

Vinfam India

News Bulletin of the Vincentian Family in India



Volume 20

(For Private Circulation among members only) July- October 15, 2017

Message

Mercy and Justice

The month of September invites us to remember St. Vincent de Paul, the corner stone of the Vincentian Family in a very special way. Along with him we also remember in this month, the Martyrs of French Revolution (September 2) who were killed for refusing to take the Constitutional Oath and out of hatred for the Catholic Faith; Bl. Frederic Ozanam (September 9), the Principal Founder of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the forerunner of the teachings found in the first social Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII; and St. John Gabriel Perboyre (September 11) the first canonized saint of China who endured martyrdom in 1840. All these Saints and Blesseds followed the footsteps of Christ in becoming merciful to the poor and the needy as well as promoters of justice to root out the causes of poverty and injustice. The core values they lived for and practiced were Mercy and Justice.

The Old Testament underlines the mercy of God. God enters in to a covenant of mercy with Israel and renews it constantly. In Exodus, Moses encounters a God **“who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounds in steadfast love and fidelity”** In the New Testament, **“Jesus is God’s mercy in person”**. By miracles, acts of healing, teachings, and deliverance from sin and suffering, Jesus shows God’s unlimited compassion for Gentiles and Jews. In the same way the Bible presents the God who loves Justice. **“This is what the Lord God asks of you: act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God.”** (Mic. 6:8). In the New Testament Jesus presents Himself as a Promoter of Justice. **“Seek first the Kingdom of God and his justice, and all will be given you”** (Mt. 6: 33). One will find joy and satisfaction in the life only if he loves and promotes justice. Therefore, Jesus says, **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.”** (Mt. 5:6). In Catholic tradition, justice is not only a legal juridical process, but a living law based on love.

St. Vincent’s journey to Mercy and Justice began in pastoral ministry to God’s people in four places:

- Clichy** - parish work;
- Gannes** - a memorable confession;
- Folleville** - start of parish missions;
- Chatillon**- a poor family that propelled him to begin Confraternities of Charity.

Further, two other experiences motivated his life to commit totally for mercy and justice:

- As a Chaplain of Galley slaves:** He found that these were the lowest rung of prisoners who had to face deplorable treatment. They were with little hope of release. Vincent did not judge or shun them, but provided them pastoral care and better living conditions;
- Noticing many abandoned children in Paris:** Unwanted newborns of prostitutes and abused women often let them on Church steps. They were labeled as *“children of sin”*. But St. Vincent set up orphanages and created *‘drop off points’* to preserve their lives.

St. Vincent believed in mercy. According to him, “It is a distinctive characteristic of God to be merciful. Let us ask God to fill us with His Spirit of Mercy and Compassion, so whoever sees us can say, ‘There is a person full of mercy’”(CCD Vol. 11, 308). He adds, “God is well aware of our woes and limits. In his mercy, he supplies for our defects. Thus, act simply and do not become anxious. God’s goodness and mercy will provide whatever we need” (CCD Vol. 11, 129). The core of St. Vincent’s thought on justice is based on Matthew 25: 40: **“Whatever you did to one of the least of mine, you did for me”**. St. Vincent constantly chose to *‘go against the grain’* providing for the basic needs of the poor, to fight for their basic rights, and to *‘humanize’* them.

Certainly St. Vincent faced a lot of challenges from within and without. Some of the members of the Ladies of Charity found it tiring to render regular service to the poor, tried to send their servants instead. On the other hand, some of Priests of the Mission wanted only to focus on caring for spiritual needs of the poor. To this situation St. Vincent exhorted them with the following: “Aren’t the poor the afflicted members of the Body of Christ? Aren’t they our brothers and sisters? And if priests abandon them, who will help them? If there are any among us who think they are...to evangelize the poor, but not to alleviate their suffering; to take care of their spiritual needs but not their temporal needs, I say that we have to help and assist them in every way possible. To do this is to preach the Gospel by words and works; it is what our Lord did and what we who represent him on earth should do” (CCD Vo. 12, 77-8). Thus in spite of all the challenges, he went ahead to be the herald of mercy and justice in this world. He continues to inspire us.

Today, we are amidst of various types of challenges: threat to a world war, terrorism, rampant corruption, various types of abuses, natural calamities etc. Many in the world are tempted to overlook the core values of mercy and justice. As a consequence, many are forced to live in a state of utter poverty. As Vincentians surrounded by various degrees of challenges, how can we refrain from “looking at the poor with love.....move with mercy...deal with justice,” as did St. Vincent? Let us remember like Pope Francis that we are chosen by God’s mercy – *Miserandoatqueeligendo*. It is meant to change our lives and also lives of the poor.

