

16th MEETING OF INTERNATIONAL LEADERS OF THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY
Madrid, January 30 to February 1, 2009
MINUTES

From January 28 to 31, 2010, the **16th Meeting of the International Leaders of the Vincentian Family** took place in Paris.

As had been planned, the Meeting this year had some "special moments". In the afternoon of January 28, the leaders of the three branches founded by Saint Vincent, plus the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, met at the Motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission. On January 29, 30 and 31, the members of the various branches who had participated the previous year, plus the invited guests, held their meeting in the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity.

REPORT ON THE MEETING OF JANUARY 28

Participants:

International Association of Charities: Laurence de la Brosse, Marina Costa and María Eugenia Magallanes.

Congregation of the Mission: Fr. Gregory G. Gay, Fr. Manuel Ginete.

Daughters of Charity: Sr. Evelyne Franc, Sr. Rosa Maria Miro.

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul: José Ramón Díaz Torremocha, Juan Tirado.

Coordinator of the "Vincentian Family Board for the Microcredit Project in Haiti" (VF Board for Haiti): Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M.

Vincentian Family Office: Sr María Pilar López.

Proposal for creation of an "Executive Board of the Vincentian Family"

Fr. Gregory Gay presented the process that has been used in the Meetings of the Leaders of the Vincentian Family. Sixteen years ago, Fr. Robert Maloney began these meetings with the leaders of the Vincentian Family. Fr. Gregory began inviting other Congregations who share the Vincentian spirituality, with the intention of helping everyone to experience more deeply the Vincentian charism, extending it beyond the reality of the traditional branches of the Vincentian Family.

After the meeting in 2009, a reflection process was begun regarding the value of continuing with the large group meetings, increasing it each year with new invited guests. At the same time, though, there was a recognized need for another type of meeting at the level of the three branches founded by Saint Vincent (AIC, CM, DC) and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

This reduced group will act as the Executive Board of the Vincentian Family. Presently it will serve as the intermediary for the "VF Board for Haiti" who will act when decisions need to be made rather rapidly. In the future, it will also be involved in decision-making for other issues with more flexible time frames.

After a time of listening and discussion by those present, the following was decided:

Conclusions:

- Continue the meetings of the members that make up the "large group" of the Vincentian Family, inviting new Congregations or Institutions inspired by the Vincentian charism to each meeting.
These meetings will have 2 purposes: ongoing formation and mutual enrichment through sharing how each group lives the Vincentian charism. These will be held biannually.
- The "Executive Board of the Vincentian Family" will continue to be made up of the AIC – International Association of Charities, the Congregation of the Mission, the Company of the

Daughters of Charity, and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. It will act in the area of motivating the charism, not necessarily as a juridical body.

Its mission will be to serve as intermediary for the "VF Board for Haiti" for the present, and in the future, for other projects and/or campaigns that the Vincentian Family can initiate as it has in the past. It will also need to be responsible for other forms of decision-making related to its role as the Executive Commission of the Vincentian Family.

It will also be responsible for preparing the content for the meeting of the "big group".

It will meet at least once a year, and more frequently as needed, using video-conferencing when possible.

The meeting for 2011 is scheduled for January 14 in Paris, at the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, and in 2012 on January 12 in Rome at Casa Maria Immacolata.

Information about the Project "EC FamVin for Haiti"

Fr. Robert Maloney, as representative of the Executive Committee of "EC FamVin for Haiti", presented the current situation of the Microcredit Pilot Project adopted by the Vincentian Family in 2009, as a way of celebrating the 350th anniversary of the deaths of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise. Due to the present circumstances in the country as a result of the recent earthquake, this Project is even more timely. (In the second part of these minutes of the "second half" of this meeting, there is more information about this Project.)

