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## Appendix I: Words from St. Vincent about the Missions

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## Appendix I

### Words from St. Vincent about the Missions

1. With reference to what has just been said about the gift of tongues, I think we would do well today to ask God to give us the grace to learn foreign languages well, for the sake of those to be sent to distant lands. The reason is that since it has pleased his divine Majesty to raise up this little Company to do throughout the world a little of what the apostles did, we have to share with the apostles the gift of tongues, since it is so essential to teach the people the doctrine of the faith. For, if faith enters by hearing, as St. Paul says, *fides ex auditu*, then those who proclaim it will have to make themselves understood by those on whom they wish to shed this divine light. Now the variety of languages is very great, not only in Europe, Africa and Asia, but even in Canada, for we see in the reports of the Jesuit Fathers that there are as many languages as there are tribes. The Hurons do not speak like the Iroquois, nor do they speak like their neighbors, and someone who understands one group does not understand the others.

How then can missionaries, with these differences of speech, go throughout the world to proclaim the gospel if they know only their own language? And how could they learn others if they did not ask God's help or not apply themselves to study? What does "missionary" mean? It means "sent." Yes, my confreres, missionary means "sent by God." Our Lord was talking to you: *Euntes in mundum universum, prædicate Evangelium omni creaturæ* [Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature]. For this reason, he wants you to study the needed languages. God never calls someone to some state of life unless he sees in him the needed qualities, or at least unless he plans to give them to him. For this reason, my brothers, let us hope that if he is pleased to call you to distant lands, he will grant you the grace to learning their language. Put your trust in him. He does not want the end without the means, and if he asks the one of you, he will give you the other.

(SV XII, 26-27, N° 183, 9 June 1658)

2. Then, gentlemen and my brothers, what joy will God experience in seeing amid the ravages of his Church made by heresy, or by the fires of concupiscence, some few persons who will offer themselves to carry off the remains of the Church, if I may speak this way, or to preserve it where it remains? O Savior, what joy you receive to see such servants and such

fervor to stand fast and to defend what is still good here, while others go out to gain new lands for you! Oh, gentlemen, what a joy!

You will see conquerors leaving one part of their troops to guard what remains, while they send off others to gain new territory for you! This is what we must do, maintaining courageously the goods of the Church and the interests of Jesus Christ, and still working for new victories, and making him known even to the most distant peoples.

(SV XI, 354-355, N° 154, September 1656)

3. And what of ourselves, gentlemen and my brothers? Are we ready to accept the pains that God sends and repress the movements of nature to live only the life of Jesus Christ in us? Are we ready to go to Poland, Barbary, the Indies, to sacrifice our own satisfaction and our very lives? If so, let us bless God. If, on the contrary, anyone should fear some inconvenience, or be so weak as to complain at any item that may be lacking, or so fragile that he would wish to be changed from house to house because the climate is not good, or the food is poor, or because we are not free enough to come and go as we please, if in a word, gentlemen, if some among us are still slaves of nature, given to sensual pleasures like this miserable sinner who speaks to you, who at the age of 70 is still so worldly, let them count themselves as unworthy of the apostolic vocation to which God has called them. They should be ashamed at seeing their confreres fulfilling this ministry so worthily, while they remain so removed from their courageous spirit.

What do our men have to bear in that country? Famine? Yes. The plague? Yes, both, and more than once. War? They are surrounded by armies, and have experienced living amid enemy soldiers. God has tried them by all these scourges. And we live here like shut-ins, without heart and with little zeal. We see others braving dangers in the service of God, while we are as timid as wet hens. O misery! O wretchedness! Look at 20,000 soldiers who go to war and suffer all sorts of ills. One will lose an arm, another a leg, and some their very lives, all for uncertain hopes. Yet they have no fear, and set off as though they were going after a treasure. To gain heaven, gentlemen, scarcely anyone will lift a finger, and those who say they are seeking to gain heaven, lead a life so lazy and sensual it is unworthy not only of a priest or a Christian, but even of a rational man. If there are any such among us they would be merely the corpse of a missionary. O God, be forever blessed and glorified for the graces you have given to those who abandon themselves to you. Praise be to you for giving to this little Company these two holy men.