May the jubilee celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the origin of the Vincentian Charism help us to emphasize the core values of Mercy and Justice in our endeavour to evangelize the poor. I pray that St. Vincent intercede for each one of us so that we will be fit missionaries for serving the poor with mercy and justice. May this Jubilee year of the Vincentian Family be a Year of blessings for all of us!!!!!!!

Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM

National Coordinator of Vincentian Family

I. International

Nearly ten thousand members of the Vincentian family from all over the world were in Rome (October 11-14) to celebrate with Pope Francis the 400th anniversary of the origin of Vincentian Charism. The three-day Symposium aimed at uniting the members of the Vincentian Family world- wide and also exploring the hope of advancing “the globalization of charity across the world.”

The Vincentian family consists of the members of Societies of Apostolic Life, Religious Institutes and Associations who are either founded by St. Vincent de Paul, or taken St. Vincent de Paul as their patron or have taken the rules of St. Vincent de Paul as the source of their Constitutions and Statutes or are founded by a member of the anyone of the branches of the Vincentian Family. At present there are approximately 2 million members in the whole world and 1 lakh in India.

St. Vincent de Paul, the architect of Vincentian Charism, was born at Pouy, France in the year 1581 and was ordained priest in 1600, discovered his charism from two strong experiences he had as a priest in 1617: the experience of spiritual poverty in a rural area around the village of Folleville (January) and the experience of material poverty in the city of Chatillon (August). Convinced of the call of God, he set out to evangelize the poor both spiritually and corporally.

The three countries have big concentrations of Vincentians are: Brazil, India and the Philippines, Father Joseph Agostino, coordinator of the international Vincentian family, said, “very many Christians, Jews and Muslims work with the Vincentians because the charism of Vincent attracts people of all different races, creeds, languages, who have a heart for the poor and they understand the dignity and presence of God in the poor.” He summarized the charism this way: “Vincent gave us a model, the evangelization of the poor: to serve the poor both spiritually and materially, seeing Christ in them.”

Fr. Agostino works from an office in Philadelphia and is also coordinator of the said symposium in Rome. It opened on Thursday evening the 12th October at St. John Lateran’s basilica, continued on Friday with workshops on “Vincentian themes” and reached its high point on Saturday when they met Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Square.

At the meeting with the Pope Francis, Father Tomaz Mavric, the 24th successor of St. Vincent De Paul, officially launched their two major initiatives for the globalization of charity: “The Global Alliance for the Homeless” and “The

Vincentian Film Festival.” The symposium was concluded with a prayer vigil that same evening, and the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, at the Basilica of St. Paul’s Outside the Walls.

Father Agostino explained their three-year-long “Global Alliance for the Homeless” project is part of the mission of the Vincentians “to go out to the peripheries.” He noted that this is what Pope Francis is doing. Indeed, he said, “We laugh and say he should have been a Vincentian, not a Jesuit, because he has that spirit of love for the poor. Our spirit aligns with his.”

He recalled that “Vincent was not one who wanted to be in the cities, he sent out his missionaries to the most remote places, because that’s where people need to feel and experience the presence of God.” And, he added, “that missionary charism is very much at the heart of who we are. The challenge is always seeking those new peripheries, as new needs and realities develop, and that’s what we are in the process of doing.”

It is with this perspective that the Vincentians are launching their “Global Alliance for the Homeless,” he said. He described it as “another attempt by the family to go into an area that is in desperate need.” Homelessness is “a very big problem in the United States; every city has an area with underserved and inadequate housing.” Indeed, every country in the world has its homeless.

The Vincentian family hopes to help the homeless in two ways. First “by trying to sensitize society to the reality and plight of the homeless, to try and create momentum around systemic change so that we’re not just doing band-aid solutions but can really try to work to change the fabric of what keeps people homeless.”

Second, by trying to get all the members of the Vincentian family to work together on this project, rather than each person doing his or her own thing. The aim is “to harness our energies and gather collaborators to work with us, so that we can have a greater impact on the practical reality of the homeless, and the issues linked to it: housing, education and jobs. So, it’s necessary to look at the structures that create the homeless.”

This is the first time in its 400-year history that the Vincentian family has come together, Father Agostino said. They hope that from this symposium—and especially from their meeting with Pope Francis—they will give “new energy, a rekindling of the zeal that is part of the Vincentian charism, and that sense of family that all of us around the world are in this mission together, to advance the globalization of charity.”

II. National



1. Executive Body Meeting

The Executive Body Meeting of VFI was held at St. Vincent House, Banaswadi, Bangalore on 02-07-2017. Seven members participated in the meeting. The meeting started with a prayer led by Rev. Fr. Sebastian Thundathikunnel V C. Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil C M, the national Co-ordinator welcomed the members. Detailed discussions followed on the different items included in the agenda. The highlights are the following:

1. Registration of VFI as Trust: VFI has to be registered as a Trust. To be clear on the legal aspects and to be specific on the objectives, it has been recommended to take the assistance of a Chartered Accountant and draft the Trust Deed. The objectives to be included were discussed in detail. For the smooth and speedy implementation of the registration process, it has been decided to include only three members as trustee, namely Rev. Fr. Francis Puthentahayil CM, Sr. Rose Chirayil D C, and Br. Tomy Varghese SSVP. After getting the Trust registered and PAN number has been secured, a Bank Account should be opened, preferably with South Indian Bank. The account should not be in the name of persons but by designation.

