



Viator Web, No. 58 – May 2013

A Word from the Superior General

For some years now, the General Chapter has concluded its work by proposing one or more priorities for the entire Viatorian Community. We know very well that the more that the priorities stray away from unity, the less they maintain the desired unity. This exercise, concerned less with innovating than with responding to a request for what is essential, challenges the Viatorian Community to give priority to Vocation Ministry and Social Justice.

As a first step, the chapter assembly committed Viatorians to a renewed vocation ministry that is adapted to current realities. Over and above a search for miracle strategies, we are called upon to change our outlook, which is the only one that can bring forth hope. The next issue of ***Viator Web*** will develop that theme.

The present issue will deal with the second priority of the 2012 General Chapter: promoting and becoming involved in social justice. Please allow me to remind you of the opening words:

In conjunction with the Gospel, our Constitution gives priority to our mission toward those who are deemed of least importance in today's world.

The General Chapter, in light of the situations of suffering and of marginalization that affect the most disadvantaged people of today, exhorts all Viatorians to undertake initiatives in favor of social justice.

The priority as formulated is less of an invitation to act in the name of crushing poverty than to be at the forefront of a charity that would forget its firm foundations in the love of God. That priority extends a hand to us and turns our hearts toward situations of poverty in order to better reveal the loving face of God. Thus are revealed the foundations of a justice that is imbued with a love that is unique.

*It is not that intelligence precedes love;
it is that love is enriched by intelligence
and that intelligence is filled with love.*

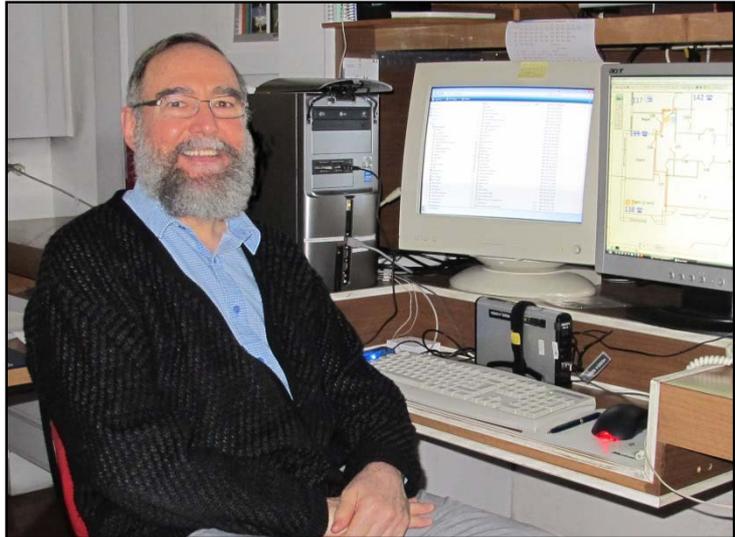
In his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI also recalled that *I cannot give what is mine to others, without first having given them what is theirs according to justice.* That is what makes the Chapter's request a pressing invitation to draw near to situations of poverty, since they are theological places, opportunities for God's mysterious love to be revealed. *The human city, concludes Benedict XVI, is not uniquely constituted by relationships of rights and of duties, but even more so – and primarily – by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy, and unity.*

Enriched by the witness of our brothers and sisters, may this issue of **Viator Web** help us to draw closer to those whom our texts describe as “the most abandoned,” since their hands, as they reach out to us, are much more than a sign of emptiness, but rather an invitation that leads us back to the discourse of the Nazarene on the mountain, the testament of our mission in the footsteps of Christ.

Thank you to our collaborators and may this second priority flourish wherever the convictions that enliven our being and our mission take root.

Brother Claude Gariépy leaves the General House

Eight years ago, Claude willingly accepted the invitation to leave the region of Joliette (Québec) and to come work at the General House. Beginning as a printer and binder, he soon was sharing many of his other talents with his confreres. To try to list all of his accomplishments would be arduous, if not perilous, since there are so many! Nevertheless, permit us to specify that our computer world would have functioned less successfully with his generous and always-ready assistance. Over and above all the services already rendered, it is an alert and pleasant confrere to whom the General House is saying *au revoir*. At home in Canada, Claude will continue assisting with certain General Direction projects.



