

SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL
EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Salamanca (Spain) 28 May – 1 June, 2010

TURNING YOUR HOPE INTO SERVICE

More than 200 Vincentians from over 110 countries gathered in Salamanca, Spain from 28 May to 1 June 2010 to attend the Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA) of Society of St Vincent de Paul (Society) for the election of XV President General (i.e. new International President General for the Society for the period 2010-2016).

This EGA was taken place at the house of the Lazarist Fathers in Salamanca, Spain. Among the 200 Vincentians attending the EGA, they were the national presidents or their representatives from 110 Vincentian countries, all members of the International Bureau and the International Structure. We were also very honoured to have important guests including His Eminence Cardinal Paul Josef Cordes, President of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum; Father Gregory Gay, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission; Father Yvon Laroche, Former Superior General of the Religious of St Vincent de Paul, and Father Robert Maloney, Former Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission.

Election of New President General

The election took place on 28 May 2010. The whole process was conducted in a very transparent manner and was taped for record purpose. A panel comprised Bro Huascar Nabuco de Abreu Filho (General Vice-President for the elections) together with Bro Erich Schmitz (Secretary General) and Bro Ian McTurk (Treasurer General) explained, managed and monitored the process. Originally, there were 5 candidates for election. Unfortunately, Bro Wenceslas de Renesse of Belgium withdrew at the very last minute and hence only four candidates stood for election. The candidates were Bro Karim Albert Cheikho of Egypt, Bro Cristovao Gomes Goncalves & Bro Nelson Antonio de Souza (both of Brazil) and Bro Michael Thio of Singapore. As seen from the list of candidates, the election this time made a history for the Society as this would be the first time a non-European president would be elected. This also in fact reflected that the Society became internationalized.

Some of the national presidents were not available at the EGA due to various reasons, their votes were posted to head quarter in Paris before hand. All the votes received by post and cast at the EGA were carefully scrutinized and counted. Having audited and reconfirmed all votes, Bro Huascar Nabuco de Abreu Filho announced that Bro Michael Thio was elected the XV President General by a margin of 87% of the votes cast. In his official speech on 1 June 2010, Bro Michael Thio thanked all Vincentians for the good charity works and also supports rendered to him. He briefed the assembly his pragmatic but ambitious plans for the Society and 9 tasks ahead were clearly indicated. Bro Michael Thio would take office by 27 Sept 2010

Knight of St Gregory the Great Order awarded to Bro José Ramón Díaz-Torremocha

In the morning of 30 June, his Eminence Cardinal Paul Josef Cordes given a talk titled "To Practice Charity". His Eminence has addressed the Vincentians giving a lecture on the origins of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, present in 146 countries and which works of help take care of the needs of nearly forty million people in the world. After the talk, Cardinal Cordes handed out to Bro José Ramón Díaz-Torremocha, our outgoing President General the medal of St Gregory the Great Order awarded to him by the Holy Father in recognition of his services to the Church. As Vincentian, we were honored of the award which to certain extent indicated recognition of our charity works by the Holy Father.

Talks and Working Groups

There were other events and activities in EGA in Salamanca. Besides the election, the report by our outgoing President General, talk by Cardinal Cordes and speech by the newly elected President General, there were four presentations each lasting a half-day of 29 and 31 May, with a discussion session, then workshops, in small groups, on the topic covered by the presentations. The first presentation was given by Bro John Falzon, the Executive Director of SSVP Australia who is an experienced Vincentian on the subject of social justice. The second talk was presented by Bro Julien Spiewak, our coordinator of the International Youth Committee covering "Vincentian youth and recruitment". The third talk was by Father Robert Maloney on the subject of "Systemic change and the poor". Bro Jean Cherville, the former National President of SSVP France and Assistant International Vice-President

for formation ended the workshop with his talk on “the need for formation”. On 1 June, Brian O’Reilly, Assistant Vice-President General for the Structure and Yasmine Cajuste, the National President of Haiti presented the results and outcomes of workshops for each topic. More details about this conclusion would be available in our website, ozanet.

International Territorial Vice-Presidents and Coordinators

Taking the advantage of the unusual presence of all the members of the International Structure, a working meeting was held in the afternoon of 1 June. Bro Brian O’Reilly presented a summary and recommendation in the possible changes of International Structure. Some comments and observations were made for Brian to take forward. The latest development of VINPAZ and Twinning were also presented to update the working meeting. Taking into account views and comments received, Bro Brian would make amendments as deemed necessary.

The Light (Hymn of SSVP)

At the EGA, we were glad to hear a piece of very lovely music, “The Light”, hymn of SSVP. This piece was composed by Bro Jean Tirado. All Vincentians were provided with 1 CD in which English, Spanish and Portuguese versions of “The Light” can be found.

Reflection

This EGA was a very successful one. Not only because we have elected the new President General, but it also allowed Vincentians from over 110 countries to gather, discuss, exchange experience in serving those in need and share their views of matters of mutual interest. It was wonderful to see the steady growth of the Society and the formation of a very strong and robust organization.

The essence of Frederic’s spirituality, which is, undoubtedly, Vincentian spirituality, is the identification of Christ with the poor. We all remember the last judgement scene described by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 25: 31-46. Here Jesus Christ specifies the works of mercy and identifies himself with the person who is hungry, homeless, naked, sick, and imprisoned. All of us have a special vocation and mission in serving our Lord and the poor. The Society is present in 145 countries with 750,000 members and assisting over 25 million poor in the world. We should be proud of being a Vincentian and let us keep up

to deliver our service to the poor and also bring them the love of our lord Jesus Christ.

God Bless

Maurice YEUNG

President, SSVP Central Council HK

Asian Group 3 Coordinator

19 June 2010