2. Contract with the South Indian Province of D C.

As the South Indian Province of D C has agreed to offer half an acre of land at Hallehalli near to St. Vincent Seminary, on renewable lease for a period of 99 (ninety nine) years, it has been authorised to draft an agreement and the contract signed by fixing a lease amount.

3. Vincentian Resource and Capacity Building Centre (VRCBCI)

It has been recommended to start a Research Centre after establishing the National Secretariat at Hallehalli. It should function for conducting formation programs and development programs for various Branches / Groups including lay people. Programs could be chalked out even before the construction of the building, if the facilities at St. Vincent Seminary can be utilized.

4. Association of International Charity (AIC). It was suggested to support the establishment of AIC units in India, as it is the first organization which Vincent de Paul founded for women.

5. Volunteers / Resource Persons

Highlighted the need of a pool of Resource Persons. SSVP has a pool of R Ps. Highlighted the need for training programs to get good RPs.

2. Development of the Registration of VFI

As per the resolution of the Annual General Meeting and the instruction of the Executive Body, we have been trying to Register 'VINCENTIAN FAMILY INDIA' as a Public and Charitable Trust. The Draft Trust Deed which was prepared by us was given to a learned Chartered Accountant who is also a Lawyer for expert comments. The revised Deed was further corrected by thorough scrutiny.

We are to inform you that with God's choicest blessings and through the powerful intercession of St. Vincent de Paul and all the Saints and Blesseds of our Vincentian Family, we have been successful in registering 'VINCENTIAN FAMILY INDIA' as a Trust with effect from 27th September 2017. We are thankful to all who have helped and prayed for it. Now we are in the process of applying for the PAN and opening a bank account. Till our General Body decides otherwise, Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil, Sr. Rose Chirayil, and Bro. Tomy Varghese SSVP will serve as President, Vice-President, and Secretary cum Treasurer respectively.

III. Regional

Tamil Nadu Region -Systemic Change Seminar



To commemorate the 400th anniversary of Vincentian Charism, the Vincentian Family of Tamil Nadu region organised a one day seminar on Systemic Change on 08.10.2017 at Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Thanjavur. Bro. T. Joseph Pandian, the International Vice- President General and Bro. A. Francis, the National Vice President were the resource persons. **Rev. Fr. S.J.M. Vianny**, the Spiritual Adviser of **Thanjavur Central Council** inaugurated the Seminar. In his inaugural address he recalled that the enthusiastic Vincentians enjoy a good reputation amongst parishes for their involvement in all charitable activities both within and outside the society.

Bro. **Joseph Pandian**, in his address on **"Poverty and Systemic Change"**, gave a brief notion on systemic change and called for the urgent need of breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. He also stressed the need to eradicate poverty by implementing systemic change principles. **Bro. A. Francis** in his talk on **Vincentian Spirituality highlighted the need of incorporating Vincentian values in the process of humanization.** **Bro. S. Pious**, the **Regional Coordinator**, in his presentation on **Social Teaching of the Church with special reference to Pope Francis underlined** the seven principles of social Teaching of the Church to be applied in the promotion of Justice and Charity. The seminar was concluded with Holy Mass presided over by Rev. Fr. Napoleon. The participants expressed their sincere thanks to Thanjavur Central Council for their excellent arrangements for the grand success of the seminar.

IV. From Different Branches

1. Vincentian Congregation

New Teams for General and Provincial Administration

The Vincentian Congregation in their General Synaxis of 2017 elected Very Rev. Fr. Sebastian Thundathikunnel VC the new Superior General. The Vincentian Family India expresses sincere



appreciations and congratulations to Fr. Sebastian and invokes abundant blessings for his ministry.

Fr. Sebastian will be assisted by a new team of Counselors. Fr. Michael Kareekunnel is elected to be the Asst. General. Frs. Antony Chakkungal, Alex Chalangady and Antony Moonnupeedikackal are elected to be the General Councillors.

Vincentian Congregation has three provinces. All these provinces too had their Synaxis and elected their new teams for their Provincial administration. Vincentian Family express hearty congratulations to Frs. James

Kallunkal, Mathew Kakkattupillil and Varghese Puthussery who are elected to be the Provincial Superiors of Mary Matha Province, St. Joseph Province and St. Thomas Province respectively.

