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Meeting of the Visitors: “Animation of the Local Communities” All Hallows College – Dublin, 4-6 June 2001: Synthesis of the Responses to the Requests Made to the Visitors

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**Meeting of the Visitors:
“Animation of the Local Communities”
All Hallows College – Dublin, 4-6 June 2001**

Synthesis of the Responses to the Requests Made to the Visitors

Methodology used:

- Each item (idea) mentioned in the Visitor’s report is counted as one instance; thus, the number cited in the synthesis pertains to the number of times an item or an idea similar or closely connected to it is mentioned.
- The items are grouped according to themes (e.g., relative to ministry, relationship, structure, or other).
- The synthesis presents only the main points taken up in the survey.
- More detailed information on the items is found in the Collated Responses Sheets.

Respondents: 40 out of 50 Provinces and Vice-Provinces

1. On Question no. 1 : Positive experiences in the local community

1.1 The area where most of the comments (92 out of 215) are made concerns structured community activities, like

- Prayer in common (25)
- House meetings (15)
- Common recreation (11)
- Less formal structure (8)
- Community plans (7)
- Common meals (7)

1.2 The area coming second is the matter of relationship (66)

- Supportive, trustworthy, respectful, understanding community (32)
- Concern for each, friendliness, mutual assistance, sensitivity to those in difficulty (25)

1.3 On the area of ministry, the following items (31) are brought up

- Teamwork in ministry (11)
- Dedication to the work of the Gospel (8)
- Sharing and planning pastoral activities (7)

1.4 From another perspective, by the number of times mentioned in general, the items considered most positive are

- Support, trust, understanding in a community (32)
- Prayer in Common (25)
- Concern for each, friendliness, etc. (25)

1.5 Significant items mentioned but outside of the main themes are

- Vincentian identity (6)
- Help from outside people (5)
- Diversity in community (4)
- Wisdom and good example of older confreres (4)

2. On Question no. 2: Difficulties in the local community

2.1 Most often mentioned item has to do with relationships (78 out of 222)

- Individualism, self-sufficiency (30)
- Lack of understanding or tolerance, superficial relationship (26)
- Eccentric or difficult confreres (8)

2.2 Second item often mentioned concerns the ministry (44)

- Difficulties in scheduling community activities (18)
- Deficiencies in the ministry, such as lack of pastoral plan, teamwork, availability, etc. (16)

2.3 Third item has to do with differences in

- Age or generation (16)
- Culture (11)
- Mentality, perspectives, personalities (10)

N. B. These items may in fact have implications on relationship. That is why with these items, the area of relationship may be even more highlighted as source of difficulty for community members.

2.4 On the area of structure, the items (35) include

- Isolation of some confreres in the mission (8)
- Big community seen as difficult for community spirit (6)
- No local plans (6)
- Inadequate participation in common activities (5)

2.5 From another perspective, by rank of highest incidence, the most important items often mentioned are

- Individualism (30)
- Lack of mutual understanding and tolerance (26)
- Scheduling difficulties (18)
- Differences in age and generation (16)

- Deficiencies in the ministry (16)

2.6 A significant item mentioned in the “Others,” but somewhat related to “differences in age and generation” is

- Growing old of confreres and its implication on the ministerial commitments (8)

3. On Question no. 3: Hopes and dreams about community life

3.1 Items on relationship and structures are most often mentioned (48 each out of 203). On relationship, the following stand out

- Support, concern, and respect for one another (19)
- Unity in diversity, understanding of differences (13)
- The local community as a home of welcome (9)

On structures, the items are

- Local plans and projects (9)
- Flexible structures (7)
- Preparation of the young members (6)

3.2 Hopes and dreams in general include 43 items. Among them

- The local community’s communion of life, goods, works, and interests; balance between the personal and the communal (13)
- A truly Vincentian community way of life (7)
- Commitment to our mission for the poor (7)
- Community as condition for integral ongoing Vincentian formation (6)
- Community life grounded on social realities of today (5)

3.3 Some beliefs and attitudes are frequently mentioned (40)

- Co-responsibility and collaboration (12)
- Local community as place of prayer (9)
- Communities united by Christ in the mission for the poor (8)
- Common purpose in our work (7)

3.4 An observation: the themes are mentioned in almost equal numbers. This seems to show the balanced perspective in regard to our hopes and dreams for the local communities. Each important area is covered.

3.5 Items not under the direct category above but in “Others” are significant in that they revolve around an implicit theme: the future of the local community/Congregation. Items mentioned are

- Local community as attractive to the young confreres (5)

- More vocations for the Congregation (5)
- Openness to the Vincentian Family and lay people (5)
- Possibilities for affiliated laity (4)

4. On Question no. 4: Means to achieve the dreams and ideals of community life

4.1 Majority of the items center around structures or structured activities (97 out of 186)

- Formulating a realistic community plan (16)
- A process involving reflection and evaluation (14)
- Intensifying community prayer and other spiritual activities (14)
- Continuing formation (13)
- Holding more community gatherings (11)
- Communication among confreres and communities (11)
- Regular meetings (9)

4.2 Second area in the number of items mentioned refers to relationship (29), which includes

- Acceptance of each other's limitations and differences (16)
- Being a community of friends (5)
- Overcoming individualism (4)

4.3 Items on leadership are also brought up (25).

- The Superior plays an important role (12)
- The Visitor should make more visits (4)

4.4 Some attitudes and beliefs are also mentioned as important means (21). Among these are

- Faithfulness to our rules and Constitutions and our Vincentian vocation (10)
- Understanding the sources of our problems (7)

4.5 As in question no. 3, the "Others" include

- Inviting young people to join our communities, working with youth, cultivating vocations (5)
- Collaboration with the laity, and other members of the Vincentian Family (5)

5. On Question no. 5: Aspects to be emphasized in the Visitors' Meeting

5.1 Of 146 items, the majority touch on structures (56).

- Community prayer (18)
- Community plan/project/covenant (14)

- Communication and dialogue (10)

5.2 The next area refers to beliefs and attitudes (45)

- Co-responsibility in the ministry, team-ministry (12)
- Vincentian community life and charism (9)
- Distinction between what is mine and what is the community's (4)
- Integration of spiritual life and pastoral work (4)
- Formative aspect of community life (4)

5.3 On the area of relationships (17), the items include

- Friendship and fraternal communication among confreres (14)
- Spirit of welcome and hospitality (2)

5.4 Items on leadership are also mentioned (14)

- The role of the Superior (5)
- Sensitivity in choosing and assigning confreres (3)

5.5 Other items not under the categorised theme include

- Openness to lay people (4)
- Age-problem (4)
- Inter-provincial exchange (4)

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