In order to facilitate coordination with the Vincentian Family, a "Project Agreement" was developed to establish the relationship between the General Curia of the Congregation of the Mission and the "EC FamVin for Haiti". This involves the procedure that will be followed when receiving donations and how to obtain authorization to use these funds. The General Curia has opened an account in dollars and one in euros to be used exclusively for this purpose.

Among other responsibilities, the General Treasurer will provide regular reports of the movement of these funds and will develop an annual budget of "EC FamVin for Haiti" which will be submitted for approval by the Executive Commission of the Vincentian Family.

REPORT ON THE MEETING FROM JANUARY 29 - 31

Participants:

Since the Meeting took place in the context of the 350th Anniversary of the Birth into Eternal Life for Saint Vincent and Saint Louise, Fr. Gregory invited other members of the General Councils of the various branches to attend.

- **International Association of Charities (AIC):** Laurence de la Brosse, Marina Costa and María Eugenia Magallanes.
- **Congregation of the Mission:** Fr. Gregory G. Gay and General Assistants: Fr. José Antonio Ubillús, Fr. José M^a Nieto, Fr. Gerad Du, and Delegate for the Vincentian Family, Fr. Manuel Ginete.
- **Daughters of Charity:** Sr Evelyne Franc and General Councillors: Sr Rosa María Miró, Sr Kathleen Appler, Sr Christa Bauer, Sr Zofia Daniscakova, Sr Madeline Hara, Sr Françoise Petit, Sr Rosa María Napolitano, Sr Neghesti Michael, Sr Marlène Terezinha Rosa y Sr Iliana Suárez.
- **Society of Saint Vincent de Paul:** José Ramón Díaz Torremocha, Michael Thio, Marco Bétemps and Juan Tirado.
- **Religious of Saint Vincent de Paul:** Fr. Philippe Mura and Fr. Yvon Sabourin.
- **Vincentian Marian Youth:** Yasmine Cajuste Fr. Pavol Noga, C.M., Sr Bernardita Garcia, Katarina Mazurova, Argelys Vega and Fabio Cleber Oliveira.
- **Association of the Miraculous Medal:** Fr Enrique Rivas and Olimpia Freire de Almeida.

- **Vincentian Lay Missioners (MISEVI):** Mari Carmen Lupiañez, Fr. David Fernández, Araceli González and María Jesús Cuenca.
- **Strasbourg Federation of the Sisters of Charity:** Sr Denise Baumann and Sr Veronika Haussler.
- **Sisters of Charity Federation of North America:** Sr Mary Ann Daly and Sr Caroljean Willie.
- **Congregation of the Brothers of Mercy:** Br. Broer Huitema and Br. Edward Gresnigt.
- **Coordinator of the “Executive Commission of the Vincentian Family for the Microcredit Project in Haiti”:** Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M.
- **Vincentian Family Office:** Sr María Pilar López.

Invited Guests:

- **Sisters of Our Lady Mother of Mercy:** Sr. Mariette Kinker.
- **Brothers of Charity:** Br. Lieven Claevs.

It was noted that the representative from DePaul Foundation, now called DePaul International, had not been invited to the meeting. This will be taken into account for future meetings.

Formation Session:

With the goal of deepening our understanding of our charism, two conferences about our Founders were scheduled.

- **Saint Louise de Marillac** – Sr. Antoinette-Marie Hance, DC, shared with us the fruit of her studies from the perspective of her deep love for Saint Louise. What stood out for her was the wonder of God’s plan of Love for humanity, and the verification that God continues to make use of our life journeys to reveal his Love.

Sister invited us to draw closer to Saint Louise from 3 perspectives, in the three parts of her presentation:

1. The life of Louise, entitling the first 35 years of her life as “*Experience of poverty and foundational events of her life*” and the last 34 years as “*The Miracle of the Servant of God*”.
2. An example of her collaboration: the work of the foundlings, which, as Sister explained, she chose to share with us not only because of the significance and the difficulty in founding this work, but also to show us how the Saint was able to encourage and coordinate collaboration among many different institutions from the highest levels to the most ordinary ones.
3. Her secret: in a certain sense, Louise’s heart was replaced by the heart of Christ. In this part, she shared with us the major aspects of her spirituality: seeking the will of God, contemplation of the Trinity and the Word made flesh, contemplation of the mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation, the Virgin Mary as God’s masterpiece and the Eucharist which is the summit of everything.

