

## 15th MEETING OF INTERNATIONAL HEADS OF THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY

Madrid, January 30 to February 1, 2009

### SUMMARY OF THE MINUTES

From January 30 to February 1, 2009, the **15th Meeting of the International Heads of the Vincentian Family** took place in the Provincial House of the Congregation of the Mission in Madrid, on calle García de Paredes, 45. Members of the Congregation of the Mission and Daughters of Charity from their respective Provincial houses as well as Vincentian Marian Youth members collaborated in organizing and hosting the meeting.

#### ***Participants:***

**International Association of Charities (AIC):** Marina Costa and María Eugenia Magallanes.

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

**Daughters of Charity:** Sr Evelyne Franc and Sr Margaret Barrett.

**Society of Saint Vincent de Paul:** José Ramón Díaz Torremocha and Marco Bétemps.

**Religious of Saint Vincent de Paul:** Fr. Philippe Mura and Fr. Yvon Sabourin.

**Vincentian Marian Youth:** Yasmine Cajuste and Fr. Pavol Noga, C.M.

**Association of the Miraculous Medal:** Fr Enrique Rivas and Olimpia Freire de Almeida.

**Vincentian Lay Missioners (MISEVI):** Fr. Felipe Nieto and Mari Carmen Lupiañez.

**Strasbourg Federation of the Sisters of Charity:** Sr Denise Baumann and Sr Veronika Häusler

**Sisters of Charity Federation of North America:** Sr Mary Ann Daly and Sr Caroljean Willie

**Commission on Systemic Change:** Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M.

**Vincentian Family Office:** Sr María Pilar López.

#### ***Invited Guests:***

Brother Edward Gresnigt, Vicar General of the **Brothers of Mercy Congregation**

#### ***Report by the Brothers of Mercy Congregation.***

In Holland, Bishop Joannes Zwijsen founded In 1844 the Brothers of Mercy Congregation under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin and Saint Vincent de Paul.

The Congregation spread from the Netherlands and Belgium to the West Indies and Indonesia, and then, after Vatican Council II, was established in Congo, Kenya, Southeast Africa, Namibia, Brazil and California. Currently there are 325 Brothers in their Congregation.

the Mercy Movement developed as a result of a newspaper advertisement announcing the possibility of deepening understanding of the Brothers' charism. 1,500 persons meet periodically, support one another and publish a magazine. They are involved in caring for refugees by hosting each week and the Brothers show them how to live their spirituality of charity and brotherhood. They have also created various choirs that collaborate in liturgical music renewal.

In Indonesia, Kenya, Namibia and Brazil... their principal activities are in the field of education, with priority given to students living in poverty and persons with disabilities. World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia helped bring about the creation of "Ambassadors of Global Brotherhood," a group that collaborates in the Brothers' ministries and reflects on and promotes the charism of the Congregation.

Currently, they are involved in a process of becoming international, and various members of their General Council come from the countries previously mentioned. Ten years ago the Vincentian Family was founded in the Netherlands and the Brothers, along with 14 other Congregations, are part of this group.

### ***Workshops by Continent for Advisors in the Vincentian Family.***

Fr. Manuel Ginete provided detailed information about the Workshops for the various Branches of the Vincentian Family that have been scheduled throughout this year 2009. The workshop for Latin America is scheduled for February 15-20 in Mexico D.F., for Brazil, June 10-14 in Brasilia, for Africa, July 19-25 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and for the Asian countries, November 8-14 in Thailand.

All workshops will dedicate time to studying the role of the Advisor, according to Vincentian spirituality, and the rest of the time will be for formation on Systemic Change. The leaders are asked to carefully select those who will attend, with the idea that they be committed Advisors who will then be able to have a "multiplying effect" in sharing the knowledge they have received.

Fr. Maloney presented information on Systemic Change, providing details about the program. We were informed that the Workshop in the US will take place in October or November 2010. Among the difficulties that exist in organizing a workshop in Europe are the various realities and diverse languages present. There will be further study on how to respond to these issues.

### ***Report from the Commission on Systemic Change.***

P. Maloney reviewed the activities that the Commission has been involved in during 2008 and the plans for 2009. He also shared with us that the book: *Seeds of Hope: Stories of Systemic Change* has already been published in Spanish and English and is in the process of being translated into French and Portuguese. The book is a good "tool" for understanding the significance of the many aspects of Systemic Change.

