

*E*choes of the Company



Spiritual Life - Challenges - News - History

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**The boldness
of holiness
for a new
missionary
momentum**

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End of the year retreat
at the Mother House

Christ is born for us, alleluia!
Come, let us adore Him.¹

S

Introduction

*Spiritual
Life*

In this Christmas Season, the Church's liturgy invites us to meditate and celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation. This mystery is great, Saint Vincent told us, great in and of itself and great because of its consequences. The Word of God has actually become a person. *"The eternal Word expressed in creation and communicated in salvation history has become in Christ a man born of a woman. Here the word finds expression not primarily in discourse, concepts or rules. Here we are set before the very person of Jesus. His unique and singular history is the definitive word which God speaks to humanity"* (*Verbum Domini*, 11). God wants to speak to us. He has something to say to us; He invites us to dialogue with Him. What He says is Jesus. As we approach Baby Jesus, attempt to understand the account of Christ's birth and gaze upon the Child, Mary and Joseph, let us allow God to speak to us. The Christmas Season is an invitation to enter into conversation with God. This presupposes a certain silence and listening. Yes, come, let us adore Him.

1. Antiphon for the Christmas Season

For this reflection, I would like to focus on the words of the Angelus. The Constitutions tell us in Statute 7c, “*In the prayer of the Angelus, [the Daughters of Charity] contemplate the mystery of salvation, of which Mary became the humble servant.*” The Angelus is a Marian prayer. The Angelus is a meditation on the Incarnation.

I. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD DECLARED UNTO MARY. AND SHE CONCEIVED OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

During a conference to the Sisters about humility, charity, obedience and patience, Saint Vincent wondered about God’s choice of the Virgin Mary. Saint Vincent said, “*What made God consider the Blessed Virgin? She tells us herself, ‘It’s my humility.’ I don’t need to tell you that, if our Sisters have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, who loved this virtue so much, she’ll obtain from God the grace for them to practice it.*”²

By repeating the dialogue between the angel and Mary and punctuating each pair of phrases with a Hail Mary, we enter into the mystery of the covenant that the Lord has made. As an Israelite, Mary bears the first covenant with all its cultural significance. She remembers the successive covenants made with Noah, Abraham and Moses. She also cherishes the hope that these promises will be fulfilled.

This is why the words of the Angel are both unsettling and encouraging. They are unsettling enough to trouble Mary and encouraging because Mary, locus of the memory of Israel, recognizes in his message the realization of the promise. “*Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to your word.*” Mary’s pure faith allows her to welcome this call, this special vocation, and to become the humble servant of the Lord. She also speaks with a bold faith, asking for the accomplishment

2. CCDX, 431 - Conference of July 14, 1658

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of what the angel announces. The Angelus teaches us to listen well and to believe well.

Blessed is the Virgin Mary who gave birth to and raised the Son of the Eternal Father. Why, though, should we admire her and sing our love and joy to her? It is not because Jesus nursed at her breast and drank her milk, not because He has her blood in His veins, not because she loved and accompanied Him, not even because she accompanied Him all the way to the Cross. All of this is true, but it is not the most important. Most importantly, Mary listened to the Word of God, kept it in her heart and acted on it. We know well how she heard the Word of God because we repeat it each time that we pray the Hail Mary.

Mary's glory, the merit for which we admire and love her like a dearest mother, is that she listened to the Word of God and observed it.

The coming of the Word of God provokes resistance, rejection and lapses in each of our lives. We can be sinners, do evil, be mistaken, follow prophets of doom... but what counts is receiving the Word of God and allowing that Word to transform our lives. Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and observe it.

In his Apostolic Exhortation on holiness in today's world, Pope Francis awakens us to the need to open ourselves to listening to the work of the Holy Spirit. I quote,

“...It is possible that, even in prayer itself, we could refuse to let ourselves be confronted by the freedom of the Spirit, who acts as He wills. We must remember that prayerful discernment must be born of a readiness to listen: to the Lord and to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways. Only if we are prepared to listen, do we have the freedom to set aside our own partial or insufficient ideas, our usual habits and ways

of seeing things. In this way, we become truly open to accepting a call that can shatter our security, but lead us to a better life. It is not enough that everything be calm and peaceful. God may be offering us something more, but in our comfortable inadvertence, we do not recognize it.”³

Like the Virgin Mary, we should let the proclamation of the Angel surprise us. As we sing in a French Advent hymn, “God is at work in this age.” Today, the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives!

II. “BEHOLD THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD. MAY IT BE DONE UNTO ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.”

In retreat recommendations given to the Priests of the Mission, Saint Vincent encouraged them *“to give [themselves] entirely to God to serve Him in the vocation to which it has pleased Him to call [them]. To have a high regard for [their] vocation and be more attached to it than to any other state in the world...”⁴*

Mary lived to do God’s will; this is her lesson of holiness for us. Mary wants to do God’s will. God’s will is her guide, her goal. She wants to make her Lord happy by all that she does. When the Angel Gabriel comes to her, she does nothing special, nothing spectacular; she is simply faithful to God’s plan for her. She *“stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from Him”* (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 489).

Trust in the Lord, and He will act. *“How can this be?”* Will this really happen? Trust, it is God’s plan. He is the source of our salvation. *“The eyes of faith can discover in the context of the whole of Revelation the mysterious reasons why God in His saving plan wanted His Son to be born of a virgin”* (CCC, 502). God’s ways are not our ways. His will is that the Son of Man

3. *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 172

4. CCD XI, 92 – Retreat Recommendations, 1632

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come into the world. Mary is stunned that God wants her to be the mother of His Son, yet she believes.

Why her and not someone else? This remains a mystery. Each day, Jesus says to us, as to Thomas, “*Do not be unbelieving, but believe*” (Jn 20:27). Mary believes that this is God’s will for her. God is everything for Mary, and the only thing she wants is to please Him. He is everything for her, and nothing is impossible with Him.

As Pope Paul VI wrote in his Apostolic Exhortation, “*The Virgin Mary has always been proposed to the faithful by the Church as an example to be imitated... for the way in which, in her own particular life, she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God, because she heard the Word of God and acted on it, and because charity and a spirit of service were the driving force of her actions. She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ’s disciples. All of this has a permanent and universal exemplary value.*”⁵

On this retreat day, let us fervently pray, “Lord, help me to imitate her example of humility and obedience so that I, too, can follow Your will in my life as she did.”

Today, I will accept with faith and hope the events and people that come my way. God’s respect for His creature and Mary’s trust and total surrender in God’s hands astonish us. How did He have the wild idea of coming to earth to speak to us of His love for us? He had to be crazy, crazy in love, to act that way!

Let us also admire Mary’s unrestricted embrace of God’s plan for her. She does not worry about the villagers’ reactions, Joseph’s possible pain or the potential disastrous consequences for an unwed mother. She says, “Yes,” quite simply and with great trust. Thanks to her unconditional faith in the words of the angel, the

5. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, 35 (1975)

Word of God could become flesh in her, not just as the son of her womb but also in all her words and actions. Her life becomes “Good News”!

Because she does not say, “*I am,*” asserting herself before God, but rather, “*Behold,*” freely offering herself to Him, the Holy Spirit can descend upon her and make her participate in the divine nature even to the glory of her Assumption.

Rereading several paragraphs from the Apostolic Exhortation *Rejoice and be glad* reminds us that our lives are paths of holiness. I noted two articles that speak to us of our mission in Christ.

“A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness, for ‘this is the will of God, your sanctification’ (1 Thes 4:3). Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel.”

“May you come to realize what that word is, the message of Jesus that God wants to speak to the world by your life. Let yourself be transformed. Let yourself be renewed by the Spirit, so that this can happen, lest you fail in your precious mission. The Lord will bring it to fulfillment despite your mistakes and missteps, provided that you do not abandon the path of love but remain ever open to His supernatural grace, which purifies and enlightens.”⁶

Yes, God is at work in this age. God speaks to us day after day. Will we know how to become “Good News” for our times? Our concrete lives make known the “joy of the Gospel”.

6. *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 19 and 24

III. AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH. AND DWELT AMONG US.

In a repetition of prayer, Saint Vincent shared with his confreres, describing the sinking of the ship that was to take three Priests of the Mission to Madagascar. After reading the event from a faith perspective and drawing a lesson, he pragmatically admired the mystery of the Incarnation:

“But don’t we also see that the Eternal Father, having sent His Son on earth to be the light of the world, nevertheless, had Him appear only as a little boy, like one of those poor little ones you see coming to this door? Eh quoi! Eternal Father, You have sent Your Son to enlighten and teach everyone, and yet He appears to us nothing less than that!”⁷

A conviction lies at the heart of Christian revelation: *“God has pitched His tent among us.”* Recall the manifestation of God’s presence in the Bible. During the exodus and the time in the desert, the Lord had a tent built as the meeting place for Him and Moses and a sign of His presence in the midst of His people. Moreover, the glory of the Lord filled this tent (Ex 40:34-38). As presented in the fourth Gospel, the person of Jesus is now the holy place where people encounter God.

The Word of God, the same Word that was at the beginning, the Word that was with God, the Word that was God, this Word waited for the acceptable time and prepared its coming, as the letter to the Hebrews reminds us. *“In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, He spoke to us through a son, whom He made heir of all things and through whom He created the universe”* (Heb 1:1-2).

The Word called the prophets, particularly the final, greatest prophet. *“A man named John was sent from God. He came for*

7. CCD XI, 339-340 – Repetition of Prayer of November 15, 1656

testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light” (Jn 1: 6-8). The Word also called the Virgin Mary. “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done unto me according to your word.”

Now this Word comes out of itself, expresses itself, enters into time, manifests itself, pronounces itself, develops, harmonizes, and becomes flesh of our flesh. The birth took place during the night; this is important as the revelation, a manifestation as coming out of self, the definitive newness. Yes, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Nothing for us to say except to receive, to let it work on us... then to praise, to sing our gratitude to God our Father.

Through the liturgical texts during these Christmas days, we realize that this Word has a real impact. It attracts all of humanity: the poor just like the rich, the shepherds just like the kings who come to see the newborn lying in a manger. They come, offer, listen and are transformed, setting off in joy and praise!

The Word who enters history also comes to each one of us today. It is just as new and effusive as at the beginning since it is eternal. We are able to welcome it; the only obstacle or condition is ourselves. Let us welcome it as we are.

Being poor, going to Jesus poorly, humbly, totally, going to the manger to consider the depth of the time offered to us, feeling this time that draws us along, welcomes us, receives us. *“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory.”*

On this day of prayer and reflection, let us ask God to contemplate more fully His mystery of love for our human race. In the silence and peace of our hearts, let us worship God who is, who was and who comes to save, free and heal us! Regular prayer of the Angelus acclimates us to this mystery of life and joy that God brings in His Son Jesus.

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God shared the human condition, the Creator united Himself to His creature, the Eternal entered into time, the Absolute experienced what is relative, the Redeemer mingled with those redeemed and the Most High became lowly. God became man. In Jesus, He showed us by His life, death and resurrection that He is our God. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us.

In another passage of the Apostolic Exhortation on holiness in today's world, these beautiful words from Pope Francis strike me. *“The Father’s plan is Christ, and ourselves in Him. In the end, it is Christ who loves in us, for ‘holiness if nothing other than charity lived to the full.’ As a result, ‘the measure of our holiness stems from the stature that Christ achieves in us, to the extent that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we model our whole lives on His.’ Every saint is a message which the Holy Spirit takes from the riches of Jesus Christ and gives to His people.”*⁸

With the saints of every age, we sing, “We sought you, Lord Jesus, we long awaited you, we thirsted for your face: O, unique desire for our faith!”

All throughout the Christmas season, we proclaim, “Christ is born for us, alleluia! Come, let us adore Him!”

By praying the Angelus, we mediate the Word of God, and it comes to accomplish in us, depending on our vocation and our faith, what it accomplished in the Virgin Mary.

In the Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God, Benedict XVI invites us to engage confidently and fervently in this prayer.