Thank you, Claude, and rest assured that the high tones of your laughter, as well as the fraternal example of a confrere who always demonstrated humility, prayerfulness, availability, likeability, and precious companionship, will continue to live on in Rome.

New Council of the Delegation of France

Last April 17, a letter from the Superior General to the Viatorians of France (and of the Ivory Coast) presented the new council of the Viatorians of France. On the occasion of a celebration that will be held in Vourles this coming June 29, the five Viatorians composing the new council will officially begin their three-year mandates.

That letter also offered heart-felt gratitude to Father Pierre Demierre, who had assumed, with passion, adroitness, and his well-known pastoral sensitivity, responsibility for the Delegation of France since 1999, as well as to the religious and associates who supported him with great generosity over the course of his mandates.

The new council is composed of:

Léon Desbos, Superior of the Delegation
Maurice Espie, Assistant Superior
François Veyrié, Councilor
Christine Legrand, Councilor
Christian Pizot, Councilor

New Provincial Council in Chicago

Last April 23, the confreres of the Province of Chicago elected Father Thomas R. von Behren for a third mandate. Fathers Robert M. Egan and Daniel R. Hall were also elected as provincial councilors.

Last May 5, the Provincial Superior announced the composition of the new council.

Thomas R. von Behren, Provincial Superior
Lawrence D. Lentz, Assistant Provincial
Robert M. Egan, Provincial Councilor
Daniel R. Hall, Provincial Councilor
Rob L. Robertson, Provincial Councilor

We offer all of you our congratulations and the assurance of the support of your Viatorian brothers and sisters.

Mark R. Francis at C.T.U.

Congratulations to Father Mark R. Francis, former Superior General, who has been named president of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Having taught there for a number of years, Mark is very familiar with that institution of intercommunity formation.

The *Positio*

The document is entitled: “*Positio [position paper]* on the life, the virtues, and the reputation for holiness of Father Louis Querbes.” Containing some 650 pages, this volume is currently being printed. A certain number of copies of the document are needed for the historical experts who are called upon to provide a confirmation of validity and authenticity. At a later date, additional copies, which will include the verdict of the historical experts, will be printed with a view to further studies by theologians, cardinals, and bishops in response to the requirements of the study of the cause. It is only at that time that a larger number of copies will be printed up for our community needs.

The *Positio* is written in French. It represents many, many hours of research and studies carried out by Brother Robert Bonnafous. From all appearances, the document carries the signature of the renowned excellence of his work. We owe him – and we give him – the expression of our most sincere gratitude.

Instituted Ministry of Lector in Kyoto

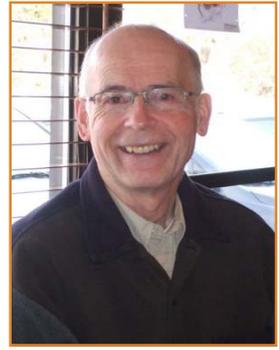
Last May 5, Serge W. Bationo, our Burkina Faso confrere who has been working in Japan, received the instituted ministry of lector. The ceremony, at which presided Bishop Mizobé, the bishop *emeritus* who resides in Kyoto, brought together a number of Viatorians and friends.

C.L.A.C.

On the occasion of the annual meeting of the Council of Latin America and the Caribbean, Father Víctor Cámara, the superior in Honduras, was re-elected for one year as the president of that organization. We can recall that this coordinating structure is composed of seven national Viatorian communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. This year, Belize welcomed five of the seven members of the CLAC, in addition to the Superior General and Brother Carlos Ernesto Flórez, the general councilor responsible for relations with the CLAC. Different topics were under study, especially the international meeting of young religious that will be held this summer in Haiti and the meeting of those responsible for vocation ministry that will be held next autumn in Colombia. CLAC meetings provide opportunities for discussing, coordinating, and expressing the great solidarity that exists among the Viatorians in those countries. Unfortunately, Haiti's representative and Peru's superior were not able to be present.



**Carlos Ernesto FLÓRES, Alain AMBEAULT, Moises MESH (Belize), Víctor CÁMARA (Honduras),
Eduardo MILLÁN (Chile), Kepa PLAZA (Bolivia), Edgar SUÁREZ (Colombia)**



Robert
Hénault,

Canadian
Viatorian

***“When we draw near to the poor
to accompany them and to serve them,
we are doing what Christ has taught us”***

Social Justice

What is social justice?