This presentation by Sr. Antoinette-Marie was greatly appreciated. It was followed by a group sharing in language groups and group summaries. Many participants expressed having discovered Louise de Marillac from a new perspective: a highly-talented woman, excellent organizer and administrator, and the mystical elements of her spirituality shined forth as well. She was a great collaborator with Vincent de Paul and the Ladies of Charity, and her life and works are an example for us.

- **Saint Vincent de Paul today** – Fr. Robert Maloney, with his wealth of experience, began his conference with the most outstanding aspects of “Horizon shifts in the last fifty years”. In line with the changes that have come about in the Church since Vatican Council II, we have moved from talking about the “Double Family of Saint Vincent” (Vincentian priests and Daughters of Charity) to the “Vincentian Family”, an expression that encompasses all the branches, with collaborative projects and activities. There is a shift from predominantly European ideas and customs to an international Vincentian Family that appreciates values of other continents; from an attitude of assisting to that of working with poor persons so that they become actors in their own promotion.

In the part entitled "Saint Vincent in his day", Father spoke of the rich personality of Saint Vincent, highlighting the "filial relationship with his Father" which allowed him to unite contemplation with action, and "his charity towards the neighbor", which led to the praise he received at his funeral that he "had practically changed the face of the Church".

In speaking about "Saint Vincent today", Fr. Maloney expressed his hope for our Vincentian Family: that we might be contemplatives in action, that we continue to increase collaboration for the evangelization and promotion of poor persons, that we remain close to poor persons and their struggle for justice, that we be inventive in putting into practice Systemic Change efforts in our projects and also be involved in sowing seeds of peace.

He concluded his presentation by inviting us to be passionate for poor persons and for justice.

In the group reports after the group work, some changes that were noted in addition to those from Fr. Maloney included the strong awareness of belonging to the Vincentian Family and effective collaboration in common projects. In terms of aspects of his personality, some highlighted the fact that Vincent was advisor to important figures in his day; he followed Divine Providence and made efforts to eliminate the causes of poverty. Hopes for the Vincentian Family included the desire to experience with the same intensity on the local level what was experienced in this Meeting, that we work together in the promotion of justice, uniting all the branches while respecting our diversity.

Reports from new groups:

Sisters of Our Lady Mother of Mercy

Their origins date back to 1832 when a young and vivacious priest, Johannes Zwijsen, saw the living conditions of his parishioners in the industrial city of Tilburgo (Netherlands). He founded the Sisters of Our Lady Mother of Mercy initially to educate young girls, and later they also become involved in care of the sick and the elderly. In 1844 he founded the Brothers of Mercy Congregation to take care of young boys.

Our Lady of Mercy is their patroness, and J. Zwijsen developed the first Rules which were inspired by St. Vincent de Paul, whom he greatly admired. At the death of the founder in 1877, the number of Sisters was 1,426. In addition to their presence in Holland, in the 19th century the congregation extended into Belgium, Great Britain, United States and Indonesia. In the 20th century they became established in Zimbabwe, Germany, Brazil and the Philippines. There are currently 750 Sisters.

Their apostolates have broadened into day and boarding schools, orphanages, hospitals, residences for elderly persons, the abandoned and pastoral care. Their focus in all their areas of work is to defend the causes of the most poor, assuring adequate education and setting up social projects. In Europe, where the median age of the Sisters is very high, as well as in other countries, the Sisters are concerned about finding collaborators, with the awareness that assuring service to persons living in poverty is more important than preserving old structures.