“The Synod also recommended that the faithful be encouraged to pray the Angelus. This prayer, simple yet profound, allows us ‘to commemorate daily the mystery of the Incarnate Word’. It is only right that the People of God, families and communities of

8. *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 21

consecrated persons be faithful to this Marian prayer traditionally recited at sunrise, midday and sunset. In the Angelus we ask God to grant that, through Mary's intercession, we may imitate her in doing his will and in welcoming his word into our lives. This practice can help us to grow in an authentic love for the mystery of the incarnation."⁹

In conclusion

From time immemorial, the Incarnation has been the object of meditation and theological study. Along with Bérulle, Olier and the French School, Saint Vincent was part of this movement. He realized that this mystery is the source that makes spiritual life, mission and service fruitful. Reading his conviction, urgency and insistence, we think of Saint Louise's words as she meditated on the mystery of the Incarnation:

*"...your admirable Incarnation [was] the source of the graces of which souls stand in need in order to reach their end."*¹⁰

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts,
that we to whom the incarnation of Christ your Son
was made known by the message of the angel
may by His passion and cross
be brought to the glory of the resurrection,
through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Father Bernard SCHOEPPER, CM
Director General

9. *Verbum Domini*, 88

10. *Spiritual Writings of Saint Louise de Marillac*, A. 13b, p. 800

Letter of January 1, 2019

Dear Sisters,

*How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings glad tidings,
announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation,
and saying to Zion, "Your God is King!" (Isaiah 52:7)*

At the beginning of this new year charged with hope for unity and peace, Isaiah's message echoes in our ears and hearts: peace, good news, salvation... As we consecrate ourselves anew to Mary, let us reverently contemplate her as the Mother of God. She invites us to rejoice with her, she who brought the world not just good news but the Good News, and to honor her Son by returning constantly to the Gospel and serving Him in His suffering members with reinvigorated passion.

In this spirit, I wish you a happy feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and a blessed New Year. Daughters of the Church and in the Vincentian tradition, we recall the graces of the past year with gratitude, reflect on our lives today, and look to respond to the calls before us. Your letters, which offer glimpses of your services, challenges, efforts, and dreams, help me to do this. I sincerely thank you for all that you have shared with me, for your wishes for Christmas and the New Year, and for your prayers and Masses offered for my intentions and those of the Company.

Your messages demonstrate how you bring Christ to those who are poor and how those who are poor bring Christ to you. You have found and brought the Good News to others! Your charity embraces all, from the youngest to the oldest, suffering from all types of poverty and vulnerability. You have told me of your work

with street children, often victims of neglect and abuse, of your care for those left to die alone, of those whom other organizations have turned away... You dauntlessly go out to the peripheries in search of people who, because of discrimination, lack of resources, or lack of voice, otherwise would have no access to what they need. It is evident that you continually *sharpen your focus in order to notice those who are truly poor* (IAD, p. 14). No service is too difficult, too dangerous, or too tiring for you. Thank you for your courage, joy, and fidelity that *unite your passion for Christ and passion for persons who are poor* (IAD, p. 5). You have expressed your fervent desire for holiness in a tireless apostolic life, committed community life, and deep spiritual life. I praise God for your willingness *to dare to renew your hearts, renew your responses and boldly renew your charity for a new missionary momentum* (IAD, p. 8). Let us pray that we always serve generously, even at the risk of our lives and the cost of our comfort, and passionately share the peace, salvation, and good news that we have come to know.

With great honesty, you have described situations that are difficult not only for those living in poverty but also for yourselves. Along with them, you suffer from natural disasters and insecurity due to armed conflict, terrorism, kidnappings, robberies, and the scarcity of basic necessities. Despite the best planning possible and all the effort put into implementation, some bold initiatives have failed. You feel the pinch of poverty in the places where there are fewer Sisters for new or existing services. This suffering is real, and together we place it in the hands of the Mother of God, that she might obtain for us the strength and resolve to persevere. With Saint Louise, I can say, "*We must love the good pleasure of God in all the events directed by His Providence. It is true that you are in great difficulties and suffering. If I were not convinced that the Spirit of God would provide you with the assistance and guidance you need, I would be very much afraid that this work would not succeed*" (SW, L. 519, p. 614). In your joys and sorrows in community and with those whom you serve, you are messengers who announce peace and bear good news.

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You are responding to the calls of Pope Francis to grow in holiness in today's world and to develop peace. In his message for this 52nd World Day of Peace, he pleads with world leaders to take on their responsibility for building peace while emphasizing, "*Bringing peace is central to the mission of Christ's disciples*" (1). His focus on the common good and interdependence highlights the importance of connections that exclude no one and are not limited to the present moment. Building peace "*respects and promotes fundamental human rights, which are at the same time mutual obligations, enabling a bond of trust and gratitude to be forged between present and future generations*" (3). To develop mutual trust, we must be able to acknowledge failures, ask forgiveness, and learn from others without growing discouraged. Your local communities and your apostolates demonstrate your conviction that your lives are "*at the service of peace if [they] find expression in the recognition of the gifts and abilities of each individual*" (5).

Sowing peace, as Pope Francis has reminded us in *Gaudete et Exsultate*, is an integral part of the holiness of the children of God. "*Peacemakers truly 'make peace'; they build peace and friendship in society... if there are times in our community when we question what ought to be done, 'let us pursue what makes for peace' (Rom 14:9)*" (GE, 88). Indeed, the Word of God calls every believer to work for peace, challenging us to do so concretely in our everyday circumstances. This is a means to respond to God's exhortation, addressed to each one of us: "*Be holy, for I am holy*" (Lev 11:44, 1 Pt 1:16).

The Holy Father's words resonate with the Vincentian charism. Our Founders often emphasized the importance of treating people with respect and recognizing their dignity. In the explanation of the twelfth Rule, "*Their chief concern will be to serve the sick poor, treating them with compassion, gentleness, cordiality, respect, and devotion,*" Saint Vincent introduced the practice of calling those who are poor "*our lords and masters.*" He continued, "*That, then, is what obliges you to serve them with respect as your masters, and with devotion because they represent for you the person of*

Our Lord” (CCD X, 267-268). The conference held August 19, 1646, begins with the Sisters’ reflections on respect and gentleness. One remarked, “*Respect and gentleness foster peace. Where there is peace, God abides*” (CCD IX, 207).

Can we commit ourselves unreservedly to working for peace and solidarity, following the path of Christ, the Prince of Peace? We all aspire to live in peace, the true peace announced by the angels on Christmas night. May 2019 be the year that our lives bear witness to it more perfectly and that all peoples enjoy it.

We know that it is not easy to “make” evangelical peace that excludes no one (cf. GE, 89). It calls for great openness of mind and heart, sensitivity, self-denial, honesty, and the courage to “*face conflict head on, resolve it and make it a link in the chain of a new process*” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 227). I am convinced that sowing peace is a mark of holiness that your lives already reflect, even as we are invited to “more”. *How beautiful are the feet of those who announce peace, bear good news, and announce salvation!*

Our ongoing conversion is necessary to bring this gift of God. Mother Suzanne Guillemin wrote, “*Every day we must direct our soul anew towards God... As long as we are on earth, we should maintain ourselves in a state of perpetual transformation, of tending towards God. God is there calling us and wanting to possess us entirely...*” (Letter of January 1, 1965). This transformation applies not only to peace-making, but to every change we wish to bring into the world. This is particularly true of the challenges we have put forward for ourselves in the Inter-Assemblies Document: simple and joyful relationships in community, trust in Providence, greater integrity, strengthened communion, co-responsibility... for “*God wants to speak to the world by your life*” (GE, 24). Yes, let the Spirit transform each of us.

The year holds before us many opportunities to raise our voices in prayer and to participate in initiatives of the Vincentian Family and broader Church. Already later this month, young people will

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gather in Panama for World Youth Day around the theme “*Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to Thy word.*” I invite you to accompany the pilgrims who seek to imitate Mary’s unconditional yes for the good of the world and to pray for them through the intercession of the gathering’s patrons. Please offer your prayer for the participants and organizers of the Vincentian Youth Encounter, January 18-21. Centered on “*The joy of being Vincentian,*” it will offer conferences and workshops to help the young people find creative ways to implement theory in their respective countries. Similarly, they will invoke and learn from the Vincentian Saints and Blessed.

These gatherings correspond to two initiatives of Father Tomáš that I encourage you to pursue this year, namely deepening our relationship with the Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God of the Vincentian Family and renewing a culture of vocation. On the path to holiness that we clearly desire to follow, we need the example and support of men and women who have lived the Vincentian charism in a radical way. Vocation ministry, which is so alive in many Provinces, means promoting continuity of the charism through *our attractive and evangelizing witness, opportunities for prayer and service, accompaniment, and shared reflection* (cf. IAD, p. 24).

Sisters, we are called to embrace the future with hope. We should not simply dream or make plans but, starting where we are with our strengths and limitations, take action. Let us be authentic Daughters of Charity, ordinary people who share our ordinary material goods and talents to build, together with those whom we serve, a more just and peaceful society and turn hearts toward God. Mary, Mother of God, help us to announce peace and bear good news!

Affectionately and with the assurance of my prayers,

Sister Kathleen APPLER
Daughter of Charity

Letter of February 2, 2019

Dear Sisters,

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with us forever!

Every year, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord gives us the opportunity to celebrate this mystery and contemplate its meaning for our lives. We remember the day that Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple and consecrated Him to God. For centuries, the people of Israel had awaited His coming in hope. When Simeon gazed on the Infant, gratitude overcame him. Looking at Jesus with the eyes of faith, this righteous and devout man exclaimed, “*Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel*” (Lk 2:29-32). Simeon was certain he had seen his Savior in his encounter with Jesus. Everything for which he had prayed was fulfilled. For him, salvation was now reality! In this reflection, I will consider how we, too, might join in the prayer of Simeon and grow through it. We desire to gaze upon Christ and indeed do so; the gaze of Christ touches us.

Initially, though, allow me to share some of the graces of this morning here at the rue du Bac. Our Superior General, Father Tomaž Mavrič, accompanied by Father Bernard Schoepfer, Director General, joined us in the Chapel for Lauds and Eucharist. Later in the morning, they celebrated Mass with the elderly Sisters of the Saint Joseph local community. Their words and presence enriched us and reinforced our holy bond, desired by Saint Louise

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and carefully maintained over the centuries, with our brothers of the Congregation of the Mission.

I had the privilege of humbly presenting to Father Tomaž our request to renew our vows on the Feast of the Annunciation. In simplicity, I shared the joys and sorrows of the past year, stressing our sincere desire to give ourselves completely to the Lord in freedom and to serve Him in the person of those who are poor. I was able to describe many bold decisions that you have made over the past twelve months, the implementation of which required you to selflessly leave your comfort zone, especially in order to seek out those who are vulnerable and isolated on the peripheries. Your commitment through direct service and prayer comes through in visits and letters, and I communicated this with a certain pride to Father Tomaž. How could I not mention my deep respect for your prayerful discernment in this ever-changing world, which takes into account the manifold needs of those who are poor and the realities of your Provinces? I asked pardon for the times that we, as a Company or as individuals, have held back due to fear, particularly of the unknown. Father Tomaž, for his part, was happy to hear about our experiences and expressed his gratitude for our closeness to those who are poor and his understanding of our weaknesses. He grants us permission to renew our vows on March 25, 2019. He promised his continued prayer and support for the needs of the Little Company.

During my preparation for this letter, Simeon's faith experience of gazing upon Jesus repeatedly drew my attention. Led to the Temple by the Spirit and fully permeated by His presence, Simeon realized that his world had been turned upside down. He had waited and prayed for years to see his Savior; when this happened, he was ready to die in peace. Imagine the intensity with which Simeon's gaze penetrated Jesus to see the reality beneath the exterior of the helpless child. Imagine how Jesus might have gazed back at Simeon, silently confirming his intuition. What might he have seen in Jesus' eyes? How deeply his eyes saw!

Perhaps you can recall a moment in your life when the Lord answered a long-standing prayer, and your life was transformed by the sense of His presence. Our reaction can only be gratitude and a readiness to enter into a new world, to “go in peace” to a reality marked by that new grace. Strengthened by the memory of those experiences, we can prepare for Renovation by reflecting on what “newness” Jesus is bringing us in order to free us for a renewed response to His call.

