

# Life on Mission





## INTRODUCTION

This is a guiding document of Misevi Spain, where general criteria are established on the missionary action of Misevi missionaries. By Misevi missionaries we mean all Full Members of the Association (hereinafter '*misevis*').

The main goals of this document are:

- Being a guide to help the *misevis* clarify how they want to position themselves before reality, from the Vincentian missionary laity parameters, establishing the bases of our doing and being on a daily basis, within our environments, commitments, jobs, families
- Marking the guiding lines for our personal and associative life and making them known to those who wish to know what exactly Vincentian Lay Missionaries (Misevi) is.
- Formalizing the guiding principles of the *misevis* mission. These criteria have been forged from experience and joint reflection and are now included in this document.

The document has been approved by the General Assembly of Misevi members in Salamanca on July 17, 2017.



## MISEVI MISSIONARIES

1. Misevi missionaries ("the *misevis*") are all Full Members of the association.
2. The *misevis* are "*laity, men and women, baptized in the Catholic Church, who wish to share St. Vincent de Paul's -founder of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity- charisma and spirituality, adapting them to their own lifestyle*"<sup>1</sup>. The *misevis* understand that the mission is born from the free gift of vocation.
3. The *misevis* "*live and act taking the option for the poor as their reference; they aim their work and actions towards people's human and spiritual promotion, the fight against poverty and active commitment to the contexts of social exclusion that take place in the countries and environments where the Association is present*"<sup>2</sup>.
4. As lay people, the *misevis* "*are called, in particular, to make the Church present and operative in the places and conditions where the Church cannot be the salt of the earth unless it is through and by them*"<sup>3</sup> and "*their first and immediate task is not the institution and the development of the ecclesial community - which is the specific function of the Pastors - but putting into practice all the Christian and evangelical possibilities which are hidden, but at the same time, already present and active in the things of the world. The proper field of his evangelizing activity is the vast and complex world of politics, social affairs, economy, and also culture, sciences and arts, international life, mass media communication, as well as other realities opened to evangelization...*"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statutes of Misevi Spain 2.2.1

<sup>2</sup> Statutes of Misevi Spain 2.2.2

<sup>3</sup> Lumen Gentium, 33. Paul VI. Vatican Council II. 1964

<sup>4</sup> Evangelii Nuntiandi, 70. Paul VI. Vatican Council II. 1975

5. *Misevis*'s spirituality is based on the following principles:
- A spirituality of "incarnation" and "insertion". Commitment cannot be given without being incarnated in the world of people in vulnerable situations, the service, the solidarity, the commitment to the world of the most vulnerable cannot be given if there is no "lowering", closeness, being with the most vulnerable. Our Vincentian lay being urges us to insert ourselves in social structures which seek social justice, denounce injustices and create inclusion and systemic change networks. Otherwise, the commitment will become bureaucracy or demagoguery. *"To save us, God came to us, came to live with us and among us; he deprived himself, taking the condition of a servant, making himself like men and appearing in his bearing like a man..."* (Phil 2: 6-7). "Our charity must approach us to them in all possible ways, but especially in coexistence, placing ourselves among them in order to analyze situations with realism, share their problems and seek solutions together, receive their friendship and also the special friendship of the Lord with whom they serve their poor".<sup>5</sup>
  - A spirituality of the "Samaritan" that leads us to be reborn to solidarity before marginalization, injustice, abandonment, misery, social exclusion... It leads us to commit ourselves in solidarity beyond media feelings and motivates us to create greater inclusive awareness in the society with people who are beyond the margins and the borders established by society itself. This "Samaritan" dimension is in communion with the Principle-Mercy, where the Vincentian maxim proposes to pass from *affective* love to *effective* love between brothers.
  - A spirituality of the "*Paschal Mystery*" that supposes renunciation of the "I" in favour of the "other". And that is Easter, the exaltation of the human being, to ascend in dignity, to resuscitate life, truth, justice, freedom; to move from non-life to Life.
  - A "Marian", committed spirituality that leads our steps to reveal the beloved soul of God, because Mary personifies the preferential option of God for the small, the helpless; the triumph of God is the weak.
6. We the *misevis* are missionaries "*inter gentes*" (between different contexts and cultures) and our missionary service can be expressed in five dimensions: "*ad gentes*" (towards people who do not yet know Christ), "*ad pauperes*" (towards the poorest), "*ad extra*" (outward, abroad), "*ad intra*" (towards one's social and ecclesial reality) and "*ad vitam*" (for all life).
7. The missionary service of each *Misevi* missionary is complemented with a commitment of service towards the association by showing themselves available and forming a proactive part of its functioning bodies: Assemblies, Coordinating Team, Work Commissions by Area and other new ones yet to be defined, according to their capabilities, the designations of the Assembly and the demanded needs.

