



Famvin Homeless Alliance Vincentian Family Global Initiative on Homelessness

Our vision is that everyone has a place to call home
and a stake in their community

EDITORIAL

A year ago, on 14 October 2017, the Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA) launched in front of 10,000 Vincentians from around the world. On 26-28 November 2018, the inaugural FHA International Conference held in this same city resonated strongly in the hearts and minds of the participants gathered from 35 countries and 18 branches.

The conference was a unique opportunity for Vincentians serving homeless people to understand the scope of the challenge of homelessness, but also to realize that the Vincentian Family is well positioned to respond to a challenge of this magnitude through effective collaboration and systemic change. Participants grasped better how the work with homeless people is embedded in their Vincentian spirituality, the Family's tradition and how integrated approaches and innovation, both locally and globally, are essential to tackling the problem.

The conference felt, as a starting point, like the real beginning of the FHA. Although the Alliance is a global movement that can provide support, action must be local to be effective. Although we have a project plan, we remain at the service of the Vincentian Family and willing to adjust to its needs. Although we are working with a small team, we believe in the strength of the expansive Vincentian network.

We will work on many activities throughout 2019: mapping the Vincentian work, networking, Ambassadors Program, 13 Houses Campaign, formation and others. But the real change will happen on the ground nurturing the dreams and projects of street homeless, refugees, IDPs or slum dwellers. May our presence and friendship, our actions and efforts, hold hope alive for them and bring about a world where each person has a place to call home and a stake in its community.

Yasmine Cajuste

FHA Project Development Manager



“TO BE OUTSIDE”: A “SPIRITUAL” EXPERIENCE!

Summary of Mgr Bruno-Marie DUFFÉ speech at the FHA International Conference (Rome, 26-28 Nov. 2018)

“Lazarus, come out! Jesus cried out (John 11, 43)”. However, what does it mean “to be outside”?

To be outside, explains Bishop DUFFÉ, Secretary of the Dicastery for the Integral Human Development Department, is to be in the nude in front of others, to be crucified on the cross of our failures and disillusionments and to experience the great wind of mistrust...

To be outside is to be in the high winds of uncertainty, in the cold facing its own limits, at the mercy of the rain, the wind and the hunger... it is the anxiety of not knowing if it is possible to find, in this world, a little confidence.

To be outside is to be on the street, a place of anonymity and ignorance.

Nevertheless, this “outside” space can be also, and “paradoxically”, a space for an “unexpected and luminous encounter”, a space where a spiritual experience can be lived: A “spiritual conversion to the welcoming each other”.

This “spirituality of encounter with our homeless brothers and sisters” is built, according to Mgr. DUFFÉ, on three major pillars: the **look**, the **presence**, and the **Word**.

This experience of the Way begins with the look, a “calm and shared look”. The look is a door between the physical, the spiritual, and the community life in which everyone is called by his name. To be looked at is to be recognized, to be named, to be considered; it is a re-knowledge, it is “to be for someone in the crowd of humans”. It is an experience of an exodus that will allow us to live an encounter in the truth.

In the encounter, we discover ourselves “poor and rich at the same time”, we discover that “the one who is outside has a beautiful face and that the only richness is that of the exchange”.

This exchange, this dia-logos, this exodus of ourselves, begins with the Word because the spiritual life - in the footsteps of Christ, the Servant and the Messenger - expresses itself with the words of our human condition, with the eyes that meet and with the lives that are revealed in their needs of humanity.

But for most homeless people, the street is often silent. These people lose the Word, which means the ability to participate in a dialogue.

To give them “the word” is to give them the “dignity” that makes each of us a subject capable of receiving and giving.



Indeed, it is about a presence: it is about being there, present for the other, sometimes in a shared silence where one is close to others to listen to it. To speak is to be there, it is a presence.

This exchange, in the street, with the homeless people, commits us “further than where we had planned to go... The charitable approach “to the other” becomes the fraternal approach “with you”.

Referring to the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, *Gaudete and Exultate* (2018), on the call to holiness in today’s world, Bishop DUFFÉ evokes three ingredients of any “encounter in truth”:

- *Humility or gentleness*: a style “proposed by Jesus” and that “goes through humility”. In the Bible, gentle and poor are referred to by the same phrase. So the most humble are for us masters. The spirituality of the presence to the poorest is a spirituality of proximity in humility and gentleness.
- *Fervor* (or daring), that is “to live what we believe deeply, in a great availability to the inspiration of the Spirit and in a great listening of the other”.
- *Attention to details*, and that means paying attention to the simple things of everyday life. It is Jesus who exhorts all of us to pay attention to the details, the little things that concern others and their happiness. It is “the contemplation of the face of Christ in the presence of the homeless brother or sister” that “leads us to receive Christ in this other that we can never reduce to what he is or what he became”.

And this is how we evangelize and let ourselves be evangelized by the other: he and she who pose on us a look that raises us; he and she who, in the moment of gratitude, pronounce for us, the Word that calls us out (of our certainties and our comfort), to pass from fear to love, from death to life.

FHA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ROME, 26-28 NOVEMBER 2018

How can the Vincentian Family help some of the 1 billion people experiencing homelessness right now around the world? Collaboration and action. These two themes permeated the 3-day FHA conference in Rome.

