



Rome, 20 September 2024

Two initiatives for strengthening the Vincentian Family Movement

Dear members of the Vincentian Family Movement,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be always with us!

The year 2025 is quickly approaching. Two events that will profoundly mark the life of the whole Church, the whole Vincentian Family Movement, and all people of good will are:

- A) The 2025 Jubilee Year, “Pilgrims of Hope,” that will begin officially on 24 December 2024, when Pope Francis opens the Holy Door of Saint Peter’s Basilica, and will conclude on 6 January 2026.
- B) The Vincentian Family Movement’s “13 Houses Campaign” that has been chosen to be featured as one of Pope Francis’s concrete gestures of charity during the 2025 Jubilee Year.

We have two initiatives that also will begin in 2025.

- 1) **The first initiative** is the opening, at the Motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission in Paris, of an **Office for Vincentian Pilgrimages**.

For many years now, pilgrimages to Vincentian sites in Paris and across France have been organized by the International Formation Center (CIF), the Daughters of Charity, groups coming from various parts of the world under the auspices of different members of the VFM, pilgrimage and tourist agencies.

With the opening of the “**Office for Vincentian Pilgrimages,**” we will have at the disposition of anyone in the whole Vincentian Family Movement, as well as any other persons, schools, groups, Congregations, colleges, and universities who would like to make Vincentian pilgrimages in the footsteps of Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Louise de Marillac, Saint Catherine Labouré, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, etc. in Paris and across France, all that is needed to organize such pilgrimages, including: visa applications, booking of transportation, hotels, trained guides in various languages to accompany the pilgrims to the Vincentian sites, etc.

The goal of such an office is to help make visits to Vincentian sites across France as pleasant as possible from the planning stage to the conclusion, and to give to as many people as possible from around the world the opportunity to undertake such a profoundly rich spiritual experience.

Many of the pilgrimages will start in Paris, from the Motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission, where the pilgrims will be lodged and receive all the needed services. The Motherhouse is being renovated and, God willing, by April 2025 most of the work will be completed.

The Vincentian Pilgrimage Office will open on: 1 January 2025

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The plan is that, at the beginning, the office will offer three packages:

- A) PILGRIMAGE TO THE VINCENTIAN “ESSENCE.”** 20 days. Based in Paris, we will go to the main Vincentian sites; that is, the places where Saint Vincent lived, discovered the material and spiritual poverty of his time, and developed his responses.

From Vincent’s early years, we will visit his birthplace, the **Berceau**, with a reconstruction of his family’s home and other places of interest, where the saint’s memory is perpetuated; **Dax**, where he studied in a Franciscan school, boarding there and with Monsieur de Comet while tutoring his children; the Marian shrine in **Buglose**, 12 kilometers from his home, where he made a pilgrimage when he was already a priest and General Chaplain of the galley convicts; **Tarbes**, where he was ordained a deacon in December 1598; **Toulouse**, where Saint Vincent studied theology from 1599 to 1605, receiving a bachelor’s degree in theology and spending his first years as a priest there; and **Chateau l’Évêque**, where Bishop François de Bourdeille ordained Vincent de Paul to the priesthood on 23 September 1600.

We will travel to sites associated with Vincent’s discovery of his vocation starting with **Gannes**, a village on the estates of Madame de Gondi, where in 1617, Saint Vincent heard the confession of the village’s miller, who was on his deathbed, and freed him from a serious

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unconfessed sin. We will continue to **Folleville**, where Vincent de Paul preached the “first sermon of the Mission” on 25 January 1617, inspiring him to combat the religious ignorance of the poor country people, and to remedy the poor formation of a considerable sector of the clergy. We will follow him to **Châtillon**, where he took over as pastor of Saint Andrew’s Church on 1 August 1617, achieving great improvements in the parish in only six months. It was there that he realized that not only religious ignorance, but also the material poverty of the indigent had to be resolved. Following the generous response of parishioners to the needs of a sick family, he founded the first Confraternity of Charity (today called the International Association of Charities, AIC) there since he saw that charity needed to be organized.

In addition to sites in **Paris** associated with his works, we will visit **Richelieu**, where, at Cardinal Richelieu’s request, the Vincentians arrived in 1638 to assume the parish, which Vincent de Paul visited five times. It was also the headquarters of a missionary team, a Confraternity of Charity and a community of the Daughters of Charity.

Other sites include **Lourdes** where Saint Bernadette Soubirous (who was a Child of Mary and wore the Miraculous Medal) was the visionary of Our Lady in 1858; **Amiens**; and the **ecumenical monastery of Taizé**.

B) PILGRIMAGE TO LESSER-KNOWN VINCENTIAN SITES. For all those who already know the Vincentian essentials but want to continue visiting beautiful French cities full of exciting Vincentian stories, we propose this 20-day pilgrimage that will include different cities every two years.

Leaving Paris, we can visit some of these cities: Chartres, Le Mans, Angers, Nantes, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, Narbonne, Cahors, Beauvais, Arras, Sedan, Metz, Reims, Troyes, Fontainebleau, Versailles, Dijon, Lyon, Valfleury, Annecy, Avignon, Marseille, Montpellier, and Tours.

C) VINCENTIAN PARIS. 8 days visiting inspiring Vincentian sites in Paris. That week we will stay at the Motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission in Paris.

In addition to the three above-mentioned options, the office also will be prepared to organize a pilgrimage to Vincentian sites according to the preference and time availability of the different groups and to add some new sites, as they may be requested.

For those who would like to make a pilgrimage to the different Vincentian sites on foot, we are preparing such an option for the near future.

2) **The second initiative**, which is not at all new, for it was launched as part of the FamVin Homeless Alliance in 2018, is the “**13 Houses Campaign**,” which continues to grow and expand to new countries. What is new is the information that

I shared at the beginning of this letter; that is, it has been chosen to be featured as one of Pope Francis's concrete gestures of charity during the 2025 Jubilee Year.

Through the tremendous efforts of so many members of the Vincentian Family Movement over all these years, the 13 Houses Campaign already has launched 108 projects in 68 countries, transforming 10,256 lives.

Because the main organizers of the 2025 Jubilee Year were impressed by the project and because Pope Francis accepted it as one of the concrete gestures of charity during the Jubilee Year, all 167 branches (Congregations and Lay Associations), as well as all others who do not belong to a specific branch, but who very deeply live the Vincentian spirituality and charism, and so are members of the Vincentian Family Movement, have a new and further incentive to come together on the local, regional, or national level of a specific country and continue developing the 13 Houses Campaign in countries where the project already exists, or start it in countries where it has yet to begin.

You also can participate by contributing to the Solidarity Fund, helping to start the 13 Houses Campaign in countries where poverty is strongly pronounced and financial resources are very limited. For more information, please contact fha.campaign@famvin.org.

In the Vincentian month of September, further information will follow with specific details of events at which the campaign will be celebrated.

What an overwhelming thought that, on 27 September, Solemnity of Saint Vincent de Paul, millions of members of the Vincentian Family Movement from around the world will be celebrating together, on the same day in 170 countries, the legacy of the "Mystic of Charity"!

May Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Saint Vincent de Paul, and all the Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God of the Vincentian Family Movement intercede for us all!

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM