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SUPERIORE GENERALE

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NOW AND FOREVER... WITH DEEP HUMILITY

Dear members of the Vincentian Family,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be always with us!

We enter the holy Lenten season following the closing of the **Jubilee of Hope**, which has permeated the life of the Church as an invitation to lift up our eyes and renew our trust in God's promises. It has been a time of grace during which we have been asked to rediscover that *hope does not disappoint* (Rom 5:5) because it is rooted in God's faithfulness and translates into concrete paths of reconciliation, mercy, and commitment.

This horizon of hope illuminates in a special way this moment for our charism: as we approach the conclusion of **the fourth centenary of the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission** (17 April 2026), we are called to keep the memory alive as a source of the future. Celebrating a centenary does not mean looking back with nostalgia. Rather, it means allowing ourselves to be challenged by what the Holy Spirit has accomplished through Saint Vincent de Paul in order to discern how we can continue today to bear fruit and be credible signs of evangelical hope, especially among the poor.

With this letter, I wish to reach out to each of you, members of the Vincentian Family, so that the Lenten journey may become an opportunity for renewed personal and community conversion and open a pathway to courageous choices that can engender a future for the mission entrusted to us.

I would like to focus on two teachings of Saint Vincent that are important for living our Lenten journey well as a Vincentian Family: to continue Jesus's mission on earth *now and forever* with *deep humility.*

Saint Vincent repeatedly invited the Priests and Brothers of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity to continue the mission of Jesus:

"The intention of the Company is to imitate Our Lord to the extent that poor, insignificant persons can do. What does that mean? It means that the Company aspires to take Him as a model in the way He acted, what He did, His ministries, and His aims... our vocation is a continuation of His, or, at least, it's similar to it in its circumstances" (*CCD* XII, 67 and 71; conference 195 on the Purpose of the Congregation of the Mission, 6 December 1658).

"Our duty right now is to tell you the reasons the Company has for thanking God for the grace He has granted it of having called it to this state of continuing the mission His Son had begun, and of using the same weapons, namely, poverty, chastity, and obedience... What can we add to what we've said about our reasons for thanking God for the grace He has given us of having placed us in this state of being consecrated to Him in this way, in order to continue the mission of His Son and of

the Apostles? ... O my Savior, You waited sixteen hundred years to raise up for yourself a Company that professes expressly that it will continue the mission Your Father sent You to carry out on earth, and which uses the same means You did, making profession of observing poverty, chastity, and obedience... But, O Savior of our souls, look at those whom You are using for the conversion of people and to continue your mission..." (*CCD* XII, 298, 302, and 306; conference 216 on the Vows, 7 November 1659).

"In line with that, the Rule tells us to practice poverty, we whom Our Lord has called to do what He came into this world to do, to continue His mission and to work for the conversion of souls" (*CCD* XII, 308; conference 217 on Poverty, 14 November 1659).

"What a happiness, Sisters, that God has chosen you to continue the ministry of His Son on earth!" (*CCD* IX, 50; conference 9 on Care of the Sick, 9 March 1642).

"Reflect that lately God has willed to provide His Church with a Company of poor country women — as are most of you — to continue the life His Son led on earth" (*CCD* IX, 103; conference 15 on Explanation of the Regulations, 14 June 1643).

"What a beautiful thing to find yourselves in the state so loved by Our Lord! If you could only comprehend the pleasure He takes in seeing a soul pursuing the life He led on earth!" (*CCD* X, 173; conference 76 on Poverty, 20 August 1656).

Jesus lived His life in a filial relationship with the Father and in total dedication to His brothers and sisters, especially the poorest and most wounded. **Saint Vincent de Paul contemplated Christ as the Evangelizer of the poor, sent by the Father to proclaim the Good News, heal wounded hearts, lift up those who have fallen, and make God's mercy visible in the concrete reality of history. According to Vincent, following Jesus is not primarily a matter of imitating isolated gestures, but of adopting His way of looking at people, of being moved by their suffering and of responding with active, humble, and creative charity.**

For the Vincentian Family, continuing today what Jesus did on earth means allowing ourselves to be guided by the same Spirit who moved Christ and animated Saint Vincent: a Spirit who draws us to the poor, not as recipients of assistance, but as where the Lord continues to reveal Himself. It is in this encounter that Vincentian spirituality becomes a source of hope because it proclaims that no life is a lost cause and no situation is without a future.

Still today, in the 21st century marked by new forms of poverty, loneliness, and global injustice, the Lord Jesus invites us to live the mysticism of charity by developing a contemplative perspective and living close relationships that generate hope and a collaborative, intelligent, and organized charity.

How amazing it is to experience Jesus' trust in us! He entrusts us fragile men and women with the proclamation of the Gospel, the care of the poor, and the witness of His love in the world. This trust is a mystery that precedes and surpasses us: it does not come from our perfection, but from His faithfulness.

Nevertheless, we can misconstrue the trust granted us. It can turn into presumption or into the unspoken conviction that we are better, more faithful, more enlightened than others. It can even become an instrument of judgment or humiliation when service turns into power, when the charism serves to exclude, or when belonging creates distance instead of communion. The Lord's trust is betrayed in such cases because we use it to exalt ourselves instead of to build up our brothers and sisters.

