



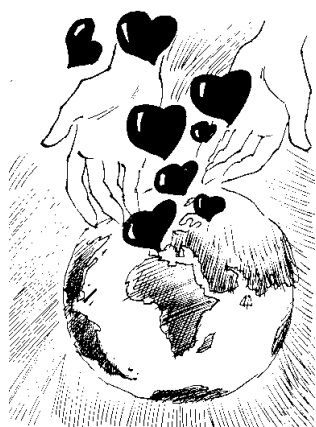
Vincentian Family
Young Vincentian Meeting



THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY A SHARED MISSION

I. Let us analyze our reality

In recent decades we have become more aware of the reality that those who share the charism of Saint Vincent de Paul are members of a spiritual family that is called the Vincentian Family. This family is a missionary family that is present in all parts of the world and includes every type of person (woman and men, young people and adults, consecrated women and men, laymen and laywomen, Catholics and non-Catholics). The members of this family are organized in over three hundred associations or institutes.



This pluralistic family, animated by the charism of Saint Vincent, shares in the mission of proclaiming the gospel to all people, especially those people who are poor ... indeed, the poor are “our special heritage”. We accomplish this mission from the perspective of our own spirituality and lifestyle and with a specific pastoral methodology which highlights organization and creativity. For this reason there exists a network of collaboration and coordination among the different associations of the Vincentian Family and with other groups in the Church and in society with whom we share the mission of making the gospel effective among those people who are most poor.

Surely in your city or in your country you know young people and adults of who are members of other Associations of the Vincentian Family, people with whom you share the charism, engage in “family” celebrations, share moments of reflection or evangelization projects or service projects ... We invite you to analyze as a group the reality of the Vincentian Family in your area.

- What Vincentian groups exist in your city? Do you know them? Is there some form of collaboration among them
- What has been your experience of collaborating with them? How did you celebrate the Vincentian Jubilee Year? How can you better the collaboration and coordination among all Vincentians?
- What role do young women and men have in the Vincentian Family? What do the young people contribute and what do they receive? What are your dreams in order to be faithful to the heritage that you have received from Saint Vincent de Paul?

A clear and simple sign of this growth with regard to the shared common mission is the different projects that have been assumed on the international level, for example, *the globalization of charity, a struggle against hunger, the political action project to eradicate malaria, and the present projects of systemic change*¹... all of this is in addition to all the projects that the Vincentian Family has developed and continues to carry out in different countries.

- Have you had some significant experience of sharing in the mission either in the place where you live or in some other place?
- Have you participated in common projects of the Vincentian Family?
- What do you see as the difficulties in making this shared mission a reality?



(Discuss these questions in group)

II. Let us enlighten our reality with the Word of God

A. Jesus sends forth his followers to continue his evangelizing mission

Let us read in our group the sending forth of the missionaries by Jesus: Matthew 28:16-20. After listening to this proclamation of the Word, share in your group ideas about the following questions:

- Do I feel that today I have received this responsibility from Jesus? Do I feel sent into the world to proclaim the gospel to the poor?
- With a sense of belonging to the Vincentian Family and the Church of Jesus, do I share this mission with others?

B. We share the same mission even though we might have different gifts and different ministeries.

Let us listen to the reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Then let us share our reflection in the group.

The whole Church has received the mission of evangelization and the work of each person is important for the growth all. Consecrated and lay members, young people and adults, share in the task of being missionaries in the world and there, in the midst of the world and with their own charism, they proclaim Jesus Christ and thus make the gospel effective in the lives of other people. Therefore we can say that there are not various mission but rather there is a diversity of

¹ Commission for systemic change in the Vincentian Family: the Spanish edition offers some web-sites in that language and so below are listed three websites that deal with the topic of systemic change and they all appear on the famvin web site.

<http://vinformation.famvin.org/courses/systemic-change/>

http://famvin.org/wiki/Systemic_Change_-_Vincentian_Study_Guides

http://famvin.org/wiki/Systemic_Change_and_the_Vincentian_Family

charisms and ministries and all of these serve the one mission of the Church (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11), which is to proclaim Jesus Christ.

Obviously the idea of a shared mission includes all of us but it does not mean, however, that we are included in projects, planning and tasks, in the materials involved in the mission, but it does mean that we must enlarge the space of our own tent (Isaiah 54:2), that is, broaden the horizons of common friendship and trust. For the Vincentian Family, the common mission implies having the courage to create our own projects and doing this within our own competency and human ability and also in very specific situations that are proper to the laity and consecrated individuals, young people and adults.

The shared mission in the Vincentian Family supposes common tasks that do not have to be accomplished in the same way. Each one ought to contribute his/her own constitutive characteristics so that the way of accomplishing these tasks complement one another. Even though this may appear to be very logical I believe it is important to be very precise here in stating that the work of the laity should not be reduced to one of mere collaboration but rather demands that the laity take on more and more responsibility. As a result, the laity have an obligation to form themselves so that they can respond to these demands.

There is no better way to live this shared mission than to educate ourselves in this responsibility from the time of our infancy. In this way all are able to understand and experience themselves as protagonists, active participants in this task and common project while at the same time accepting the risks and responsibilities from a very early age. Only in this way will we be able to create an awareness that this mission is also my mission; this Church is also my Church. I am not a spectator but have something to contribute to this effort. I have a place and a task that is requested of me simply because I exist and exist in this specific place.