(SV XI, 411-412, N° 170)

4. Do you know the thought that occurs to me when I am told of the distant needs of the foreign missions? We hear about them; we feel some affection for them; we think Fr. Nacquart, Fr. Gondrée and all those other missionaries blest who have died like apostolic men for the establishment of a new Church. Indeed, they are happy, for they have saved their souls by giving their life for the faith and for Christian charity. This is beautiful; yes, this is holy. Everyone praises their zeal and their courage. And then that is all. But if we had that spirit of indifference, if we did not cling to this and that trifle which we love, to a certain reservation we have, who would not volunteer himself for Madagascar, for Barbary, for Poland, or for any other place in which God is pleased to be served by the Company?

(SV XII, 241, N° 205, 16 May 1659)

5. Let us ask God to give the Company this spirit, this heart, this heart which will make us go everywhere, this heart of the Son of God, the heart of Our Lord, the heart of Our Lord, the heart of Our Lord, which will dispose us to go as he went and as he would have gone if his Eternal Wisdom had deemed it fitting to labor for the conversion of those poor nations. He sent his apostles to do that; he sends us, like them, to bear this divine fire everywhere, everywhere. *Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur* [I came to cast fire on the earth; how I wish it would be set alight]; to bear this divine fire everywhere, this fire of love, of the fear of God, throughout the whole world: to Barbary, to the Indies, to Japan.

(SV XI, 291, N° 135, 22 August 1655)

6. Ah! gentlemen, let us all ask God fervently for this spirit for the whole Company, this spirit that will carry us everywhere, so that when men see one or two missionaries they can say: “There are apostolic men about to leave for the ends of the earth to bring the Word of God.” Let us pray to God to grant us this heart. There are some of us who, by the grace of God, possess it, and all such are servants of God. But to go there, O Savior! Not to allow oneself to be stopped, ah! that indeed is something. We should all have this heart, all the same heart, detached from all things so that we may have perfect confidence in the mercy of God, without taking thought, without growing uneasy, without losing courage. “Will I have such or such a thing in that country? How can I obtain it?” O Savior! God will never fail us. Ah! gentlemen, when we hear of the glorious death of those who are there, O God! who would not desire to be in their place? Ah! who would not wish to die like them, to be assured of an eternal reward! O Savior! is there anything more desirable? Let us not be tied down to this or that. Courage! Let us go where God calls us. He will

be our provider. Let us fear nothing. Well, then, blessed be God! Let us pray for that intention.

(SV XI, 291-292, N° 135, 22 August 1655)

7. God has chosen us as instruments of his boundless and fatherly love that desires to be established in and to replenish souls. Ah! if we only knew the meaning of such a holy manner of living. We shall never clearly see it in this life; for if we did, oh! how differently we would act; at least, a wretch like me would. Our vocation, then, is not to go to one parish, or even to one diocese, but throughout the whole world, and for what purpose? To inflame the hearts of men, to do what the Son of God did. He came to cast fire on the earth, to inflame it with his love. What else have we to desire save that it burns and consumes all? My dear confreres, let us please reflect on that.

(SV XII, 262, N° 207, 30 May 1659)

8. Now, if it be true that we are called to spread God's love in all directions, if we are bound to kindle it among the nations, if it is our vocation to spread this divine fire throughout the world; if that is so, I mean, if that is so, my brothers, how should I myself not burn with this divine fire!

(SV XII, 263, N° 207, 30 May 1659)

9. Yes, Gentlemen, we should be all for God and the service of the public; and we should give ourselves to God for that end, and wear ourselves out for that end, and give our lives for that end. We should strip ourselves bare, so to speak, to clothe ourselves anew; at least we should desire to be so disposed, if we are not so already. We should be ready and disposed to come and to go as it pleases God, either to the Indies or somewhere else. Finally, we should put ourselves at risk for the service of our neighbor and to extend the empire of Jesus Christ in souls. I myself, old and aged as I am, should not cease having this disposition in my heart, even to set out for the Indies to win souls to God there, even though I were to die on the way or aboard ship. For what do you suppose that God is asking of us? The body? Oh! not at all. And what then? God is asking for our good will, an honest and true disposition to seize every opportunity to serve him, even at the risk of our lives, to have and foster in ourselves this desire of martyrdom, which God sometimes finds as pleasing as if we had actually suffered it.

