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First General Assembly of the Vincentian Marian Youth Association

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FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE VINCENTIAN MARIAN YOUTH ASSOCIATION

Rome, August 8-12, 2000

Final Document

A dream come true...

After two years of preparation, hard work and reflection, we have now had the first General Assembly of the JMV. For five days we were able to share times of intensive prayer, study, reflection and living together, and we believe that we achieved the objectives we had in mind. All this is due to the powerful presence among us of the Holy Spirit whom we invoked over and over again as we prayed: "Come Holy Spirit." Guided by this same Spirit, our Assembly elected its first International Council and set out the Association's Lines of Action for the next five years. These events left a deep impression on our minds and hearts.

It is not easy to communicate, in all its depths, the richness of the experiences we had together, but these all lead us to declare that our Association is a gift for the Church and for the world in this new millennium. We were able to get to know one another and discover our values. The diversity of cultures among us became a source of enrichment. This was particularly evident in our Eucharistic celebrations, our group work and the time we spent together.

The message of rue du Bac, which led to the setting up of our Association, is still relevant and it is a living force urging us to be witnesses to Christ the Servant, following the example of Mary, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Catherine Labouré. This message is in our hands and we have been sent to show the world, through our works, that God is love and that Mary is the reflection of God's tenderness.

When our Assembly was over, we returned to our different countries, our hearts full of love, hope and enthusiasm, and ready to continue our wonderful JMV journey together in this Association which is now established in more than 40 countries. As well as sharing with you the joy felt by our new international co-ordinating team, we address to you this message of hope:

Dear Friends, brothers and sisters,

We bring you this good news: yes, there is a path that we can all travel together in the new millennium. We have been dreaming about for the Association over **the next five years:**

In the light of the message given us in each conference, and inspired by the reflection of all the members of the Assembly, we thought it necessary to concentrate on the **seven topics** we judged to be the most important. For each topic we drew up some simple and specific **Lines of Action**, and together with you, the Association's members, we wish to implement these in the next five years so that we can do still more and be a prophetic force that can transform the world.

1. SPIRITUAL LIFE

Our hope is that we will be able to support one another by our daily prayer, and that this prayer will be something beautiful for God and attractive to young people.

1. We will make prayer an integral part of our catechetical and formation meetings and of our apostolate, service and evangelisation, so that prayer will become a natural and spontaneous part of our lives.
2. The International Secretariat, in collaboration with the International Council, will compile a book of prayers for all Association members. This is to help us preserve the spirit of common prayer and so reinforce our sense of belonging to the Association. All countries will be asked to contribute their own prayer material for this project.

2. FORMATION

The initial and ongoing formation of the Association's members is of vital importance: it is the key factor in our faith journey.

1. The International Council and International Secretariat will draw up the general outline for the various stages of formation. Each National Council will develop these in concrete ways according to the circumstances and needs of its Association. This national formation programme will be particularly concerned with the human, ecclesial, missionary, Marian and Vincentian dimensions of membership.
2. The International Secretariat and the National Councils will be committed to producing creative material suitable for formation programmes. This material will be shared and it should be simple, concrete and attractive, so that it will help us in the formation of the Association's members.
3. In our formation programmes we will be very mindful of the social dimension of life so that we can help our members to develop a critical and prophetic understanding of events. We will analyze reality from our Marian and

Vincentian perspective: this will inspire us to look for specific forms of service and ways of registering prophetic protest.

4. At all levels of the Association we will encourage our counsellors, formators and leaders to commit themselves to personal and ongoing formation so that they will become for us true guides and prophets.

3. MARY AND THE ASSOCIATION

Mary leads us to Christ. She invites us to love in the way that He loved. From her we learn humility, simplicity and tenderness in order to become instruments of love in the service of others.

1. We will base our Marian spirituality on the canticle of the *Magnificat*, which invites us to live in joyful thanksgiving to God for the wonders of salvation.
2. Inspired by this *Magnificat* canticle we will make a clear option for God who is the only Absolute, and we will take our place among the poor, for this is the “milieu” in which we will be living out our commitment to God.
3. We will promote and inculcate a deeper understanding of the Act of Consecration, the sign that we belong to the Association. All National Associations will use the same formula for this Act of Consecration.
4. The International Council, as well as the National Associations, will produce material for prayer and for study that will help us to give young people a deeper understanding of the message of rue du Bac and its relevance today, so as to promote devotion to Our Lady through use of the Miraculous Medal.

4. LIFE WITNESS

Our mission today is to be a critical and prophetic presence, to be people who will spread the good news and be a transforming force in organisations that confront the different forms of poverty in our society.

1. In fulfilling our mission we will proclaim the gospel and, as prophets, denounce injustice, first and foremost by the testimony of our lives and the way that we live in accordance with gospel values. We will be faithful to the Marian and Vincentian virtues that should characterise our lives: simplicity, humility and practical charity.
2. As members of the Association we will tie together our Christian vocation and our social commitment in a single experience of faith and life.

5. SERVICE-MISSION

The prophetic young person is someone who is sent to evangelise the poor, to help the weak, set free the oppressed, bring down tyranny and defend justice. In this way we will strive to help people, especially all those who are in difficult situations, to be the agents of their own development, to live in dignity, and to know that God loves them.

1. We will encourage all the members of the Association to make their apostolate one of organised service as part of the Church, in co-operation with other pastoral workers, and in direct contact with the poor.
2. We will look for ways of becoming more and more involved in social action and thus be a force that can denounce unjust structures in our society.
3. We will draw up projects for service and for the apostolate that will help us to reach out to young people, especially those who are at risk.

6. INTERNATIONALITY

We have to be open to other realities and be enriched by them so that we can create one single human family that will benefit from the positive aspects globalisation has to offer.

1. We will work at securing approval for our National Statutes in those countries where the Association is already established.
2. We will try, with the help of the International Council, to find ways of setting up the Association in countries where it does not yet exist. In doing this we will rely on the strong support of the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission, as well as that of other religious or priests who promote the Association.
3. We will be open and ready to go wherever God and the poor are calling us to evangelise and to proclaim God's kingdom, and we will be prepared to go beyond our national frontiers in order to do this.
4. We will set up an economic solidarity fund with contributions from helping agencies and from National Associations, in so far as this is possible. This will help us to collaborate in helping the poor in emergency situations and in aid-projects for Associations that need our help.
5. We will generate interest in the Association by our frequent use of the JMV Web page as well as that of the International Vincentian Family.

7. JMV AND THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY

God calls us to serve and to evangelise the poor through effective and practical charity, regarding ourselves as members of one and the same Family which shares its gifts and places them at the service of the poor.

1. The National Associations will join with the Vincentian Family to form a National Co-ordinating Committee so that we can join forces and channel our energies in order to serve the poor better.
2. The National or Regional Councils will participate with other branches of the Vincentian Family, in drawing up, implementing and evaluating projects for formation and for the service of the poor.
3. All members of the Association will be prepared to get to know the other branches of the Vincentian Family and to collaborate with them in mutual support. The National Councils will communicate with the other branches periodically.

We confide the Association to Mary, our only Mother, and we also place in her hands these “Lines of Action” which, with God’s grace, we hope to see implemented in all our members in each of our countries:

“O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to You.”