If Jesus’ gaze as a baby was so transformative, how much more powerful was His gaze after all the events of His earthly life! I often reflect on Saint Louise’s painting of the Lord of Charity, which hangs in the stairwell just steps from my office. We know that she sent various versions of this representation of Jesus to local communities in order to encourage the first Sisters and support their prayer. If we contemplate it, we will see that Jesus’ lowered eyes gently fall on the viewer, to whom Jesus seems to be speaking or listening. His head is lightly inclined, as if to answer a request. His feet, firmly planted on a globe, speak of His close connection with the world and His willingness to come to us with unguarded availability. His open hands reveal His desire to welcome us. Unafraid to show His wounds, Jesus embraces the suffering that He has endured for us. Most strikingly, Jesus’ heart radiates light to indicate His limitless love for each of us, His brothers and sisters. Every element of this depiction of Jesus invites us to a close relationship with Him.

What graces can happen in and through us if we accept this call? Let us not avert our eyes. Placing ourselves in God’s presence and welcoming His gaze will allow us to “*see salvation*”, whatever that means for us in our particular situation, and, as I stressed in my January 1, 2019, letter, announce and bring that salvation to others, especially those who are poor. Are we ready to enter into the depth of loving dialogue with Jesus to which the painting invites us? Saint Vincent assured us that whenever we come humbly before the Lord, He speaks with us “*heart to heart*”. He

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continued, “*It is then that Our Lord’s promise to lead your soul... is fulfilled*” (CCD IX, 176). Jesus’ gaze holds guidance for our most vital questions and fosters the development of the virtues of our state.

Furthermore, we want to be pleasing to Jesus when His gaze falls upon us. Saint Vincent described how a Sister who does everything out of love pleases God. “*Seeing the spirit in which you work and the trust you have in Him, He regards that with so much pleasure that He has none greater. Why? Because He sees himself in it; He sees these virtues in you. Therefore, He can’t help loving you; for we love what resembles us. Once a person has reached this point, God takes pleasure in that soul, especially since He sees in her the features of His divine perfections, His love, His goodness, and His wisdom, which He has implanted in her by His grace. The Son sees in this her conformity with the Will of God His Father and takes His delight in it*” (CCD X, 436). Understanding the gift of Jesus’s gaze upon us can promote our spiritual growth through a sort of “virtuous circle” that reinforces a progressive likeness to Christ in us.

Our gaze back at Jesus corresponds to our desire to respond to Him unconditionally and give of ourselves completely. In order to be the Daughters of Charity whom we are called to be, we ratify this by vow. It is through Jesus, God made flesh and salvation in person, and because of Him that we assume the evangelical counsels that He first lived. Gazing upon His total gift of self as revealed in Scripture, we wish to give ourselves in our entirety. This involves much more than our time, material goods, or activity, but our very person (cf. C. 30a). We cannot be ambivalent or lukewarm.

Experience proves that each vow is an essential support for living our Vincentian vocation authentically.

We “*embrace chastity as a gift that frees [our] heart and gives it the dimensions of the heart of Jesus Christ*” (C. 29a). This freedom helps us to look on others as God does, adopting a benevolent, merciful, and attentive gaze. At the same time, it seeks, with detachment of heart, others’ best interest, which can sometimes mean that it leads to challenging them. We further know that whenever we are in the presence of a poor person, we are in the presence of Christ. “*By drawing its inspiration from the love of God and the strength of the Spirit, chastity brings us to discover that the heart of the Lord is the meeting-place for all of humanity and, in particular, of the poor. It permits us to live an authentic relationship with others as perfectly as possible*” (*Instructions on the Vows*, p. 46). Such a relationship requires openness, honesty, purity of intention, and a certain vulnerability on our part. It leads us beyond our habits and comfort to share experiences in a spirit of faith and strengthen bonds of communion. Does our chastity bring us closer to God, to our Sisters in community, to those who are poor, and to all those with whom our service brings us into contact? Saint Louise wrote, “*In order to fulfill His holy plan... there must be great union among you*” (SW, L. 104b, p. 113). Fidelity to the mission entrusted to us depends on the quality of our chastity.

We assume poverty because we are “*concerned with sharing the lot of those who are poor*” (C. 30b) and are “*happy to have no other treasure than God*” (C. 30a). Poverty directs our gaze to the heart of the Gospel message. Mother Guillemin considered it so essential for the Daughters of Charity that she wrote, “*The entire future of the Little Company depends upon the way in which we shall understand and live holy Poverty*” (Letter of February 2, 1965). Jesus looks at us and sees our poverty because He knows our weaknesses and our reliance on Him for everything. What do others see? In the section “A life simplified by the Gospel”, the Inter-Assemblies Document states, “*The Charity of Christ impels us to be authentic servants and missionaries of the Gospel and gives us the courage to adopt a simple life style in solidarity*”

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with our brothers and sisters, the poor” (IAD, p. 12). Being poor with the poor, resembling those who are poor, is a condition for effective service. Without this proximity of life, we risk losing access to the very people whom we wish to serve and obscuring the message of God’s love for those who are poor. Growing in real poverty of spirit involves giving up everything that is not Christ and accepting the reality of our dependence in order to enjoy the freedom of counting on Him rather than ourselves. It is a source of true joy! Each day, we pray for our Founders’ help to “*deliver our hearts from self-sufficiency and selfishness,*” that is, to live poverty concretely in order to be faithful to our Vincentian vocation.

We live obedience and “*make to God the offering of [our] freedom*” (C. 31a). Here, too, we must let go of everything that is not Christ. Growth in obedience is a process of aligning our will with God’s will. Is our food to do the will of the one who sent us (cf. Jn 4:34)? Deepening our sense of belonging to the Company and our conviction that we act in its name helps us desire and savor such food. Transcending our own opinions and interests for the common good enables the Company to provide the services entrusted to it (cf. C. 31c). In a world that idolizes personal freedom, this attitude is not natural; it is *supernatural*. If we gaze without flinching on Jesus, “*obedient unto death, and the death on the Cross*” (Phil 2:8), He will grant us the courage to joyfully embrace His example and work for His Kingdom alone. Indeed, there is only one mission, the mission of Jesus Christ, in which we have the privilege of participating. In our personal and communal discernment, making use of the many means that the Company offers to promote co-responsibility, participation, and subsidiarity, we should always look to the sacred horizon of our service with and of Christ. Discernment is not reserved for “important” matters, but also applies to the details of everyday life, the choices that we sometimes make without really thinking about them. “*It involves striving untrammelled for all that is great, better and more beautiful, while at the same time being concerned for*

the little things, for each day's responsibilities and commitments" (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 169). Only an active, prayerful obedience will allow us to live out our mission faithfully.

We commit ourselves by a specific vow to serve corporally and spiritually those who are poor, "*an act of love*" (C. 24a). As an act of love, our service can know no limits – no limits to availability, creativity, openness to forms of poverty... In response to a question about consecrated life, Pope Francis spoke of his admiration for priests, brothers, and sisters with a real sense of work, "*those consecrated persons who are unpretentious, who don't make a lot of noise, but who work without drawing attention to themselves... They are really people who empty themselves without looking to their own needs. They give all with open hands*" (*The Strength of a Vocation*). Jesus' loving attention to those who are poor calls us to further open our hands, eyes, and hearts to do everything possible for those who are thirsting for food, shelter, education, justice, an encounter with the living God... This year, how will we show that our passion for persons who are poor shapes our attitudes, directs our choices, and produces a conversion of mind and heart (cf. IAD, p. 14)? Vincentian service makes us strive to "work ourselves out of a job" through being the voice of the voiceless, working to change unjust structures, helping people living in poverty to become agents of their own promotion, developing prevention and awareness programs, praying with them...

Our vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience have the goal of liberating the heart and making us fully available for the service of persons who are poor. We must understand everything in the context of love: a special invitation to love God more, to love Him better, to love Him universally – in all people, situations, and circumstances, and to make Him loved. *Love with all our heart, with all our being, with all our strength, and with all our mind* (cf. Lk 10:27)... This is not easy, but I am convinced that it is worth it!

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Jesus offers us His Mother, strengthened by their mutual gaze over many years, to support us in this arduous way of life. Standing at the foot of the Cross, Mary's purity in all her relationships allowed her to open her heart, suffer with others, accept John as her son, and thus enter into communion with all believers. Despite "*having found favor with God*" (Lk 1:30) and being "*blessed among women*" (Lk 1:42), Mary led a life of material poverty and is the "*model of the poor in spirit*" (C. 15b) because of her humble dependence on God. In a spirit of obedience, Mary gave up everything – her plans, her reputation, her homeland, and ultimately her Son, turning Him over to God – to participate in the realization of His plan of salvation. The "*handmaid of the Lord*" (Lk 1:38), Mary served God unconditionally and places her very self at the service of humanity. She is there to help us live our vocation with evangelical joy. In the words of Mother Guillemin, "*Mary is the purest, the simplest, the most beautiful model for the life of every Daughter of Charity. Looking to her is enough to find the light, but we must look to her!*" (Repetition of Prayer, December 7, 1962)

Sisters, I invite you to experience the gaze of Jesus in order to reenergize our living out of the vows this year. May our prayer, reflection, and dialogue in preparation for Renovation help us to understand more fully their riches and concrete ways to live them more consciously. If we are able to do this, our lives and services will witness more vividly to the Gospel. Let us find strength in God's personal appeal to us, "*Be holy, for I am holy*" (Lev 11:44), in order to respond joyfully and with our entire being.

All this is important for the exciting year that lies ahead of us. In the Company, the General Council is advancing with preparations for the upcoming Assemblies, beginning with Domestic Assemblies this year. Please pray that we may loyally follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. You will be receiving many more details in coming months. I am confident that the sharing, to which each Sister will contribute with all the wealth of her personality

and culture (cf. C. 35a), will be fruitful and will lead us forward as impassioned servants according to the spirit of our vocation. The General Council is also organizing a series of sessions for revitalization according to age groups. The first, for Sisters 11-24 years vocation, will be held April 29 – May 13. Each session will foster reflection on the “more” to which the Sisters in their particular context are invited, in terms of spiritual, community, and apostolic life.

The universal Church, with the dissemination of the final document from the Synod on young people, the faith and vocational discernment, continues to draw our attention and ask for our response to the needs and gifts of young people. We should join our voices with the Synod to affirm, “*We believe that even today God speaks to the Church and to the world through the young, their creativity and their commitment, as well as their sufferings and their pleas for help. With them we can read our era more prophetically and recognize the signs of the times*” (Final document, 64). Daughters of Charity have a special responsibility to help young people discern their vocation within the Church and encourage them “*to commit themselves to the service of those who are most deprived*” (S. 9c). I know that this is a priority in your Provinces; it must also be one in each local community and for each Sister. This October, the Church will offer us a month dedicated to the missions, which will surely help us advance in the commitments set out in the Inter-Assemblies Document regarding going out to the peripheries and particularly the mission *Ad Gentes*.

In your name, Sisters, I offer our gratitude and the assurance of our prayers for Father Tomaž Mavrič, Father Bernard Schoepfer, Father Robert Maloney, Father Gregory Gay, Father Fernando Quintano, Father Javier Alvarez, and Father Patrick Griffin. Their brotherly attention and evangelical witness support us greatly.

I also extend our deep thanks and the promise of prayers for Sister Juana Elizondo and Sister Evelyne Franc. Their wisdom

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and intercession for the Company continue to be a great treasure for us. May the Lord look with favor on them and grant them the graces that they need at this time.

By the merits of Simeon, who gazed upon Jesus in the Temple and allowed his life to be transformed, and those of Mary, who contemplated her Son in all stages of His life in order to conform her life to His, may we welcome and return the gaze of Jesus in order to prepare for Renovation and give ourselves entirely!

Affectionately and with the assurance of my prayers,

Sister Kathleen APPLER
Daughter of Charity

United Nations
70th Anniversary of the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights

Mother House, November 5, 2018

Introduction

The United Nations will celebrate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 2018. I would like to make some links between the Universal Declaration and our ministries.

*Current
Challenges*

Context of 1948

Let me set the scene of what was happening in 1948. Several key events were occurring on a Community level.

First, the canonization of Saint Catherine Labouré had taken place just the year before (July 27, 1947), and celebrations continued in many locations throughout the world.