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<sup>5</sup> "The Church and the poor", Document of the Episcopal Commission of Social Pastoral of the Spanish Episcopal Conference, nº 134



## ONE PRIORITY: THE SHARED MISSION

8. The rediscovery of the ecclesiology of communion as it was developed in the time after Vatican II is on the basis of the shared mission. The Church is not primarily a set of groups of Christians that are clearly delimited and classified into different states of life, as has happened for many centuries. First of all, the Church is a community. The elements that unite us all Christians are much more determining than those that differentiate us. We are united by the fact that all Christians participate in the unique mission of the Church, which consists in the proclamation of the Gospel, which each one carries out according to his or her particular vocation. This participation of all the baptized in the unique mission of the Church can be called "*shared mission*", especially when the charisma is the same.
9. Therefore, we understand the ***Shared Mission*** as a movement of ecclesial dynamics which carries within itself a change and a deep desire to follow paths of transformation to continue the mission of Jesus Christ together; which can crystallize in the relationship of the consecrated with the laity, between laity and among consecrated people; which is given in the participation of faith and charismatic life; which can occur between ecclesial families of different charismas and even, in some areas, with other spiritualities or people, institutions, civil, political and social associations... etc. which work to make and get a more fair society and world.
10. We believe that sharing mission is one of the evangelical fruits of our times and living it like this makes us feel protagonists in the history of the Church, contributing our bit to this renewing movement. We are strongly convinced that the Vincentian charisma can be lived with the same authenticity by the consecrated people as well as by the laity; it is a gift granted to the Church.
11. The mission has always been the *spearhead* of the Church. In this sense the new times call us to collaboration and co-responsibility. The shared mission is a clear visualization of that love that makes us unmistakably Christians.
12. Mission and communion are inseparable, as co-responsibility and complementarity are. Our rich Vincentian charisma in living the shared mission can better meet the expectations that God has for his kingdom. We can help each other complementing our weaknesses being co-responsible and providing the best of ourselves and our branches. In this way, we approach *the best serve*, to love these people, our lords and masters. As Vincentian missionaries, we are all called (Fathers, Sisters and laity) to put all our capacities in equality, freedom and gratuity at the service of the mission. At the same time, we are aware that full *Shared Mission* is a utopia, but as Galeano said, "*When I walk two steps, the utopia moves away two others. Utopia is good for walking*".
13. Misevi concretizes its conviction for the *Shared Mission* from the configuration of its own associative structure, involving the CM<sup>6</sup> and the HHC<sup>7</sup> Company as advisors of the association, with a spiritual, charismatic and collaborative link. As reflected in our statutes, "*Misevi promotes contact and collaboration with the Vincentian Family, especially at a local level, both at the point of origin of missionary sending and in missionary service places, within the possibilities of every concrete situation*".