Saint Vincent is a continual strength and inspiration for them. Recently, the Congregation has rediscovered Saint Vincent, and his spirituality has an important place in the formation of young members. They are also seeking to make connections with other congregations that follow the Vincentian charism.

Brothers of Charity

Until the 19th century, persons with psychiatric conditions were rejected from society and confined to insane asylums. In Gante (Belgium) psychiatric patients were imprisoned, in what was called the Castle of the Devil, damp and cold dungeons without any care provided.

In 1815, a priest named Fr. Peter Joseph Triest, who had founded the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity in 1807, freed the psychiatric patients from their chains in the Castle of the Devil and the Brothers of Charity began to care for them. This event proved to be a sign; for the first time persons with psychiatric conditions were being treated like human beings, with care and affection.

After implementing other initiatives with psychiatric patients in other places, with children living on the streets, with persons with incurable diseases, and 10 years after their foundation, Fr. Triest, with his Brothers of Charity, concretized as definite services provided by the Congregation the following: care of elderly persons, persons with psychiatric illnesses and the education and care of

the abandoned.

The founder chose Saint Vincent de Paul as the patron and inspiration of the Congregation.

In 1860, the Brothers became established in Canada, and in 1911 began their service in South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi, Indonesia, Peru, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. Their establishment in Africa is very significant, for in this continent persons with psychiatric illnesses are considered possessed by evil spirits.

Today the Congregation numbers about 600 members and serves in 30 countries, following the Vincentian charism that was passed on to them by Fr. Triest, who was in his day called "Vincent de Paul of Belgium".

Presentation on dynamic and creative apostolates:

When the invitation for the meeting was sent out, the various branches were asked to bring to the Meeting some example of an apostolate that could be shared with all the participants, to demonstrate the creativity and timeliness of the Vincentian charism. The following projects were presented:

International Association of Charities

The AIC members of Puebla (Mexico) have been working with a group of elderly persons with visual disabilities since 2007. Today they manage to do this on their own and they come together weekly to comment on the gospel.

The AIC members from Italy developed a protocol in 2008 in collaboration with the Department of Minors in the Ministry of Justice, with the goal of working to help reinsert young people between the ages of 14 and 21 who were being released from prison. In Sicily, the AIC have welcomed youth who have been sent by the Center of Juvenile Justice, and involve them in service to persons in need.

Congregation of the Mission

The community in Xirrundzo (Mozambique) is made up of five priests and one brother who work in the parish and the community together. They minister in three parishes and missions, in which the Christian community is growing and forming a Ministry and Services Community. They are involved in assistance and accompaniment of persons with HIV/AIDS, education and nutrition programs for orphans, chaplaincy at the Carmelo Hospital, and administration of the Vice-Province's Livestock Project and serve in the center for human promotion called "Rebirth into Hope." In this center, specific promotion services are provided.

Daughters of Charity

In 2006 the Daughters of Charity arrived in Masanga (Tanzania) at the invitation of the bishop to collaborate in small communities in the fields of health care, education and parish ministry. The Community is made up of Sisters from USA, Madagascar and Democratic Republic of Congo.

The people began with a small dispensary which has now been transformed into a hospital, and has the resources to allow it to begin preparations for the DREAM Project in collaboration with the Community Sant Egidio.

Promotion of women is another very significant and needed work. The long-term goal is to address social justice themes, especially in regards to women and children. From the beginning, the Sisters have been addressing the problem of female genital mutilation. With the support of prayer, the local bishop and agreement by the local authorities, and in collaboration with the parents of 53 young girls, they developed a program and a final ceremony as an alternative rite of initiation. The Sisters as well as the young women and their parents are proud of the program and aware that they are experiencing a historical change.

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Since 1990, "La Grania" located in Nowra, New South Wales Australia, provides numerous rehabilitation services to persons who suffer from psychological disorders or addictions, with the goal of helping them rebuild their lives.

