

AUGUST 2020



# NUNNTIA

Newsletter of the Congregation of the Mission



**Congregation of the Mission**  
Communication Office

# CHRONICLE OF THE FIRST MISSIONARY VOCATIONS FESTIVAL



The pandemic of COVID-19 could not overshadow the fraternal atmosphere with which the Congregation of the Mission began the Vincentian month.

This Tuesday, September 1st, when the clock struck 5:00 pm in Rome, the first edition of the Missionary Vocation Festival began. This was an initiative convoked weeks ago by the Superior General, Tomaž Mavrič CM. Fr Tomaž led the opening of the Vincentian celebrations of this month seeking to promote the vocational sensibility of the whole Congregation of the Mission.

Further, the meeting which was held virtually through Zoom was attended by more than 300 people from the five continents: Missionaries, students, seminarians, those in formation and young people in discernment.

The community of the General Curia in Rome was responsible for the animation of the festival and also interacted as masters of ceremony presenting the speakers and testimonies.

Seminarians from various provinces delighted our hearts with their musical talents: the first were the seminarians of the Polish Province, then Jean Baptiste Ging a student from the French Province who using the inspired motto “Our vocation consists in going, not to a parish, not just to a diocese, but to the whole earth” (ES XI, 553), composed a song befitting for the missionary

call of the Superior General and the occasion. Next, was Ângelo Cacilda Macamo a student of the Vice-Province of Mozambique who also presented a rap style song. To finish the event, the seminarians of the Vice-Province of Costa Rica lit up our hearts with the well-known song: “The Heart of St. Vincent de Paul”.

As the festival progressed, four missionaries shared their missionary experiences from their respective places of missions. Starting with Father Toshio Francesco Sato, we were privileged to hear all about his work in Bolivia where he is currently on mission. Fr Toshio is the first Japanese Vincentian, belonging to the Western Province of the United States. Then followed Fr Yohanes Berchmans who is currently on mission in Indonesia. Next in line was Brother Jorge Barrera. Br Jorge is from the Province of Colombia and his missionary testimony served to remind us of the importance of the vocation of the brothers in the Little Company. The last testimony came from Father Pedro Opeka, CM, who narrated his encounter with the poor of Madagascar since 1970 and his motivation for the missionaries to be a family wherever we are. He also invited the young people not to be afraid to respond to the call to the missionary vocation.



Next in the agenda was the presentation of the book “Where God Wants Us” written by Fr Rolando Gutierrez, CM of the Vice-Province of Costa Rica. Fr Rolando who a few days ago had published this work informed us that the work will soon be published in English and other languages. The core theme running through this outstanding work of his is the theme of Vocational Culture, read from the charism of St. Vincent de Paul: “I speak to you about vocational culture read from the heart of the Vincentian charism. ...that allows us to revitalize the missionary mysticism with a sensibility like the one that moved St. Vincent to follow Jesus Christ, evangelizer of the poor, and that ends up turning us all into callers.

The festival moved on with an interview conducted by Fr Tomaž Mavrič, CM the Superior General. Fr Tomaž interviewed Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle who was present in the festival and had visited the General Curia in July. The Cardinal shared his admiration for the Congregation of the Mission for its missionary service and its contribution to the formation of the clergy and laity. The Cardinal concluded by giving his support to the 1% missionary call campaign and this is what the Cardinal had to say to us:

“With all my heart I support this 1% Campaign, so that we may have a constant flow of Vincentians, especially those ordained to the mission ad Gentes. This is an invaluable work and it is a way of giving witness to a fragmented world. Because for us, the love of Jesus makes us brothers and sisters to each other. Even in a foreign land, I can find a home, because I have brothers and sisters in Christ. Coming together from different countries to people and finding a home in another country is a testament to God who is love, and who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. And you are also called the Congregation of the Mission. You can say that you miss your home when you leave your own home when you go to another land. But for you, you make the place where you arrive another home, because you will always find the poor to love them, to serve them, you will always find Jesus. So please let the 1% become 2% or 3% depending on God’s action and also on your availability. Please let us support the campaign,”.