The heart of Saint Vincent had been displayed at the Mother House for a year.¹ The film, “Monsieur Vincent,” which was

1. The Echo of the Mother House, February 1948, page 39

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released in 1947, was “creating a real sensation throughout Paris” in 1948.² The film was a stirring appeal to charity and love.

The Sisters in various countries were, perhaps without knowing it, addressing human rights concerns and, in some cases, experiencing human rights violations themselves due to forces within their countries.

In January 1948, Mother Marie Antoinette Blanchot said, “*The world is in a turmoil and we may expect an “explosion” unless our Blessed Mother produces a happy union of minds and hearts in the Charity of Christ.*”³ Could not those same words be said today?

In Portugal, the Sisters were working with more than 300 patients in the Leper Home at Trocha.⁴ Their efforts relate to Human Right Article 25 (1), which speaks of the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and of one’s family, medical care (among other needs) and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of sickness (and other situations beyond their control).

Sister Roy, Visitatrix of **Madagascar**, noted, “*We had some lamentable stories!*” She commented that the Mission gained some “*real martyrs*,” speaking of an 80-year-old man who was led to a place designated for execution.⁵ That situation violated multiple human rights and principles, including:

2. The Echo of the Mother House, January 1948, page 22

3. The Echo of the Mother House, January 1948, pages 11-12

4. The Echo of the Mother House, February 1948, page 47

5. The Echo of the Mother House, February 1948, page 51

- The basis of the Human Rights Declaration - recognition of the dignity and worth of each person
- Article 3, which refers to a person's right to life, liberty and security
- Article 5, which states that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- Article 9: No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

In Moulin-les-Metz, **France**, the Sisters were addressing the impact of severe flooding. *“The poor everywhere have turned once more to the Daughters of Charity for food, clothes, and lodging,”* remarks Sister Bergier, Visitatrix of the Province of Lorraine.⁶ She noted the whole ground floor was a bed of thick mud, the refrigerator overturned, the organ had drifted to the altar railing, and vestments were probably unfit for use. Water rose to the second floor. Sheep, hens, and a hog drowned. The Sisters prepared to move to the attic. And firemen observed a cradle, with a *“new little Moses,”* floating down the Moselle River.⁷

Many times in a disaster situation, human rights violations are unintended, but happen due to scarce resources and other factors. But the Sisters' provision of various necessities to the flood victims was fulfilling victims' rights to security in the event of unemployment, sickness... or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond their control, in keeping with Article 25.

In **Guatemala**, Sister Lefebvre commented, *“It is a pleasure to see the busy Central House with more than 1,000*

6. The Echo of the Mother House, February 1948, page 54

7. The Echo of the Mother House, February, 1948, page 53-54

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children in the classrooms, dispensary, etc.”⁸ No doubt the Daughters of Charity were teaching in many points around the globe in 1948. Their presence in the classroom helped fulfill Article 26 (1), which states that everyone has the right to education.

In **Greece**, Sister Rallie mentioned that Thessalonica was filled with *“refugees who are afraid in their homes, for their children are seized by the enemy.”*⁹ The refugees’ circumstances violate multiple human rights, including:

- Article 13, which states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.”
- Article 9: “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.”

In a tragic situation in **Vietnam**, a Daughter of Charity lost the very right to life, which is assured by Article 3. Sister Brazina and Sister Nen were traveling from Saigon to Dalat with several civilians on a military train. The train was attacked three times. A machine gun was aimed at their compartment, and Sister Brazina received a bullet to her head and breathed her last. Sister Nen, who was two years vocation, also received splinters of shells in her head and hands. It was the intention of the attackers to sprinkle gasoline on the travelers in order to burn their compartment. When the Major approached, Sister Nen said to him, *“I beg you, do not hurt me. I am a Sister of Charity and I take care of the Poor.”* He took the crucifix and gave orders to stop firing!¹⁰

You see the many links between situations our Sisters encountered back in 1948 and the Universal Declaration

8. The Echo of the Mother House, February, 1948, page 52

9. The Echo of the Mother House, June, 1948, page 176

10. The Echo of the Mother House, April, 1948, page 111

of Human Rights. The world was crying for recognition and protection of human rights then. That cry continues to echo in 2018.

Our ministries today remain closely connected to the protection of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights addresses many protections for persons on the move. (Persons who migrate are also protected by other rights treaties.) In addition to meeting immediate needs, Sisters who are ministering to migrants may be ensuring some of the following twelve rights are protected:

- Article 1: People are free and equal in dignity and rights.
- Article 3: The right to life, liberty and security.
- Article 6: The right to recognition everywhere as a person under the law.
- Article 9: The right not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile.
- Article 13: The right to freedom of movement and residence within one's country's borders, and to leave any country and return to it.
- Article 14: The right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
- Article 15: The right to a nationality.
- Article 26: The right to education.
- Article 18: The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- Article 23: The right to work.
- Article 25: The right to a standard of living adequate for himself and his family.
- Article 27: The right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community.

Other articles of the Human Rights Declaration also apply to migrants. Another issue close to hearts of Daughters of Charity

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and a very serious modern-day human rights violation is human trafficking. Human trafficking typically involves confinement, forced labor and slavery, among other atrocities. Many human rights are violated in the perpetration of this crime. Five human rights articles immediately come to mind.

- Article 1: The basic premise of dignity for each person.
- Article 4: No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.
- Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- Article 9: No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
- In the case of forced labor which results from trafficking, there is a violation of Article 23: (1), which indicates that everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work...

Next, let us consider homelessness, because that is a current focus of the Vincentian Family. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, in Article 25, section 1, that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing... (and more).

While today we are discussing the 70-year-old Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is important to know that the Declaration is a model for various other treaties, national constitutions, laws and policies, many of which cover issues such as migration, human trafficking, and homelessness. One example is the Global Compact on Migration, which was approved on December 10 in Morocco.

You may ask, “Who is in charge of promoting human rights at the UN?” It is Michelle Bachelet, who was the first woman President of Chile. She is

the 7th Commissioner for Human Rights. In addition to Mrs. Bachelet promoting protection of human rights, the UN strives to achieve them through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and by other means. If you review the goals, you will see that they address many human rights. Which one strikes you as being in urgent need of attention? Perhaps this could be the subject of a community meeting, or you might take time to see which of the goals connects with your ministry.

The question now arises, “What can I do in terms of promoting human rights?” The trend is to move from a needs-based approach to a rights-based approach to service.

According to Peter Harney, of Edmund Rice International, the needs-based approach begins with the question, ‘*What are the presenting issues and needs in a particular community?*’ On the other hand, the rights-based approach asks, ‘*What rights are being neglected or trampled in this situation?*’ (Peter Harney, 2013; https://www.erc.org.au/rights_based_approach)

According to Harney, the rights-based approach starts with the task of naming the rights of those who are experiencing the injustice that are not being respected. From there, one asks, “*Why is it the people can’t enjoy their rights?*” This stimulates investigation of reasons for their disempowerment. In the midst of the struggle, persons dealing with oppressive systems gradually come to know their rights, ask for recognition of those rights, and claim them, according to Harney. Encouraged as they find their voice, persons experiencing injustice can then challenge duty-bearers (leaders) to change the unjust structures that deny them both dignity and rights. This is a self-empowering path, which leads to systemic change.

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There are many versions of a rights-based approach. What are some main steps in applying a rights-based approach to a problem? Harney outlines them for us:

1. Look at the problem as a human rights issue. Ask, “What rights are being violated? Who are the rights holders? Who is (are) the duty bearer(s)?”
2. Think, plan and decide about the problem as a human rights issue by involving the most vulnerable — the people whose rights are not being respected. They have the best wisdom and insight related to their circumstances.
3. Consult with all stakeholders without discrimination, building an inclusive network or coalition of human rights defenders, encouraging and enabling local decision making, ensuring no one is left behind, holding duty bearers to account and aiming to change relevant laws, policies, procedures or practices.
4. Review progress towards your goal.

Why take a human rights approach? Human rights are universal, and that provides an underpinning platform which applies to all. They feature essential values, principles and standards that enable people to fully live. They are also designed to safeguard both human dignity and human identity (individual and collective). There is a systems component to a human rights-based approach, which dovetails well with our Vincentian Family value of systemic change.

Today, as in 1948, “*The world is in a turmoil*,” as Mother Blanchot said. In addition to being dedicated women of charity, how can each Daughter of Charity promote and protect the dignity and human rights of each person?

Sister Catherine PRENDERGAST
Daughter of Charity

Province of España-Est

The pastoral team at the Penitentiary in Pamplona

Prisoners are among the most despised people in society. As their autonomy is limited, they are progressively dehumanized. Coming from poor and often dysfunctional families, most of them are without resources. The suffering of their childhood, education that was not adapted to their needs and the resulting difficulty in entering the workforce all affect their entire lives. Emotionally and psychologically deficient, they are readily excluded, and their lives seem meaningless. As children, they were often in homes run by child protective services; as adolescents, they found themselves in reform schools; as adults, they end up in prison.

Lay volunteers, priests and consecrated persons participate in prison ministry, always in collaboration.

As members of the pastoral team, we try to immerse ourselves in their complex world made up of misunderstanding, solitude and unworthiness... We strive to be close to them and to bear witness to the love God has for them, just as our first Sisters did with the galley convicts. We privilege the least fortunate, those who need psychiatric care or are held in isolation.



*News from
the Provinces*

Sisters' Testimonies

REHABILITATION PROGRAMS OUTSIDE PRISON

We accompany prisoners in their family, social and professional reintegration. It is a slow process of personal reconstruction with choices for professional and other training to improve their future upon release:

- sponsored transitional apartments
- day centers, penitentiary guidance centers, various workshops to connect them with other community social services.

ACTIVITIES WITHIN PRISON

- workshops in sewing, handicrafts, art and social skills
- legal advice, counseling, coaching services
- religious formation, prayer services and Eucharistic celebrations
- mental health programs in conjunction with medical professionals
- mediation between prisoners and their families; support and guidance for family members
- visits to hospitalized prisoners.

We carry out all these activities in coordination with the prison authorities, professionals and the diocese.

The relationship that we establish with them is the most important: caring for them, trying to heal their wounds and making up for what society has not offered them. Our accompaniment, which strives to be positive and non-judgmental, intends to help them recover their dignity.

The penitential system continues to be punitive, but we should believe that no one ends up there of his or her own free will. Re-education and rehabilitation are thus important tasks. Jesus' words inspire our work: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He*

has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” (Lk 4:18-19).

HERE ARE SOME SISTERS’ TESTIMONIES.

“My life with the women prisoners teaches me to call myself into question when my attitude is not consistent with the Gospel.”

“I am edified by the simplicity and humility of the prisoners. They speak simply of their past and ask humbly for such basic and necessary things that no one should go without.”

“We always conclude by praying the Our Father and shaking hands.”

“I have come to understand that my work does not so much consist in accomplishments or efficiency but in the quality of my presence.”

“They need to be loved, called by their name...”

“I am touched by their harsh reality. Human beings like each one of us, they ‘do the time’ imposed on them because of mistakes made; to this, however, we must add the loss of their human dignity.”

“We try to get to know them and establish sufficient connections to assure personal accompaniment.”

“These individuals bear difficult-to-heal wounds in their hearts. They have many types of needs: psycho-emotional needs (anti-social behaviors, abandonment by their families...), economic needs, moral needs (loneliness, boredom, discouragement, low self-esteem...). They receive little attention inside and outside the prison, for example, denial of permissions despite their having the

Sisters' Testimonies

right to them. This is the distress of those who have nothing, the vulnerability of the weakest. There are major gaps in rehabilitation plans, a lack of support to poor families. Ultimately, it is a real dehumanization.”

“I became aware that there is much still to do in these penitentiaries and a real need to raise awareness on the outside.”

“We try to make present the goodness and mercy of God, but the needs are so great that they are beyond our means.”

“In the transitional apartment, sharing life with people from such diverse backgrounds and situations is a source of human and spiritual enrichment that I have not found elsewhere.”

“Learning the art of ‘positioning myself’ with the other person and based on the other person has been a challenge that I have not always been able to meet, but it has helped me to see people more humanly.”

