International Bulletin

"VMY: Here I am!" October 2018 Nº 119

The Marian Consecration in the VMY

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VMY International Council

Since the time of its foundation, the Marian Consecration has been an important element in the VMY and it is a most significant expression of the spirituality of the Association. From the perspective of our Vincentian and Marian identity, this consecration is an expression of our growth and maturity in faith. "Oh Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you!".

The International Statutes of the VMY state: 10.1. The Association offers to the youth the Consecration to Christ through Mary as a way of making explicit their baptismal consecration and to make of their life a total gift to God through service and evangelization of the poor, choosing Mary as Mother and model; 10.2. The Consecration to Christ through Mary will be the result of deep knowledge of the Association, of formation within the perspective of faith, and of a serious discernment in the Holy Spirit. (Article 10). Therefore, I pose the question: do we understand the meaning of the Marian consecration? Do we live out this consecration in our daily life or do we view this consecration as one more festive moment (we make the consecration because it is a time for a party), as a social event (we make the consecration because others are doing the same thing), as something that is superficial (we make the consecration but have not engaged in a process of discernment)? Do we want to deepen our relationship with God?

Mary said: Do whatever he tells you (John 2:5). To act, however, in accord with what God is saying demands a radical detachment from us and from the world. We live in the "today" absorbed in so many things that often prevent us from following God and that also limit our ability to love.

What, then, is the relationship between this consecration and Mary? First, Mary has given us an example of total surrender to God. Mary put aside her own dreams and personal plans in order to embrace something greater, in order to say to God, Yes, here I am! By her example Mary has become a model and an inspiration with regard to the call to live a holy life. If God is divine, then Mary is person whom God placed on earth in order to lead us to him.

The Marian consecration is a personal, sincere and free decision to live in accord with our baptismal promises, fully surrendering ourselves to the following of Christ and the building up of his Kingdom. We are inspired to make this consecration as a result of the example of the Virgin Mother of God and the option of Vincent de Paul to dedicate his life to the evangelization of those persons who were poor Literally, the word consecration means "to associate oneself with those things that are sacred".

Consecration is a faith response that becomes a lifestyle. It is our Yes to Christ's invitation: if anyone wants to come after me (Luke 9:23). To consecrate one´s self is to live intensely in and for Christ, living in accord with the gospel demands and seeking perfection in love. In order to concretize this consecration we have only to look at Mary and in her we find the path that leads to Christ. thus, we often say: to Jesus with Mary! Mary, as our mediator, strengthens our resolve to engage in effective collaboration in our attempts to change the world so that people might respond to the Love of God

Therefore, I view our Association as very special because it provides us with an opportunity to deepen our understanding of these important issues. The VMY provides us with an opportunity to walk in the ways of God and at the same time, Mary continues to bless us and guide us so that we might confidently imitate her way of life.

We should not be discouraged if we find ourselves attached to and dependent on earthly things … God will never give up on us. Yes, much is demanded of us, and yet at the same time we are given the strength to accept this responsibility that will demand sacrifice and at times, will also demand suffering.

If we live our life as a continual mission, if our attitudes reflect God's love and if we practice the virtues of faith, hope and charity, then we can live with certain serenity because our Marian consecration will enable us to be effective instruments in the world.

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From June 30 to July 2, the National Assembly was held in Douala (Saint-Michel College). The National Priest Advisor opened the gathering with a prayer and then spoke about the objectives of the Assembly. An Assembly of this nature is held every two years and the members are given different tasks, especially the creation of new groups in their neighborhoods.

Ivory Coast

On Sunday, July 15, some members made their Marian promise. These young men and women want to continue their mission as members of the Association. In June, one of our members was ordained to priesthood in the parish of Saint Ann Port-Boeut (Diocese of Grand Bassam). The members are active in the ministry of charity on behalf of orphans and those who are poor.