Social justice appears to me as being based upon the injustices that I witnessed in my career as a social worker for the Province of Québec for thirty-six years.

I always found it to be unjust that recipients would receive an amount smaller than what the law foresaw because their social worker did not give them all the information that they should have received. The Québec Social Assistance Law requires, in fact, that people ask to receive the benefits foreseen by the law. But, how can people ask for what they do not even know exists? I, for my part, always informed my clients. However, the memory that has remained with me is that those in charge scarcely appreciated my actions.

It always struck me to see that there were performance goals with respect to the priority, which consisted in uncovering fraud and trying to recover assistance that had already been given, while there were no such performance goals for the quality of services rendered to the clients. Those performance goals led to recovery efforts that, in my opinion, were oftentimes abusive and that the social workers justified by the right that the recipients had to challenge them.

Social justice, therefore, is that reality that we engender by carrying out activities such as those that I will indicate below.

Initiatives undertaken in Joliette on behalf of social justice

To help people defend themselves against decisions made by social assistance workers, there exists in Joliette the Lanaudière Dignity Action Organization.

There is also another organization in Joliette that is especially active on the level of the collective defense of people's rights. The Lanaudière Anti-Poverty Organization is composed of representatives of unions, the Local Community Services Center, the young people's center, the grass-roots education movement, the organization for the defense of social rights, the organization for the defense of renters' rights, and so forth. The organization initiates various actions in opposition to laws, proposed laws, or other measures that are harmful to the common people. It also participates in various public demonstrations.

In what way does this priority, which is already part of our mission, change the way that we look at our world?

It seems to me that, in Québec, those Viatorian men and women who are involved in ministry with the disadvantaged, if they are not already doing so, could:

- see to it that the disadvantaged are informed about all those things to which they are entitled according to the laws and the social assistance regulations that everyone can read on the Internet;
- accompany people when they meet their social assistance agent, whether it be to know what the agent requires for submitting a purchase order for glasses, for example, or for any other subject, since that presence can be very valuable for the person being accompanied.

With respect to "accompanying," I recall that the bishops of Latin America wrote: "*When we draw near to the poor to accompany them and to serve them, we are doing what Christ has taught us*" (Peter Henriot, *Option Justice*, Éditions Paulines, Montréal, 1994, page 30).

Ken and
Michelle Barrie,

US Viatorian
Associates

*“Justice does not invite us
to do things for the poor,
but rather to do things with
the poor, at the service of the community.”*



Social Justice

What is social justice?

As we talked about social justice and tried to define it, we felt, in simple terms, that it is about human dignity and fairness. We also felt that our faith in God, as well as our faithfulness to our baptismal and Viatorian Community promises, have called us to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ; to love, listen to, and provide aid and comfort to our brothers and sisters in need. As we have learned about and reflected on Father Querbes, we have felt that his heart was for God and for serving the least of God's people. He showed amazing courage, in very tumultuous times, proclaiming the Gospel and creating a climate of fairness and opportunity for those in need. His motives were pure: he did not seek power or position; but instead he sought to be a servant.

Initiatives undertaken in Pembroke on behalf of social justice

We have been greatly blessed by the Lord on our journey and we give great thanks to Him for leading us to a village called Hopkins Park and to its surrounding rural area called Pembroke Township. This area is in the eastern section of Kankakee County, thirty minutes from Kankakee; but, at first glance, it seems so far, far away. By all accounts and records from the government and other agencies, Pembroke Township is one of the poorest townships in our great nation – so poor, in fact, that Oprah Winfrey once visited it and did a television show about the plight of its poor! The population, about 1200, is primarily African-American. Conditions are very poor. In many households, struggles abound and families depend on their strong faith in their Lord. So many in this community have loved us, shared with us their stories of faith and struggle, and partnered with us to

help and encourage each other. The prayers and support of our parishioners, parents, and many benefactors have allowed our Young Church to enter this mission field and to be transformed by God's Love and by God's people.

In what way does this priority, which is already part of our mission, change the way that we look at our world?

We have missioned for the past fourteen years in this community of strong faith. We have seen renewal and have felt a spirit of hope. As we have helped people, we have seen a "pay it forward" attitude. It has been said that "justice calls us not to do things for the poor, but rather to do things with them, in service and in community." Over these past years, the Viatorians have been in the forefront of partnering with us to serve those of little or no importance. Pembroke fits the bill of Father Querbes' vision of serving the rural poor among us. Let us all continue to love and serve the Lord and His people.