“Listening to others demands peaceful acceptance, pure vision, words and attitudes that inspire trust rather than communicate a threat. This presupposes a presence of the entire body, with all our energy and being, so that others find a warm atmosphere where they can feel at home.”

“In the rehabilitation process, each of the prisoners goes at his or her own pace. By setting small goals without forcing them, we try to offer a little light amid so many uncertainties and pains. The simple fact that they consider the house “home” makes them feel respected. They can make decisions on their own and have a little privacy, autonomy and freedom. We rejoice in these small steps, little successes.”

“Forming Sister volunteers for entering into relationship with prisoners is essential: spiritual and human formation as well as

on the reality of prison. Holistic formation offers support and the basic tools for empathetic relationships.”

“For me, the ongoing relationship with detainees is a real school of life: we learn and understand deeply the meaning of the words freedom, healing, hope, goodness, forgiveness, acceptance...”

“If I had to define our work in prisons, I would say that Daughters of Charity should be like solid, sure, functional ‘bridges’, bridges that reduce differences and bring us closer, bridges that scatter the darkness and give hope. Mediating bridges by which the prisoners can confidently go from one point to another. Bridges that need regular monitoring, repairs and updating. Bridges with prisoners’ families in order to encourage and support them.”

Our service as Daughters of Charity is always a collaborative work with other volunteers as well as with the penitentiary staff. In this difficult environment, we try to make Christ present, convinced that He always goes before us.

As Pope Francis has said, *“No cell is so isolated that it is shut to the Lord, none. He is there, He weeps with them, He works with them, He hopes with them, His paternal and maternal love reaches everywhere. I pray that each one may open his heart to this love”* (Address to participants in the Italian national meeting of prison chaplains, October 23, 2013).

Daughters of Charity
Province of España-Este

The boldness of holiness for a new missionary momentum

H

*History of
the Company*

In the Catholic Church, we honor the saints. In his 2018 letter for the feast of Saint Vincent, Father Tomaž, Superior General, called us “*to renew and deepen our relationship with the Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God of the Vincentian Family around the world as models of the Vincentian charism.*” As Saint Francis de Sales said, there is no more difference between the Gospel and the life of the saints than there is between a musical score and sung music. We can thus say that the Saints and Blessed of the Company are the Constitutions, sung and played.

The history of the Company is a grand story of holiness influenced by a constellation of better or lesser known saints. We all know Sisters who lived their lives as Daughters of Charity in a radiant light that deeply moves us, draws us along in their wake and nourishes us. Is official recognition by the Church necessary for their virtues to shine forth and their intercession in heaven to help us? We do not need to wait for their official canonization; knowing them is enough for us to love them, imitate them and call upon their intercession.

Nonetheless, the Editorial Committee of the *Echoes* has chosen to focus particularly on several Daughters of Charity whose Cause of Beatification

is in progress. One day, some of them will be placed before all of us as examples of faith and charity, proving that the Gospel can be lived heroically still today at the beginning of the 21st century. By developing an intimate relationship with them and coming to know them well, we can better understand the urgent need for our holiness and its relevance, as well as the importance of infusing all our humanity with the very life of the Gospel, as Pope Francis invites us in his Apostolic Exhortation on the call to holiness, *Gaudete et exultate*.

Editorial Committee

The Saints and Blessed of the Vincentian Family

This presentation is a concrete response to the Superior General's circular letter and his invitation to deepen our relationship with the saints.

“At the beginning of the fifth century of the Vincentian charism... renew and deepen our relationship with the Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God of the Vincentian Family around the world as models of the Vincentian charism... Reflect on the list of all the Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God of the Vincentian Family... Encourage others to pray through the intercession of that Saint, Blessed, or Servant of God for various needs and to trust in his/her intervention before God, being open to graces, miracles, healing of soul and body, and conversions. To this end, compose a prayer through the intercession of the chosen Saint, Blessed, or Servant of God, indicating an address or e-mail where persons can communicate the graces received. This also will help to bring the processes of our Blessed and Servants of God to a conclusion. Many still need a miracle to be presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in order to be recognized officially by the Church as Saints” (Circular letter of September 3, 2018).

“Thank His Divine Majesty for all the gifts and graces He's been pleased to grant all the saints in general who are now in heaven, and to each of them in particular, for the good use they've made of those same graces and for their perseverance in the practice of good works until the end. We should thank God for all that because they practiced so well the first lesson Our Lord taught them and us: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the

Kingdom of Heaven' (Mt 5:3)" (CCD XI, 382, Repetition of prayer, November 1, 1657).

INTRODUCTION

Consecrated by Baptism, all Christians are called to holiness. Let us review several paragraphs from chapters 5 and 6 of *Lumen Gentium* on the universal vocation to holiness in the Church.

- 40 – The universal call to holiness

“The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and everyone of His disciples of every condition. He Himself stands as the author and consummator of this holiness of life: “Be you therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48)... Thus it is evident to everyone, that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity; by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society.”

- 41 – The many forms of living out the one holiness

“The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one — that sanctity which is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who obey the voice of the Father and worship God the Father in spirit and in truth. These people follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ in order to be worthy of being sharers in His glory. Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity...”

- 42 – Ways and means of holiness

“Therefore, all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed, they have an obligation to so strive. Let all then have care that they

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guide aright their own deepest sentiments of soul. Let neither the use of the things of this world nor attachment to riches, which is against the spirit of evangelical poverty, hinder them in their quest for perfect love. Let them heed the admonition of the Apostle to those who use this world; let them not come to terms with this world; for this world, as we see it, is passing away (cf. 1 Cor 7:31).”

- 44 - Nature and importance of the religious state in the Church

“The faithful of Christ bind themselves to the three aforesaid counsels either by vows, or by other sacred bonds, which are like vows in their purpose. By such a bond, a person is totally dedicated to God, loved beyond all things. In this way, that person is ordained to the honor and service of God under a new and special title. Indeed, through Baptism a person dies to sin and is consecrated to God. However, in order that he may be capable of deriving more abundant fruit from this baptismal grace, he intends, by the profession of the evangelical counsels in the Church, to free himself from those obstacles, which might draw him away from the fervor of charity and the perfection of divine worship. By his profession of the evangelical counsels, then, he is more intimately consecrated to divine service.”

Therefore, we are all called to holiness, but we know that there is a special sort of holiness: holiness that can be canonized. All canonized saints lived holiness, but all those who lived holiness are not beatified or canonized.

In my presentation, I will speak about the Saints and Blessed of the Vincentian Family; then, I will explain how to introduce a cause of beatification and the process for demonstrating holiness for canonization.

I - THE SAINTS AND BLESSED OF THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY

Before presenting them, I would like to clarify what I mean by the Vincentian Family. In our day, that expression includes all the groups and congregations that have a connection with Saint Vincent. However, in this presentation, I will take the Vincentian Family in a limited sense; I will only speak of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity. In fact, we cannot place all the saints of the Vincentian Family in the broadest sense on the liturgical calendar official approved by Rome, with a couple exceptions such as Ozanam, Elizabeth Ann Seton and certain founders. In general, I will speak primarily of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity. Together, they currently include six Saints, thirteen Blessed, four Venerable and some twenty Causes of Be- atification in progress.

THE 6 SAINTS

**(4 Priests of the Mission, 2 Daughters of Charity)
to which we add Elizabeth Ann SETON and Jeanne-Antide
THOURET**

SAINT VINCENT

Born April 24, 1581, in Pouy in the region of Gascony, he died in Paris on September 27, 1660. Founder of the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity and the Ladies of Charity. He was beatified on August 13, 1729, and canonized on June 16, 1737. On May 12, 1885, Leo XIII proclaimed him the patron of all charitable works he inspired throughout the world. His feast is September 27.

SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Born on August 12, 1591, in Paris, she died there on March 15, 1660. Co-Foundress of the Daughters of Charity. She was be- atified on May 9, 1920, and canonized on March 11, 1934. On February 10, 1960, for the three hundredth anniversary of her

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death, Pope John XXIII proclaimed her the patron of all Christian social workers. Her feast, previously celebrated March 15, is now May 9.

SAINT JUSTIN DE JACOBIS

Born on October 9, 1800, in San Fele, Lucania (Kingdom of Naples), he died in Hebo in the Alighede Valley in Abyssinia, on July 31, 1860. He was beatified on June 25, 1939, and canonized on October 26, 1975. He is considered the founder of Catholicism in Abyssinia. When he was sent there in 1839, he was told, “You will find Catholics there.” Once there, however he did not find any. In 1844, the mission numbered several hundred Christians constantly persecuted by the Coptic clergy. Consecrated a bishop in 1849 and becoming entirely “Eritrean”, he led and encouraged the minority Christian communities for twenty-one years. In a hostile environment, he suffered exile and imprisonment several times. His feast is July 30.

SAINT CATHERINE LABOURÉ

Born on May 2, 1806, in Fain-lès-Moutiers (Burgundy, France). The famous apparitions of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal took place in 1830 at the rue du Bac in Paris. Assigned to the Enghien Hospice, she dedicated herself in obscurity to humble and hidden services for 46 years, relentlessly silent, modest and unassuming. She died in Paris on December 31, 1876. She was beatified on May 28, 1933, and canonized on July 27, 1947. Her feast is November 28.

SAINT JOHN-GABRIEL PERBOYRE

Born on January 5, 1802, in Montgesty (near Toulouse, France), he was imprisoned, sentenced to death and died in Wuchang, China, on September 11, 1840. He was beatified on November 10, 1889, and canonized on June 2, 1996.

During the beatification ceremony in 1889, a Daughter of Charity in Belgium, who was completely paralyzed, was cured. This miracle could have led to his immediate canonization. One of the

doctors, however, said that the Sister's paralysis was "psychological". The Postulator at the time was discouraged, but in 1995, the question of this old miracle was reopened, and the doctors approved the miracle, allowing John-Gabriel's canonization in 1996. After his canonization, Pope John Paul II announced the canonization of all beatified martyrs of China, which took place on October 1, 2000. His feast is September 11.

SAINT FRANCIS-RÉGIS CLET

Born on August 19, 1748, in Grenoble (France), he entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1769. During the upheaval of the French Revolution, he set off for China in 1791 at his request. On February 18, 1820, he died in Wuchang, China. He was beatified on May 27, 1900, and canonized on October 1, 2000, without a miracle because Pope John Paul II, after Father Perboyre's canonization, announced that he would canonize all the Chinese martyrs without need for a miracle. Francis-Regis was thus canonized on October 1, 2000, as part of a group of 120 martyrs from China. The date of his feast, previously celebrated February 18, is now July 9.

The causes for the canonization of the Chinese martyrs and thus of Father John-Gabriel Perboyre and Father Francis-Regis Clet were important for the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity because they helped change attitudes about the beatification of Confreres and Sisters. Indeed, until the 20th century, the Congregation refused to think about possible beatifications or canonizations; that of Saint Vincent was enough.

In the 19th century, when the Province of Rome wanted to present the cause of beatification for Father Francesco Folchi, CM, the 1835 General Assembly of the Vincentians declared, "*We reject this proposition because it is in opposition to humility.*" Therefore, beatification was not pursued. However, François Verdier, Superior General (1919-1933), wrote in a circular letter, "*The 18th General Assembly of 1835 opposed pursuing in Rome Causes of Beatification... how strange! While considering humility one of*"

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the most essential virtues for our Congregation, we do not believe to be lacking in it by pursuing in Rome the causes of several of our own.”

SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON

Born on August 28, 1774, in New York, she died in Emmitsburg (Maryland) on January 4, 1821. She was beatified on March 17, 1963, and canonized on September 14, 1975. She was the first American-born saint, Foundress of the Sisters of Charity according to the Rule of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul; in Emmitsburg they became Daughters of Charity. She is considered the foundress of Catholic Schools in the United States. Her feast is January 4.

SAINT JEANNE ANTIDE THOURET

Born in Sancey-le-Long (Diocese of Besançon, France) on November 27, 1765, she died in Naples on August 24, 1826. Having entered the Daughters of Charity in 1787, she returned to her family in 1793 because the French Revolution suppressed all religious congregations, and the Daughters of Charity were obliged to disperse. She continued to serve those who were poor. In 1799, unable to join the Company that no longer existed, she founded the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity under the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul in Besançon. It rapidly developed and in 1810 expanded into Italy. She was beatified on May 23, 1926, and canonized on January 14, 1934. Her feast is May 23.

