

Press Release

The first international meeting of the leadership of the various associations and institutions that today compose the Worldwide Vincentian Family (representing some two million men and women) has been initiated. The meeting, which will continue until Sunday, is being held in the Patristic Institute Augustinianum (Via Paolo VI, 25) and is intended to enable the participants to come to a more profound mutual understanding of the distinct branches of the Family and to lay a foundation for greater collaboration. Father Marvič highlighted the fact that *collaboration is not a new concept within the Family, rather it was the model that Vincent de Paul proposed at the very beginning. Throughout his life, the close collaboration between the members of the Confraternities of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity and the Ladies of Charity had a tremendous impact on the lives of the poor whom these groups served on a local, national and international level. The Vincentian Family (in terms of number of people involved in service and the amount of shared financial resources) is one of the largest non-governmental organizations in the world. We are composed of various charitable organizations, associations, religious congregations of women and men and we all share the same charism that has been bestowed on us by Vincent de Paul. Our branches provide assistance and charity in many different forms. Everything is done with humility and much care (as demanded by the Vincentian charism which is the basis for our activity). These great works of charity are present in the developed world as well as in developing countries but often these works are not known outside the Vincentian Family.* Father Marvič then proposed five areas of work for the near future: formation and spirituality, education, health care, global initiatives of the Vincentian Family that respond to specific needs (for example, the call of Pope Francis in *Laudato si* and humanitarian activities that respond to some catastrophe).

Father Robert Maloney (the predecessor of Father Tomaž in the role of superior general of the Congregation of the Mission) stated that *Pope Francis reminds us that we are heirs of those who have gone before us and who had the courage to dream. So I ask you who are gathered here today to have that courage to dream! Work in a collaborative manner with bold prudence, work in the manner of Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, Frederic Ozanam and many other founders. These individuals made their dreams a reality.*

There are many projects in progress and here we will mention a few: the 13 houses campaign. During its first year of activity, more than 3,200 have been chosen for this initiative in 28 countries and in the next few months, 24 more countries will be involved in this activity. More than 500 houses have been built by different branches of the family who work on behalf of those who are poor. The 13 houses campaign is an initiative of the FamVin Homeless Alliance. They began their work in November 2018 at the time of an international conference about homelessness in Rome. The objective of this initiative is to change the lives of 10,000 homeless people in the course of 3-5 years. This initiative takes its name from a 17th century initiative of

Vincent de Paul who built 13 houses for children who had been abandoned in Paris. The campaign began with a single house in Little Rock, Arkansas [USA] and expanded into large projects on different continents. Some of these projects are focused on providing houses for the victims of natural disasters [as is the case in

Mexico]; other projects are designed for immigrants [New Zealand] or for people who are living in marginalized neighborhoods [India]. Not all the 13 houses projects involve the construction of houses ... in Spain and Colombia, the Vincentians have organized sensitivity services in order to provide better care to those persons who are homeless. In Peru, support is being provided to the refugees who have traveled to this country from Venezuela. Some projects have received funding from the Solidarity Fund of the FamVin Alliance, but the majority of the projects have found their own proper funding and/or are supported by individual and institutional donors.

The Vincentian Family came into existence as the result of a twofold experience of Vincent de Paul (1617). In the village of Folleville, France, Vincent came to recognize the spiritual poverty of the country people and then in Châtillon Vincent confronted the material poverty of these people. Those two events marked the beginning of Vincent's personal conversion which enabled him to respond to the urgent needs that he had discovered. Vincent's focus was on the whole person and thus on every form of poverty: spiritual, emotional, physical, material. From this small mustard seed that was planted in 1617, the Vincentian Family has become a large tree composed of more than 160 branches (lay associations and congregations of religious life) with more than two million members in one hundred fifty countries. At the same time there are countless men and women who, even though they do not formally belong to some particular branch, are inspired by the example of Vincent de Paul and his service on behalf of those who are poor.

At the beginning of the fifth century of life, the Vincentian Family looks toward the future with the awareness of the necessary urgency of an ever closer synergy with all that came into existence from the "seed" that was planted by the founder.

On Saturday the participants will address the question: how do we move forward together ... this session will include a panel discussion and there will be time to reflect on the potential of the internet and the challenge that this presents for the future. Sunday morning will be dedicated to gathering together suggestions and proposals as well as assigning specific tasks and responsibilities. Father Joseph Agostino will take care of thanking people and other commentaries. This historic event will conclude with the celebration of the Eucharist, presided by Father Tomaž Mavrič, CM and animated by the music group, Gen Verde.

Interviews with participants

PRESS CENTER

of the Vincentian Family

Interviews will be allowed during the work breaks. For further information, please contact Elena Grazini of the Vincentian Family Press Office, email: elena@elenagrazini.it – Cell. +39 338 190 24 36

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