



**Vincentian Family**  
Young Vincentian Meeting



**"Vincentian, a life style for today"**

## **YOUNG VINCENTIANS AND THE SERVICE OF THE POOR**

### **I. LET US ANALYZE OUR REALITY**

#### **LET US CONTEMPLATE OUR WORLD**

The world is a paradox because while half of the people on this planet produce and consume on a daily basis more than double the number of calories needed to survive and continually seek more effective diets, the other half of the world is dying of hunger.

While the part of the planet that we call "developed" discusses ways to put an end to war, international organizations design a "magical" formula so that the poor become less poor (but not richer). If we analyze the world's reality from the perspective of human development and its relation to poverty we find comparisons that represent the great paradoxes of the world:

- *Of the 842 million people who are dying of hunger, only 10 million live in the industrialized nations while 38 million are found in countries in transition and 798 million in the countries that are in the process of developing.*
- *The industrialized nations (one fourth of the world's population living in the northern hemisphere) consume between 60% and 80% of the natural resources (70% of the world's energy, 70% of the world's metals, 85% of the wood and 60% of the food).*
- *The average income of the 20 richest nations is 37 times greater than that of the 20 poorest nations, a gap that has doubled during the past 40 years.*
- *The 356 richest people in the world have a combined wealth that is greater than that of 40% of the world's population.*
- *60% of the world's population has never made a telephone call and one third of the world's population has no electricity. 79% of the people who use the internet reside in wealthy nations while only 0.4% of the inhabitants of Africa have access to the internet.*
- *Half of the world's population (between 2.5 and 3 billion people) live on less than \$2.00 a day and more than a billion people lives on less than \$1.00 a day.*
- *The money needed for everyone in the world to receive a basic education is \$6,000 million while the cost of creating cosmetics is \$8,000 million in the United States.*



- *In order to create an infrastructure so that everyone could have running water \$9,000 million is needed and at the same time the cost of making ice cream for the inhabitants in Europe is \$11,000 million. In general the cost of arms throughout the world is \$780,000 million and yet it would cost only \$12,000 million to provide maternity care throughout the world.*
- *It would cost \$13,000 million to provide basic health and nutrition for everyone and yet at the present time*
- *Europe and the United States spend \$12,000 million in caring for their pets.*

## OBJECTIVES OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

**The Millennium Declaration** was approved by 189 countries and signed by 147 heads of state and government during the Millennium Summit that was held in September 2000 at the United Nations. There are eight ambitious objectives of the millennium development plan and it is hoped that these objectives will be achieved by 2015. These objectives are based directly on the goals and activity that is included in the Millennium Declaration (there are 8 objectives and 21 quantifiable goals that can be measured by 60 different indicators).

Objective 1: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Objective 2: achieve universal primary education

Objective 3: promote gender equality and empower women

Objective 4: reduce child mortality

Objective 5: improve maternal health

Objective 6: combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Objective 7: ensure environmental sustainability

Objective 8: develop a global partnership for development



The development objectives of the Millennium plan bring together in one document many of the more important commitments that had been assumed during previous summit meetings and other conferences sponsored by the United Nations during the decade of the 90's. These objectives recognize the relationship between dependence and growth, between the reduction of poverty and sustainable development. Now all people are responsible for the development objectives. The eight objectives are linked to one another and therefore if one of these is not achieved, that will have an effect on the other objectives. The mortality rate cannot be lowered without combating AIDS and a country cannot develop in such a way that it becomes autonomous unless it invests in education. If we do not obtain these objectives we will not be able to provide for the people throughout the world even though theoretically we live in a world that is able to produce sufficient food for everyone. It is obvious that we all need to be co-responsible in this work: this includes governments and men and women in every land who must act as responsible citizens because with simple gestures we develop a way of serving and living in solidarity with one another.

**In light of this situation:**

- What is my attitude? Am I indifferent? How do I feel what I examine these statistics?
- When I pass by someone who is suffering, how do I justify this position?
- What do I have to do in order for the millennium development goals to be achieved? What do I have to eliminate in my life? In what areas do I have to grow?
- Do I pause to reflect upon those areas of my life that have to change so that the goods of this earth might be shared more equitably?

## **II. LET US ENLIGHTEN OUR REALITY WITH THE WORD OF GOD**

**Let us read and comment on the Scriptures:**

**The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)**



+++What is the position that a Young Vincentian should take with regard to other people whom we might encounter during our journey? Who are the people who enter our life and also need our help? Can we recall a time when we have acted like the priest and the Levite? A time when we acted like the Good Samaritan?

+++The Good Samaritan revealed his willingness to draw near to the wounded man when he dismounted his horse. At the same time it is clear that the Samaritan listened, invited other to collaborate with him, preserved in his action and did not hesitate to do what had to be done? Do I cultivate these qualities? Which of these qualities do I believe to be most important? Why?

