

Tempo Forte Circular

7-12 December 2015

“Let us allow ourselves to be renewed by the missionary vitality of our Vincentian vocation.”

(Motto of the 2016 General Assembly)

Dear Confreres,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

We began our *Tempo Forte* with an ongoing formation session, on Sunday, 6 December, together with our Vincentian priest-students here in Rome and the Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly. We had 14 priest-students present, in addition to the members of the General Curia. The theme was the overall thrust for the 2016 General Assembly, with the main focus being the new evangelization in light of our 400th anniversary of Charism.

The Preparatory Commission was with us the entire week, working hard at getting things in order for the General Assembly. We also had the Working Group on Interreligious Dialog present. Its members gave a summary of their meeting to all of us on the last day of our meeting, 12 December. The other activities are as follows:

A. Updates on activities in the Congregation of the Mission

1. Remote Preparation for the New Visitors' Meeting 10-20 January 2016, here in Rome. We worked out the definitive program and looked at the list of participants. We will be expecting a fairly large group of new Visitors for this period, some 17 or so.

2. Continuing preparation for our 2016 General Assembly. The Preparatory Commission made a summary of all the material that had been sent in by a good number of the provinces. Nonetheless, unfortunately, as usual, there was also a large number of provinces, which did not send in any material. This makes it difficult not only for the remote preparation for the General Assembly, but also for the unfolding of the General Assembly itself. Hopefully we will be better prepared as the date approaches. We recommended that there be just one major theme for the General Assembly; that is, the Vincentian charism and new evangelization and that that theme be developed under other subdivisions, such as solidarity, collaboration, multiculturalism, universal-

ity, and missionary vitality. Our desire is that the atmosphere of the General Assembly be one of deep reflection and sharing, so that the outcome will be concrete lines of action for the different parts of the world where the Congregation is located. Other technical matters were considered, including an update on the costs presented by the Treasurer General and how to distribute the payment of the various expenses.

3. Reconfiguration. We discussed the continuing advancement of the process of reconfiguration between the Province of New England and the Eastern Province of the United States, as well as an update on the reconfiguration being considered in CLAPVI-South, particularly between Chile and Argentina.

B. Different Themes

1. We studied an invitation received from the **Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life**. We have asked different members of the General Curia, as well as our priest-students here in Rome and confreres from Italy, to participate in the event that will be held in February for young religious members of congregations of Consecrated Life.

2. We had a session with Fathers Harrie Jaspers and Leo Moues from the **House of Panningen**, the new house which forms part of the General Curia. Father Harrie is the superior. He and Leo gave us an update on the adjustment that is happening in the once Province of Holland and now the Mission House of Panningen under the General Curia. They are undergoing a major restructuring of the house in order to fulfill all civil requirements and state laws. The house will be open to the elderly and infirm confreres, as well as Daughters of Charity and other persons from religious life, who need housing and particular care. The House of Panningen also has a very nice program to help continue the Vincentian charism, called a Center of Vincentian Spirituality, in our former house of Nijmegen. It is being staffed by a confrere and also the former Superior General of the Brothers of Our Lady, Mother of Mercy, Brother Bruder, as a project of inter-Congregational collaboration in the Vincentian Family.

C. The General Curia

1. Personnel. We are continuing to search for an Assistant Treasurer General to work together with Father Joseph Geders.

2. From the **Director of the Office of Communications**, we received and studied a list of criteria for the presentation of information in our various means of communication for the Congregation. We are doing a study of how to reduce the costs of *Vincentiana's* publication, lessening the financial burden on the provinces.

3. We discussed **SIEV** and the ongoing development of a Masters in Vincentian Studies online, working with the possible collaboration of DePaul University. The project's next step is to work out the details with the experts at DePaul University regarding online studies.

4. We received a report from the **Director of the Vincentian Solidarity Office (VSO)**. It is notable that the VSO continues to be a great source of financial backing for a number of projects in the developing provinces. We have had to continue the suspension of the micro projects because of a lack of donations.

5. **United Nations Representative.** We received a full report from the new representative to the United Nations, Father Guillermo Campuzano. He indicated that he will attempt to move our status at the UN to a more fully participative level called ECOSOC. Father Campuzano will be contacting the Visitors of various provinces to find out more information regarding their legal status within their country. This information will help him receive this standing within the United Nations, giving him the possibility of having greater input in the decision-making processes.

6. We received a report from the entire team of the **Working Group on Interreligious Dialog**, led by Father Claudio Santangelo from Rome, along with Fathers Charles Pan from Taiwan, Fransiscus Xaverius Eko Armada from Indonesia, Mathew Nayak from North India, and Narcisse Djerambete from the future Vice-Province of Cameroon, working as a missionary in Tunis and also serving as Secretary for COVIAM. They presented their project for the year, focusing on publications for raising the awareness of confreres and members of the Vincentian Family regarding matters of interreligious dialog. They have a website (www.vindialogue.org), which will be updated regularly. They hope to be able to continue projects of collaboration, as well as making presentations to various groups of the Vincentian Family, especially in light of the delicate and volatile world situation in which we live, regarding what our attitudes should be as Christians toward those of other religious faiths, especially, at this time, Muslims. They have other ideas, besides publications, such as participating in workshops to promote greater understanding of interreligious dialog, etc. The members of the Working Group are very enthusiastic in what they are doing and we have great hopes for having our consciences raised further in terms of how we should promote, and live more fully, interreligious dialog.