He shared that the Commission had awarded the two prizes planned for 2008 to a Project sponsored by the Daughters of Charity in Brazil and to a Project with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Guatemala. The final date for sending in project applications for the prizes for 2009 is September 1.

### ***Update on the Commissions and Organization for the 350th Anniversary of the death of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise (2010).***

Fr. Manuel Ginete, representing the Executive Committee for the Celebration of the 350th Anniversary, presented detailed information of what had taken place to date. He noted that the point of departure had been the previous meeting of the Heads of the Vincentian Family in January 2008. As Fr. Gregory had communicated with all the leaders in his letter of October 7, 2008, the following commissions were formed: "Vincentian Heritage," "Rome Celebration," "Paris Celebration," "Projects," "Finance," and "Secretariat." Each contains representatives from the various Branches, and the Executive Committee coordinates their respective activities. He presented the general objective of the celebration: "*That the Vincentian Family, together with the rest of the Church and the world, give homage to St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac as witnesses to and examples of love and service of the poor.*" He then outlined the activities that have been accomplished by the Executive Committee and the various Commissions.

- Vincentian Heritage Commission – They insist on the need to provide opportunities to learn more about Saint Louise, greater understanding of her spirituality and her action in collaboration with Saint Vincent. They propose a series of topics that could be addressed in monthly study handouts that could be distributed each month during 2010.

The decision was made to proclaim a "Jubilee Year" for the celebration from September 27, 2009 to September 27, 2010.

The development of an interactive CD was suggested, in which a sort of "virtual pilgrimage" of various Vincentian sites could be made. There is also value in using You Tube as a media to

make Saint Vincent and Saint Louise more widely known.

- Celebration Commission - In Paris there is a Eucharistic celebration planned in the Cathedral in Paris for March 14 and in the Chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal on March 15. In Rome a Eucharistic celebration is scheduled in Saint Peter's Basilica on September 27.

- Projects Commission - Fr. Maloney, member of the Commission, presented the objective of it: to help to chose and develop a common project in light of the Celebration, and at a later time, to decide who could benefit from assistance from the Vincentian Family.

He suggested that in choosing a Project, that it involve the greatest number of Branches possible, that it be focused on systemic change and that it be characterized by, among other factors: sustainability, ability to network and the possibility of being carried out by those who would benefit from it.

The initiation of a pilot micro-credit project in Haiti was proposed, and application of the project to other places would be determined based on the results obtained. Given the direct implications for each of the Branches, it was requested that all consult with their respective International Councils.

- Secretariat Commission – They suggested the possibility of editing an illustrated book on the life of the Founders and the presence of the Vincentian Family throughout the world. They are also considering a commemorative album to mark the occasion and the need to open “windows” of the various FamVin pages telling about the Celebration.

A request was made to develop a simple brochure to publicize the objectives of the 350th Anniversary Celebration, with information to promote interest and encourage creativity in each place. This could be accompanied by some sort of document of a spiritual nature.

- Finance Commission – This commission has already met once and is waiting for the budget proposals from the various Commissions to submit them to the respective General Councils.

### ***Representation of the Vincentian Family before the UN.***

Fr. Gregory read a report made by Fr. Foley who represents the Congregation of the Mission at the UN, giving an update on the organization, in collaboration with other representatives from the Vincentian Family, principally Sr. Germaine Price, who represents the Daughters of Charity. Sr. Caroljean Willie, from the Federation of the Sisters of Charity, noted that being able to work together is a very positive aspect. For this reason, they meet monthly in order to study and prepare interventions.

Sr Caroljean added that there is a movement to substitute the expression “the poor” with “people living in poverty”. She also noted that working collaboratively allows them to unite forces in defending the rights of persons living in poverty and gives such individuals the opportunity to express themselves as well.

### ***Recommendations to the International Vincentian Family from the meeting of the Vincentian Family that took place in Bathurst and Sidney in July 2008.***

The decision was made to form a committee of six members: one representative each from JMV International, JMV Spain, SSVI International, SSVI Spain, a Daughter of Charity and Lisa Bright from Australia. JMV International has agreed to convoke the first reunion of this committee.

### ***Report about the historical sites for the Vincentian Family.***

Both the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity are committed to the project of making the Berceau a more attractive place from an international perspective, so that pilgrims can receive information in their own languages. There are many groups that visit the Berceau and can benefit from the opportunity to understand more about our charism.

