



UAC NEWSLETTER

March 2014

Dear sisters and brothers in the Union,

we are happy to present to you in this newsletter a sharing regarding the pastoral initiative called **the "Project Vincent I" in Codó, Brazil**, prepared by Francisco Ferreira dos Santos, along with other news from the Union.

1. PROJECT VINCENT I

Charity and love are our way of educating. Our commitment is to restore hope to life and to believe that a better world exists; it depends only on a small gesture, yours and ours.

On March 8th, 2009, International Women's Day, in the chapel of St. Vincent Pallotti, Parish of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, in the city of Codó, Maranhão State, north-eastern Brazil, a project was born: Vincent I. "When we dream alone it is only a dream. But when we dream together it is the beginning of a new reality". We believe that this phrase of beloved Dom Helder Camara brilliantly summarises the mysticism of St. Vincent Pallotti! Everything began with a visit by the youth group, Juventude Palotina (Pallottine Youth), to one of the poorest areas of the district of Santa Teresinha. There were many children whose childhood was stolen because of degrading work in rubbish dumps. Children who cannot live as children but who became workers doing a humiliating job.

It was here that the dream was born, a challenge was thrown down: give back to these children the right to be children, restore their dignity as human beings. We needed to reawaken their hearts, win their affection and their trust. We decided to visit them in their homes and at the end we invited them for a breakfast. In this we took our first step.

On the morning of March 8th, 2009, the first activity of Project Vincent I took place with a prepared breakfast, yes with a certain anxiousness, but also with joy and great affection. We were astonished by the number of children who turned up, between 150 and 180, as we had prepared for the morning with about 40 to 50 children in mind... A little desperate, but at the same time very happy, we let "God be God among us" in that moment. I think that this experience changed our lives. A little bread, some packets of biscuits, a little bit of coffee and several bottles of milk, eight litres of soft drinks and much "love" was all that we had. It was sufficient, because in that moment, in exchange, we received from those children a marvellous smile of gratitude through a small word which they called us: "uncle/aunt" (meaning that they recognised a particular attention on the part of the volunteers and expresses a sense of closeness, affection, trust). This experience served This experience has served to develop our project, which has the following objective: to guarantee with absolute priority the implementation of the rights to life, health, food, education, sport, recreation, a professional culture, respect, dignity and to family and community life. We seek to promote all of the opportunities and structures to allow their physical, mental, moral, spiritual and social development in conditions of freedom and dignity.

The second step was that of knowing the family environment of each child as well as their living conditions. The conditions to which they are exposed became apparent, such as drugs, illiteracy, prostitution, violence, criminality. From this the project came to life with lessons (reading, Portuguese, mathematics), catechesis, music workshops (guitar, flute and voice), crafts (making bracelets and pens decorated with thread), the organisation of breaks and recreation.

Finally, I can say that this experience done in community and in communion has and continues to transform us. We have experienced the presence of Christ in our midst through a new joy and a particular desire to improve the circumstances of many children who live in conditions far from human dignity and in total poverty, in every aspect imaginable.

We would like to thank from the bottom of our hearts the God of Life who saw fit to call us to this

mission, also as a realisation of the spirit of St. Vincent Pallotti as "Juventude Palotina", and also the many good people who put their trust in us, above all the benefactors who help our work with generosity. All for the infinite glory of God! **Note:** Presently, some of the activities mentioned above are not taking place because of a lack of resources to cover the expenses and the need for more volunteers.

Francisco Ferreira dos Santos – coordinator of Project Vincent I (in the name of the JP coordination team, Codó)

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2. Australia - letter addressing the issue of membership of the Union:

After the recognition by the PCL of the Union as an international public association of the faithful and the approval of its General Statutes, the need arose to try to clarify whether those who had a longstanding relationship and collaboration with the Pallottine family in so many different ways wished to be considered members in the sense outlined in the General Statutes, simply because such formal membership includes particular rights and duties. This has been a delicate issue in some countries, with the concern that such an enquiry might, to some people, give the impression of somehow calling into question their relationship and collaboration with the Pallottine family over the years, and their future status. The experience in Australia has been interesting. During February of this year, the Australian NCC circulated a letter discussing membership of the Union and asking people who had been part of the Pallottine family for many years to complete a membership form if they wished to be identified as "formal" members. NCC President, Cheryl Sullivan, speaks of the positive outcome of this initiative: "I can only say, the response to this letter has been amazing and (from a personal perspective) life-giving, with so many giving the historical context of their membership and providing snippets of how they live this membership in their daily lives... clearly articulat[ing] a deep understanding of what the Pallottine Family (UAC) is all about, people living their vocation in their everyday life... Mr. Patrick Maguire, the NCC President in Ireland recently put our role/charism very succinctly when describing the work of the UAC he wrote: Pallotti is clear about the work we should be doing. First, we are to try to rekindle faith wherever and whenever we can. Second, we are to engage in charitable action that will make visible the reality of God in our world and be the face of Christ to all we encounter. Third, we must acknowledge the power of prayer and be committed to the apostolate of prayer so that our mission will always remain the very mission of Christ himself". In the final analysis, the most important thing is not whether one is a formal member of the Union or not, but whether one is a dedicated and authentic apostle and witness of Christ in daily life; the Union and its structures are there to try to help ensure that this is lived out in a community setting coordinated with others, since "reason and experience tell us that the good done alone is usually lacking, uncertain and of limited duration, and that the noblest efforts of individuals cannot bear fruit if they are not united and directed towards a common goal" (St. Vincent Pallotti).

3. Community of families from Starogard Gdański, northern Poland - Parenting Seminar

During February, Iza Owczaruk, a member of the Union who is a psychologist and the mother of two almost grown children, conducted a series of workshops on parenting in a community of families from Starogard Gdański who recently expressed a desire to begin UAC formation (cf. UAC Newsletter - November 2013). The workshops were devoted to relations between parents and their adolescent children, and were divided into two parts - the first attended only by parents, and the second also by their teenagers. "The workshops primarily made us aware of the fact that our teenage children do not have an easy life, that they are very vulnerable, having to face us, the world and others. Iza reminded us of what we all knew somewhere in our subconscious: about building good relationships, determining boundaries, encourage cooperation, learning to think about and bear the consequences of decisions and actions. We also tried to analyse the specific needs of our children which we face on a daily basis and to look for healthy solutions. We also talked about feelings, how to accept and deal with them. The second part of the workshop in which parents and their teenagers participated together was very interesting, a great experience that palpably helped to renew sincere relationships, hopefully resulting in permanent change. Particularly positive was the workshop style, during which we had to role play scenes from the life of teenagers, trying to understand and experience their feelings and needs" (Goshia and Medard, parents). "I liked the workshops conducted by Ms. Iza very much. She showed us that we and our parents really want the same thing. We want to get along. She also helped us to realise that all disputes can be resolved through dialogue and a willingness to compromise. An important point of the workshop was writing letters, and then reading the letters to and from our parents. In many cases, this was accompanied by tears of emotion. I think that such meetings are very important and hope that they will help communication between the generations" (Olga, 15 years).