Nigeria

The members had their pilgrimage, national assembly and national elections last August 16-19. The theme of the gathering was VMY, Here I am! There were 46 participants who came to St. Louise, and the schools of Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State and 3b Queen Street to participate in this event. The members elected a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer.

America

Costa Rica

The summer camp was held with the participation of young men and women from different parts of the country … the theme of this experience was: Come and follow me! This took place on the grounds of the Seminary of the Congregation of the Mission (June 19th – July 1st).

Cuba

From July 6-8, the members participated in the National Assembly which was held at the National Shrine of San Lazaro. A new council was elected: Miguel Suárez (President), Rachel Diez (Secretary and Press Representative), Eddy González (Treasurer) and Rodrigo Marrero (Mission Consciousness Advocate).

Europe

Poland

From June 28 – July 10, twelve members of the VMY in Poland traveled to Smotrych (a town in Eastern Ukraine) in order to engage in a postulate work in the "House of Mercy" of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. During that time the participants took care of the sick and the poor and helped in the renovation work of the house.

VMY – A HAPPY HOME

"The VMY Association helps members to collaborate with other groups for works of charity and service" (VMY Vietnam Statute).

As a member of the VMY, at first I felt I belong to one group and I paid attention to the services in my group only. I, however, have gradually realized that the VMY belongs to a family where several groups and associations are present sharing the same charism of serving the poor according to the identity of Saint Vincent de Paul.

I live in a parish in the countryside ministered by some priests of the CM. Although the community of the parish is not so large, there are 5 branches of the Vincentian Family present here: The Congregation of the Mission (CM), The Daughters of Charity (DC), The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP), the International Association of Charities of St. Vincent de Paul (AIC) and finally the Vincentian Marian Youth (VMY), where I am in. Since I have been a member of the VMY and at the same time living in a parish with a Vincentian charism, I can acknowledge more my position in this big family through my cooperation charitable associations in the parish.

Encouraged by the CM priests, I have come to work as volunteer teaching English to children living in the country at a vocational school opened by the fathers for the locals. I also lend my hand helping the fathers teach children during catechism classes. Other VMY members and I join the fathers to hold some fun events and celebrations for the children annually like the Mid-Autumn Tet and Christmas and Lunar New Year. Through those experiences of collaboration, I was not only able use my abilities given by God in serving others but I also have the opportunities to be with the youth and to live deeply the spirituality of VMY, to love and take care of lives of the young generation as Our Lady did. After the services, my friends and I always receive great joy, encouragement and love from the fathers. There were also times when we were in need, and they were always ready to help us and encourage us in carrying out our services. All those experiences have given me a feeling that the Vincentian priests are like fathers who always give the best to their children.

If the CM priests are considered as our fathers, the sisters of DC to us are our mothers. I often accompany the sister to the villages to visit and bring food to the poor, to help the old and the sick to receive the Communion since they are unable to come to the church. On some special occasions, my VMY group also helps the sisters to celebrate the carnivals for the kids at the kindergarten and do the Christmas decorations. There have been several experiences when my friends and I had such a good time with the sisters when we were working together. Every time we have finish the service, we are rewarded with 'precious prizes' from them, like ¡ ice-cream, a candy, a little cake or a little bowl of sweet soup…anything that might seem nothing, but from which we can feel the care and love the same way a mother has for her children.

Working in the Vincentian Family, I also see the members of the two associations SSVP and AIC as my "grandparents". Working with them brings me such feeling. In Vietnam, when the Lunar New Year is coming, an activity of making hundreds of 'Banh Chung' (one of the traditional food of Vietnamese on New Year Holidays) for the poor is held in the parish. Thanks to this activity, I had the chance to work with the members of the different associations. They are always friendly and considerate as they teach me how to make a 'Banh Chung', telling me some fun stories. Through

those experiences, I could not just learn the traditional morals like a grandchild learn from his grandparents but I could feel being a member of a family, as well. Most of them are of old ages so I they are obviously playing the role of grandparents in this family.