(SV XI, 402-403, N° 167, 17 June 1657)

10. After I have gone away, there shall come ravening wolves and false brethren shall rise up among you who will proclaim perverse doctrines and teach you the opposite of what I have taught you; but do not listen to them; they are false prophets. In the same way, my brothers, there will be corpses of missionaries who will strive to introduce false maxims to ruin, if they can, these foundations of the Company. Such men must be withstood....

Should it happen that, at some future time, someone would suggest that the Company abolish this practice, leave that hospital, recall the laborers from Barbary, stay here and not go there, give up this work and not hasten to distant needs, those false brethren should be boldly told: "Gentlemen, leave us in the laws of our fathers, and in the state in which we are. God has put us here and he wishes us to remain." Hold firm.

"But the Company," they will say, "is overburdened by such or such a work." Alas, if in its infancy the Company managed this and bore all those other burdens, why will it not succeed in them when it is stronger? These must be told: "Leave us, leave us in the state where Our Lord was on this earth; we do what he did; do not stop us from imitating him." Warn them, you see, warn them and do not listen to them.

But what sort of men will they be who will try to turn us away from those good works we have begun? They will be freethinkers, freethinkers, freethinkers. They ask for nothing but pleasure and, provided they have a good dinner, they do not trouble themselves about anything else. Who else? They will be... It is better not to say it. They will be men who coddle themselves (saying this, he stuck his hands under his armpits, imitating the lazy), men who have only a narrow outlook, who confine their views and plans to a fixed circumference, within which they close themselves up in one spot. They never want to leave it. And if they are shown something outside and come close to consider it, at once they withdraw to their center, like snails into their shells.

(SV XII, 91-93, N° 195, 6 December 1658)

11. There will be some who will oppose those works, have no doubt about that; and others who will say that it is far too much to undertake sending men to distant lands, to the Indies, to Barbary. But, my God, but, my Lord, did you not send St. Thomas to the Indies and the other apostles throughout the world? Did you not entrust them with the care and guidance of all the peoples in general and of many persons and families in particular? No matter; our vocation is *Evangelizare pauperibus*.

(SV XII, 90, N° 195, 6 December 1658)

12. The departure for Madagascar has been delayed again until the month of September. Since we have waited this long, we can easily wait another four or five months; a great good is worth being long desired. You, who have received from God a strong attraction for this mission, should keep yourself in the same disposition because that is a sign of a calling. Furthermore, the Company has designated you for that place from the beginning and still intends that you go there, which is a second sign. And a third sign is that, you have not only been named in Rome, as I wrote you previously, but have been sent the usual faculties granted to those going to work for the conversion of unbelievers, and we are holding them here for you.

After all that, Monsieur, there is no reason to doubt that God is relying on you for such a holy work. You will do well, then, to keep the resolution you made of not thinking about the Carthusians any longer, especially since you wrote me that, if it is God's good pleasure to make you an artisan rather than for you to transfer to that holy Order, you would willingly do so because you have so much respect and love for the adorable Will of God. Offer yourself anew to him, since you are a worker whom he is calling to the loftiest, most useful, and most sanctifying service on this earth, namely, that of drawing souls to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and of going to extend his empire in places where the demon has reigned for so long. The apostles and several great saints considered themselves most fortunate to spend themselves for that end. Even now we see many monks leaving their cloister and many priests leaving their country to go and preach the gospel to unbelievers, and if there were none to be found, the Carthusians would have to leave their solitude to be sent there. Consequently, Monsieur, I ask you, in the name of Our Lord, to wait patiently until the time comes which he has marked out for your departure. In the meantime, you are serving God very effectively where you are.