The program can accommodate twelve persons, and most remain for about three months. Medical and psychological services are provided. There are five buildings, the largest a residence in which each person has their own bedroom and access to a kitchen and large day room.

The buildings were constructed by the residents themselves, according to each one's abilities.

Federation of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg

They presented a "History of Systemic Change" involving 12 of the 14 Congregations that form the Federation, located in Europe. It consists of updating the realm of health care, in institutions using advanced technology, with commitment to bioethical research and in an organization that is dealing with serious economic pressures.

Part of the reality in Europe is that, in close collaboration with the laity, serious questions arise: Who is taking responsibility for human dignity? What hospital has the right to refuse to perform abortions paid for by social security? Who is safeguarding the dignity of dying persons?

In this context, the Congregation has been committed for the last ten years to a process based on Gospel values and in accord with Vincentian convictions. Lay people and the Sisters have followed a formation and reflection process in three groups: General Superiors, Sister collaborators and Directors of the Institutions. This has led to the development of a "Charter of Values" in order to work in the hospital community, with the purpose of defending the dignity of persons from the beginning to the end of their lives.

Federation of the Sisters of Charity of North America

The twelve Congregations in the Federation have started a collaborative mission in New Orleans, where the poor population has not yet been able to recover from the disaster of Hurricane Katrina. The lack of professionals in health care, social services and education is made up for by short-term volunteers. In the "House of Charity" a space is provided for them for apostolic reflection. The Sisters of the Federation coordinate the activities of the volunteers and provide a variety of services in collaboration with other members of the Vincentian Family.

Congregation of the Brothers of Mercy

Brother Linus Schousten and his team of five full-time and two part-time workers bring hope and joy to those housed in 96 prisons in Kenya. The organization has been providing this service since 1984, organizing libraries, conducting exams, distributing personal hygiene items, and organizing sports activities.

The prisons are greatly overcrowded, with a population three times the capacity of the prisons, which also implies that the government, among other issues, only covers expenses for the "theoretical occupation rate", and in order to sleep, the inmates must take turns. There is also a high level of corruption.

One of the most significant parts of the program is to provide opportunities for professional development of the inmates, including basic education at primary or secondary school level, to help increase the number of inmates who can take state examinations. This education is also available to the prison staff.

Report on the activities for the 350th Anniversary:

Fr. Manuel Ginete presented a summary of the activities of the various branches:

- **Celebration Committee:** On March 14, in Paris at the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Vespers will be celebrated at 5:45 pm followed by the Eucharist presided over by Cardinal Andre Vingt-Trois.
On September 25 in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Eucharist will be celebrated by Cardinal Franc Rode.
- **Heritage Committee:** As planned, this committee is publishing Vincentian reflections each month. Six have been published so far, and there will be a total of 12. They are available on the website. Thanks to the Brothers of CMM, they have been translated into Dutch and Indonesian.
- **Secretariat Committee:** They have developed a brochure that had been requested and has been published by Editions du Signe.
- **Finance Committee:** A bank account in dollars and one in euros has been opened, so that donations to Haiti can be received.

Vincentian Family Microcredit Project in Haiti

Fr. Robert Maloney gave a report about the Microcredit Project in Haiti, adopted by the Vincentian

Family on the occasion of the 350th Anniversary of the deaths of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise.

The project is also in line with the Millennium Goals, is in keeping with the principles of Systemic Change and responds to what Pope Benedict XVI expressed three times in his encyclical "Caritas in Veritate".

He reviewed the troubling statistics, demographics and economic realities in Haiti before the earthquake. This was the context in which the leaders of the Vincentian Family chose this project, which today has even more reason for being.

DePaul University is currently developing a web site which will allow the members of the Vincentian Family, as well as organizations of Haitians in the diaspora, to make donations in order to fund Microcredit projects that have been pre-approved. There will also be the option of sending in small donations for reforestation projects. The site will be operational as of March 31.