On the final morning, Mons. DUFFÉ stressed the profound hopelessness brought by homelessness. 'How is it possible,' he asked, 'to believe, to believe again, when one is sitting or lying outside, trying to stay safe from the wind, from looks and sometimes from God himself?' And from this, how can we bring not just a home, but restore inner peace, inner joy? A challenge, but one the Vincentian Family is well-placed to answer.



At the very start of the gathering, Fr Robert MALONEY reminded us that the Vincentian Family's initiative on homelessness is rooted in the collaborative efforts of the founding branches 400 year ago.



This heritage is the inspiration for the FHA's 13 Houses Campaign, officially launched in Rome. The Campaign uses Vincent's own 13 Houses for orphans as a basis for new projects for homeless people today.

Over the three days, we heard from practitioners from all six continents. They came from across the Vincentian Family as well as other Catholic agencies. Dozens of speakers inspired those gathered, leading workshops and discussions. Too many memorable moments to list.



So I will mention just one which captured the spirit of the conference. Sr Bridgit KEROSI, a young Kenyan Daughter of Charity, described with an understated power the entrenched, gruelling poverty of young kids forced to live on the street in her hometown Kitale. How these kids are sometimes forced by their families to fend alone from the age of 8 or 9. But Sr Bridgit also described her dream – a project to help these kids, to provide them with a chance at life.



Dozens in the room held similar dreams. Many others offered support and expertise to help realise these dreams. The Collaboration Commission led a lively and productive session during which individual relationships and informal coalitions were formed. Indeed, the Famvin Homeless Alliance exists to facilitate these relationships – to harness the collective potential of the Vincentian Family.



As a Family, we celebrated the Mass of the Miraculous Medal on the second evening. The sense of communion was powerful. And as Vincent taught us, if we replicate this communion in our charity by working together, our actions for the poor are magnified, become systemic. The conference provided a space for this – a start of greater ministries to come.



This collaboration underpins and amplifies our action. By the end of the conference, 20 countries were committed to joining the 13 Houses campaign, two days after its launch. All participants wrote individual pledge cards on how they will improve their service over the next year.

Conferences are a place for talking and thinking and discussing. The action that comes afterwards is of course harder. But we all left Rome with a commitment to act, to improve, to help. The true Vincentian spirit.

Ewan Day-Collins
Research and Development Officer

THE 13 HOUSES CAMPAIGN

The 13 Houses Campaign of the Famvin Homeless Alliance was officially launched on 26th November 2018 at the FHA Conference in Rome. Since then, we have heard many inspiring ideas about potential projects around the world that will improve and transform the lives of street homeless people, slum dwellers, refugees and internally displaced persons in their communities. The FHA will keep you updated on new projects throughout, and if you have a 13 Houses project that is currently being developed, please do let us know so we can write about it!

Just before the FHA conference, we were happy to be in a position to support a remarkable 13 Houses project in Guatemala through the Solidarity Fund. This project is an amazing example of collaboration both within and beyond the Vincentian Family and will improve the quality of life of the victims of the Fuego Volcano eruption by constructing a total of 35 houses! The beneficiaries are families that lost everything during the eruption; their homes were destroyed or are no longer habitable.



Beyond the provision of homes to these vulnerable families, the project will also offer access to vocational training which will not only benefit the families but also the local economy.

We are looking forward to telling you more about this project and the stories behind it once construction has begun.

Anja Bohnsack

Research & Development Manager

ON THE FHA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Felicitarles y darles las gracias a todos los responsables y a todas las personas que han estado ahí sin que sepamos su nombre, pero que han hecho posible esta fraterna y maravillosa convivencia!

Un éxito total, que no olvidaremos y estoy convencido que va a dar, Dios mediante, muchos frutos para Su ayor gloria! Magnífica organización y magnífico encuentro!

Une très bonne rencontre qui a élargi les horizons. Découverte de l'ampleur de la pauvreté dans le monde. J'ai aussi aimé revenir aux sources de la FV et l'audace, l'envie de faire des projets pour et avec les sans-abris.

Creo que (la conferencia) es un punto de partida excelente que seguirá fortaleciendo el carisma para bien de la Iglesia y de los pobres.

Tenha certeza que a SSVP Brasil está comprometida nos projetos da FV em especial o projeto 13 casas, já realizamos reunião para falar da vivência da Conferência em Roma, vamos nos reunir com a FV para alinhar nossa proposta de implantação do projeto no Brasil. Feliz pela oportunidade de conviver com muitos irmãos de caminhada, que vivem e buscam o mesmo sonho que o nosso que é construir um mundo mais justo e mais fraterno. Deus abençoe você e os seus.

Me ha parecido una buena iniciativa el posibilitar encontrarnos desde las distintas ramas para seguir motivando nuestra acción e impulsar nuevos proyectos, desde el enfoque del cambio sistémico y la espiritualidad del encuentro. Si lo soñamos, podemos hacerlo realidad.

It was lovely to meet you in Rome. It was an amazing gathering and the first of its kind for me. I made many connections and have tried to keep in touch. One thing is in my mind: to make myself useful, making my background, knowledge and experience useful for eradicating homelessness.

It was not only fruitful, but also inspiring. I also learnt the conference not to judge the poor, but to listen more to them. I also learnt to involve the people we serve in the decisions we make as they are the ones suffering.

Ha sido un regalo poder compartir proyectos e iniciativas y poder volver con el ímpetu y la energía de continuar trabajando por los sin techo.



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