



International Association of Charities - Vincentian Family

ACTING TOGETHER – AGAINST ALL FORMS OF POVERTY

AIC UK is part of the 150,000 strong International group of, primarily, women whose spirituality is rooted in Vincentian tradition. Begun in 1617 by St Vincent De Paul, the Confraternities of lay volunteers help the disadvantaged in society. Groups became the Ladies of Charity – a name that many countries still use today under the AIC umbrella. Groups in ABBEY WOOD, BEXLEY, DARLINGTON, GLASGOW, MILL HILL & PECKHAM.

Contact AIC UK: info@aic-uk.org.uk **NB THE NEW CONTACT EMAIL**

This email address is linked to our website; aic-uk.org.uk

400th ANNIVERSARY

NEWSLETTER 2017

PRAYER FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR COMMEMORATING THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR FOUNDATION

With all our hearts, we give thanks to you, Lord, Father of mercy. You have chosen us to be members of the AIC and to continue the mission of the Confraternities of Charity that were established by Vincent de Paul some four hundred years ago. Grant us the grace to continue this marvellous collaborative work. Inspire us to join hands with those countless men and women who live in the midst of poverty so that together we might build a more just and equitable world. Give us strength

to communicate your love to our brothers and sisters so that they, in turn, might become active in their own development.

Teach us to be docile to your will. Strengthen us to be authentic ministers and transformational agents of change in the midst of society. May our numbers increase and may all the volunteers be convinced of Jesus' words: ***whatever you do for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you do for me (Matthew 25:40)***. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.
AMEN

400th anniversary! The hairdresser gasped! "I thought you were going to say, at most, a 60th wedding anniversary" she said. We had the attention of all the women in the salon, as we chatted about how AIC had grown from a kindly act in a small town in Eastern France, and how the organisational ability of one man, coupled with his vision of doing God's work in the service of the poor, had become a global movement of almost 2 million people in 225 organisations.

It was with this heritage in mind that we planned the GB Vincentian Family Mass in St George's Cathedral, Southwark, South London. The Vincentian leaders; Sr Ellen Flynn DC, Fr Paul Roche CM, Fr Richard Diala CM, Adrian Abel SVP and Jim McKendrick SSVP and myself Dee Mansi AIC met last year to discuss how we could collaborate in "Family" celebrations of the 400th anniversary of our charism.

There were so many high points to this first celebration on 25th February, and when I see the number of people in the "team", I am not surprised how smoothly it all went. Family members came from far and wide - Glasgow, Cardiff, Lake District, Whitley Bay and Darlington for example, as well as those based nearer to Southwark and London. Roll on our next national events on 24th June in Liverpool and 30th September in Glasgow!

Archbishop Peter Smith captured our essence, our charism, he was the perfect celebrant. Fathers Paul Roche, our homilist articulated our Vincentian character so well, Richard Diala our benevolent benefactor who wanted the best for everyone, Julius Nkafu, a civil rights lawyer, our speaker for the social justice of Welcoming the Stranger that energised us to "keep up the good work" as were the Archbishop's parting words. Sr Ellen and her Secretariat team of staff members and Sisters produced the order of service and recruitment leaflet on such beautiful paper and Sisters Theresa, Kay and Moira set up their inspiring display of the Daughters of Charity heritage.

Elizabeth Palmer and Adrian Abel brought their SVP work too and Ken Madine SVP who supported our lovely SVP ushers in keeping everything moving SO well and Andrew Hollingsworth of Vincentian Volunteers too. Seminarian, Chinadoo CM, Kathleen Kennedy DC, Rose Hombo AIC, Winston Waller SVP and Paul Southgate ViP - all the acronyms of our family - reading so well.

I am brimming with pride too for "our gals" of AIC ; Christine, Jo, Rose, Iffy and Naomi who produced a terrific display which showed the project work we undertake with people living in poverty, including the homeless, disabled, young offenders, prison visiting, refugees, asylum seekers and care home visits as well as collaboration with SVP youth work and justice work with Citizens UK. Numerous AIC members processed proudly behind our banner in the entrance procession to celebrate our special Anniversary. Everyone looked SO well considering we are 400 years old!

The choice of hymns was simple and know by all, which made the singing very inclusive. Hannah led us in the new 400th anniversary song 'Welcoming the stranger'.

Amigo Hall, a few foot-steps from the Cathedral, was just the right size for the almost 200 people being refreshed. Here again, displays lined the walls, with tables café-style allowing for comfortable dining of the delicious varied hot food. It was a delight to see people greeting each other – some hadn't seen each other in years. The atmosphere was one of trusted mutuality, fun and enjoyment at gathering! We know who we are – and we revel in it! Vincentians all!