This is the challenge of the Church in the XXI century: to be aware of our vocation and of the need for formation and a firm commitment ... these are elements that perhaps we have not always been mindful of in the past but now they are fundamental if we want to take our place in the Church and become involved in this shared mission.

C. Witness of Saint Vincent de Paul concerning the shared mission

Let us read this reflection of **Father Javier Alvarez, CM**, Vicar-General of the Congregation of the Mission, and listen to him speak to us about the shared mission of Saint Vincent de Paul (these words he shared with a group of professors ministering in the schools of the Daughters of Charity).

With regard to the theme of a shared mission ... Saint Vincent showed himself to be very open in this aspect. He was never suspicious of the laity or women or ecclesiastics or other consecrated women and men of his time. All these were few in comparison to the great works of evangelization and charity that he knew as the plans of Jesus Christ. With a practical sense that

was so characteristic of Saint Vincent he knew how “to share the wealth”, he knew how to involve every type of person so that the work of God could move forward. He was convinced that without close collaboration with the laity he would never be able to accomplish the work of God. We can begin by saying that thanks to a laywoman, Madame de Gondi, Saint Vincent established the Congregation of the Mission. She intervened in the discernment process and she also encouraged Saint Vincent to dedicate himself to the missions and to do this with the assistance of other priests. Saint Vincent always referred to her as “our first founder”.

In Châtillon Vincent discovered the call to charity and was helped in this discovery by two laywomen, Chassigne and Charlotte de Brie. The first project on behalf of the poor was carried out by a group of twelve women (Ladies of Charity). We can say that Saint Vincent seemed to have this special gift of involving the laity in his mission because he was convinced that without them he could do nothing that would endure. We mention here, by way of example, the experience in Mâcon. In September, 1621, with the Confraternity of Charity in Mâcon, Vincent conceived of a great plan to eradicate begging from the city. For this purpose he involved the magistrates of the city, the bishop, the municipal officials, wealthy people and merchants. The plan worked and what follows is Saint Vincent’s evaluation of the plan: When I set up the Charity in Mâcon, everyone made fun of me and would point at me in the streets, but when the deed was accomplished, everyone wept for joy. The town magistrates paid me so much honor on my departure, that not being able to stand it, I was compelled to leave in secret to avoid the applause; and that is now one of the best established Charities (CCD, I:281-282)

Let us now share in our group:

- What can we learn from Saint Vincent’s experience with regard to sharing today the mission in our city or town or village?

III. Let us commit ourselves

The Vincentian charism is revealed in three principal ways:

- Love and service on behalf of the poor: the poor are *our heritage*. Saint Vincent tells us that God calls us to serve and desires that we serve together.
- Vincentian spirituality, a style of life in which we live with simplicity and humility and thus these virtues become fundamental attitudes of our life and our service on behalf of those who are poor.
- Pastoral methodology: direct and specific projects, projects that involve our creativity and inventiveness.

IV. Let us celebrate

We can celebrate this gift of a shared mission, a mission which Jesus has given to us, by uniting together in a **Celebration of the Word**:

- Commentary
- Hymn
- Biblical reading: Luke 10:1-11



- Symbol and commitment
- Our Father
- Prayer: To be Vincentian

TO BE VINCENTIAN

- To be Vincentian is to follow Christ,
 to continue his work,
 to continue his style of life,
 to accept his plans,
 to live according to his spirit as expressed in the Beatitudes.
- To be Vincentian is to share Jesus' cause
 the construction of the kingdom
 the liberation of all women and men
 the great utopia of God
 where men and women can live as brother and sisters
 where all people can live with dignity and justice and peace.
- To be Vincentian is to be part of the Vincentian Family,
 a community of love
 a community that is united in proclaiming the Good News to the poor
 a community that is united in serving those persons who are most poor.
- To be Vincentian is to bring to life the path of Jesus
 to live anew the process of Jesus
 to maintain Jesus' options
 to sow with Jesus the seeds of his Kingdom
 to build active and prayerful communities
 to give witness to the Word
 to live his commandment of love.
- To be Vincentian is to live from the perspective of our charism
 to be animated by the Holy Spirit
 to have our hearts filled with the Spirit of God
 to say "yes" with Mary to the things that the Father asks of us
 to have the strength of the Spirit so that we can respond to the plans of God for our lives.
- To be Vincentian is to live in the Spirit of the Lord
 to hope for that which seems impossible
 to realize that for God nothing is impossible
 to unite our hands and efforts in creating a better life for all people
 to begin, like Jesus, with the those who are viewed as least and unimportant
- To be Vincentian is discern the signs of the times
 to discern the signs of God in our own time
 to discern with clarity
 to be courageous in our discernment
 to announce and denounce all that is opposed to the Kingdom of God.
- To be Vincentian implies accepting conflict and risk in order to follow Jesus
 to mature during the time of crisis
 to grow in sincere fidelity
 to live anew the passion of Jesus

to embrace the cross
to be men and women of integrity in our words and actions
to live with simplicity
to allow ourselves to be freed from power and consumerism
to allow ourselves to be freed in order to grow in faith
to allow ourselves to be freed in order to hope and build
to allow ourselves to be freed in order to love and free others.



V. To share with other young Vincentians

(We invite the group to share the fruits of your reflection with other young Vincentian on the blog "Encounter of Young Vincentians":
<http://jmj2011famvin.00k.org>.

- Share your experience of the Vincentian Family and/or some project in which you have participated.
- What suggestions can
- you offer to better this sharing in a common mission of the Vincentian Family?