Growing up in the VMY since I was still a little boy, I never feel alone or lonely serving those who are poor around me, especially since I have realized that these poor people themselves have brought me to a wonderful family where I can share the mission, but being taken care of by my 'Dads', 'Mom', 'Grandpa', 'Grandma' and my 'brothers' and 'sisters' like in a family. That is nowhere else but in Vincentian Family.

May each of us who are members of the VMY feel the company and love of Our Lord and Our Lady bestowed upon us by being a member of a Charitable Family so that we may keep working with other members in the family in order to make it A HAPPY HOME.

United in prayer

Joseph Nguyen Cong Thanh
VMY Vietnam National Councilor

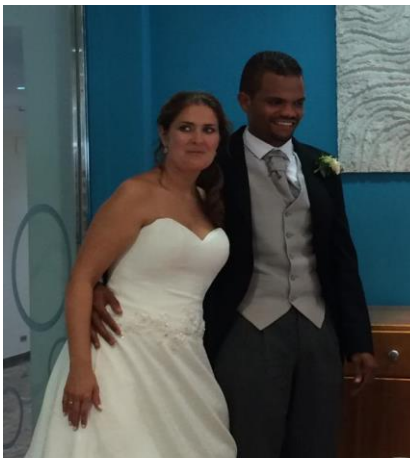
To follow in the footsteps of Saint Vincent is an invitation to see Christ in the poor and therefore, to reach out to those persons who are poor

Yvette Ramanjakatiana
French-speaking Volunteer

As Vincentians, it is very important to live the charism of charity. Through this charism we become aware of the fact that Vincent de Paul sacrificed his time and his life for those persons who were poor … that was always Vincent's priority. Therefore, as Vincentians, we continue to concretize the mission of Vincent de Paul, that is, we make real the fact that Jesus lives in the person of each and every poor person. Jesus stated: whatever you do for one of these least brothers or sisters of mine, you do for me (Matthew 25:41) … Vincent understood the meaning of those words and invites us to see Christ in the poor.

We should not deceive ourselves into thinking that Christ is only present in the Eucharist or in the Church or in some holy/sacred space … Jesus himself has told us that he is present in those men and women who are poor, in those persons who suffer, in prisoners. That reality led Vincent to serve all those who were poor and should lead us to do the same. There is no coincidence in the fact that you and I have become a member of the VMY … that is the destiny that we have inherited from Vincent de Paul and therefore, it is something that we should be proud of. Therefore, each one of us has an opportunity to serve those persons who are poor, something that we should do with humility because this opportunity is a grace that enables us to share with those who are poor: it is more blessed to give than to receive (Act6s 20:35). The reality of the Incarnation makes us, like Jesus, instruments of salvation. There is no need to wait for Jesus to come down from heaven in order to become concerned about our task. In accord with the demands of love we have an obligation to help one another. Yes, we go to the church in order to participate in the Eucharist and other religious services but then we leave the Church in order to engage in acts of charity (let us love not in word or speech, but in deed and truth [1 John 3:18]). Therefore, let us go out and do that which is good; let us not be afraid to go out beyond the four walls of our churches because for one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, it is a sin (James 4:17).

God will reward those who help the poor and therefore we should make every effort to love others, regardless of the difficulties that might be involved. God does not want us to act in a selfish manner and in fact, provides for those who reach out and care for those who are poor. *Therefore, let us do what must be done through Jesus and thus, do that which is also pleasing to his mother, Mary.*

International Council and Secretariat

- We want to remind all the members of our Association to participate in the revision of our International Statutes which were sent to all the countries through the official link. This is a commitment that we have all made and every opinion is very important. Please send us your revisions by November 27, 2018
- We want to express our gratitude to André Peixoto for his service at the International Secretariat as a volunteer for the Portuguese speaking world. May the Lord bless him as he continues his journey of faith.
- We also want to extend our congratulations to our International President, Yancarlos Carrasco, who was married on October 13. We wish him many blessings.