(SV IV, 368-369, N° 1489, 24 April 1652 [English edition, 363-364])

13. Your chief concern, after striving to live among those with whom you will have to get along amicably and in an exemplary way, will be to help these poor people, born in the darkness of ignorance of their Creator, to understand the truths of our faith, not by subtle theological reasoning, but by arguments taken from nature. You have to begin in that way, trying to let them see that you are only developing in them the signs of himself that God has left on them and which corrupt nature, long accustomed to evil, had effaced in them. To do this, Monsieur, you will often have to turn to the Father of Lights, repeating to him what you say to him every day: *Da mihi intellectum ut sciam testimonia tua* [Give me discernment that I may

know your decrees]. In your meditation, set in order the lights he will give you, in order to demonstrate the truth of the First and Sovereign Being, the appropriateness of the mystery of the Trinity, and the necessity of the mystery of the Incarnation, which causes a second, perfect man to be born in us, after the corruption of the first, so that we may improve and reform ourselves on him. I would like to make them see the weaknesses of human nature in the disorders which they themselves condemn, for they have laws, kings, and punishments.

Although there are a few books dealing with these matters, such as Granada's catechism or some other which we will try to send you, I can only repeat to you, Monsieur, that the best one will be the prayer, *Accedite ad eum et illuminamini* [Come to him and be enlightened], abandoning yourself to the Spirit of God, who speaks in these circumstances. If his Divine Goodness is pleased to give you the grace to cultivate the seed of the Christians who are already there, living with these good people in Christian charity, I have no doubt whatsoever, Monsieur, that Our Lord will make use of you there to prepare an abundant harvest for the Company. Go then, Monsieur, and since your mission is from God, through those who represent him for you on earth, cast your nets boldly.

(SV III, 281-282 N° 1020, 22 March 1648 [English edition, 280-281])

14. God has given the grace of being prepared and disposed to go to foreign lands to spend their lives there for Jesus Christ! History tells us of the many martyrs who have sacrificed themselves for God. And if we see that so many men in armies expose their lives for a little honor, or perhaps in the hopes of a little earthly recompense, with what far greater reason should we not expose our lives to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the most distant lands to which his Divine Providence calls us!

(SV XII, 51, N° 188, 30 August 1658)

15. Our missionaries in Barbary, and those in Madagascar, what have they undertaken, executed, carried out and suffered? One single man takes care of a whole galley on which there are sometimes 200 convicts; he gives instructions, hears general confessions both of the healthy and of the sick, day and night, for two weeks. And at the end of that time, he gives them a treat; he goes off himself and buys a cow. He has it cooked and gives them a party. One single man did all that! Sometimes he goes to farms where slaves are at work; he seeks out the masters and asks them to let him work to instruct their poor slaves. He takes their time and teaches them to know God. He renders them fit to participate in the sacraments, and at the end has a little banquet prepared for them.

He also spoke about Brothers Guillaume and Duchesne. After being enslaved, they were redeemed with the help of the consul because of the zeal with which they were animated in their work among the poor slaves.

Fr. Vincent also said: In Madagascar, the missionaries preach, hear confessions, and teach the catechism continually from four o'clock in the morning until ten, and then from two in the afternoon until nightfall. They spend the rest of their time in reciting their Office and visiting the sick. These men are workers; these are true missionaries. May it please God's goodness to grant us the same spirit that animated them, a great heart, vast and ample! *Magnificat anima mea Dominum!*

(SV XI, 203-204, N° 125, 26 July 1655)

16. It is now time for this seed of the divine call to take effect in you. For behold, by authority of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, of which the Holy Father the Pope is head, the Nuncio has chosen the Company to go and serve God on Saint-Laurent Island, also called Madagascar. The Company has cast its eyes on you, as the best offering it has, to do homage to our Sovereign Creator and to render him this service, together with another good priest of the Company.