We might ask, “ARE OUR FIRST SISTERS SAINTS?”

Clearly, Saint Vincent spoke very enthusiastically about Marguerite Naseau, Barbe Angiboust who did not want to serve the Duchess of Aiguillon because she was not poor, and so many others: Marie Joly, Henriette Gesseume, Geneviève Poisson, Elisabeth Turgis, Jeanne Dalmagne, Elisabeth Martin, Jeanne Lepintre, Cécile-Agnès Angiboust, Anne Hardemont, Geneviève Caillou, Françoise Carcireux, Marie-Marthe Trumeau, Claude Brigide, Marthe Dauteuil, Julienne Loret, Jeanne Delacroix, Marie

Lullen, Elisabeth Hellot, Barbe Bailly, Avoie Vigneron, Geneviève Doinel, Marguerite Moreau, Laurence Dubois, Mathurine Guérin, Marguerite Chétif, Nicole Haran, Jeanne-Christine Prévost, Françoise Ménage... All of these first Sisters are certainly saints. If it had been possible at the time, they could have been beatified.

Let's take a few minutes to consider a lesser-known aspect of Saint Vincent

We have all read the biographies of Saint Vincent written by Abelly, Collet, Coste, etc. but maybe not *The Real Life of Saint Vincent de Paul* by Antoine Rédier, published in 1925. The Superior General at the time forbade reading this book because it rejected an overly hagiographic description of Vincent's childhood and demystified him. This book instead emphasized Vincent's humanity. I will quote for you the last chapter, on Vincent's death.

It is based on testimonies from confreres who were present at Vincent's death and recount the final moments of his life. This last chapter is entitled, "Enough!" Rédier claims this was Vincent's final word. Here is what he wrote:

"How did his human carcass resist 80 years? It is because he was tall, solid, with excellent hygiene, the hygiene of saints. People mistakenly believe that saints are people of extremes; they are people of perfection, which is not the same. They are spiritual athletes who train; they are also physical athletes, in a way, who are healthy and live a long time, remaining unscathed by harsh treatment that would knock us down. Highly regular, very sober, methodically trained in the most severe disciplines, he amazes us in what he asked of his old machine even in his final years. Awake at four o'clock every morning, he never went to bed until he had finished his work. He exhorted his priests, his Daughters or others every day and often several times a day, giving totally of himself in the least exchange. He ran about everywhere, coming and going, seeing everyone, fighting, struggling. His letters repeatedly refer to a recurring fever, which he called his "little

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fever”; he hardly troubled about it. Like all those of his times, he had to undergo purging and bleeding frequently and spent several seasons at the healing waters of Forges. Others forced him to take care of himself and eat well. He drank wine but, as he said, “well watered down.” The story goes that the doctors prescribed sniffing tobacco. In the canonization process, the devil’s advocate apparently tried to assert that it was his little passion whereas saints have none. Things could have turned out badly had the other party not immediately brandished a prescription that he had fortunately included among his documents. Keep your prescriptions! This is good advice. Vincent, however, never sniffed tobacco; doctors never imposed this on him, and the advocates at his process in Rome dealt with very different matters than tobacco. All these little legends are lovely. Unfortunately, they have a rather rough life. Moreover, the poor man had all sorts of health issues and accidents: inflammation of the eyes, swollen legs, insomnia, a fall from a horse in 1631, another fall from a horse two years later, and worse in 1649 when he was pinned under the horse he was riding when it slipped in the river near Durtal...

The two following years, the last of his life, were perhaps the most productive of his career. He did so much that he killed himself. For many months already, his poor legs refused to genuflect for the Mass. They had to force him in the end to praying his breviary seated and then to complete confinement in his room. His lucidity and activity did not diminish, and his most beautiful conferences and most eloquent speeches date from 1659. During an initial health scare on January 9 of that year, he wrote to Father de Gondi, the former general of the galley ships, saying his farewells and asking his forgiveness. More surprisingly, he wrote something similar the same day to the much less interesting Cardinal de Retz. All throughout 1660, trials assailed him, as he scarcely left his room and lost Father Portail and then Louise de Marillac.

On September 26, wrote one of his priests, Vincent was helped to rise and get dressed although already a bit tired and brought to Mass, where his drowsiness increased, such that when the

doctor was informed, he determined his life was in danger. A gentle purgative was administered, but in the afternoon the pain increased, so at half past six, Father Dehorgny administered extreme unction in the presence of Fathers de Beaumont, Bejoue, Maillard, Gicquel and others.

His dying then began. He sat in a chair, surrounded by many people. These priests, these brothers, seeing him dying, were troubled. One of them – we think that it was Father Gicquel – noted down all the words and acts of these sorrowful hours.

As his missionaries asked him for his blessing, he answered, “*It is not for me to do...*” The narrator added the explanation, “*wishing to indicate that he was unworthy.*” Drowsiness overcame him again, and he remained in this state, seated, his head resting on a towel, supported by one of our brothers, Prévost, Survire or Ducournau, all night long, because his head fell forward in his drowsiness...

Every fifteen minutes, and sometimes between *Miserere*, Father Gicquel or Father Berthe said to him, “*Mater gratiae, mater misericordiae.*” He repeated this...

Around eleven o’clock, sweat bathed him; weakened, his pulse slowed; the sweat turned cold. They recommended his soul to God. Gicquel cried out to him, “*Jesus*”, and he answered, “*Jesus.*” “*Deus in adjutorium...*” and he repeated in a low voice, “*Deus in adjutorium.*”

They offered him some orange juice, and he clenched his teeth.

Father Dehorgny said, “*Propitius esto*”; he responded, “*Propitius esto.*”

At half past one, they asked him a second time to bless his spiritual family, and he answered, “*God bless it.*” ...

Father Dehorgny asked for his blessing for the Tuesday Confer-

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ences and the priests who attended them, and he answered, “Yes.”

- *For the Ladies of Charity.*

- *Yes.*

- *For the Foundlings.*

- *Yes.*

- *For the poor of the Name of Jesus Hospice.*

- *Yes.*

- *For all our benefactors and friends.*

- *Yes.*

At two o'clock, a second sweat; he turned glowing red and then white as snow.

Father Gicquel said, “*Deus in adjutorium*” too often, and awakening, Vincent said, “*Enough!*”

Great Saint Vincent, weak men could not let you die in peace. At this sacred moment, you had to act with authority. Seeing you drowsy, they had forgotten who you were. With a single word, you brought them back to their senses and could rest gently in God while, contrite and tender, they prayed and wept quietly.

Surely, you spent your last minutes on earth asking God's forgiveness for your expression of impatience. It was part of your nature, and that is why we love you so much. You were a great saint but also an impulsive man like us.

We pray with all our heart to you in heaven, where you enjoy the peace of the elect, but please allow us to look at you as well with great human piety in that little room of Saint Lazare, where you suffered your dying night and where we are told that you handed over your soul a little before five o'clock ‘in your chair, fully dressed, close to the fireplace’.”

THE 13 BEATIFICATIONS of Priests of the Mission and Daughters of Charity

There are thirteen Blessed or groups of Blessed, too many to name individually.

THE FRENCH MARTYRS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The French Revolution sought “liberty, equality and fraternity”, but it quickly turned against the Church. In 1793-1794, the Reign of Terror raged and threatened the Catholic Church. The main issue was the oath of allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. When the Pope took a stance against it, the Priests of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity were encouraged not to make this oath. Many of those who obeyed the Pope were killed or died in prison.

BLESSED LOUIS-JOSEPH FRANÇOIS AND HIS 3 COMPANIONS:

Beatified as part of the group of 191 ‘September Martyrs’ on October 17, 1926.

Louis-Joseph François, born on February 3, 1751, in Busigny (Nord),

Jean Henri Gruyer, born on June 13, 1734, in Dôle (Jura),

Nicolas Colin, born on December 12, 1730, in Grenant (Haute-Marne),

Jean Charles Caron, born on December 31, 1730, in Auchel (Pas-de-Calais),

They are among the 72 men martyred on September 3, 1792, at Saint Firmin Seminary (Paris). Their feast is September 2.

BLESSED PIERRE RENÉ ROGUE (1758-1796)

He was born on June 11, 1758, in Vannes (Brittany, France) and died as a martyr in Vannes on March 3, 1796. He was beatified on May 10, 1934. His feast is September 2.

BLESSED MARIE-ANNE VAILLOT and ODILE BAUMGARTEN (of Saint Jean Hospital in Angers)

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Marie-Anne Vaillot, born on May 13, 1736, in Fontainebleau,
Odile Baumgarten, born on November 15, 1750, in Gondrex-
ange.

They died as martyrs on February 1, 1794. They were beatified on February 19, 1984, in Angers as part of a group of 98 martyrs. Their feast is February 1.

BLESSED MARIE-MADELEINE FONTAINE AND HER 3 COMPANIONS (of the community of Arras)

Marie-Madeleine Fontaine, born on April 22, 1723, in Etrepagny (Normandy),

Marie-Françoise Lanel, born on August 24, 1745, in Eu (Normandy),

Thérèse-Madeleine Fantou, born on November 28, 1771, in Miniac-Morvan (Ille-et-Vilaine),

Jeanne Gérard, born on October 23, 1752, in Cumières (Meuse). Having refused to take the oath, they were arrested on false accusations on February 15. After four months of detention in Arras, they were transferred to Cambrai to be guillotined there on June 26, 1794. They were beatified on June 13, 1920. Their feast is June 26.

BLESSED MARGUERITE RUTAN

Born on April 23, 1736, in Metz (France), she was martyred in Dax (France) on April 9, 1794. She is one of the martyrs of the French Revolution, but her cause had remained closed due to some historical objections to documentation. She was ultimately beatified in Dax on June 19, 2011. Her feast is June 26.

“By virtue of our apostolic authority, and acceding to the wishes of our brother, Philippe Breton, Bishop of Aire and Dax, together with many other brothers in the Episcopate as well as many of the faithful, and after hearing the opinion of the Congregation for the Cause of Saints, we declare that henceforth, the Venerable Servant of God, Marguerite Rutan, virgin and martyr, member of the Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul,

who dedicated her life to the poor and to the care of the sick, and ultimately poured out her blood for Christ, can be called Blessed and her feast can be celebrated each year on June 26th in the places and in the manner laid down in the rules of law. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Given at St Peter's, Rome, on June 13, 2011, in the seventh year of our Pontificate. Benedict XVI, Pope)."

OTHER BLESSED

BLESSED GHEBRÉ MICHAEL (Ethiopian)

Born in 1791 in a village of Goggiam (Abyssinia). Baptized, he became a monk. He found a teacher and a spiritual father in the Bishop of Abyssinia, Justin de Jacobis. He died as a martyr in the region of Goggiam (central Abyssinia) in late August 1855. He was beatified on October 31, 1926. His feast is August 30.

BLESSED MARC ANTONIO DURANDO (Italian)

Born in Mondovi (Cuneo) on May 22, 1801, Visitor of the Province of Torino, he died in Torino on December 10, 1880. He founded the Daughters of the Passion of Jesus of Nazareth (Nazarene Sisters). He was beatified on October 20, 2002. His feast is December 10.

BLESSED FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM (French)

Born on April 23, 1813, in Milan, he died in Marseilles on September 8, 1853. He was the principal founder of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul. He was beatified on August 22, 1997, at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris during World Youth Days. His feast is September 9.

BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU (French)

Born on September 9, 1786, in Confort (France), she died in Paris on February 7, 1856. She helped Ozanam in the apostolate and the service of those who are poor. Her superiors took issue with her, particularly the Superior General. He considered some of her behavior dubious and did not attend her funeral, but it was a

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triumph in Paris. The Sisters of her local community left written testimonies that contradicted the Superior General's opinion. She was beatified on November 9, 2003. Her feast is February 7.

BLESSED LINDALVA JUSTO DE OLIVEIRA (Brazilian)

Born in Açu (northern Brazil) in 1953, she died as a martyr in Salvador de Bahia on April 9, 1993 (Good Friday). She was declared Venerable by a pontifical decree on her martyrdom on December 16, 2006, and beatified on December 2, 2007, in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, the first Brazilian consecrated woman beatified. Her liturgical memorial is January 7.