The Missionary Vocation Festival came to an end with the launching of the 1% campaign by the Superior General. Father Tomaž, who, from the beginning of the Festival, wore a white T-shirt with the name of all the cities where there are ad gentes missions, explained the campaign in these terms:

“The Congregation has been missionary since its foundation, and with the campaign of 1% we seek to

encourage the departure for the mission, but in addition, we also wish to recover our reflection on the meaning of the Missionary Spirit in the Congregation, and to recognize that our missionary dimension is not limited only to the International Missions, but it extends to the missionary regions that have taken on many provinces, and that the presence of missionaries outside their countries of origin obeys the response that a given province makes to a expressed by a bishop or a particular church, but also corresponds to the call of the Church to go on Mission Ad Gentes”.

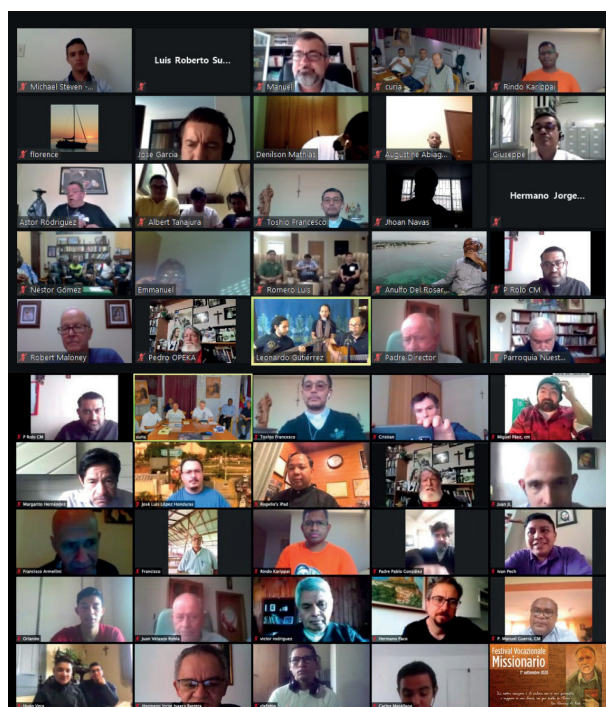
The Superior General also pointed out a series of signs that the Communications Office of the General Curia has prepared to motivate this campaign, including posters, T-shirts like the one he was wearing, the logo of the 1% stamp, and the new website:

<https://cmglobal.org/en/mission-cm/>

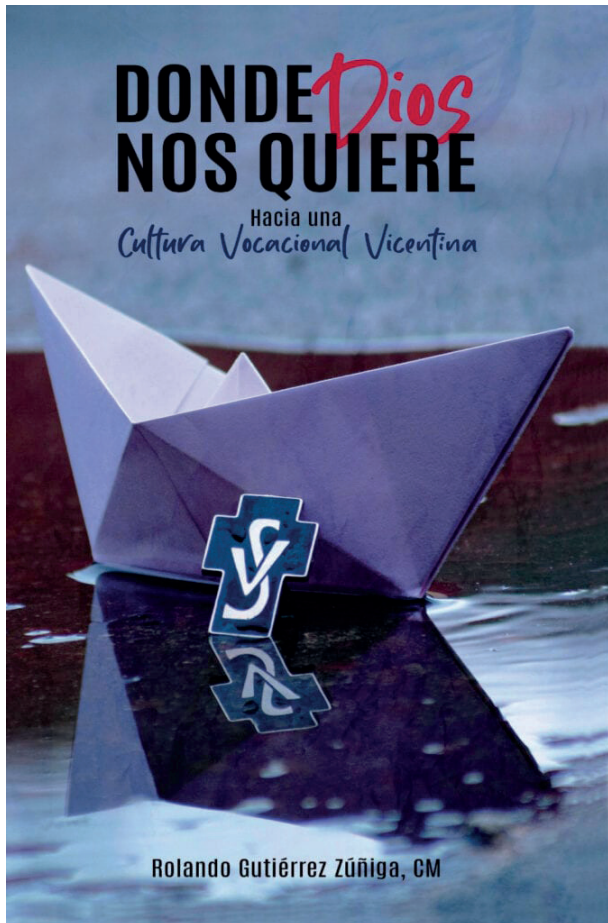
Finally, Father Tomaž Mavrič, CM, convoked all the missionaries related to the Vocation Ministry apostolate for a virtual meeting on Saturday September 19th at 5:00 pm Rome time, and he also invited the seminarians and those in formation for a virtual meeting on Saturday October 17th at the same time.