<sup>6</sup> CM: Congregation of the Mission

<sup>7</sup> HHC: Spanish acronym for *Daughters of Charity*



### A MISSIONARY BEING: DIFFERENT WAYS OF BEING ON MISSION

14. The Misevis, as Vincentians and lay missionaries, live our missionary being from different styles of life on mission. Our being lay offers us different ways of being on mission, always looking for the best and most effective way of building the Kingdom of God together with people in a situation of vulnerability.
15. One option is life in a lay, missionary and Vincentian community. Another option can be the missionary life from the family, lived with a family option which can be shared with a community or not. Another option is the life of the Vincentian missionary lay person who chooses to live the mission individually, having the ecclesial community as a community belonging. So the mission models could be listed as:
  - The missionary community
  - The missionary family
  - The missionary
16. Vincentian creativity, missionary flexibility and our secular identity allow us to take different options to live on the mission at different moments of life. The personal circumstances, the pastoral proposals, the challenges of reality and the criterion of the common good are decisive when choosing temporarily or permanently any of the different ways of living our missionary option together with the people in a situation of vulnerability.



### A MISSION FRAMED IN TIME

17. There are many changing elements in our lay and missionary reality (couples, children, family, work ...). That is the reason why we opted for timing the missionary sending, although the sum of the periods adds a lifetime. In fact, the option for the mission is vital among the missionaries.
18. Therefore, it seems more appropriate in this context to insert oneself temporarily in projects or pastoral projects and works led by religious institutions, which are more stable in time (parishes, congregations ...).



### OUR WAY OF MAKING PASTORAL

19. Misevi is not only called to give specific care or political answers. Our pastoral contribution, based on the foundations of the Social Doctrine of the Church, leads us as lay Vincentian missionaries to build the ideological map with which to argue our pastoral, our action, with which to give a reason for the meaning and purpose of it, using a language and ethics aimed at *dialogue with the other* and the transformation of social systems and cultural paradigms from the dynamics of the **systemic change**.
20. Our pastoral work is based on the **Vincentian theology of the Mission**, whose convictions encouraged Vincent de Paul's missionary impulse, and which should be the same ones for the Misevi missionaries:
  - Christ, missionary of the Father.<sup>8</sup>
  - The Church, following on the Jesus Christ's Mission.<sup>9, 10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> SVP XI 33-, SVP, IX, 42, (SVP, XI, 555 586, 588, 589, 590, 697).

<sup>9</sup> A. Dodin, Lessons on Vincentianism, Published by Ceme, Salamanca, 1978, pp. 66-67.

<sup>10</sup> P. Bossuet, sermon on "The Eminent Dignity of the Poor". Published by Metz, 1659. From AA.VV., L'Eglise, pp. 7-8.

- The vulnerable person, the protagonist of the Mission.
21. The implementation of the Vincentian theology of the Mission must go through three moments, where the dynamic of the systemic change is the fundamental axis of the pastoral process, and the continuous evaluation with all the agents enriches each one of the elements:
- *Seeing*: intelligence.
  - *Judging*: wisdom.
  - *Acting*: commitment.

### **Seeing**

22. The analysis of reality constitutes the beginning of all missionary action by the Misioneros. This analysis must start from a local diagnosis of the political, economic, religious, cultural, community aspects... Therefore, this look must be a vital attitude, which requires the incarnation in the reality to be transformed and must be accompanied by a process of enculturation. In the missionary dynamic, *returning after seeing* is a permanent exercise that illuminates our experience of approaching the reality of the other, which becomes ours and is lived from and within gratuitousness.
23. The permanent exercise of SEEING leads us to **take over reality**, that is, the profound experience of understanding the other and its reality, the obligation<sup>11</sup> deeper than that one of duty, which arises when we discover that we are linked to each other and that is the reason why our life cannot be good without sharing tenderness, consolation and meaning with them.

### **Judging**

24. Judging from the Word of God the Social Doctrine of the Church, the Vincentian Theology of the Mission and this document '**Life on Mission**', which is the framework that illuminates where we should support our pastoral action. Judging from wisdom, which is nothing other than experience, learning, living, empathy and "co-reason / co-heart"<sup>12</sup>.

