

SOME CLUES TO UNDERSTAND THE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Sr. María Pilar Hurtado de Saracho, DC

00 WHAT DOES THE “SYSTEMIC CHANGE” MEAN?

Systemic change is a new way to understand and to live the assistance to the needy person. It is to modify the whole system (our thinking system, and if it is possible, the social one), the way of seeing, understanding and supporting those people who are in a situation of poverty. Change does not mean to modernize. It is not to agree more and more with the current philosophies, sociologies or technical or communication means. It is a question of changing from and towards the Gospel and the Vincentian tradition.

To reform is not to work on or to suggest a bare innovation in the ecclesiastical topics, but it is to return to the origin, RE- FORM towards the Gospel's heart. To reform is to reshape “the program” coming back to the initial core. To reform is not to transform either: *“until now this was a school and we have transformed it into a residential home for the elder”* this is not to reform but to transform. A reform is to return to the origin, to the genuine concepts, to the original shape. TO REFORM IS GRATITUDE AND A TRIBUTE TO THE TRADITION; TO THE LEGACY WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN.

When we do not want to reform we do not want to recognize the dimension of the Church and the human being that in several occasions are limited, outdated and sinful. A well-done reform requires a good hermeneutic (interpretation). Fundamentalisms are the negation of every interpretation and reform. The criterion is that the Gospel of the Lord reaches all our fellows. What is the core of the Gospel? It is life, resurrection, hope, love, service, peace, etc. Let's shape it and if the current structures of the charity we live in do not take us to the Gospel of the Lord: REFORM.

01. WHERE THE CHANGE IS LIVED AND CARRIED OUT

- First of all, we have to carry out the change interiorly, in our mentality and as a consequence, in our life.
- To achieve the change it is necessary to contrast our life style with the Gospel and the charisma of St. Vincent.
- Possibly, we will feel this necessary change arises from a new way to understand the needy person. Our anthropological concept (of the person) as a biological, mental, social, spiritual being. This way of conceiving the person, will involve a concrete way to live the solidarity, a new way to see the person who is in a difficult situation, to see our own group or association, even a new way to see the Vincentian family.
- In this way, we will experience by conviction and coherence this new mode of living the Charity fire.

02. BASIS OF THE CHANGE:

The foundation of our Christian change is:

- a. In the Word, in the Gospel, in the person of Jesus and in His way of acting and living.

- b. In St. Vincent de Paul's life, his way of following Jesus' criteria and as a consequence his way to serve the poor.
- c. In the Wisdom of our Vincentian family –Louise de Marillac, Frederick Ozanam, Catherine Laboure- and in its experience of the service to the neediest.

03. SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING ON THIS TOPIC

- a. Firstly we have to reflect individually on the readings about the criteria of the Gospel, the praxis of St. Vincent and the Wisdom of our Family.
- b. We have to deepen in *reflection and prayer*
- c. Secondly, we will share on the worries, initiatives and challenges for our concrete life, illuminating our action.

All these activities will take us to change our current way of conceiving, understanding and carrying out the assistance to the needy.

The International Vincentian family has chosen the Systemic Change as a central topic, at least during the next two years, starting since September 27, 2007. Last year they suggested us the motto: *"Love is inventive even to infinity"* as a central issue. In connexion with that motto, this year a text of the first letter of St. John: ***What we have heard and seen and touched with our hands – we announce to you"*** (1 John 1:1-4)

04. FIVE SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS

(to reflect and to share our viewpoints)

- PRESENTATION OF THE FIRST REFLECTION ON THE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

"THE GREAT EXAMPLE: CHATILLON-LES-DOBES"

To enter to the reality of the poor

- PRESENTATION OF THE SECOND REFLECTION ON THE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

"VINCENT AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE"

Let's walk against the flow. To be aware our role as Vincentian is to be prophets and to sow the Christian criteria.

- PRESENTATION OF THE THIRD REFLECTION ON THE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

"THE PERSON OF THE POOR AND TRANSFORMATION"

To consider the individual's role in his or her own transformation, in the search of solutions and in the search of a sense for living.

- PRESENTATION OF THE FOURTH REFLECTION ON THE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

"VINCENTIAN POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT"

To unpack what it means to address the systems that cause poverty

- PRESENTATION OF THE FIFTH REFLECTION ON THE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

"TO BE A PROPHETIC MEMBER OF THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY"

To understand that speaking the truth turns the world upside down.