Adored and Loved Be Jesus.



Txema
Martínez,

Viatorian
in
Bolivia

“I have heard the cry of my people”
Exodus 3: 7

Social Justice

We always try to define certain subjects or situations of our life and thus run the risk of closing them up in a definition – and nothing more. I would like to present our reality and our action with the help of three verbs: observe, accompany, encourage.

Observe

Above all, we must observe, that is, meet other people in their dignity as persons. *God created them, male and female, and made them in his image and likeness.* Observing the face of our brothers, our sisters, is to understand the cry of the lack of recognition of their dignity, their poverty, their marginalization, their exclusion, as the Latin American Bishops told us in their Aparecida Conference. In their faces, in their wordless gestures, we can discover their necessities. So many times we write about injustices without being able to attach faces! The image conjured up by the oftentimes used expression is that of Christ's commandment: *Love one another as I have loved you.*

Accompany

Then, we must accompany, that is, remain in contact with and walk with those who are at our side in our daily lives, living out what the Lord teaches us in the Parable of the Good Samaritan – that our brothers and sisters are not the “untouchables” that they were considered to be by the priest and the levite. The foundations of mercy should touch us in such a way that we will stoop down to meet our brothers and sisters.

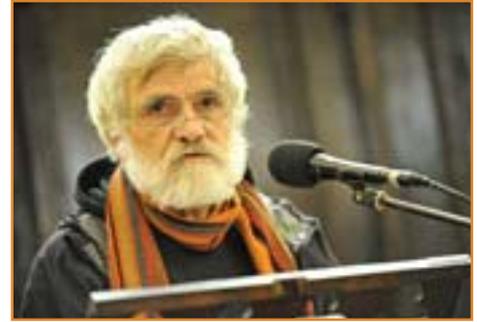
Adoring the Lord means that we are convinced that there is only one God, the God of our life, the God of our history. And that has consequences in our lives: that we eliminate so many of those idols, big or small, that all of us have and in which we take refuge and oftentimes search for our security. Those are idols that we oftentimes keep hidden – idols such as ambition, our career, a desire for success, a need to dominate others, a tendency to always be first, a belief that we are the unique masters of our lives.

Accompanying people encourages us to practice austerity and to get along with what is essential. May whatever we have be used to serve and not to possess. May we accumulate nothing except for what we will share in a spirit of service. All of that leads us to ask ourselves: How are we living? Do we own and offer our lives and our resources in service to others?

Encourage

In our day-to-day lived experience in Bolivia, our actions in Popoy and in Cochabamba are not directed towards begging, but rather towards raising the awareness level, of our students and of those who live with us, about the gifts that God has given to them. We do that in such a way as to encourage them to truly walk in Christ's footsteps and not to follow the model of an unjust society that causes suffering, misery, exclusion of others, but rather the model of those who serve one another after the example of Jesus. Providing encouragement invites us to denounce situations in which people are simple objects and not subjects in the hands of a vile economic system that causes hunger and suffering and disrespect for life, as we can see happening today in our cities of Santa Cruz, La Paz, and Cochabamba.

Viatorian brothers and sisters, let us not be satisfied with words, but let us listen to our conscience and liberate the expression of what lies within us.



François
Veyrié,

French
Viatorian

SOCIAL JUSTICE:

***a commitment of our heart,
our hands and our voice***

Social Justice

In speaking of social justice, I am going to use the triple expression of heart, hands, and voice, which represent unified human nature and which can be found in biblical culture. I am also going to make use of my involvement with the C.A.A.T. (Christians in Action for the Abolition of Torture) organization, in which I am responsible for leading a group and for coordinating activities in the Lyons region.

Heart

Simple words should touch my heart, that place where my convictions dwell. And I find those convictions nowhere else than in the Word of God: *each time that you did it for the least of my brothers and sisters; love and truth meet, justice and peace embrace; seek the Kingdom of God and his justice; love one another.*

Words that become concrete in contemporary minds can be: human dignity, solidarity, partnership, equality, brotherhood, sisterhood.

