, attending the Holy Eucharist lead Sr. Joaquina Rey and Sr. Victoria Arregui to the Martyrdom. From the Maternity Hospital Madrid Sr. Modesta Moro Briz and Sr. Pilar Izabel Sanchez Suarez were condemned to death by peoples' tribunal for celebrating secretly Holy Mass on Oct 31, 1936.

The Martyrs at Hospital San Carlos were the following: Sr. Josefa Girones Arteta, Sr. Stephanie Saldana and Sr. Lorenza Diaz Bolano were persecuted and were shot on November 22, 1936. They were condemned because of their fidelity to the faith and to their vocation when confronted with their prosecutors' immoral propositions.

From **Valncia**: Sr. Josefa Laborra, Sr. Carmen Rodriguez Banazal, Sr. Estefania Irisaral, Sr. Pilar Nalda, Sr. Isidora Izquierdo and Dolores Broseta (a child of Mary) were assassinated. Sisters were hidden in a boarding house in

Valencia. Doloros Briseta brought them their meal by the former students. Betera and a companion took turn in giving this service. On 9th December 1936, one of them followed and the persecutors came and shot them all.

Martyrs at **The secret Police Headquarters:** Sr. Gaudencia Benavides Herrero, a missionary in Puerto Rico came back to Spain due to heart problem. Recognizing her as a sister, she was arrested and subjected to terrible treatments in three different prisons. Her body was full of wounds and she got no medical care. She died on February 11, 1937, witnessing her faith and forgiving to the persecutors.

During the beatification homily, the Papal Legate Cardinal Angelo Amato emphasized that the "Blessed were not victims of the civil war, but Martyrs of a radical religious persecution whose goal was to make the Church systematically disappear". These martyrs of 20th century are our elder sisters and become excellent role models. Their lives were stripped in splendor shines today as ever shining stars. It is because they loved God more than their lives. They dedicated their life with passion for Jesus and for the person of the Poor. They strove to restore peace in the midst of violence, responding with goodness, forgiving insults, calumnies, humiliations, severe tortures by looking at God, they risked their lives with boldness of charity cried aloud "Long live Christ the King"! These 28 martyrs of 20th centaury added the zeal of every Christian and boost our faith and opened for us a Door of Faith by living what they believed and by giving their life for Christ in whom they believed. The ceremony that occurred at the time of the closing of the Year of Faith on 13, October 2013 was not the end of the year of Faith ... but years to live the faith our Vincentian family members have handed on to us.

Sr. Soniya Kalappurackal DC

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" Humility is nothing but truth, and pride is nothing but lying".

St. Vincent de Paul