

*The Boldness of Charity*  
*for a New Missionary*  
*Momentum*

COMPANY  
OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY  
OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL



September 27, 2015

Dear Sisters,

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always  
with us!*

On this feast of Saint Vincent, it is with joy that I present you the Inter-Assemblies Document: ***The Boldness of Charity for a New Missionary Momentum***. It is the fruit of our prayers, of the Holy Spirit's action and of the reflection of the members of the 2015 General Assembly, who drew significant inspiration from what you contributed through the Domestic and Provincial Assemblies.

We are grateful to the members of the Editing Commission of the Assembly, who were charged with drawing up the first drafts. The members of the General Council continued the editing process that resulted in the document in its present form.

I invite you to study this document, pray with it and use it as a concrete resource for your local community dialogues and development of your

Local Community Plans and Provincial Plans during the Inter-Assemblies period 2015-2021. May this document serve as a valuable tool guiding you to a deeper understanding of our Vincentian charism. May the challenges put forward strengthen our shared passion, which our services make visible. We are confident that this document will help us together to live fully our vocation as Daughters of Charity, authentic servants of persons who are poor.

Centered on Christ, through the intercession of our Blessed Mother and our Holy Founders, let us ask the Lord to bless us with the graces we need to make the **BOLDNESS OF CHARITY** for a **NEW MISSIONARY MOMENTUM** a vibrant reality.

Affectionately united with you in prayer,

Sister Kathleen Appler  
Daughter of Charity

## Introduction

In the conference held on August 24, 1659, in which the Charter is found, Saint Vincent emphasizes the radicality of the vocation of the Daughters of Charity: *“They will consider that, since their ministries oblige them to be out of the house and among the people most of the time, and often even all alone, they need greater perfection than Sisters who minister in hospitals and other similar places, which they rarely leave.”*

Expressions evolve and words have changed, but we are still being called today to live the Gospel in the world in a radical way, following the example of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise. They successfully united passion for Christ and passion for persons who are poor.

The words of Pope Francis lead us along this same path as he invites us *“to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel”* (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20).

The theme, *“the Boldness of Charity for a New Missionary Momentum”*, could have been a quotation from Saint Vincent and could be summarized by this exhortation: **be a Company that goes forth!** Sharing at the Assembly demonstrated the desire of all Daughters of Charity to live in harmony with God’s plan for them: to remain in Christ, to love, serve and live with those who are most poor and together to go out towards the peripheries of the world.

With one heart, the members of the General Assembly professed some **primary convictions** that are essential for the future of the Company:

- ✓ Return constantly to the **Gospel**.
- ✓ Be a Company of “coming and going” to the **peripheries**.
- ✓ Live in **close relationship** with those who are excluded and victimized by all forms of violence.

- ✓ Have a life style that bears witness to a more radical **evangelical poverty**.
- ✓ Be more **simple** and **joyful** in community living.

The intrinsic importance of these convictions led us to go further and to ask ourselves:

- The quality of local communities' spiritual, missionary and community life is an important issue for the future of the Company. What needs to be energized?
- What do we need to do in order to be even closer to our brothers and sisters, those who are truly poor?
- How can we more effectively coordinate our efforts on behalf of persons victimized by modern forms of slavery and those affected by multiple types of poverty?

- If Saint Vincent and Saint Louise were to give a new conference, what would they suggest to us in order to be authentic servants in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

**Let us dare to renew our hearts, renew our responses and boldly renew our charity for a new missionary momentum.**



## A way of living driven by the Gospel

*"I am the way and the truth and the life."*

John 14:6

### A close relationship with Christ

*We are convinced of the necessity to draw constantly from the Gospel; a close relationship with Christ transforms us day after day.\**

In order to receive the boldness of charity from Christ, we must keep alive our desire to encounter Him and enter more and more deeply into an intimate relationship with Him.