BLESSED GIUSEPPINA NICOLI (Italian)

Born on November 18, 1863, in Casatisma (Pavia, northern Italy), she lived primarily in Sardinia, where she devoted herself totally to those who were poor. She died in Cagliari on December 31, 1924. She was declared Venerable by a pontifical decree on her virtues on April 28, 2006. She was beatified in Cagliari on February 3, 2008. Her feast is February 3.

BLESSED MARTA ANNA WIECKA (Polish)

Born on January 12, 1874, in Nowy Wiec (Polish territory), she died in Sniatyn (modern-day Ukraine) on May 30, 1904. She was declared Venerable by a pontifical decree on her virtues on December 20, 2004, and beatified in Lviv, Ukraine on May 24, 2008.

THE MARTYRS OF THE SPANISH REVOLUTION (1936)

Violence escalated between July 18, 1936, and April 1, 1939, giving rise to a real religious persecution resulting in the destruction of 70% of Spanish churches and the assassination of nearly ten thousand people including 13 bishops, 4,184 priests and seminarians, 2,365 consecrated men, 283 consecrated women and several thousand lay men and women; it is impossible to know their exact number.

Beatification in TARRAGONA on October 13, 2013

A group of 522 Spanish martyrs from various dioceses, including **15 Priests of the Mission and 28 Daughters of Charity** (13 from Valencia and 15 from Madrid).

FATHER FORTUNATO VELASCO TOBAR and his **14** companions.

SISTER JOSEPHA MARTINEZ PEREZ and her **12** companions.

SISTER MELCHIORA ADORACION CORETES BUENO and her **14** companions.

Their feast is November 6.

Beatification in MADRID on November 11, 2017

*** A group of 18 Priests and 15 Brothers of the Mission with 6 members of the Association of the Miraculous Medal.**

FATHER JOSÉ MARIA FERNADEZ SANCHEZ and his **38** companions.

*** A group of 6 Priests of the Mission, 2 Daughters of Charity, 5 diocesan Priests (chaplains for the Association of the Miraculous Medal) and 7 lay men.**

FATHER VICENTE GUERALT LLORET and his **20** companions.

THE 4 VENERABLE

3 Priests of the Mission and 1 Daughter of Charity

The designation “Venerable” means that the Pope has declared in favor of heroic virtues, but a miracle is still needed for beatification.

FATHER SALVATORE MICALIZZI (Italian)

Born on November 5, 1856 in Naples, he died there on October 14, 1937. He was declared Venerable by the pontifical decree on his virtues on December 16, 2006, and we are waiting for approval of a miracle by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

BISHOP JANEZ FRANCISEK GNIDOVEC (Slovenian)

Born on September 29, 1873, in Veliki Lipovec (Ljubljana, Slo-

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venia), he worked extensively for ecumenism in the Balkans. He blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who herself testified to the holiness of his life. When a saint speaks about the holiness of another person, this testimony carries considerable weight. He died in Ljubljana on February 3, 1939. The *Positio super virtutibus* was given to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 2000. He was declared Venerable on March 27, 2010. A miracle obtained through his intercession was presented to this Congregation in 2007.

BISHOP ANTONIO FERREIRA VICOSO (Portuguese)

Born on May 13, 1787, in Peniche (Leira, Portugal), he died in Mariana (Brazil) on July 7, 1875. The *Positio super virtutibus* presented in 2001 was approved by historical experts for the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on April 23, 2002. He was declared Venerable on July 8, 2014. A miracle obtained through his intercession was presented to the Medical Board in 2018.

SISTER JUSTA DOMINGUEZ DE VIDAURRETA E IDOY (Spanish)

Born on November 2, 1875, in Azpeitia (Spain). The Visitatrix of Madrid, she died in Madrid on December 18, 1958. The *Positio super virtutibus* was presented in 2001. She was declared Venerable on April 14, 2018. A miracle obtained through her intercession in 1994 was presented to the Medical Board in 2018.

SOME TWENTY CAUSES of BEATIFICATION ARE IN PROGRESS Servants of God

At the beginning of a Cause of Beatification, the first step is as a “Servant of God”. For Servants of God to advance towards beatification, the diocesan inquiry (testimonies and documents) is summarized into a single volume (Positio) that, if it obtains the favorable opinion of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, will result in a decree authorized by the Pope. Such a decree of martyrdom immediately authorizes beatification (martyrs do not need a miracle for beatification); for other Servants of God, they

are then Venerable and need a miracle. The invocation and prayer should refer to that Servant of God alone in order to attribute an extraordinary and scientifically inexplicable healing to him or her.

THE MARTYRS OF CHINA

The diocesan inquiry, carried out in China and presented in 1936 to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, includes 931 martyrs, mostly lay people, killed during the Boxer Revolution in 1900. The files are complete but remain blocked in the Holy See for diplomatic reasons.

* **FATHER JULES GARRIGUES and 4 other Priests of the Mission:** Father Maurice-Charles Pascal Doré, Father Pasquale Raffaele d'Addosio, Father Antonio Claudio Chavanne, Father Nie Pietro. Jules Garrigues, born June 23, 1840, in Saint-Sernin de Gourgois (France), was martyred in Beijing on June 14, 1900.

* **FATHER CLAUDE CHEVRIER** (French, born on August 13, 1821 in Saint-Jodard, France) and **VINCENIUS OU** (Chinese, born in 1821 in Guangdong, China).

* **SISTER MARIE-THÉRÈSE MARQUET and 9 other Daughters of Charity.** Martyred on June 20, 1870, in Tianjin, Hebei (China). The diocesan inquiry was completed in Tientsin in 1925.

* **BISHOP FRANS HUBERT SCHRAVEN** (Dutch) and **4 Priests of the Mission, 2 Brothers of the Mission** and a Trappist priest.

Bishop Schraven, born on October 13, 1873, in Lottum (Limburg, Netherlands), was killed during the massacre on October 9, 1937, in Zhengding (China) during the Sino-Japanese War. The diocesan inquiry in the Diocese of Roemond (Netherlands) began on March 23, 2013, and closed on January 3, 2014. The *Positio super Martyrio* is currently being written.

During the Sino-Japanese War, the parish of Zhengding, which had a large walled-in space of 60 acres, welcomed hundreds of Chinese women and girls who had come to seek refuge from Japanese soldiers. Bishop Schraven and his companions were massacred by the Japanese vanguard made up of mercenary

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soldiers entrusted with the 'dirty work'. The reason for the massacre is unknown because the Japanese generally did not bother Europeans, but our confreres died, victims of their duty as they remained with the people for whom they felt responsible and with the refugees whom they had received.

OTHER CAUSES IN PROGRESS

FATHER GIAMBATTISTA MANZELLA (Italian)

Born on January 21, 1855, in Soncino (Cremona, Italy). A missionary in Sardinia, he died in Sassari on October 23, 1937. The diocesan process on his virtues and reputation of holiness took place both in Sassari and Torino and concluded in 1964. The *Positio super virtutibus* cannot be established without certain necessary documents to resolve all historiographical obstacles.

SISTER FRANCESCA BENICIA DE OLIVEIRA (Brazilian)

Born on August 23, 1896, in Redenção (Brazil), she died in Baturité-Ceará (Brazil) on July 2, 1966. The diocesan inquiry on her virtues and reputation of holiness began in Fortaleza in 1995 and was submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 2001.

BISHOP BONAVENTURA CODINA Y AUGEROLAS (Spanish)

Born on July 13, 1786, in Hosterlich (Spain), he was the Director of the Daughters of Charity during the Generalate of Father Etienne. His papal appointment as Bishop of the Canary Islands meant that he no longer belonged to the Congregation of the Mission. (Today, a confrere appointed a bishop remains a member of the congregation.) He died in Las Palmas (Canary Islands) on November 18, 1857. The acts of the diocesan inquiry were submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 2001.

BISHOP EMILIO LISSON CHAVES (Peruvian)

Born on May 24, 1872, in Arequipa (Peru). During the Great Depression in the 1930s in the Americas, he was entirely on the side of those who were poor. He died in Spain in Valencia on

December 24, 1961. The diocesan inquiry on his virtues and reputation of holiness began in Valencia on September 20, 2003.

SISTER GABRIELLA BORGARINO (Italian)

Born on September 2, 1880, in Boves (Cuneo, Italy), she died in Luserna (Italy) on January 1, 1949. The acts of the diocesan inquiry of Pinerolo were submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 2004. The historical consultation ruled favorably on her heroic virtues. The *Positio super virtutibus* was presented in 2018. A miracle took place in 2012. The Cause is very far along.

SISTER ANNA CANTALUPO (Italian)

Born on September 3, 1888, in Naples, she died in Catania (Sicily) on March 17, 1983. She was heroic in her work for those who are poor. The diocesan inquiry on her virtues and reputation of holiness was presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 2008. The *Positio super virtutibus* is nearly completed.

SANTIAGO MASARNAU (Spanish)

Born on December 10, 1805, in Madrid, this religious advocate against poverty died in Madrid on December 14, 1882. He founded the Spanish branch of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The diocesan inquiry on his virtues and reputation of holiness concluded in 2000 in Madrid. The Historical Commission approved the *Positio super virtutibus* on October 30, 2007.

SISTER BARBARA SAMULOWSKA (Polish, missionary in Guatemala)

Born in 1865 in Woryty, Gietrzwałd (northern Poland), she died in Guatemala City on December 6, 1950. The diocesan inquiry on her virtues and reputation of holiness began in Gietrzwałd on February 2, 2005, and was certified in 2008. Since then, the cause has stalled, but we hope to revive it.

FATHER JOZEF FLORKO (Ukrainian)

Born on May 8, 1915 in Winnikach (Lviv, Ukraine). A Vincentian priest in Poland, he died as a martyr in the concentration camp

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of Bergen-Belsen, near Hanover (Lower Saxony), on February 25, 1945, during the Nazi persecution and heads the list of his 10 companions, martyrs. The diocesan inquiry began in Krakow on September 17, 2003.

SISTER CECILIA CHARRIN (French, missionary in Guatemala)

Born on February 17, 1890, in Saint-Etienne-des-Oulliers (Rhône, France), she died in Guatemala on July 13, 1973. The diocesan inquiry in Guatemala on her virtues and reputation of holiness was certified on September 30, 2016.

FATHER JAN HAVLIK (Slovak)

Born on February 12, 1928, in Dubovec, Slovakia. In 1949, he entered the novitiate of the Congregation of the Mission. One year later, he was transferred to a “special monastery for young religious” to be “reeducated”. In 1951, he was arrested for having studied theology. After eleven years of suffering in prison and forced labor, he was released seriously ill and died abruptly as a novice before he could pronounce his vows. The diocesan inquiry, opened in Skalica (Archdiocese of Bratislava, Slovakia), concluded in Bratislava on February 24, 2018, and sent to Rome, was opened in 2018 (the seal was broken) by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (Rome).

SISTER TERESA (OLGA) TAMBELLI (Italian)

Born on January 17, 1885, in Revere di Mantova (northern Italy). She entered the Daughters of Charity in 1903 and was sent to Cagliari in 1907. Companion of Blessed Nicoli, she worked closely with her. At Sister Nicoli’s death in 1925, Sister Teresa continued the work with heroic charity. She died in Cagliari on February 23, 1964, with a great reputation of holiness. The diocesan inquiry for her beatification began in Cagliari on November 6, 2016.

SISTER LÉOPOLDINE BRANDIS (Austrian)

Born on November 27, 1815, in Graz (Austria). In 1837, she entered the Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent de Paul in Munich (Germany). In 1841, Sister Léopoldine and several companions

returned to Graz to begin the service of the sick in the city's general hospital. She became the superior of the small community of Sisters of Mercy of Graz, and vocations multiplied. Sister Léopoldine's desire was to live according to the original Rules of Saint Vincent and of the Company. In 1851, the Sisters of Charity of Graz joined the Company of the Daughters of Charity. She was appointed the first Visitatrix of the Province of Graz (covering all the countries of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire). To provide care for the sick overnight, she founded a new institution called "Sisters for the care of the Sick", today the Sisters of Mary of the Miraculous Medal, recognized as a congregation in 1925. At her death in 1900, she was buried in the crypt of the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity in Graz. The beatification process began in Graz in March 2017.