He explained that the institution called "Fonkoze" has been chosen to collaborate as director of this project. The selection was made after a thorough study of all those that exist in the country. In addition to their management role, Fonkoze promises to provide formation to those who receive the microcredits.

Presently, the Commission is attempting to acquire funds from USAID and the Inter-American Bank for Development. It is collaborating with DePaul University who is contributing financially to the project and will host the website launching for the Haitian diaspora in Chicago. It is also working with St. John's University who will be hosting students from Haiti and launching the website for the Haitian diaspora in New York.

Information regarding Continental Sessions for Advisors in the Vincentian Family

Fr. Manuel Ginete updated us on the process of these Sessions whose program is divided into two parts: the first part focuses on the formation of advisors, directors and leaders in the Vincentian Family, and the second addresses matters of Systemic Change. The Sessions are not an attempt to give exhaustive formation but rather to introduce the participants to the process and an understanding of the method, as a way to promote sustainable development for poor persons.

They also strive to help the participants' efforts to have a "multiplier effect" in places where they are coming from and also to provide times of sharing of experiences and mutual formation, with the goal of deepening the understanding of the Vincentian charism.

The Sessions were organized jointly by the local coordination group, the Commission on Systemic Change and the Vincentian Family Office in Rome. Participants included Vincentian priests and brothers, Daughters of Charity and lay people from the various branches, especially AIC and SSVP. An important aspect was the presence of Visitatrixes, Visitors, National Directors and members of the Coordinating Councils of the Vincentian Family.

There was much enthusiasm among the participants and a great interest in knowing more close at hand the Vincentian Family throughout the world, our Vincentian spirituality, the role of advisors and directors and experiences of Systemic Change.

As of now, these gatherings have already taken place in: Mexico for Latin America, Brazil for that country, in Cameroon for Africa and Madagascar, and in Thailand for Asia-Oceania. A gathering is planned for the US for November 4-7, 2010.

Report about World Youth Day which will take place in Madrid in August 2011

Yasmine Cajuste reported on the various issues related to this gathering. A Coordination Commission has been set up, over which she presides, containing representatives from all the branches of the Vincentian Family in Spain.

Several meetings have been held, and among their activities were the development of a provisional plan and the creation of several work commissions.

The visit of the Pope will take place from August 16-21, 2011. Prior to this, from August 13-15, the gathering of Vincentian Youth will take place, with the theme of "*Vincentians, a life style for today*".

She asks the International Vincentian Family to spread news about the event, and space on the website www.famvin.org will be given for this effort. All the branches of the family should create a link to this space.

Fr. Gregory convoked the next Meeting for March 13-15, 2012 in Rome at the Casa Maria Immacolata, Via Ezio 28.

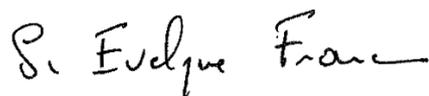
The meeting concluded by placing the Vincentian Family under the protection of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.



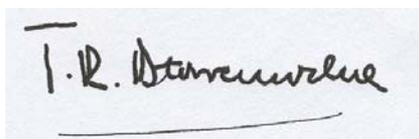
Laurence de la Brosse
Presidenta, AIC
(Fundación en 1617)



G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General, Congregación
de la Misión (Fundación en 1625)



Sor Evelyne Franc, H.C.
Superiora General, Hijas de la
Caridad (Fundación en 1633)



José Ramón Díaz Torremocha
Presidente, Sociedad de San Vicente
de Paúl (Fundación en 1833)



Philippe Mura, rsv
Superior General, Religiosos de
S. Vicente de Paúl (Fundación en 1845)



Yasmine Cajuste
Presidenta Juventud Mariana
Vicenciana (Fundación en 1847)



Enrique Rivas, C.M.
Subdirector General de la
Asociación de la Medalla Milagrosa
(Fundación en 1909)



Mari Carmen Lupiañez
Presidenta, MISEVI
(Fundación en 1999)