**Let us now read the following texts from Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac:**

### **TO SERVE THOSE WHO ARE POOR IS TO GO TO GOD (CCD., IX:5)**

*Our Lord himself willed to be born poor, to welcome poor persons into His company, to serve those who were poor, to put Himself in their place, even going so far as to say that the good and the harm that we do to those who are poor He will consider as done to His Divine Person. What more tender love could He show for persons who were poor! And, I ask you, what love can we have for Him if we do not love what he loved! That being the case, Ladies, loving those who are poor is to love Him in that way; serving poor persons well is to serve Him well (CCD., XIIIb:433-434).*

*So then, if there are any among us who think they are in the Mission to evangelize poor people but not to alleviate their sufferings, to take care of their spiritual needs but not their*

*temporal ones, I reply that we have to help them and have them assisted in every way, by us and by others, if we want to hear those pleasing words of the Sovereign Judge of the living and the dead, "Come, beloved of my Father; possess the kingdom that has been prepared for you, because I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was naked and you clothed me; sick and you assisted me." To do that is to preach the Gospel by words and by works, and that is the most perfect way; it is also what Our Lord did, and what those should do who represent Him on earth, officially and by nature, as priests do (CCD., XII:77-78).*



*Be friendly and kind toward those who are poor because you know that they are your masters and therefore we ought to love and respect them. These maxims must not only be a part of our interior life but it is also necessary that we give witness to all of this through our charitable and caring ministry (Writing of Saint Louise [The Spanish citation could not be found in the English volume]).*

- As you have listened to these words of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise and as you have reflected on their actions what has moved your heart? What are the challenges for a young Vincentian?

### III. LET US COMMIT OURSELVES

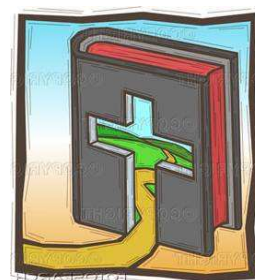
Create a scale of the different forms of poverty that you view as most significant in your country.

Divide the group into pairs (so that one individual is with only one other individual) and each small group of two people will create three scales using their own criteria: one scale that represents the most urgent forms of poverty, another that places the forms of poverty in a hierarchical order and another that refers to new forms of poverty that are becoming more and more obvious as times goes by. When each group is finished with this work the individual contributions will be combined and one single scale should now be made ... thus the groups might very well enter into a discussion and debate concerning the priorities that are listed in each of these scales.

- Are you committed to struggle against some of these forms of poverty?

### IV. PRAYER

- ❖ **Begin with a hymn**
- ❖ **Reading from the gospel of Saint Matthew 25:31-46**
- ❖ **Reflection:**



### 3<sup>rd</sup> Preparatory Catechesis for the VYG, Madrid 2011

*The love that we experience within ourselves when we serve people who are poor cannot be ours ... in fact many times there is no explanation for this love ... we are simply channels who communicate this love to another. In some way we become God for those who are poor and those who are poor also become God for us. Thus everything is very simple and at the end only GOD and LOVE OF GOD remain.*

*This experience changes our life and what we offer to our sisters and brothers in need is our concern, our undivided attention, our gentleness, our willing to accompany them in their struggle to overcome and heal their wounds so that they can live with dignity and grow as individuals. At the same time we have to allow the love of God's to continue to move through us as life-giving energy.*

*But here we run the risk of measuring our action by results and thus our service begins to lose meaning because we begin everything in terms of production and consumption. We are challenged, however, to find a balance between tenderness and firmness as we work tirelessly to help people to become the protagonists of their own growth. Indeed, we cannot place ourselves in a position to assume this work for others.*

*It is this dimension of faith that will enable our service to be respectful, tender and devout. When we love and understand and forgive, when we provide other with an opportunity, when we encourage and urge on and are willing to take a risk ... when we do all of this we discover that **love is creative to infinity** and we become channels of God's love in easy going and difficult moments.*

- **Gesture:** Call to mind the name of an individual and some specific event in which you discovered the face of God in a sister or brother who was suffering.

**PRAYER** (from the writings of Saint Louise [was unable to find this reference])

Lord, help us to imitate your life and your way of acting.

You told us that you were on this earth  
to serve and not to be served.

Teach us how to be gentle with everyone  
and how to accept people lovingly as you did.

We want to love tenderly,  
as you did,

and we want to respect all those persons  
whom we encounter on our journey.

We want to be kind and good especially to those  
who in some way are in pain and suffering.

Lord, teach us to always embrace and respect  
our neighbor, our sisters and brothers.

Your life on earth, your death and resurrection  
reveal to us your great love for all people. Amen.

## V. QUESTIONS TO SHARE ON THE BLOG

- What are the qualities that a Young Vincentian should actualize when serving people who are poor?
- ¿Which form of poverty that now exists in the world appears to you as the form that is most urgent to combat?
- Give an example of Vincentian service that you have witnessed and that made you to question yourself.