FATHER GIUSEPPE ALLOATTI (Italian)

Born in 1857 in Villastellone (Torino), he died in 1933 in Chieri (Torino) where he spent the last six years of his life. A missionary in Bulgaria, he founded the Sisters of the Eucharist in 1889 and worked extensively for ecumenism, especially with the Orthodox. From 1925-1927, he was a close friend of Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, nuncio to Bulgaria (elected as Pope John XXIII in 1958). We were asked to begin the cause for beatification in Torino.

THE BEATIFICATION PROCESS

All canonized saints lived holiness, but all those who lived holiness will not be beatified or canonized. Among those who heroically live all the Christian virtues, the Church has chosen some of them for beatification and canonization. The criteria for holiness are not limited to heroic virtues. Let's look more carefully at this special aspect of holiness, holiness that can be canonized, and the criteria that distinguish general holiness from that which can be canonized. In the Instruction *Sanctorum Mater* (2007), the Congregation for the Causes of Saints defines the norms for opening a Cause of Beatification.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO BEGIN A CAUSE OF BEATIFICATION?

Who writes a letter? Who is the petitioner? Who is the Postulator? Who is the competent Bishop? What is the Congregation for the Causes of Saints? What is the diocesan phase? What is the Roman phase?

A Cause of Beatification is like a case that begins before a court. It may seem strange, but a court case does not begin without an accusation. In the case of a beatification, the “accusation” is not of a crime but of something positive. The case does not start if no one starts it. The one who begins it is the petitioner of the Cause, who presents an issue for judgement. There must also be the prosecution, the defense and a judge.

1 - THE PETITIONERS OF THE CAUSE

The petitioners of a Cause of Beatification are either an individual or more often a group of the faithful, a religious congregation, a community, an association... who ask the Bishop to open the diocesan inquiry on a potential beatification. The question must always be presented by the Postulator of the cause, who is the competent person designated by the petitioners and accepted by the Holy See (Congregation for the Cause of Saints). There is no direct communication between the petitioner and the Bishop. The petitioner cannot speak with the Bishop; communication should always take place through the Postulator appointed by the petitioner. Therefore, the first thing a petitioner should do is to appoint a Postulator.

2 - THE POSTULATOR

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints must accept the Postulator. It is useless to appoint a Postulator who is not accepted by the Holy See. The Postulator should know theology, canon law and the procedures of the Congregation for the Causes of

Saints; for recognition of competence, he or she must have taken the specific course offered by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and obtained a diploma.

The Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity do not need to appoint a Postulator because they already have a Postulator General appointed by the Superior General and accepted by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Therefore, a Visitatrix should not appoint a Postulator. Many congregations have a Postulator General.

The Postulator will put the question forward to the Bishop, but not before five years have passed since the death of the candidate for beatification. (Similarly, a request to open a Cause for Beatification cannot be presented more than thirty years after the candidate's death because there is a risk the delay would be to make sure witnesses had died. However, everything is possible as long as you can prove the reasons for waiting to make the request. For example, for the martyrs in China, it was impossible to present these Causes because of the Communist regime.)

The Postulator should gather evidence of the reputation of holiness... and present it in the name of the petitioner to the competent Bishop.

In the Instruction *Sanctorum Mater*, article 7, 1 states, “*Before deciding to initiate the cause, the diocesan or eparchial Bishop must verify if, among a significant portion of the people of God, the Servant of God enjoys an authentic and widespread reputation of holiness or of martyrdom as well as an authentic and widespread reputation of intercessory power.*” Not all holy people or martyrs are venerated. They are holy, but if no one is interested in devotion to them, why canonize them?

Article 7, 2 further stresses, “*This reputation must be spontaneous and not artificially produced. It must be stable, continuous, widespread among trustworthy people and existing among a*

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significant portion of the People of God.” If someone says, “My aunt is a saint; I want to introduce her Cause,” but no one knows her, why beatify her? It is necessary to prove that a significant group of the People of God desire this beatification.

“First of all, the Postulator must collect documentation on the reputation of holiness or of martyrdom and on the reputation of intercessory power and, in the name of the petitioner, present it to the competent Bishop” (Sanctorum Mater, article 8, 1).

To begin a Cause of Beatification, you must present sufficient documents. For example, in the 1920s the Diocese of Dax attempted to have the martyrdom of Marguerite Rutan recognized with other martyrs of the French Revolution. The Sisters of Arras had been beatified, but not Sister Rutan because, at the time, the devil’s advocate presented objections regarding the reason for her martyrdom. Indeed, the motive for martyrdom must be the faith, fidelity to Jesus, not politics. The documents implied that Marguerite Rutan’s death was political because she allegedly favored the Germans during the French Revolution. The devil’s advocate thus said that we had to demonstrate the reasons for killing her. At that time, the Postulator did not give any response, so the Congregation for the Causes of Saints said that she was not a martyr for the faith. Some years later, the Cause was taken up again because we could prove that she was indeed martyred for her faith, that she refused to swear allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and that the political question was only a pretext for falsely accusing her. We also had to demonstrate that there was indeed popular devotion to her after her death.

3 - THE DIOCESAN PHASE

THE COMPETENT BISHOP

The Postulator should present a Cause of Beatification to the Bishop of the diocese where the candidate died. The local Bishop has the responsibility for evaluating the documentation and opening the diocesan inquiry for beatification.

EVALUATION OF THE DOCUMENTATION BY THE DIOCESE

“The Bishop must evaluate the documentation in order to ascertain the existence of the reputation of holiness or of martyrdom, and of the reputation of intercessory power, as well as the importance of the cause for the Church” (Sanctorum Mater, article 8, 2).

Aware of the norms for beginning the inquiry, the Bishop should verify the importance of causes. He should not open an inquiry with insufficient justification. He must obtain the *Nihil Obstat* from the Holy See, which will have conducted research with various Vatican Congregations: the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, the Congregation for Bishops, in order to verify that there are no secret documents against this candidate. If there are any adverse documents, the Holy See says, “No, it is useless to begin because there is an obstacle,” but the Holy See is not obliged to reveal the reasons.

OPENING OF THE INQUIRY BY THE DIOCESE: *SERVANT OF GOD*

After receiving the *Nihil Obstat* (no problems) from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and verifying that the candidate has an authentic, continuous and widespread reputation for holiness among the faithful, the Bishop decides to open the inquiry in the diocese.

When the Bishop accepts the Postulator General’s request and begins the beatification process, the candidate is henceforth called a Servant of God. Perhaps it will go no further, but he or she remains a Servant of God. The inquiry takes place based on testimonies, accounts and documents brought forward.

The Bishop only presides over the first session.

All the other sessions are presided by a judge delegated by the Bishop and a notary. Both swear an oath on the Bible.

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The Cause begins. The delegated judge receives all the witnesses and verifies that they are free and legitimately convoked. He will sign the minutes of all the sessions.

The court defending the Cause will appoint a **Historical Commission** (a minimum of three people) that must consult all the archives, documents, testimonies and writings and prepare a signed report to confirm that it has indeed verified everything.

Theological Censors will review *all writings* to verify that there is nothing against the faith or good morals.

When everything is finished, the **final session is closed by the Bishop**. The critical study of writings is condensed into a **secret sealed document**. A copy of the document remains in the diocese but can only be opened with the permission of the Holy See. Two other copies, authenticated by the court, are sent to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome; the Postulator General receives one. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints and the Postulator will carry out the final instruction of the Cause.

4 - THE ROMAN PHASE

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints, having received the file and verified the validity of the inquiry carried out in the diocese, designates a Reporter for the Cause charged with preparing a summary of all the documentation (biography, virtues, etc.) called “*La Positio super virtutibus* of the Servant of God”. The *Positio* constitutes the logical demonstration (*Informatio*) of heroic virtues thanks to the testimonies and documents gathered in the diocesan inquiry (*Summarium*).

THE DECREE OF HEROIC VIRTUES TO BECOME ‘VENERABLE’

This cannot happen until **nine theologians have judged in favor** of the case on three questions:

- Is the *Positio* well-written with sufficient depth?
- Did the Servant of God practice virtues heroically?

- Is it necessary and appropriate to beatify this candidate?
Who does his or her beatification interest?

After the favorable opinion of the nine theologians, a **college of Cardinals and Bishops** is questioned on the *Positio* and the heroic practice of virtues.

Then, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints presents the case to the Holy Father. The Pope can then authorize the reading of the “decree of heroic virtue”, and the “Servant of God” becomes “Venerable”.

THE DECREE OF A MIRACLE FOR BEATIFICATION TO BECOME ‘BLESSED’

A miracle obtained through the intercession of the Servant of God is required for beatification. In order to be considered by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, a diocesan inquiry is necessary with the same procedure as above: testimonies, doctors, the *Positio super miro (Informatio and Summarium)*. Everything is then submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

The Positio on the Miracle presented in Rome is examined by **seven doctors** who must give their opinion on the extraordinary nature of the healing. It must be proven to be instantaneous, irreversible, total and medically inexplicable.

If the doctors’ opinion is favorable, a congress of **nine theologians**, presided by the Promotor of the Faith, will be called upon to make a judgment on the supernatural character of the event in question and on the fact that the intercession was addressed to the Servant of God.

For the miracle, as for the heroic nature of virtues, a **meeting of Bishops and Cardinals** takes place. The final decision lies with the **Pope**, who receives the documents and the decree on the miracle. The Holy Father settles the question and authorizes the reading of the decree.

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At the time of beatification, the Pope fixes the date for the memorial in the local liturgical calendar or that of the religious family. Beatification is a pontifical act, but the rite takes place in the diocese that promoted the Cause of the new Blessed or in another appropriate place; a representative of the Holy Father celebrates (*Notice of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on new procedures in the rite of beatification, September 29, 2005*).

THE DECREE OF A MIRACLE FOR CANONIZATION TO BECOME ‘SAINT’

Another miracle that occurs after the beatification and receives approval by the same procedure as above is necessary for a Blessed to be proclaimed a Saint and canonized.

In conclusion

As the Postulator General, I would like to remind you that each person has his or her share of responsibility. The Postulator does his work, but the group of petitioners must also do its work and demonstrate the holiness of the candidate. We are all involved in the processes of beatification and canonization, according to our specific roles and tasks: the petitioners, who are primarily responsible for the Cause that they wish to see begin; the Postulator, who is the mediator between the petitioner and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints; the vice-Postulator appointed by the Postulator, who follows the Cause at the diocesan level.

Each group or individual should know its role and fulfill it. Sometimes we try to pass the responsibility on to others: the petitioner thinks it depends on the Postulator or the Bishop; the Postulator says, “That is the job of the petitioner”; the Bishop says, “That depends on the Congregation for the Causes of Saints”! The most common point of confusion is thinking that the Congregation for the Causes of Saints works in favor of the Causes of saints. I have to say that the Congregation for the Causes of Saints does nothing for them; rather, it works against them, judges, plays the devil’s advocate and generally rejects what is being done. Why? The petitioners, who request someone’s beatification, must prove his or

her holiness and provide the elements that justify such a request. When the Congregation for the Causes of Saints asks questions, the petitioner must respond. This is entirely the petitioner's duty even if the response comes through the Postulator. Each party has the tendency to assume the responsibility belongs to someone else, but each party must know its role well and assume it.

Petitioners who desire beatification thus must demonstrate the widespread and continual reputation for holiness. It is therefore necessary to send documents on initiatives, graces received and news on the promotion of the cause to the Postulator General of the Vincentian Family, as our Superior General reminds us.

Father Giuseppe GUERRA, CM
Postulator for the Causes of Saints of the Vincentian Family

**A child is born to us!
A new heart is offered
and given us.**

**A new world longs to be born.
Extraordinary words are heard.
Those who hear them recover
their child-like heart.**

**They are children of God.
It is Christmas!**

May God bless and keep you!

Happy and holy 2019.

With the assurance
of my brotherly prayer,

Father Bernard SCHOEPFER, CM

