



TRAINING REFLECTION: JUNE 2017

As AIC volunteers we are celebrating this **Jubilee Year** (8th December 2016 – 10th December 2017) with much enthusiasm. A series of activities have been organized, the most important of which being of course our recent International Assembly in Châtillon, France to celebrate in the place where **St Vincent de Paul founded the first Confraternity of Charity 400 years ago, now known as the International Association of Charities.**

The Vincentian Family, of which we are members, is also celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the birth of our Charism, and as part of their formation programme, they sent us this wonderful article in 8 parts, written by **Sr María Pilar López, DC**, which we be sharing with you, month by month, on the topic of:

The Prophetic Dimension of the Vincentian Charism in light of the Social Doctrine of the Church

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1. Introduction

We have just asked the Lord to give us a heart like that of Vincent de Paul. It is said that we are able to love more than which we know better and so this morning we are going to try to know a little more about the heart of Monsieur Vincent.

José Vicente told me that he would like me to deal with the social doctrine of the Church and he knew that this was a theme that I was very interested in ... [but it was] a vast field.

What I proposed to José Vicente was to focus on Vincent de Paul, synthesizing and adapting material so that we might be able to have a rich sharing during this day when the Province gathers together to celebrate the birth of the Congregation of the Mission. Since we are unable to examine in detail the sources and roots and processes that led to the formation of the social doctrine of the Church, I ask you to be mindful of the fact that the first “**official document**”, the first social encyclical, was written by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, that is, **two hundred and thirty years after the death of Saint Vincent.**

2. What do we mean by prophecy?

El Nuevo Diccionario de Espiritualidad [The New Dictionary on Spirituality] states: The constitutive element of the prophetic experience is the experience of **being chosen**, set apart, and sent forth **by God**. The prophets speak in the name of God and as a result of their calling become instruments within the framework of the plan of salvation history. The prophets feel **compelled to fulfill this difficult mission**. (Nuevo Diccionario de Espiritualidad, Ediciones San Pablo, Madrid, 1991, p. 1610).

The prophets are, first of all, **charismatic**, individuals who are aware of the fact of being sent forth by God. For this reason the prophets speak in the name of God and base their words on their own experience of the God who sent them forth. Prophets are individuals who are also **committed to the social question**: they have discovered the will of God and they want to fulfill God's will. Therefore they denounce the evils of society, they proclaim the judgment of God and they endeavor to lead people to respond to the word by changing their lives.

If we examine the writings of the prophets, especially Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah ... we see that they never spoke about God in abstract or impersonal concepts, rather, with **the totality of their lives** they communicated the passionate love and the great holiness of God.

In their time both monachism and the appearance of religious orders became elements of the Church's **prophetic response**. Today we ought to remember that the most fruitful responses in the Church are those that are inspired by charity and marked by a holiness of life ... these are signs of salvation. Let us reflect on the importance of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac for the Church.

As I said before, we are going to try to engage in a **reflective reading of some aspects of the Vincentian charism in light of the social doctrine of the Church**. We will see how Vincent de Paul, his teaching and his life were centuries ahead of the Church's magisterium.

AIC's suggestion for reflection:

Through baptism, we are all priests, prophets and kings:

1. How would you define a prophet?
2. How do you fulfil your mission as a prophet in your local group?
3. Share something you have done in your mission as a prophet.