Scripture asks us, "*What do you possess that you have not received?"* (1 Cor 4:7). Every gift, every responsibility, every mission entrusted to the community is a grace, not a conquest. Recognizing that everything is a gift frees the heart from competition, squelches the need to assert oneself, and opens one up to gratitude.

When a community of consecrated life or a group of an association lives in the awareness that everything is a gift, its way of looking at others also changes. Differences are not a reason for confrontation or domination, but an enrichment to be welcomed. Authority becomes service; words become listening; mission becomes co-responsibility. In this climate, the Lord's trust does not crush, but lifts up; it does not divide, but unites.

The Lord's trust then becomes a school of humility for all. Saint Vincent de Paul considered humility, *a beautiful and lovable virtue* (Cf. *CCD* XI, 44; conference 36 on Humility), **the foundation of all true charity. Saint Vincent made humility the cornerstone and foundation of his entire spiritual life**. He learned its power through personal experience and presented it as the most suitable way to identify with the humanity of Christ. Let us reread his words:

"… let's strive for humility, especially since the more humble we are, the more charitable we'll be toward our neighbor. Charity is the paradise of Communities and the soul of the virtues, and it's humility that attracts and preserves them. Humble Companies are like valleys that draw down on themselves sap from the mountains. As soon as we empty ourselves of self, God will fill us with himself; for He can't stand a vacuum" (*CCD* XI, 1-2; conference 1 on The Vocation of a Missioner).

"… this insignificant Company, the least of all, must be founded only on humility as on its characteristic virtue; otherwise, we'll never do anything worthwhile within or outside the Company. Without humility, we mustn't expect to make any progress for ourselves or benefit for the neighbor. O Savior, give us this holy virtue, which is characteristic of You, and which You brought into the world and love so much. And you, Messieurs, know that anyone who wants to be a true Missioner must constantly strive to acquire this virtue and make progress in it, being careful above all to banish all thoughts of pride, ambition, and vanity, as being the greatest enemies he can have. As soon as they appear, he must rush upon them to uproot them, and keep a close watch so as not to give them any opening" (*CCD* XI, 46; conference 37 on Humility).

"… humility was very often recommended by Christ Himself, by word and example, and the Congregation should make a great effort to master it. It involves three things: (1) to admit in all honesty that we deserve people's contempt; (2) to be glad if people notice our failings and treat us accordingly; (3) to conceal, if possible, because of our personal unworthiness, anything the Lord may achieve through us or in us. If that is not possible, though, to give the credit for it to God's mercy and to other people's merits. That is the basis of all holiness in the Gospels and a bond of the entire spiritual life. If a person has this humility everything good will come along with it" (*CCD* XII, 161; Conference 203 on Humility, 18 April 1659).

The Lenten journey offered us, on which the Jubilee of Hope and the closing of the fourth centenary of the Congregation of the Mission shed light, reminds us of the essence of our vocation and mission: to be, *now and forever,* the mouth of Jesus, the arms of Jesus, the feet of Jesus... a continuation of His mission on earth.

Now and forever **expresses a profound conviction of Vincentian faith, spirituality, and charism: what is born of the Spirit of God in history does not belong only to the past but remains alive, fruitful, and active in the present and future of the Church.**

The charism that was given to the Church in the 17th century through Saint Vincent de Paul is a gift of the Spirit that has an evangelical force capable of coming down the centuries. For this reason, we can affirm that that the initial *"now"* has not been depleted but becomes *eternal*.

As long as there are poor people to serve, the Gospel to proclaim, charity to embody, and communities to build, the Vincentian charism and spirituality will remain relevant, necessary, and fruitful.

Let us not forget, however, that only in *profound humility* can the charism and spirituality remain fruitful. Only in humility can they continue to be renewed, purified by history, challenged by the poor and redirected by the Spirit. It is this humility that preserves the *eternity* within our fragile *present*, until the day when God will be all in all.

Let us entrust this time of conversion to the Spirit of the Lord, that He may purify our perspective, make our heart humble, and renew our joy of serving Christ in the poor. In this way, Lent will be a passage toward a life that is simpler, more Gospel-based, and burning with even more charity.

With this prayer, let us accompany one another on the journey towards the Passover of Jesus, certain that He who has called us continues to walk with us and to work through our poor but willing humanity.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

Questions for personal reflection and community sharing

1. Continuing the mission of Jesus

- Through which attitudes, choices, or concrete works does our community or our association make the mission of Jesus, evangelizer of the poor, visible today?
- In what ways do we risk "doing things for Jesus" without truly allowing His way of seeing and loving to imbue us?
- What new calls from the Spirit to continue the mission entrusted to the Vincentian Family today do we perceive?

2. The Lord's trust, a school of humility

- How do we live, personally and as a community, the trust that Jesus places in us: as a gift or as a privilege?
- In what community or group dynamics do presumption, judgment, or the search for recognition creep in?
- What helps us to remain in evangelical humility, recognizing that everything is grace and that nothing belongs to us?

3. Living as mystics of charity today

- How do the Eucharist, prayer, the Word of God, and the poor concretely interweave in our daily life?
- In our context, what forms of poverty call out to us most powerfully as a place of encounter with Christ?
- What concrete steps can we take as a community to grow in a more collaborative, organized, and prophetic charity?