The participants reiterated that groups who visit the Berceau are greatly impressed by it and

appreciate discovering it and understanding in a deeper way the human and spiritual process that Vincent de Paul went through in his journey towards God and towards persons living in poverty.

The importance of organizing visits to these places was stressed, taking advantage of the 350th Anniversary. There are events connected to all of these places, and thus visiting them gives new dimensions to the story of Saint Vincent. Fr. Rybolt's book was suggested as a good tool, which could be accompanied by a spiritual guide to the places where Saint Vincent, Saint Louise, Saint Catherine Laboure, Frederic Ozanam, etc. lived.

### ***Celebration of the Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul for 2009.***

Since it was decided that the Celebration of the 350th Anniversary will begin on September 27, 2009, it was proposed that this be the point of departure for the Celebration. It seemed appropriate to proceed as in the previous year: first by communicating by a brief summary of this meeting, and during the month of May, an official announcement of the Celebration of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the death of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise, the motivation for celebrating the Jubilee Year.

### ***Other business.***

- **Marco Betemps**, from the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, gave a detailed report on the presence of various Branches of the Vincentian Family in health services on the continent of Africa along with the Hospital Order of Saint John of God. They are present in about 150 different places in 28 countries and the opportunities to benefit from an agreement with Sanofi-Aventis who market a drug against malaria.

- **Fr. Gregory** shared that the Congregation of the Mission wished to evaluate the webpage of FamVin. Although there are topics that appear in all three languages, the reality is that the website in English has been developed to a much greater extent than the other two languages, offering a larger quantity of information. The participants greatly appreciate all the material provided on Systemic Change and are disappointed that this material is not published in the other two languages. The issue of the need for translators once again came up.

### ***Dates and locations for future meetings.***

- 2010: January 29 - 31 in Paris, at the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity
- 2011: January 14 - 16 in Rome
- 2012: January 13 - 15 in Paris

### ***Presentation and dialogue with the Coordinator of the Vincentian Family in Spain.***

On Sunday there was a very congenial gathering with representatives of the Vincentian Family in Spain. In her opening remarks, Carmen Gomez, the President of AIC Spain, welcomed all the representatives of the Vincentian Family on the international level and thanked us for having chosen Madrid as the site for our meeting and for having set aside time to come together as "family," united by the same charism and committed to a common mission.

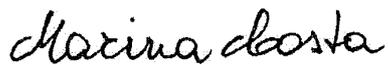
After showing a Power Point presentation on the realities of each Branch in the Vincentian Family, Irune Fernandez from JMV gave a report on the steps that Coordinator of the Vincentian Family in Spain has taken for formation, from when she began at the time of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Meeting for Families that took place in Valencia in July 2006. The challenges currently facing the Coordinator are: helping the groups to get to know one another better, collaboration in projects, being a living witness to the charism in society, celebrating and praying together as a Family on special occasions and sharing formation locations.

Fr. Gregory, before concluding the Gathering, thanked the Vincentian Family in Spain for their welcome and expressed gratitude to the Coordinator for her presence. He also thanked the members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity in the two Provincial houses for their excellent hospitality given to the participants, and the translators for their quality service. He expressed how grateful he is for the efforts made to provide formation for the Vincentian Family Coordinator in Spain and encourages them to continue this. He noted that Spain is one of the places with a large representation of the Vincentian Family and that thanks to its missionary spirit, it has

made a great impact in spreading the charism throughout the world.

The Gathering closed with a solemn Eucharistic celebration in the Basilica of the Miraculous Medal, presided over by Fr. Gregory.

God bless you.



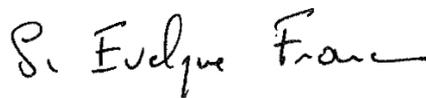
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Marina Costa  
Presidenta, AIC  
(Fundación en 1617)



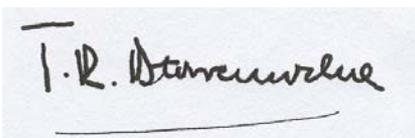
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G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General, Congregación  
de la Misión (Fundación en 1625)



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



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



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



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Yasmine Cajuste  
Presidenta Juventud Mariana  
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Enrique Rivas, C.M.  
Subdirector General de la  
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Mari Carmen Lupiañez  
Presidenta, MISEVI  
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