



# NEWSLETTER

## INTERNATIONAL GENERAL COUNCIL

May/June 2014

### One Million for the Philippines THANK YOU !

On 8th November 2013, a super typhoon called "Haiyan" hit Tacloban, in the center of the Philippines. Dozens of surrounding towns were wiped off the map, razed to the ground by winds blowing at more than 300km/h and by gigantic waves. This is one of the most violent storms ever to have been registered. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul massively mobilized to raise funds and engage in urgently relief. 3 months after the cyclone, more than 1 million have been collected, and the phase of reconstruction has started. On behalf of the International Confederation and the National Council of the Philippines, President General Dr. Michael Thio expresses his gratitude to all Vincentians.



Dear Vincentians,  
The Peace of Christ be with you.

We are very pleased to inform you, that through the grace of God, the total donations received have amounted to Euro 1,231,918 which surpassed our target of Euro 1 million. We are truly very grateful to all our generous donors from around the world in responding so positively to this disaster appeal. We express to them our heartfelt appreciation and enormous thanks. It is very touching and encouraging to witness the compassion and love of the donors in showing their Oneness and Solidarity with the victims of Typhoon Yolanda. We give Praise and Thanks to the Lord.

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The Commission for International Aid & Development (CIAD) of CGI are working closely with the National Council, SSVP Philippines, in the various rehabilitation programs/projects in alleviating the plight of the victims and to provide them with the essential basic necessities, housing, education, sustaining projects and more to enable them to live a more dignified and humane life.

Holy masses will be offered in thanksgiving and for the intentions of both the donors and the recipients.

Let us remain united in prayer in union with one another and the poor and the needy in glorifying to the love and goodness of God. In Jesus precious and adorable name, we pray.

In our Vincentian mission, charism and ethos and with the Love and abundant blessing of the Lord.

Yours in the service of Christ in the poor,

Dr. Michael Thio  
President General

# SVP in Cameroon: the harmonization process is nearing completion

Since its foundation in 1972, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Cameroon has been divided in two regions, naturally determined by the 2 languages commonly spoken : the francophone and Anglophone regions..



The initiative to harmonize the two regions is a long awaited venture. Over the years, several attempts have been made by two tireless and selfless Vincentians: the Vice President General, Bro. Brian O'Reilly and the Senior ITVP, Bro. Pius O. Ehiagwina. However, this dream was actualized when Brian O'Reilly agreed to a date in February 2014 for a meeting with representatives from both Regions.

## The harmonization process

The first step consisted to settle the internal problems within each of the Regions, particularly with francophone region where difficulties protracted for many years. This was nevertheless resolved with the election conducted by Bro. Pius Ehiagwina in Douala, in which Sister Mary Grace Biyag was elected as president of the Francophone Region.

When it was thought that all was well with the Regions, it became necessary to have one united National Council of Cameroon. The first meeting towards achieving this was scheduled to take place in Paris, France. Brian and Pius were present in Paris for the meeting. But sadly, the Cameroonians who were the main actors were all absent. Despite disappointment and frustration, Brian and Pius were not defeated and decided to continue on the process of harmonization.

They worked continuously with all concerned and in 2013, Pius and Basile thought the time was right to have another trial. Pius contacted Brian and agreement was

reached to call another meeting. This meeting was to be in Cameroon so that many Cameroonians could attend.

The meeting took place in Yaoundé at the Hotel Luxtral from 13th – 17th February 2014. The meeting was well attended by Vincentians from the two Regions.

On Friday 14th February 2014, an interim election for the National Board was held. Sr. Marie Grace Biyag from the Francophone region was elected as the Interim National President and Bro. Philip Itoe from the Anglophone region was elected as Vice President. The Interim Secretary General (Gabriel Njikam) emerged from the Anglophone and Assistant Secretary General (Fankam Kamgang Pulcherie) and Treasurer (Mme Clare Wirwung) emerged from the Francophone region.

## The Structure of the Interim National Council

The Vice President General took time to explain in detail the suggested structure of the National Council emphasizing the importance of having one Society in Cameroon as in other parts of the world. From his explanation, the participants understood the meaning of National Council, District Council, Area Council, Conferences and the role and close collaboration with the church beginning with the Archdiocese down to parish level.



A courtesy call was made to the Vicar General of Yaoundé Archdiocese who embraced the harmonization and congratulated the Society for a good job well done.

In conclusion, harmonizing the two regions was a welcome idea and a dream come true. The two regions are ready to work together to push forward the Society in Cameroon. The first meeting of the Interim National Council was convened in Douala for 14th March 2014.

# Karl Hila : Presentation of the new Vice-President International Youth

**Overwhelmed and happy! Karl Hila, Filipino 30 years old, cumulates for the last few months his job as a IT consultant with his new role as Vice President International Youth. Vincentian by heart, member of the Society for 15 years, Karl replaces Julien Spiewak, appointed by Dr. Michael Thio as Secretary General last September. Between his work and his many trips for SSVP, he accepted with great kindness to talk about his appointment and the beginning of his term.**



**Q : What was your reaction when the position of International Vice president of youth was offered to you?**

It was minutes before a meeting at my work when I opened my email and saw the email message asking me to be the IVP for Youth of SSVP CGI. I was so shocked that I cancelled my meeting, get some coffee, and just stared at my office window asking God: "Lord, where are you leading me this time? I just left my work last year to go for a 3-months mission in France and Italy, and now, it seems Lord that you don't want me working for my own plans. But of course, I know that Your plans are better than mine. Guide me Lord as I make this difficult decision." And then I emailed Julien (the former IVP for Youth and the current Secretary General) asking for some days for prayer and discernment before sharing my decision.

