

PRESS RELEASE

On the occasion of the celebration of the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul (September 27th) the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission published a message in which he shared reflections on the challenges for charitable activity especially during this time of the pandemic that has spread throughout the world.

The pandemic and the Christian response, inspired by the Vincentian charism, are the central themes of the message that Father Tomaz Mavrič, CM addressed to the members of the worldwide Vincentian Family, present on five continents. Together in prayer, thought and action, Father Mavrič highlights several recent events: prayer to Saint Jean Gabriel Perboyre, CM, China's first canonized saint ... prayer for a cure for COVID-19 and prayer to strengthen health care workers, social and religious workers, public authorities and all those who are involved in some way in alleviating the suffering that has been caused by this pandemic. The prayer is entitled, the prayer of the Vincentian Family for the needs of the world ... a prayer for those who suffer the terrible consequences of COVID-19, racism and other pandemics that threaten the dignity of the human persons.

Father also spoke about the response of the Vincentian Family to the tragedy in Lebanon and explained: This tragic event and so many others around the world – wars, earthquakes, floods, and other calamities – speak clearly of the importance of a model for responding to such urgent needs quickly and in the most organized and effective way possible. We wish to become more and more affective and effective tools in the hands of Jesus to demonstrate His mercy, compassion, and love wherever He wants us to go. To strengthen current practices, the model for the Vincentian Family worldwide is to keep growing in the concrete practice of acting and responding to the call of the poor together as a Family, as a Movement. Every single branch, whether it is big or small, is an invaluable part of the wonderful mosaic that makes up the Vincentian Family. To this we add the members of the Vincentian Family in the larger sense of the word, and together we become a force on which the world's poor can count.

Another important event that occurred at the beginning of 2020 took place when the international representatives of the 170 branches of the Vincentian Family (the superiors general and international presidents) gathered together in Rome for the first time in order to share, listen to one another, plan, and make decisions with regard to the future. One of the themes of this meeting was the Vincentian Family Homeless Alliance (FHA) and its 13 Houses Campaign. This campaign is a charitable initiative which involves the whole Vincentian Family and therefore, is also to be promoted by all the members of the Family so that the heart of each individual member is moved and becomes an active participant in this common initiative. At the present time there are 53 projects in some stage of development in 37 countries, that is, 761 houses have been built or repaired. It can, therefore, be said that the life of some 5,000 people has been bettered. It should be noted that the campaign was begun in November 2018 with the objective to transform the lives of 10,000 within a period of 3-5 years. In addition to the results mentioned above, the following initiatives took place in the last months:

1. The FHA for Covid-19:18 initiatives in 16 countries. Assistance has been provided to the following: Angola, Bolivia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Ghana, Lebanon, Guatemala, Madagascar (2), Peru (2), the Dominican Republic, Rwanda, and the Ukraine.
2. Lebanon: from our heart to the heat of Lebanon – emergency response to the August 4th explosion. An on-line call and a general call to raise \$100,000.00 in order to assist the Vincentian Family in Beirut and the many families who were left homeless as a result of the explosion.
3. On September 27th, on the YouTube channel of the FHA, there will be a presentation that summarizes the work of the Vincentian Family on behalf of the homeless.

Father Tomaž explains: Because the needs of the poor are never-ending, different ones receive priority in each country as the individual branches respond so wonderfully to these needs. However, the Famvin Homeless Alliance is our unique common project. Therefore, it needs to be promoted, extended, and introduced in all 156 countries where the Vincentian Family is present so that no Congregation or Association will remain outside it, but all will take an active part in the initiative in every corner of the world where we live and serve. [...] I would like to return to certain points from last year's letter for the Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul that I am convinced are the key for us to move forward so that the 160 branches pray, think, and act together. This year, we are especially invited as the Vincentian Family, as the Vincentian Movement, to further commit to the FHA because the message of Pope Francis for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, which providentially will be celebrated 27 September 2020, speaks of one of the groups of persons whom we are helping through the FHA. Therefore, this year's Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul becomes an extraordinary opportunity to reaffirm or make a commitment to active participation in the FHA as well as in the "13 Houses" project.

Father General invites the members of the 170 branches of the Vincentian Family to become active collaborators in the Famvin Homeless Alliance (website: www.vfhomelessalliance.org – email: homeless@famvin.org) and concludes: The COVID-19 pandemic has brought us as individuals and as members of the worldwide Vincentian Family many opportunities as well as challenges. The same will be true in the post-COVID-19 period. Pope Francis repeatedly reminds us that the world, and we as individuals, cannot remain the same after COVID-19. We will become better, or we will take a step back and become worse. The same is true for our Vincentian Family, for our Vincentian Movement. So many wonderful steps, be they new forms of prayer gatherings, collaborative food distribution, or other initiatives, have already been taken in the pandemic period and will be taken in the so-called post-COVID-19 period, bringing the Family together more and more.

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