To this end, **let us dare** still more:

- to cultivate our interior life, following the example of Jesus who withdrew into silence to pray and seek the Father's will;

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*\*Synthesis of Responses from the Provincial Assemblies*

- to contemplate Christ in the Gospel together, in order to build a faith community day after day;
- to be simple and spontaneous in our sharing of the Word of God and of our faith experiences;
- to deepen our sense of liturgy in order to celebrate our faith more fully.

## **Relationships imbued with Gospel values**

*All our relationships, centered on Jesus Christ, allow us to be credible witnesses of God's mercy and tenderness.\**

To the extent that we develop a spirituality of communion expressed in respect and esteem for others, in forgiveness and mercy, in

compassion and kindness, our relationships become mutually supportive and a powerful means of evangelization.

**Let us dare** in reality:

- to consider persons, events and creation from a faith perspective;
- to open our hearts and overcome our fears in order to embrace differences;
- to make time to listen to each other and speak with each other;
- to walk alongside our brothers and sisters who are poor, open to transformation. They are “our Lords and Masters”;
- to make a dramatic shift in our consumer habits for an ethical use of the earth’s resources.

## A life simplified by the Gospel

*The Charity of Christ impels us to be authentic servants and missionaries of the Gospel and gives us the courage to adopt a simpler life style in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, the poor.\**

A life simplified by the Gospel is shown by a humble, authentic and joyful way of being and acting.

**Let us dare** with conviction:

- to undertake a courageous and systematic revision of our way of life in light of the

Gospel and in the spirit of our Charter, as a call to greater integrity;

- to simplify our structures and remove whatever clutters our personal and communal spaces;
- to break down external and internal barriers that create obstacles to our availability and generosity;
- to practice personal and communal responsibility in our use of material goods, including the means of social communication;
- to create and evaluate, together, budgets that reflect a simple life style that is closer to the living conditions of persons who are poor.

## A missionary momentum inspired by charity

*“Go and do likewise.”*

Luke 10:37

### The boldness of charity today

*Jesus is the source of the boldness of charity. He is the one who gives us the strength to dare and to overcome our fears in order to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel. It is a call to have a new perspective and to be more open to changes and new horizons.\**

Our passion for Christ nourishes and energizes our passion for persons who are poor. It shapes our attitudes, directs our choices and demands of us a conversion of mind and heart.

Therefore, **let us dare** boldly:

- to sharpen our focus each day in order to notice those who are truly poor;

- to develop great trust in Providence;
- to give up our routines, our securities, our comfort and our prejudices;
- to rekindle our passion for persons who are poor and go further in order to invent new ways of serving.

## A new missionary momentum

*Alert and attentive to the signs of the times in order to discern and denounce the root causes of poverty, taking into account new and emerging forms of poverty, we are called to offer effective, intrepid and even risky responses that demand the boldness of charity.\**

In order to reinvigorate this missionary momentum, let us confidently continue our commitments along familiar roads and enthusiastically and generously take new paths.

## **Let us dare** resolutely:

- to implement a process of discernment for a real revision of works that would make it possible for us to go out to the peripheries;
- to review our choices, our decisions and our commitments in the light of the Word of God, the social doctrine of the Church and the guidelines of the Company;
- to practice justice and take a stance against everything that undermines human life, rights and dignity;
- to seek with others to fight against the root causes of poverty and to develop prevention and awareness programs;
- to immerse ourselves more deeply wherever those who are most poor, who suffer from multiple poverties, are found;
- to engage our collaborators when reviewing our missions;
- to become involved locally in inter-faith dialogue.



## Shared commitments to ending modern forms of slavery

*Seek new ways of serving creatively. Dare to come out of ourselves, our comfort zones and our middle-class mentality in order to go out to the peripheries, to difficult areas.\**

All of our Provinces face modern forms of slavery.

How far are we willing to go to in our solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are its victims? Will we have the boldness to go further in our commitment to serve them?

**Let us dare** courageously:

- to choose a concrete commitment in each Province that will contribute to combatting modern forms of slavery;
- to increase networking at all levels - particularly, Interprovincial and international - in order to facilitate

collaborative service with the Vincentian Family and others for the defense and integration of migrants, refugees and victims of modern forms of slavery;

- to open Interprovincial local communities in critical places of immigration;
- to take a deeper interest in the Company's involvement at the United Nations by more actively sharing information between the Provinces and the Sisters serving in this organization.

