



VINCENTIAN MARIAN YOUTH  
International Secretariat  
Madrid, Spain

July 18, 2012

*Dear members of the VMY:*



Receive my warm and heartfelt greeting on this special day when we celebrate the 182<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the first apparition of the Virgin Mary to Saint Catherine Laboure and the beginning of the adventure known as the Vincentian Marian Youth Association!

This year I am especially mindful of Saint Catherine as the messenger of the Virgin. It is interesting to note that at first sight it would appear that Catherine has nothing to say to the world since she lived a life of silence and self-sacrifice. Nevertheless, her life, which was dedicated to spreading the message of the Miraculous Medal, has had an impact on many individuals, including ourselves. She is the instrument that has enabled us to be members of the Association and to serve Christ in those who live in situations of great disadvantage. We know that this privilege of having seen and spoken with the Virgin did not change everything ... it did, however, enable Catherine to be more faithful to the promise that she made when she was a little girl: *From this moment you will be my mother!*

The simple life that Catherine lived makes us question ourselves. Let us reflect on three aspects of her life. In the first place: **her dedication to her everyday duties**, the secret of true holiness. I believe that we can rediscover this holiness as we sanctify the little things of everyday life, that is, as we fulfill the duties of our state in life (studies, work, etc...), as we live our interpersonal relationships from the perspective of the gospel and gospel values, as we are mindful in our decision making process of the cause of the Kingdom and the building up of a more just society, and as we live life with our eyes focused on the eternal city. Secondly, we reflect on her **trust in the power of prayer**. In her autobiographical notes she wrote that after listening to a lesson in the seminary on the saints and the Virgin Mary *I had such a great desire to see the Blessed Virgin, that I thought she would grant me this grace. This desire was so powerful that I was convinced I would see her in all her beauty and majesty. I lived with this hope.* At other times in her notes Catherine spoke about the prayers that she offered to Saint Vincent in which she requested the Founder to intercede on the behalf of others as well as on her behalf. Prayer, as a heart to heart encounter with the Lord and the friends of the Lord, was an essential element in the daily life of Saint Catherine. Her prayer was based on trust (on the hope and certainty that God listened to her) and took on the form of a prayerful reading of the Word and events. Today prayer is still an essential element that enables us to be faithful on a daily basis and also enables us to fulfill our personal mission. It is interesting to note how the different social networks (twitter, Facebook, etc) have become spaces for sharing about the apostolate, prayer and mutual assistance. During this past year the use of Facebook has provided me with an opportunity to reflect on the communion of saints. Through prayer and words and/or through the images that we exchange, this medium gives life to the mutual help that we provide to one another. Saint Catherine reveals herself as one who was raised up in order to lead others to holiness and also reveals herself as one like us and therefore as one who is still able to influence us. My desire is that each one of us might continue to see Catherine as a model of holiness, a woman who lived a life of prayer, simplicity and fidelity to everyday obligations.

The third aspect of Saint Catherine's life that inspires us is her **perseverance**. Neither the hesitations of her confessor nor the difficulties that she had to confront prevented her from moving forward. Indeed, these obstacles allowed her to live more fully as a Daughter of Charity, enabled her to see the first Miraculous Medal that was every struck and enabled her to witness the initiation of the first group of the VMY. This same perseverance ought to characterize our own life as members of this

*"Like Mary, give something more!"*

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Association. Our groups, councils, and/or members might experience moments of crisis, but we should be encouraged by the fact that this Association is not of our making but rather is Mary's desire ... it is Mary who directs and leads the VMY. We are simply servants of Mary's dream, and like Mary, we are disciples of the Master and servants of the poor.

We ought to persevere in our journey as we move forward with our International Campaign of Self-Financing. Since December 8, 2011, the day on which we inaugurated this campaign, we have collected 25,715 euros and 26,322 dollars (as of June 15, 2012). The majority of this money represents donations by members of the Vincentian Family. Nevertheless, we do not want to forget that **this is our campaign** and ought to be the fruit of our effort. Therefore, I want to remind you again that a Foundation has offered \$25,000.00 if the members, groups, and councils of the Vincentian Marian Youth Association raise this same amount by June 2013. At the present time we have collected 1,778 euros and we are far from the meeting the objective that the Foundation has established. I hope that in the coming months all the countries will be encouraged to pray their yearly quote for 2012 (monies that will go toward the achievement of our goal) and send all their contributions to this campaign to the Secretariat. I know that we can do this and I hope that next year I can share good news with you in regard to this matter.



As we celebrate the anniversary of the Association this year, several representatives of the VMY in Latin America are gathered together in Quito (Ecuador) for the Encounter-Mission Assembly which has great importance for the VMY on that continent. On the day of our anniversary, our Association will be remembered at the *Rue-du-Bac*. Filled with confidence in the maternal presence of Mary, may we, as individuals and as a community, continue our pilgrimage toward holiness! May this July 18<sup>th</sup> be an opportunity for a new beginning that gives us the strength to remain faithful to who we are and what we are called to do!

***Happy Anniversary members of the VMY!***



**Yasmine Cajuste**  
INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE VMY

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