### **Acting**

25. The Good Samaritan story helps us to concretize the previous theory, because it not only tells us what to do about the poor, our neighbour, but also tells us how to do it.<sup>13</sup>
26. Our action, our commitment, is aimed at:
- *Shoulder reality* with compassion, with closeness, to bandage wounds, lowering ourselves to be part of that personal and structural reality.
  - *Handle reality* by looking for different, alternative, creative ways... Because another way of life is possible, other information is possible, another way of consumption is possible, another exchange of culture and knowledge is possible, another way of spirituality is possible, another policy is possible, another way of interacting is possible...<sup>14</sup>
27. From a believing dimension that surpasses any socio-political dimension and where the crucified people give us new eyes to see, new hands to work, backs

<sup>11</sup> Ob-: Latin prefix meaning 'because of, by virtue of, by force of'. Ligation: from the late Latin ligatio -ōnis. 1. f. Action and effect of linking (link or joint).

<sup>12</sup> Book by José María Toro 'Educar con co-razón'. Translator's note: the title of the book is a Spanish word game, untranslatable into English. It derives from de words "corazón" (heart), "razón" (reason) and the prefix "co-", thus becoming 'co-razón', meaning a balanced mixture of heart and reason.

<sup>13</sup> Take charge, charge and take care of reality. Samaritan Road Map for another Possible World. José Laguna.

<sup>14</sup> Yayo HERRERO, 'Objections to Development: a Critical Look at the Concept of Progress'. Published by 'Revista Pueblos' (no. 36), March 2009. <http://www.revistapueblos.org/spip.php?article1577>.



to endure and hope to *let ourselves be burdened* by the reality of the crucified of history.<sup>15</sup>

### **Misevi's pastoral option**

28. MISEVI opts for this itinerary to develop its pastoral. Each place, each person, each time, each circumstance, each culture ... will indicate the type of response that we as laity, missionaries and Vincentians are called to give.



### **A DOCUMENTARY BASE FOR THE MISSION**

29. The missionary presence of Misevi must be framed by a series of documents whose purpose is to establish the criteria explained in the previous points, the goals and methodologies of the missionary actions, as well as the responsibilities assumed by each one of the missionary agents.
30. The documentation generates security and responsibility and can always be the source to solve different situations. In addition, our experience tells us that the process of creating such documentation generates enriching debates which help clarify positions and intentions.
31. The documents may be of a different nature, some of them being essential. Namely:
- **Institutional agreements.** Agreements which Misevi makes with the institution with which it has decided to share the mission. These documents are formalized before the missionary sending takes place and establish the motivations and responsibilities of each of the parties, as well as the mechanisms that will articulate the shared mission and the joint pastoral projects.
  - **Individual agreements.** Agreements that will be formalized between the missionary sent and Misevi. It establishes the rights of the missionary and the duties of each of the parties, as well as the timing of the missionary sending.
  - **Missionary projects.** This type of document is prepared by the missionaries, according to the principles of this document and ratified by the Misevi Spain Coordinating Team. It establishes the guiding principles of the mission, from different prisms: lay and Vincentian, bearing in mind the pastoral priorities, the relationships with other ecclesial institutions, as well as the available means to carry it out.
  - **Operating regulations.** This type of document establishes among other things: the specific roles that are established within the organization chart of the missionaries and / or the community, the ways of relationship and communication with the Coordinating Team, the decision-making joint system, the holiday periods and the organization of economic aspects.
  - **Express request to be a Full Member.**
  - **Agreement of acceptance** by the Coordinating Team where the Full Membership condition is recognized and where the rights and obligations which this entails are collected.

<sup>15</sup> Jon SOBRINO, 'The Crucified People and the Civilization of Poverty'. From: 'There Is No salvation Outside of the Poor. Small Utopian-prophetic Essays'. Published by Trotta, Madrid 2007, p.26.

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