**Link to the Festival: <https://youtu.be/PVXNPmzCDEI>**

*Communication Office*



# “WHERE GOD WANTS US” – A NEW BOOK ON THE VINCENTIAN VOCATIONS CULTURE



The dream is to build a vocational culture from the perspective of the Vincentian charism ... such is the horizon of the recently published work of Father Rolando Gutiérrez, CM, a missionary of the Congregation of the Mission in Costa Rica and the author of numerous articles about vocational ministry and the Vincentian charism.

We are speaking about a recent publication from Editorial CEME-La Milagrosa which offers us a deeper understanding of a vocational culture within the framework of the New Evangelization and interpreted from the perspective of our Vincentian identity.

In the Prologue, the Vicar-General, Francisco Javier Álvarez states: When speaking about a vocational culture and a Vincentian vocational culture, the author lines up a series of concepts that, in the end, present a design for an appropriate vocational ministry. They are strong brushstrokes that artists capture on a canvas to

give perspective to their paintings. At no time is there a lack of depth in his approach ... and it should be stated that only when things are seen in depth can there be clarity in action.

According to the author, this work is the result of a series of reflections expressed in his conferences and articles in which he takes into consideration the contributions of some outstanding personalities in the field of vocational ministry, such as Amedeo Cencini. The author also refers to the Vocational Promotion Congresses that were held in Europe and Latin America as well as the recent Synod that was held in Rome (2018) on the theme of Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment. There is also reference to the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*.

The book is divided into three parts, eight chapters and is 208 pages in length. In the first part (chapters I and II) we find a study of the reality of youth and data and statistics concerning the Congregation of the Mission and some important reflections, such as the reflection on the theme of the pandemic of mediocrity (a metaphor used by Rolando Gutiérrez when speaking about a silent problem that lies within Consecrated Life and from which Vincentian congregations do not escape). In the second part (chapters III, IV and V) some very clear theological and scientific concepts are laid down and thus, facilitate reading about the dimensions of a vocational culture from a Vincentian perspective. In chapter V the author establishes four coordinates which he views as defining a Vincentian vocational culture, namely, authentic prophecy, radicalness or extinction, rejuvenate or grow old and Pope Francis' principle, time is superior space. Finally, the third part of the book, (chapters VI, VII, VIII) offers the reader a Vincentian Vocational Pedagogy through three verbs: to go out, to see and to call.

This book can be acquired through Editorial CEME-La Milagrosa on their web page

[www.editorialmilagrosa.net](http://www.editorialmilagrosa.net)

[lamilagrosa@lamilagrosa2.e.telefonica.net](mailto:lamilagrosa@lamilagrosa2.e.telefonica.net)

*Communication Office*



# BALANCE IN THE COMMON HOME: POST-PANDEMIC GUIDELINES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE INDIGENOUS CONCEPT OF FULL LIFE



When lightning strikes near a Ngäbe house, tradition requires summoning people (for a period of four days) to participate in the traditional “jeiki” dance. The dance involves all the guests, placing their arms on the shoulders of the person in front of them, thus forming a long line and following the steps and the beating of the maracas and the sacred songs. In one of the ancient myths that explains the cosmic order of the ngäbe, lightning is a twin who ascended into heaven, while his sister, turned dragon, went into sea. The dance, at this time, is intended to “scold” the lightning, so that he knows that he is not welcome near the place of the family dwelling and that it would be better to strike the place where his sister dwells, namely the sea. The sacred dance is intended to restore the cosmic order, where all beings have their place and function.

