

Alicia Duhne, AIC International President
and all the AIC volunteers

Rome, 23rd August 2017

To all the AIC volunteers,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be with us
always!

Four hundred years ago today (23rd August 1617), the first Confraternity of Charity was born in Châtillon, France, thanks to the inspiration given by the Spirit of God to Vincent de Paul, parson of a parish close to Lyon. The seed was sown during a Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, in which the great Saint asked his parishioners to rescue a family in need, and this seed has been passed on from generation to generation. How could we forget this lovely story that we have reflected on so many times in the Association and the impulse to make a commitment in our lives... **Organise charity!** This was Vincent de Paul's first thought and dream. There have already been many generations before us who have not forgotten this beautiful moment of pilgrimage, of leaving one's own comfort zone to help those most in need. God bless you and your families, dear AIC volunteers, for being part of this great movement that Vincent de Paul started with just a few women, but which is renewed every day in the life of AIC volunteers. This call to charity has not ended, it lives on in the hearts of so many women, who together do so much good for others, *"It is not enough to love God if my neighbour does not love him"* (SV).



I share the joy of being a member of the Congregation of the Mission and AIC International Spiritual Advisor, in this fourth century of the charism, which began with committed lay women. I pray as a priest for the intentions of all the volunteers, thanking God for his generosity in reaching so many places, and with full confidence in the words of the Gospel, *"Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward"* (Mark 9:41). Our reward will be in Eternal Life and in the joy of having done so much good on earth, just like so many other men and women whose hearts were full of God. *"Our vocation is to go and enflame the heart of men, to do what the Son of God did, He who brought fire into the world to set it alight with His love. What else can we wish for, than for it to burn and consume all things?"* (SV).

May my blessing and prayer reach every single volunteer on this wonderful day of action of grace to God for starting the Confraternities of Charity.

Kindest regards in Saint Vincent,

F. Alvaro Mauricio FERNÁNDEZ, CM
AIC International Spiritual Advisor