ARTICLE RE; AIC INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY – CHATILLON 2017

Our pilgrimage began in Notre Dame Cathedral on 8th March 2017 – International Women’s Day – at a Mass attended by 1,000 AIC France and other nationalities. It was the first of several encounters with the Heart of St Vincent in our presence. Later on, after the vin d’honneur reception in Quai d’Anjou, which included our very own Sisters Marie Raw and Kathleen Appler, 800 members and friends proceeded to Maison Mere, the Rue de Sevres, Lazarists House “a gouter” – afternoon tea to you and me!

It set the scene for what would be an exhilarating, effective and deeply spiritual experience in Chatillon with almost 400 women celebrating living in the Vincentian charism.

The theme of "our Common Home" with keynote speech by our Spiritual Director Fr Alvaro Mauricio Fernandez CM set the scene for an Assembly with sustainability permeating the whole proceedings. Stimulating presentations included project work from diverse developing and more developed countries, including our own CAFOD Live Simply campaign.

Speakers like Daughters of Charity Sr Pilar Caycho, Peru with a fulsome talk on Sr Louise and Charity, workshops relating to "Vincentian spirituality in our grassroots actions today" followed on Fr Celestino Fernandez CM's talk on "Vincent de Paul, a leader for our time". Sr Françoise Petit DC, Assistant to Sr Kathleen Appler, facilitated a workshop on "The teachings of St Louise to welcome 'the stranger' today", and the other numerous DC and CM Spiritual Advisors met with our Superior General Fr Tomaz Mavric. Our own Sr Bernadette Ryder and Sr Clare Sweeney, Ireland attended.

A tour of Chatillon, with sight of the original Charter of the Charities, in St Vincent's House was a highlight! With such a rich diet, we felt nourished and fired up to return with great energy to create ways to support those people living in poverty in our own home.

The Statutory Assembly was the business part of the 12th-15th March days we stayed in Chatillon, Ars and the surrounding countryside. Attended by 42 Full Rights and Associate member Presidents – out of the 53 countries with AIC organisations, it took much to cut through the cultural differences of democratic debate and election procedure. Ideas emanated from this about training needs, challenged us to remember that some members come from Communist countries, like Laos and Cambodia where members meet in secret, and other paternalistic societies where it is difficult for women to achieve positions of responsibility.

Letting our hair down at the "Talent Show" (no prizes – no competition) allowed the UK gals to sing a Beatles parody of "She loves ya" reworked to include lyrics lamenting Brexit "We still love ya – yeah, yeah, yeah" and an Irish 'Danny Boy' with USA backing singers! Did we have fun? yeah, yeah, yeah!

So many memories, so many dreams and plans forming from our heightened experience in this our 400th year!



Chatillon sur Chalaronne Market Hall – 14th Century still very much in use in this very picturesque town.

A huge amount of local volunteer French AIC – Equipes St Vincent (Teams of St Vincent) was deployed to prepare and serve our meals, drive us from home to venues and cheerfully and quietly cover our every need.



The church of St Andre where the Archbishop said Mass. We were presented with our AIC Charter by International President Alicia Duhne. The stained glass windows retell the story of St Vincent's time in Chatillon, including the beginnings of the Confraternities of Charity which became the Ladies of Charity and now AIC. Heart of St Vincent is in glass case to the right/front of the altar.





Naomi, left, striped top enthusiastically waves the Union Jack to encourage Dee bringing up the flag in the procession of the countries attending. We had such great discussions with members from all over the world, and our contributions were valued in feedback sessions.



The newly elected Executive Board; Left; Fr Mauricio Fernandez CM, Colombia our Spiritual Director, Alicia Duhne, Mexico, Int President, Babeth Gindre, France, Treasurer. Maru Magallanes, Mexico, Secretary. Melodee de Castro, Phillipines, Carla Ines, Colombia, Dee Mansi, UK, Anne Bemmo, Cameroon, Mary Ann Danuono, USA, Mia Latrille, France, Milagros Galisteo Spain.



Staying in French homes, we experienced such generous, kindly hospitality we felt thoroughly cossetted!

Our hosts, Mr and Md Guy & Beatrice Richard absorbed our 6 member UK delegation into their holiday farmhouse – a wonderful, authentic French experience! Srs Bernadette and Clare had a similar welcome in their home.

Dee Mansi. AIC UK President