There are many Ngäbe examples that focus on maintaining a natural balance: the cycles of the earth — sowing, caring and harvesting — are accompanied by rites and practices that recognize the order established by Ngöbö (God). The “dänkien” or guardians of the various species protect them and send messages

to humans when they exceed appropriate limits/ boundaries at home or when fishing. An elderly Ngäbe, speaking about the importance of being humble in the face of the mystery of God that is revealed in his act of creation and about our responsibility to maintain a natural balance, stated: We must not change what God has done. We must leave creation as it is, not make big changes. Sometimes we have to knock down the mountain, but that is to plant and to survive. The Ngäbe, like other indigenous peoples, have maintained reciprocal practices for thousands of years because they have understood that every action has a consequences and therefore, it is up to them to understand their place and responsibility in the plan of the Creator ... they are active participants in action of perpetual creation.

## *The Pandemic and natural balance*

The present pandemic should lead the human family to a profound reflection on the historical errors that have resulted in an infirm world. Several interrelated issues have emerged during the pandemic: socio-

economic inequality, labor fragility for the working class, weaknesses of state health policies, and systemic racism that has resulted in high mortality rates among minorities and certain ethnic groups. In this reflection, I want to focus on the ecological issues: the connection between the pandemic and the destruction of our Common House, in addition to the ways in which the peoples of Good Living, such as the Ngäbe, can guide us on the post-pandemic path so that we do not continue leading the planet Earth and all its inhabitants towards destruction.

We have seen, from the international news and social networks, the images of places in the world where the environment has improved due to the decrease in tourism, traffic and industry during the pandemic. We are struck by seeing crystal clear waters in rivers and canals for the first time in decades, satellite photos of pollution-free cities or wild animals confidently entering urban areas. They are images that point to the natural imbalance that an indifferent world has accepted in the industrialization process. However, they can also be signs of hope, examples of the possible restoration of the planet if we commit ourselves to doing this together as a human family.

In much of the world, the current model of “progress” model has created powerful extractive and productive interventions, which result in the destruction of entire ecosystems. This reality is intimately connected with the pandemic that we are presently experiencing. In a scientific way, the specific origin of the new coronavirus, possibly originated in bats, etc. is being investigated. Nevertheless, animals and nature themselves do not threaten us, rather it is our developmental interventions that destroy entire ecosystems, resulting in threats and consequences such as pandemics. The continued destruction of ecosystems promises more global pandemics.

The relatively new discipline of “Planetary Health” focuses on the relationship between human health and the integrity of ecosystems, inseparable realities, but not given much consideration in the neoliberal political-economic model. We have not been able, as a global community, to imagine a socio-economic model that is cyclical, ecological and solidaristic instead of the dominant model based on extraction, production, consumption and discard. The direct relationship between the pandemic and the common environmental destruction in “developed” societies is not being taken into consideration by government officials and big business, who ignore the evidence of the human impact on environmental degradation and try to force “reactivation” at all costs from the same savage capitalist economy that treats nature as “market goods”.

## ***Guidelines from the perspective of indigenous concept of Full Life***

The current model and the political-business decisions that protect this model are based on a vision that keeps the human being “outside” of creation and with little possibility of interacting with it in a responsible manner. We have lost our place and identity in the Common Home, convinced that we can occupy the position of creator instead of recognizing that we are creatures. In light of this erroneous understanding, indigenous peoples teach us that all of God’s creation is one network of life that includes us as human being. The Ngäbe, for their part, place us in the “Ju Ngöbökwé”, the house of God, which encompasses all of creation and the cosmos.

During the last decades, the Church has begun to pay attention to indigenous worldviews, wisdom and practices, especially regarding their relationship with creation. Recent church statements, although they have been slow to recognize this reality, propose an intimate relationship of the human being with all creation, affirming that as believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings (Laudato Si’). The Apostolic Exhortation, Querida Amazonia, affirms: if the care of people and the care of ecosystems are inseparable, this becomes especially important in places where “the forest is not a resource to be exploited; it is a being, or various being, with which we have to relate” (#42). This is language that is far removed from the concept of “dominion over” nature in service of the human person, a concept that dominated Christian understanding of the relationship between the human person and creation for many centuries.