The members of the Congregation are serving today in India in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Seemadhara, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, and Uttar Pradesh. The members are also serving in Australia, Austria, Canada, England, Germany, Italy, Kenya, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Peru, Scotland, Switzerland, Tanzania, Uganda and United States of America.

2. Sisters of Charity



a. The New Provincials in Bangalore and Patna

Recently the SCN sisters of Bangalore and Patna Provinces elected their new team of Provincial administration. The Bangalore Province has the following team members: Sisters Amrita Manjaly, the provincial, BeenaChirackal, vice provincial, Manisha Azhakath, Nimmie and Jessie Saldanha. The new office bearers were installed on June 1, 2017 at Nazareth Convent, Chandapura, Bangalore. The new leadership team members of the Patna province are the following: Sisters Philomena Kottoor, provincial, Amelia Moras, vice-provincial, Board members, GracyMlakuzhyil, Joel Urumpil and Susan Tudu. Vincentian Family India expresses hearty congratulations and prayerful wishes to the new team of administration in India.

For nearly two hundred years, the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (SCNs) have dedicated their lives to education, health care, and social work. With an emphasis on simplicity, humility, and charity, SCNs live out the motto *Caritas Christi Urget Nos* –The Love of Christ Impels Us. The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth was founded in 1812. Bishop John Baptist David and Mother Catherine Spalding, (Nazareth's First Superior), are remembered as cofounders of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth.

SCN roots in India date back to 1947 when six Sisters crossed the seas from West to East bringing the SCN Charism to another nation and another people through the health ministry especially to persons marginalized by leprosy. Nazareth Hospital, Mokama, was established in 1948 with a School of Nursing and Pharmacy.

As the third Congregation of women religious founded in the United States, SCNs in 2012 celebrated 200 years of ministry. The Sisters and their 170 Associates continue to spread the legacy of their co-founderess, Mother Catherine Spalding: "Impelled by the love of God, they read the signs of the times and respond in faith."

ANNUAL GATHERING : *The Annual Gathering of the Major superiors/heads of the Vincentian Family in India will be held on 3rd and 4th March 2018 at St. Vincent's Retreat cum Seminar Center, Gopalpur-on-sea (Odisha).*

V. Saints and Blessed of the Vincentian Family 60 members of Vincentian Family to be recognized martyrs

Cardinal Carlos Osoro Sierra, the Archbishop of Madrid in a letter invited all to participate in the Beatification ceremony to be held in Madrid. He begins his letter by stating that Pope Francis has affirmed that sixty members of the Vincentian Family, born in different parts of Spain, be publicly recognized in the Church as martyrs for Christ. God willing, on November 11th, 2017, these individuals will be beatified in Madrid by Cardinal Amato (the Pope's representative). What a joy to be able to give thanks to God together as a family for this great gift! What a wonderful privilege to be able to rely on the example and the intercessions of these brothers and sisters who lived the Vincentian charism, lived it to the point of making the ultimate sacrifice of laying down their life for the love of God and for the love of their sisters and brothers.

These new martyrs are composed of 40 members of the Congregation of the Mission (24 priests and 16 brothers), 2 Daughters of Charity, 13 lay members of Vincentian Associations and 5 priests from the Diocese of Murcia who served as spiritual advisors to those groups. During the years of the persecution that occurred during the twentieth century, all of these individuals, from different parts in Spain, gave their life for Christ and with Christ.

The majority of these individuals (39 of them) were martyred in Madrid and a large group of them were members of the parish of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal (14 members of the Congregation of the Mission and 6 lay persons from the area of Chamberi [mothers and fathers and members the Miraculous Medal Association]). Ten other members of the Congregation had belonged to the mission house in Atocha (six from the Internal Seminary in Hortaleza, three from the house in Valdemoro and one from the community of Calle Fernandez de la Hoz).

Twenty-one of these individual gave witness in Cataluña, Valencia and Murcia. Three members of the Congregation of the Mission and two Daughters of Charity were martyred in Barcelona; another member of the Congregation was assassinated in Gerona and two other members of the Congregation and one young member of the Miraculous Medal Association were martyred in Valencia. Finally, one member of the Congregation, five diocesan priests and six lay members of the Miraculous Medal Association were martyred in Murcia.

Cardinal Carlos expressed his appreciations for those martyrs by quoting Saint Vincent : "Oh, what good reason do we not have to thank God for having given this Company the spirit of martyrdom, that light, I say, and the grace that made him see something great, luminous, brilliant, and divine in dying for the neighbor in imitation of Our Lord" (CCD:XI:275). He congratulated the Vincentian Family for their new martyrs who are raised for veneration. He also called everyone to thank God and to the generations of men and women who have incarnated the charism of Vincent de Paul. May these martyrs become a source of spiritual strength that will enable everyone to live in accord with this wonderful charism.