

# SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2003.

### AN ADDRESS BY THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT – BRO. ANTHONY WONG DOO

Your Grace, Most Rev. Edward Gilbert, Archbishop of Port of Spain, Ms. Leela Ramdeen, Episcopal Delegate for Social Justice, Brothers and Sisters of Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Peace be with you!

*“If your Faith is not enduring, you will not endure.”*  
*Isaiah 7:9*

This year I will open with the bold statement that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Trinidad and Tobago is going through a *Crisis of Faith*. In our meeting of Presidents in November, 2002, we fervently declared that the year 2003 will be **Recruitment Year** with special emphasis on youths. In my opinion we could not have chosen a more propitious year, for two reasons:

1. In January, 2003, we experienced a Synod which challenged us as a community of faith to be living stones in the Church.
2. In July, 2003, Trinidad and Tobago hosted the Antilles Episcopal Conference, **Caribbean Youth Assembly**.

The call to Mission was pervasive. Yet we as a Society have not delivered. Why? Let us remember that,

*“Faith without actions is dead.”*  
*James 2:26*

A new dynamic spirit is urgently needed in the Society, for many Conferences are experiencing an unhealthy dryness and their performances have become routine. There is simply little or no zeal. For our Society of St. Vincent de Paul to experience physical growth it must, as a pre-requisite, attain spiritual growth.

The good news is that as Church, we have a sanctuary in our rich history. Let me remind you Brothers and Sisters that our founder – Blessed Frederic Ozanam – once also experienced a crisis of faith.

Kneeling before the Tabernacle in the Church of St. Bonaventure, Lyons, Blessed Frederick experienced a sense of his own inadequacy and need, and in humble prayer he pledged, in return for the gift of impregnable faith, to consecrate his life to God’s service. Blessed Frederick thus received the Grace, which impelled him to become a servant of the poor. It is

important to underscore where Blessed Frederick went for his inspiration at the point of his dryness and what he pledged. As a Eucharistic Church, why have we not fired? Indeed in our opening prayers, we affirm that the Eucharis is the source of our Apostolate, so if we keep the faith, we too will truly become committed servants of the poor.

At this juncture, let me draw your attention Brothers and Sisters, to an article from our Bishop His Grace – Edward Gilbert in the Catholic News, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2003 headlined “**Making Room for Youth**” sub heads “Commitment” an “Mission”.

In my opinion, this article represents a **Recipe for Recruitment** period. Employing the ‘think four formula’:

1. Faith/Knowledge
2. Formation
3. Commitment – which His Grace beautifully defines as the “spiritual glue”
4. Mission

His Grace Archbishop Edward Gilbert counsels that “Commitment to the Lord does not come out of a vacuum.”

As a Society we will apply the contents not only for our own advantage but I propose, through our Regional Co-ordinator for the Caribbean, to request that this article be placed on the Agenda for study and implementation at our next meeting of National Presidents in Grenada 2004.

For like commitment, **growth will not come out of a vacuum.**

*Thank You*