The indigenous concept of Full Life, which is not grounded on unbridled competition and the accumulation of goods, teaches the western world that there are alternatives to their supposed concept of “progress” or development. Summarizing the concept of Full Life in Querida Amazonia, Francis states that indigenous people know how to be content with little; they enjoy God’s little gifts without accumulating great possessions; they do not destroy things needlessly; they care for ecosystems and they recognize that the earth, while serving as a generous source of support for their life, also has a maternal dimension that evokes respect and tender love. Indigenous peoples express an authentic quality of life that involves personal, familial, communal and cosmic harmony and finds expression in a communitarian approach to existence, the ability to find joy and fulfillment in an austere and simple life, and



a responsible care of nature that preserves resources for future generations (Querida Amazonia, #71).

It should be noted that after several decades of struggle against megaprojects on their lands (mining, dams), the Ngäbe people (in 2012) achieved the enactment of an environmental protection law for their land, which, among other aspects, prohibits mining for any metal. The promises of wealth and supposed “development” by the government and transnational corporations did not convince the Ngäbe to allow the massive destruction of their land, which would also result in the destruction of their practices of harmony with Mother Earth, the human family and God.

### ***Toward another possible world***

This pandemic reveals the roots of a crisis that is essentially a life crisis. It has had the unexpected effect of forcing us to reevaluate what is essential in order to live with dignity as individuals and as

a people. Furthermore, in the midst of the sadness of this crisis, we have witnessed the great capacity of human beings to make sacrifices for the good of others. Although there are examples of selfishness in some settings, many people in various countries have been able to make sacrifices, completely change their way of life and daily activity for the good of the other, especially the most vulnerable. This reveals humanity's ability to change and implement a different model when confronted with an imminent threat.

The great task, then, will be to make this spirit of solidarity and willingness to sacrifice for the good of others a permanent reality in order to confront climate change and environmental degradation in general ... establishing a new human lifestyle and a renewed relationship with Mother Earth. If we want to avoid more pandemics, we have to take our place and role in the care of the Common Home very seriously and commit ourselves not to return to life as “normal” when this pandemic passes. We can begin this process of change with a new vision of the integrity of all creation and our responsibility to maintain it. We can affirm that everything is related and interconnected. This can open a new dawn for us in which the integrity of ecosystems are respected because each creature is important in the Creator's plan.

Hopefully the crystalline waters of the rivers and the clean air in the cities are not just temporary effects of a health crisis, but become the new standard of coexistence in the sacred dance of on-going creation, an important moment of change of

direction for humankind that is able to learn from the indigenous peoples that another world is possible.

*By: José Fitzgerald, CM*

*[José Fitzgerald is a priest of the Congregation of the Mission, founded by Saint Vincent de Paul. He received a doctorate in theology at the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana and is author of the book, Danzar en la casa de Ngöbö: Resiliencia de la Vida Plena Ngäbe frente al neoliberalismo (Dance in the house of Ngöbö: Resilience of Ngäbe Full Life in light of neoliberalism), Editorial Abya Yala, 2019. Since 2005, he has ministered among the Indigenous Ngäbe].*

*[source aelapi.org]*



# THE FAMVIN COMING TOGETHER FOR BEIRUT!



The August 4 Beirut blast devastated the city and added a climate of high insecurity in the country, which was already struggling with a severe economic and financial crisis coupled with uncertainty at several levels.

On top and above with the huge material damages, the pre-existing humanitarian crisis initially provoked by socio-economic challenges, rising rates of unemployment, poverty and collateral damages of the Coronavirus pandemic became more pronounced.

The Vincentian Family in Lebanon represented by all its organizations was on the ground since day one to assist families. An executive committee was initiated by Father Ziad Haddad, the FamVin Coordinator in Lebanon after a FamVin Council meeting. A project proposal was drafted, and an action plan written. The first step from the project is launched and we were overwhelmed by the generous donation of \$50 000 from the FamVin Alliance.

