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The Activities of SIEV

*by Roberto Lovera, C.M.
Executive Secretary of SIEV*

1. SIEV (International Secretariat for Vincentian Studies) was born in 1982 as a response to a Postulatum of the 1980 General Assembly, which sought to create local organizations for the promotion of Vincentian Studies, and an organization at the international level with the job of coordinating them. Before SIEV, there was an unofficial group known as GIEV.

2. The purpose of SIEV is to "animate, inform, and promote everything that has to do with Vincentian Studies."

3. To realize this purpose, certain paths are indicated in the Statutes of SIEV:

- assure information and communication;
- be at the center of Vincentian studies and promote new studies of Vincentian matters;
- furnish concrete instruments for Vincentian formation;
- invite specialists to share the results of their research by organizing dialogues on specific themes;
- support the publication of a Vincentian bibliography that is as complete as possible;
- stimulate the organized care of archives and of historical research;
- propose to the General Council the organization of international Vincentian Study months.

4. The members of SIEV were eight, plus the representative of the General Council, until December 1996. Since 1 January 1997, there are 5 members. Fr. Emeric Amyot d'Inville represents the General Council. The other members are: Hernando Escobar and Norbert Tix, nominated in 1992; John Prager, Kazimierz Stelmach and Roberto Lovera, nominated in 1997. Lovera is the executive secretary.

5. In these last six years, the interests of SIEV have been focused on the following matters:

- 5.1 collect and publish material to help everyone in knowledge and study;
- preparation of a CD-ROM with all the Vincentian texts available in computer language;

- the plan of a CD with Vincentian photographic material of both historical and contemporary nature that can be updated from time to time;
- preparation and publication of a Vincentian bibliography in the various languages according to a scheme that gives a uniform base;
- preparation of an index of Vincentian articles published in our principal magazines;
- evaluation of the notes left by Fr. Chalumeau and of all the material left by Fr. Dodin;
- gathering of the documents of the Holy See about the Congregation of the Mission or concerning general interest for the Vincentian Family published after 1876 (the date of the publication of the last such collection);
- publication of some of the reports given at the European sessions for our young in formation and at CIF;
- other matters.

5.2 stimulate new publications; in particular, we are looking for a confrere who might prepare a biography of Perboyre for 2002, the 200th anniversary of his birth; it should be a well researched and critical work, but at the same time easily accessible to the public at large;

5.3 organize directly or support those who organize the Vincentian months and of other moments of study and deepening of knowledge;

1. In 1993 we held the Vincentian month on the theme of the General Assembly 1992: *New Evangelization, New Men, New Communities*, especially directed to those confreres less than 12 years ordained or, in the case of brothers, with less than 12 years in vows;
2. In 1997 we held the Vincentian month on the theme of evangelization through popular missions; not only confreres involved in evangelization, but also Daughters of Charity, sisters of other communities, and lay people who work in the popular missions participated in this session;
3. We are preparing for 1999 a session of study on Islam and the relationship between the Congregation of the Mission and the Islamic world;
4. We are planning for 2001 a Vincentian month reserved to the Provincial Directors of the Daughters of Charity; the Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity herself asked for this.

5.4 assist the mutual awareness of the various organizations of Vincentian Studies spread out through the various provinces so that there be a real collaboration and a reciprocal enrichment; we are trying to take a census of all these study organizations; we will publish the data so that everyone can know what is happening.

5.5 help the provinces in the work of formation: we are preparing an essential bibliography that indicates the most accessible material in the various languages so we can make use of it in the formation of our own.

5.6 pass on information of the initiatives in process through, for example, the brief information page we send to the Visitors and to the Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity after every meeting of SIEV; this is also published in *Vincentiana*.

There are other things in the Statutes of SIEV that we have not been able to develop or to take into consideration. There are certainly other significant themes or other aspects that the confreres of the provinces have. One of the best ways to make SIEV work for you is to send suggestions and even criticisms either from the Visitors or from individual confreres. In my judgement, we still have to develop our understanding of the task of the "corresponding members" in the provinces or in regions (Statute 3,4) to get more functional collaboration; the secretaries of the various organizations of Vincentian Studies in the different provinces or regions could function in this way.

1. The members of SIEV ordinarily meet once a year (our next meeting is at the Collegio Alberoni, Piacenza, Italy, in the middle of September, 1998). The decisions and directions that come out of this meeting are given to the Superior General and his Council for their examination before they become operative. Once they are approved or corrected, they become the operative guides for the work.
2. A final word on the making of the CD-ROM with the Vincentian texts. We had thought about this project for a long time, and finally got it accomplished, thanks to the collaboration of many confreres, beginning with those who took care of the translation of this text from the written word to computer language. We owe a special debt of gratitude in this area to Fr. Claude Lautissier, who was not only the pioneer, but who did an enormous amount of work together with those with whom he collaborated. We are grateful because all of these confreres (those who did material work as well as those possessing the "right of the author") gave us their material *gratis* so that the CD-ROM's cost would be very low. This was one of the desires of the Superior General and of the Council so that this instrument could be distributed widely.

The CD-ROM is an experimental version, as Fr. John Freund, who took care of the technical part of making it, will tell us. We thank him and his collaborators for having done this work in an extremely short period of time so we could present it to you at the General Assembly.

On the CD there is a very large amount of material in French, much in Spanish, some volumes of Coste in Italian and English. By making the CD-ROM available now, even if we do not have all the texts in all the languages, we hope it will be a stimulus to the confreres and to the provinces to prepare the material that is missing so that as soon as possible we may have a complete version and one which is even better in the technical sense, thanks to your good suggestions.