SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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Audience with members of the "Vincentian Family"

At midday today, in Saint Peter's Square, the Holy Father Francis met with the members of the "Vincentian Family" on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the foundation of the charism (Rome, 12-15 October 2017).

The following is the address given by the Pope during the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

Thank you for your warm welcome, and thank you to the superior general for introducing this meeting of ours.

I greet you and together with you I thank the Lord for the four hundred years of your charism. Saint Vincent generated a zeal in charity that has lasted through the centuries: a zeal that came from his heart. That is why today we have here the relic: the heart of Saint Vincent. Today I would like to encourage you to continue this path, proposing three simple verbs I believe very important for the Vincentian spirit, but also for Christian life in general: *to adore*, *to welcome*, and *to go*.

To adore. There are countless invitations from Saint Vincent to cultivate inner life and to dedicate oneself to the prayer that purifies and opens the heart. For him, prayer is essential. It is the compass for every day, it is like a manual for life, and, he wrote, the "great book of the preacher": only by praying can be draw from God the love to pour into the world; only by praying can we touch the hearts of the people when we announce the Gospel (cf *Letter to A. Durand*, 1658). But for Saint Vincent, prayer is not only a duty, far less a collection of formulas. Prayer means stopping before God to stay with Him, to dedicate oneself simply to Him. And this is the purest prayer, that which makes space for the Lord and for His praise, and nothing else: adoration.

Once discovered, adoration becomes indispensable as it is pure intimacy with the Lord, Who gives peace and

joy, and melts away the sorrows of life. Therefore, to someone who was under particular pressure, Saint Vincent also advised staying in prayer “without tension, turning to God with simple glances, without seeking to have His presence with perceptible efforts, but abandoning oneself to Him” (*Letter to G. Pesnelle*, 1659).

This is adoration: placing oneself before the Lord, with respect, with calmness and silence, giving Him the first place, abandoning oneself trustfully, to then ask that His Spirit come to us and to let what is ours go to Him. In this way even those in need, urgent problems, difficult and burdensome situations enter into adoration, so much so that Saint Vincent asked to “adore in God” even the reasons that we struggle to understand and accept (cf. *Letter to F. Get*, 1659). He who adores, he who attends the living source of love, cannot but remain, so to speak, “contaminated”. And he begins to behave with others as the Lord does with him: he becomes more merciful, more understanding, more willing; he overcomes his own rigidity and opens up to others.

We thus arrive at the second verb: *to welcome*. When we hear this word, we immediately think of something to do. But in reality, welcoming is a deeper disposition; it does not demand merely making space for someone, but of *being* welcoming people, willing, accustomed to giving themselves to others. Just as God does for us, we do for others. Welcoming means cutting the self down to size, straightening out our way of thinking, understanding that life is not *my private property* and time does not belong to me. It is a slow detachment from all that which is mine: my time, my rest, my rights, my plans, my agenda. Those who welcome renounce the self and bring *you* and *us* into life.

The welcoming Christian is a true man and woman of the Church, because the Church is Mother and a mother welcomes life and accompanies it. And just as a son resembles his mother, bearing her same features, in this way the Christian bears these features of the Church. And so, he is a truly faithful son of the Church who is welcoming, who without complaining creates harmony and communion, and with generosity sows peace, even if this is not reciprocated. Saint Vincent helps us to value this ecclesial “DNA” of welcome, of willingness, of communion, so that in our life we may “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away … along with all malice” (*Eph* 4: 31).

The final verb: *to go*. Love is dynamic, it comes out of itself. Those who love do not stay in their armchair, watching, waiting for the advent of a better world, but with enthusiasm and simplicity they get up and go. Saint Vincent put this well: “Our vocation is thus to go, not in a parish or even just in a diocese, but in all the earth. And to do what? To inflame the hearts of men, doing what was done by the Son of God, He Who came to bring fire in the world to inflame it with His love” (*Conference of 30 May 1659*). This vocation is always valid for all. It poses to each one the question: “Do I go towards others, as the Lord wishes? Do I take where I go the fire of charity or do I stay at home to warm myself before my hearth?”.

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you because you are in motion on the streets of the world, as Saint Vincent would ask of you today too. I hope you will never stop, but instead continue to draw every day from adoration the love of God and spread it in the world through the good contagion of charity, willingness, harmony. I bless you all and the poor you encounter. And I ask of you, please, the charity not to forget to pray for me.