Volunteers, experts, priests and nuns devoted their time, know-how and efforts to accelerate the process and respond to the immediate relief of the families. Needs assessment and family visits are done, we want to be: Effective, Fast and Straight to the Target!

We, the International and National FamVin, came together with faith, hope and charity to spread love and kindness across the communities. The deeper we go into our families the more we feel their distress, sorrow and grief. The burden is heavy, but our faith is greater.

## **Vincentian Family in Lebanon:**

- International Association of Charities (AIC)
- School of Faith
- Missionary Team of Charity (EMC)
- Vincentian Marian Youth (VMY)
- Young Lebanese Vincentian Lay Missionaries (MISEVI)
- Congregation of the Mission (CM)
- The Sisters of Charity (Besancon)
- The Daughters of Charity (FDC)
- Louise de Marillac
- Society of Saint Vincent de Paul – Lebanon (SSVP)

*Danielle El Chemaly  
Executive Committee Member*



# THE UNITED NATIONS: TALK OR ACTION?



If people were asked what the United Nations is all about, a majority might say “they discuss things, then set up committees to discuss it all again.”

Not this September. The UN invites us to an Action Week September 18-26, a week of concentrated global action for People and the Planet.

Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. But not without some help in bending it that way! So too the Global Week to act for a better future: one that is more equal, more active on climate change, one that seeks to end poverty, and protects health.

These goals will take serious “bending” to accomplish, or as the UN says “To Turn It Around” for the sake of humankind. The goals are enshrined in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set out by the UN as the world’s “2030 Agenda.”

The Action Week next month presents a challenge to our creativity: how to share with others a critical agenda of life-giving, and life-saving, issues in the middle of a pandemic where everything is done virtually. But creativity in doing good, and doing it well, is in our DNA: St. Vincent de Paul reminds us that love is creative even to infinity.

Realistically what might we do?

How about beginning a plastic “fast”? Plastic, one of the most useful inventions ever, has reached an almost equal downside. Four hundred million tons are produced annually, yet less than 18% is actually recycled. And the current pandemic is only exacerbating the problem as disposable packaging for take-out and grocery shopping increases in the effort to keep infections low. We know about the island of plastic floating in the Pacific, and we hear plastic is seeping into the food chain, but we cannot seem to meaningfully curb its use.

Everyone googles. We could look up the 17 SDGs and the brief compelling text of each, and discuss in depth the one that most gets our attention with family and friends, or people in our ministry, beginning discussions that need to happen if we are to Turn It Around for People and the Planet.

Social Media are everywhere. We could use these platforms to #Act4SDGs, spreading the word about goals that seem to belong to a perfect world, but are totally achievable if people on the ground work collectively. Maybe leaders will follow!

Poverty cannot be eliminated until everyone is “homed.” Since global homelessness is the current focus of the worldwide Vincentian Family, we might investigate what our city or community is doing about human beings—even families—“rough sleeping” on our streets. And then find a way to speak up about it.

If we take seriously this UN Call to Action Week, it could put us on a path towards that better future. All it takes is a little “bending” to Turn It Around.

*Jim Claffey*  
*Congregation of the Mission UN NGO*

## ORDINATIONES

PENKIVSKYI Serhii	Sac	SCM	22/08/2020
DA SILVA DOS ANJOS Lenilton	Sac	FOR	23/08/2020
AGUSTINUS Agustinus	Sac	IDS	27/08/2020
DUE Franciskus Xaverius	Sac	IDS	27/08/2020

## NECROLOGIUM

Nomen	Cond.	Dies ob.	Prov.	Aet.	Voc.
GRACE Thomas A.	Sac	05/06/2020	OCC	82	65
SCHULTE Daniel R.	Sac	17/06/2020	OCC	67	36
CLARK John F.	Sac	30/07/2020	OCC	78	59
PUST Anton	Sac	01/08/2020	SLN	86	62
GONZÁLEZ LÓPEZ Antonio	Sac	04/08/2020	COL	82	65
LANDOTTI Giuseppe	Sac	08/08/2020	ITA	94	77
AIRAS PAGE* José	Fra	29/08/2020	SVP	90	74

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