O my more than dearest Father, what does your heart say to this news? Does it have the shame and confusion suitable for receiving such a grace from heaven, a vocation as lofty and adorable as that of the greatest apostles and saints of the Church of God, and the fulfillment in you, in time, of eternal plans? Humility alone, Monsieur, is capable of bearing this grace, and perfect abandonment of all that you are and can be, in exuberant trust in your Sovereign Creator, must follow. You will need generosity and sublime courage. You also need faith as great as Abraham's and the charity of St. Paul. Zeal, patience, deference, poverty, solicitude, discretion, moral integrity, and an ardent desire to be entirely consumed for God are as appropriate for you as for the great St. Francis Xavier.

(SV III, 278-279 N° 1020, 22 March 1648 [English edition, the same])

17. Be that as it may, Monsieur, we have deeply regretted the loss of these good servants of God, and have had great reason to admire in this last unexpected event the unfathomable reasons for his ways of acting. He knows how willingly we have kissed the hand that struck us, humbly submitting to these blows, to which we were so sensitive, although we could not understand the reasons for such a swift death in men who were

so promising, in the midst of a people asking for instruction, and after so many obvious signs in them of a vocation to Christianize that people.

Nevertheless, this loss, like previous ones and the events that have occurred since then, has not succeeded in the least in undermining our determination to assist you, or in shaking that of the four priests and the Brother who are on their way to you. They feel drawn to your mission and have asked us over and over again to be sent there....

I do not know who will be more consoled by their arrival — you, who have been waiting so long for them, or they, who have such an ardent desire to join you. They will see Our Lord in you and you in Our Lord and, with this in view, they will obey you, by his grace, as they would obey us. I ask you, then, to guide them in this. I hope that God will bless both your leadership and their obedience.

You would not have been left so long without some relief, were it not for two unsuccessful departures. One ship was lost on the river at Nantes; two of our priests and a Brother, who were on the ship, were saved by the special protection of God; but nearly a hundred persons were lost. The other ship set sail last year, was captured by the Spaniards, and four of our priests and a Brother who were on board came back home.

And so God did not permit any help or consolation to reach you from here but willed that these should come to you directly from him alone. He wanted to be the one to act in that divine, apostolic work to which he has applied you, in order to show that implanting the faith is his own affair and not the work of men. That is how he acted when he began to establish the universal Church, choosing only 12 apostles, who went their separate ways throughout the world to announce the coming and the teachings of their Divine Master. But once this holy seed had begun to grow, his Providence increased the number of workers. It will do the same for your infant Church which, growing little by little, will at last be provided with priests who will survive to cultivate and extend it.

(SV VIII, 158-159, N° 3013, November 1959 [English edition, 182-184])

- 18.** Go, gentlemen, in the name of our Lord, for it is he who sends you. You begin this voyage and this mission for his service and his glory. He will guide, help, and protect you. We hope for this from his infinite goodness. Remain always faithfully dependent upon his faithful guidance. Have recourse to him everywhere and in every encounter. Throw yourselves into his arms, recognizing him as your loving Father, completely confident that he will help you and bless your work.

(Abelly, Book III, chapter 3, p. 12 [English edition, Book III, chapter 3, p. 22])

19. Is there anything closer to what our Lord himself did, when he came to earth to deliver men from the captivity of sin, and to teach them by his word and example? This is the example all missionaries must follow. They must be ready to leave their country, their conveniences, their rest to imitate our confreres in Tunis and Algiers who are so completely given to the service of God and neighbor in those barbarous and infidel lands.

(Abelly, Book II, chapter 1, pp. 142-143 [English Edition, Book II, chapter 1, sect. 7, part 12, p. 124])

20. Monsieur, how very precious is a good Missionary! God must raise him up and fashion him; that is the work of his omnipotence and his great goodness. That is why Our Lord has specifically recommended that we ask God to send good workers into his vineyard; for in fact there will be no good ones if God does not send them, and very few of these are needed to accomplish a great deal: 12 sufficed to establish the universal Church, despite human wisdom, the power of the world, and the rage of demons. Let us ask Our Lord, Monsieur, to give the apostolic spirit to the Company, since he has sent it to carry out that ministry.

(SV VII, 613, N° 2879, 20 June 1659 [English edition, 626])