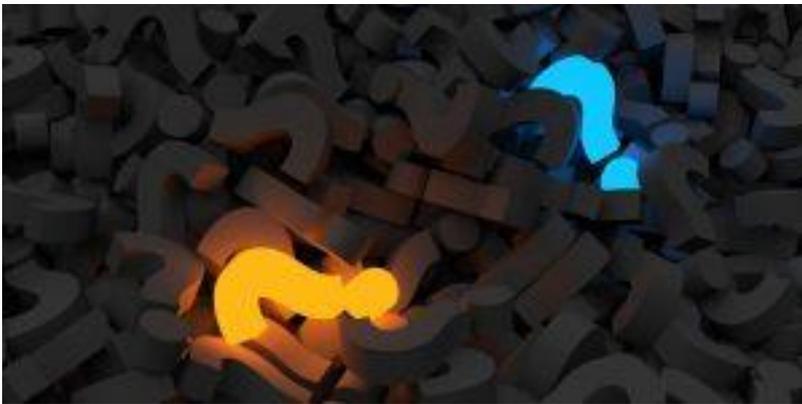


New Forms of Charity to Alleviate the Poverty that Challenges Us

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If you think that the Vincentian charitable action has been the same since the foundation of our association in 1833 to this day, you are wrong. In each time, the Vincentian work has adapted to the reality of each moment, in each region of the world and with different initiatives. Nowadays, the problems that are presented to the Vincentian Conferences pose even greater challenges and require a specific preparation by members, always with a lot of creativity.

We live in a selfish and consumerist world. The environment is polluted. People move away from the Church. The family has been destroyed by divorce. Unemployment and lack of education aggravate the social crisis. The Vincentian Conferences are inserted in this inhospitable scenario and must be innovative to help more effectively people who suffer.

For example: does anyone doubt that digital inclusion must be an effective contribution of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul to reduce poverty? In this regard, several Conferences and even Councils have created computer centers at their headquarters, generally unoccupied for a good part of the month. Another interesting idea is microcredits, which allow the assisted

persons to generate income from small loans at low interest. Along the same line of thought, a Central Council of Brazil has already signed an agreement with a banking institution.

And the joint actions with the other branches of the Vincentian Family? Does anyone doubt that this union of forces is not beneficial to the poor? In several cities, various social projects in peripheral areas under responsibility of several branches of the Vincentian Family, have been very successful and produced excellent results. We cannot forget the fraternal union between Vincentian Conferences, which also helps to “make charity,” beyond the borders of our parish.

To promote the Vincentian action, United Works and Special Works were created that undoubtedly complement the work carried out together with the most needy: schools, community centers, nurseries, nursing homes, dispensaries, hospitals, orphanages, among many other social ventures. In addition to our works, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has been open to associations with private companies, other Christian churches, agreements with government agencies and with entities of the tertiary sector, with the aim of expanding charitable action, as we are encouraged to do by our new Rule. Alone, we are not going to solve the challenge of misery in the world. Brother Furtado de Menezes said: “The Vincentian is not responsible for ending the misery of the world, but he is responsible for all the poor that Christ puts in his way.”

For all this, members cannot neglect their Christian and human formation. Participating in spirituality events and training courses is, clearly, a fundamental condition for the Vincentians to be adequately prepared to overcome the new forms of poverty.

In addition, the Vincentians should be attentive to the news disseminated by the media, to be well informed about socioeconomic issues, because thanks to the correct interpretation of these data we can better direct the work of the Conferences. Being aware of the Human Development Index (HDI), measured by the United Nations (UN), for example, helps us to better identify the areas of poverty in a given State or municipality.

Dear brothers and sisters: we must be clear that 21st century Vincentians are different from their predecessors. We cannot “do charity” in the same way as 10, 20 or 50 years ago. Everything has changed: technology, labor relations, the family, the media, society as a whole. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul must also change, without abandoning its principles, its charism and the original spirit that moved the seven co-founders to create our Society.

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