Hands

With respect to hands, those instruments used for taking and for undertaking, there are a number of classical ways of becoming involved: signing petitions, protesting, challenging institutions and governments, corresponding with victims, mobilizing public opinion, educating people about human rights, accompanying those seeking asylum, and so forth.

My voice, which gives expression to my thoughts and intentions, opens me up to the world and leads me to become aware of the fact that certain attacks against fundamental human rights can evolve into torture. That makes me more aware of the socio-economic conditions that are imposed upon certain populations, even to the extent of a degradation of the environment.

And that is precisely where and how my daily life is impacted. I am led to change my ways of being and of acting by choosing among little steps, which lay the groundwork for moving forward towards the construction of a better world.



April 11, 2013: Demonstration in front of the Mexican Consulate in Lyons against "ARRAIGO" (dispositions of the Mexican Government permitting the use of torture during police custody).



Fernando
Sanz,

Spanish
Viatorian

***“We are invited to never
distance ourselves from the poor!”***

Social Justice

In simple words, what does social justice mean?

In the Solidarity and Social Justice Commission of the Province of Spain, we understand that social justice, in its Gospel perspective, is not simply distributive justice nor even less the action of giving each person what belongs to him or her. That is what is established by the national laws and agreements of almost all nations in order to keep today's world in balance. But the Gospel demands much more of Jesus' disciples when it comes to questions of justice.

***What initiatives are being undertaken
where we live and where we work,
on behalf of social justice?***

If that question were addressed to our sisters and brothers, the Viatorian associates and religious, there could be drawn up a long list of actions, all of which would be in relationship with freely-given and altruistic service.

Hours offered for retreats in the intervention efforts of Caritas and of local non-governmental organizations, including management and leadership of projects of solidarity with the Third World as it faces the real poverty brought about by the current economic crisis. Obviously, the list would include, in the domain of cooperation and development, the BASQUE SERVICE ORGANIZATION, which, in years of prosperity, obtained a great deal of financial assistance from public organizations, especially in the Basque part of Spain, where the headquarters of the organization dedicated to assisting our

foundations is located. The list would also contain the involvement of several religious who work in prison ministry, in welcome centers, in re-integration programs for women who formerly were prostitutes. The directors of our schools would emphasize their support for low-income families and scholarships for the children of our families and for students with fewer resources. In all of our schools, that kind of department has been set up to deal with such concerns. And Viatorian parishes could not remain silent about their parochial Caritas service, in addition to food pantries and second-hand clothing stores. Specific services are offered to immigrants.

Considering the new situation of poverty that we encounter every day and the request of the General Chapter, the Province of Spain established a special Commission on Solidarity and Social Justice, the mission of which is to support the Provincial Council in offering a positive, generous, and effective response to that request. The commission has already produced a working document (2013 Basic Document), which, with the support of the Provincial Council of the Viatorian Community, will invite local communities to prioritize that solidarity where they live and work and to include it in their community and personal projects for the coming year. Additionally, the commission has collected – and will offer – a summary of commitments and initiatives that, in the same regard, are abundant among us on both the personal and community levels, as well as in our schools and parishes. We believe that they can inspire all of us and give us renewed energy. The Province is also working toward the official creation of a Viatorian Fund that, with our resources and those coming from friends, would make it possible to support future social projects in places where Viatorians live and work.

We live very comfortable lives. We are not rich, but we do not lack anything. The economic model that underlies the collective productivity of the religious life is efficacious, but perhaps not sufficiently Gospel-based if it pretends, first and foremost, to assure the quality of life of its members for today and for tomorrow.

***In what way does this General Chapter priority,
which is already part of our mission,
change the way that we look at our world?***

Over the course of the last twenty years, I have attempted to reconcile my leadership work in a parish located in the midst of great poverty; I have also experienced life as a teacher and the responsibilities that such a life implies; I have worked on developing social assistance programs for persons excluded from society, especially women. I wish to state clearly that I am not a saint nor a person with greater abilities than others. I did not fully succeed in freeing myself from all the encumbrances of this consumer society. But living so close to poverty and coming into daily contact with people who have been maltreated by life opens one's spirit first of all and then one's heart. Living the religious life and following after Jesus then take on a new dimension. We are invited to never distance ourselves from the poor!

This text was written in collaboration with other members of the
Commission on Solidarity and Social Justice of Spain.