In prayer, God led me back to the past World Youth Day and the International Meeting of Vincentian Youth where, though unplanned, I met several National Youth Representatives, discussing the realities, issues, and best practices that they do in their countries. I was led to go back to my experience as a member of the International Youth Commission, where I felt so grateful to be given a chance to make a difference, voice out my ideas for the SSVP youth around the world.

I was led to my 3-months Taize experience where I had a chance to live with fellow young people coming from various continents of the world, the knowledge that it

gave me which opened my eyes to several realities that the young people are facing in various contexts, and the lessons that it taught me on simplicity, spirit of poverty, reconciliation, silence, and mission. I was led to my rich experience as an SSVP member since the day I joined the organization 15 years ago.

Finally, everything is getting clearer, and on the day Bl. Frederic Ozanam died and the same day of the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I echoed Our Lady's words: "be it done to me according to your word!"

**Q : Since your appointment on last September, how do you feel with your mission?**

The invitations from various SSVP conferences and youth events around the world and in my country started to swarm my email account the day my appointment was announced. Most of the time, I have to travel several hours (even for a whole day sometimes) just to be in an event where I will speak for only 30minutes to an hour. I have work during weekdays but I am busier during weekends.

And so, at times, I feel so tired, my body feels very tired, however, my spirit is always filled with gladness, filled with great love, filled with great energy that cannot be explained. Just like everyone else, I am excited for the weekend, not because I would get a good rest but because that's the only time that I really work! Working not to have a salary but to be of service to God and humanity; working not because of a contract but because it is what I love doing - going on a mission; working not for a boss who wants more profit for his company but working for my God given mission who calls me to be fisher of young men.

How do I feel with my mission? I honestly hope I can do this full time 7 days a week!

**Q : According to you, what are the main objectives of the Youth Commission?**

It was a deep prayer and discernment that led me to creatively call this objective: "the ARK of SSVP Youth". To develop programs that will:

A - Attract more young men to see Jesus in our Vincentian Apostolate;

R - To help our young members Rediscover their faith, rediscover Jesus, rediscover the Vincentian Spirituality in our works of Charity;

K - To inspire young people to commit themselves and so to Keep them in this SSVP Ark so that they will continue journeying, with fellow young Vincentians all over the world, towards Jesus who will later on call

them to build more ARKs. More arks who will then journey towards the people whom the Church should give more love: the young (Church's preferential love for the young) who are poor (Church's preferential love for the poor).

The young beneficiaries should be able to rediscover their faith, rediscover Jesus, and rediscover our Vincentian charisma so that they, too, can be empowered not just to overcome their own poverty but to also use this rich experience of God's love to empower others.



**Q : What have been your first task as an International Vice President of Youth?**

It is to review the Strategic goals of SSVPGI, specially the goals and objectives for the young. This led me to recently propose the SSVPGI Youth Day program (Coming Soon!!).

**Q : Apart of your mission, I think you are still involved in other works for the SSVPGI, specially in Philippines, can you talk about it?**

I am also the Director for Youth Development at the National Council of the Philippines and the President of my own Conference. The former is similar to my IVP for Youth Role but only on a National context. All the things that I will be doing at the CGI as an IVP for Youth, I will owe it to the experience and trainings that the National Council of the Philippines gave me as its National Youth Representative.

*Interview : Helene AFRIAT fot IGC – Paris*

## “A luz”, The Society’s hymn now available in Portuguese

**Brother Ricardo Alessandro Nicoleti, Brazilian member living in the town of Iguatemi (State of Paraná), is the winner of the competition held by the International Council General of the SSVPGI, to choose a Portuguese version of the words for the hymn, “The light”, the Society’s official song.**

Ricardo Nicoleti is 33 years old. He has been an SSVPGI member for 10 years, and presently belongs to the Good Lord Jesus Conference. He entered the competition along with nine others from Brazil and Portugal. The rules of the competition stated that the entries must comply with the metrical parameters, as an adaptation of the original words, sound and linguistic standards. Each entry was assessed by the members of the selection committee.

The selection committee was formed of SSVPGI members Juan Tirado, from Spain (who wrote the words of the hymn in the English, Spanish and French versions) and Renato Lima (Vice-president of CGI for South America), as well as Samira Nahass, a music specialist.

The three members of the Commission had a tough decision to make, choosing the most suitable words. All the entrants were very talented, and submitted really beautiful and imaginative lyrics, which made our job very difficult,” Renato commented.

The Portuguese version of the hymn will be recorded by a Vincentian choir from Portugal and will have its official premiere on June,10th when the International Council General holds its annual meeting, this year in Council General and the Selection committee warmly thank all the entrants, and congratulate Ricardo Nicoleti for his winning version.

Here are the words that won the competition:

**1st Part**

A light is shining  
in the skies of Paris  
And all at once,  
spreading  
and taking root  
In my heart  
Faith and love  
Enthuse my vocation  
In Christ the Lord  
Spreading love  
to all, in community,  
To help and to serve  
Those who are poor  
Jesus is there with us  
Gazing and smiling

**2nd Part**

This blessed light  
is shining down  
On the poor and suffering  
It is Christ who said so  
Live the mission  
Serving with love  
Seeking salvation  
Such is the taste of life  
Practising charity  
Through a network of  
fraternity  
To help and to serve  
Those who are poor  
Jesus is there with us  
Gazing and smiling