## **A Company enriched by the participation of all Sisters**

*“That they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.”*

John 17:21

### **The spirit of communion in an international Company**

*“...true Daughters of Charity must be united in order to fulfill God's expectations... following the example of the Blessed Trinity, we must have but one heart and act with one mind as do the three divine Persons.”*

Saint Louise, *Spiritual Writings*, A.85, p. 771

Since the charity of Christ is universal, our service of Christ in persons who are poor strengthens our spirit of communion and our sense of belonging to an international Company.

## Therefore, let us dare:

- to be available to go wherever God sends us;
- to be more open to our internationality: to value our differences as enriching, to intensify intercultural dialogue characterized by listening and respect, to facilitate learning languages, etc.;
- to give thanks for our elderly and sick Sisters who participate in the mission of the Company and to rely on their wisdom, their prayer and the offering of their sufferings;
- to pool our resources in the context of Interprovincial sharing: our skills, experience, initiatives, resources, formation, etc.;
- to use the information resources of the Company that are available to us in order to enrich our knowledge of each other.

## Means to make progress in the participation of all Sisters

*“The Company... is a work that God has placed in your hands... a treasure you have in your care...”*

Saint Vincent, CCD IX, p. 539

The Company offers many means (Local Community and Provincial Plans, Provincial Guidelines, Formation Plans, consultations...) to promote co-responsibility, participation and subsidiarity at all levels.

In our local, Provincial, Interprovincial and General contexts, **let us dare:**

- to be more committed to making use of the means set out in the Constitutions and Statutes;
- to improve dialogue in an atmosphere of freedom and trust;
- to adopt the attitudes of Christ the Servant in order to exercise authority as

service, which brings out the best in others;

- to be more trusting of Sisters and collaborators in order to delegate responsibilities to them;
- to provide information and be accountable for the mission entrusted to us;
- to study more deeply, as a local community, the *Guide for the Sister Servant* in order to strengthen the sense of “living together” and each Sister’s responsibility to contribute to building community.

## **The vitality of the charism of the Company and its missionary vocation**

*“I belong neither here nor there, but wherever God wants me to be.”*

Saint Vincent, *CCD IX*, p. 10

Wherever we are, whatever our ministry, each one of us is missionary.

To keep alive the flame of our charism, to encourage missionary boldness and to respond to the challenges of our time, **let us dare** to continue our efforts:

- to ensure that formation is not just the passing on of knowledge but an opportunity for each Sister to forge solid convictions and root herself ever more deeply in her vocation as a Daughter of Charity;
- to raise awareness during initial formation of the mission *Ad Gentes* since it is at the heart of the vocation of a Daughter of Charity;
- to promote formation for Sister Servants in order to support them in their mission;
- to study, as a local community, the documents of the Company and the Church and to share their wealth;
- to offer more opportunities for Vincentian formation to those who work with us: staff, volunteers, collaborators, etc.

Each Sister has the responsibility to be involved in vocation ministry and to witness to her joy of being totally given to God in community.

To this end, **let us dare** generously:

- to strengthen a vocation culture through our attractive and evangelizing witness;
- to open up our local communities to young people in order to offer opportunities for sharing, for prayer and for concrete service of persons who are poor, to accompany them and to reflect with them on their experiences of faith and service;
- to take a more active part in ministry to young people and families within parishes and faith groups, etc.;
- to participate in the New Evangelization through pastoral ministry and the service of charity, which proclaims God's love for persons who are poor.



*Mary, Virgin and Mother ...*

*Star of the new evangelization,  
help us to bear  
radiant witness  
to communion,*



*service,  
ardent and  
generous faith,  
justice  
and love  
of the poor,  
that the joy of the Gospel  
may reach to the ends  
of the earth,  
illuminating even  
the fringes of our world.  
other of the living Gospel,  
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,  
pray for us.*

*Amen. Alleluia !*

*Evangelii Gaudium, 288*