7. We received an updated report from Father Claudio Santangelo on the investigation that he is undertaking regarding a **Project for the Expansion of the Congregation into Muslim Countries**. He spoke about his visit with the Superior General to Morocco and his upcoming

visit to Mauritania. He also already visited the country of Tunisia in northern Africa.

8. The Superior General gave an update on the most recent meeting of the **Union of Superiors General**, which focused on the participation of members of the Union of Superiors General and others in the most recent Synod on the Family. In that same line, Father Shijo represented the Superior General at a **General Assembly of Solidarity with Southern Sudan**, at which a strategic plan for 2016-2020 was presented with the hope of carrying out a transition process with the local Church and in collaboration with local Congregations present in South Sudan.

9. We received a report from our main English translator, Father Charles Plock, indicating the different ways he has supported not only the Congregation, but the Vincentian Family in his **ministry of translation**. To say the least, he and other persons have a great spirit of collaboration with the Congregation in terms of translation, which has saved the Congregation a great deal of money and we are grateful for their contributions. Among the other of our most faithful translators are Madame Raymonde Dubois, Father Antoine Douaihy, and Father Félix Álvarez.

D. Economic questions

We received a report from the Treasurer General regarding the expenses incurred at the meeting of the Superiors of our International Missions and Provincial Missions. We also previewed the budget for 2016, as well as those for the Vincentian Solidarity Office and the Website for 2016.

E. International Missions

1. We studied a report that we received from our three confreres in **Cochabamba, Bolivia**. There is a great possibility that we might be reducing that community from three missionaries to two missionaries.

2. We received a report and plan from the mission team in **Papua New Guinea**. At the present time there are seven confreres and they are expecting three more, who are preparing to arrive. The newly arrived missionaries are Joel Bernardo Yco from the Province of the Philippines, working in a cultural center; and Marcin Wróbel from Poland, who will be doing an orientation process. We also received a request for a director for a spiritual-year program from the Seminary of Saint Fidelis in Papua New Guinea. We were unable to respond positively to the rector's petition, but I ask here for anyone who may be interested in accompanying a group of seminarians who are in their

spiritual year, something that would be similar to our Internal Seminary, that is run in this particular diocese of Papua New Guinea.

3. We began by thanking all those involved, particularly the Visitor of Oceania, for the help and support they attempted to give us during the sickness that led to the death of our young rector and missionary of five years in the **Solomon Islands**, Raúl Castro. We began the process of consulting for a new superior for this international mission. The former superior, Father Jose Manjaly, left the mission as of 10 December, along with Father Varghese Ayyampilly, who also returned to his province of origin. We are grateful for their generous service and missionary spirit. We are also requesting from the community names for a possible candidate for rector that we can submit to the bishops responsible for Holy Name of Mary Seminary.

4. We reviewed an email we received from the mission superior in **Chad**, announcing the arrival of a new confrere, Father Sylvain Disuka from the Province of Congo. He will be working in the seminary of the diocese where our mission in Chad is established.

5. We received a report from the superior of our mission in **Punta Arenas, Chile**. They hope to secure a fourth missionary so that they can more adequately live and experience community, while responding well to the different pastoral responsibilities they have been given.

6. We studied a letter we received from the Archbishop of Anchorage, **Alaska**, in which he expressed his happiness with the work that the Vincentian team has undertaken thus far in this mission. It is predominantly dedicated to the Hispanics dispersed throughout the Archdiocese of Anchorage and even beyond, if requests come from other bishops. We also studied an evaluation that was done by the three present members of the mission, Deacon Arnold, Father Pedro, and Father Andrew Bellisario, the superior.

7. Missions and Candidates. We received offers from 12 candidates for our international missions. We hope to be able to place six of them immediately for our different missions.

8. Mission Requests. We received requests from three different places: the Diocese of Uvira in the Congo, the Apostolic Vicariate of Beni in Bolivia, and the Diocese of Alotau-Sideia in Papua New Guinea. Unable to respond directly to the requests of these bishops, we are asking the various conferences of Visitors and/or Provinces to study well the requests and, if possible, to try to respond to them. Each of the requests made are very suitable as Vincentian places, where much missionary presence is needed.

F. The Vincentian Family

1. We received a report from the **Coordinator of the Systemic Change Commission**, Father Giuseppe Turati. He presented their Strategic Plan for 2015-2018. Their need is to strengthen the presence of the systemic change process, particularly in Africa.

2. We also received a report about the collaboration that is happening among the different branches of the Vincentian Family that are present at the **United Nations**. They have a project that will be considered by the Vincentian Family Executive Committee when it meets in January 2016.

G. The Conferences of Visitors

1. The Asian-Pacific Visitors' Conference (**APVC**) informed us that there will be an ongoing formation meeting in May for confreres under five years of ordination. This will take place in the Province of South India.

2. From **CLAPVI**, we read a report regarding the four provinces of CLAPVI-South, evaluating the itinerant missionaries and their efforts over the past few years that this special project has been underway. It will now be temporarily suspended as they look for new ways of collaboration. Also, it was announced that there will be a program for formators of CLAPVI. That will be held in Bogotá. The Superior General, with the assistance of Father Eli Chaves, has written a letter to all the Visitors of Latin America, soliciting their participation in this most important event of formation of formators.

3. The President of **COVIAM**, Father Getahun Fanta, has terminated his mandate as Visitor and, therefore, as President. His responsibilities, at least temporarily, will be given to the Vice-Coordinator, who is the Visitor of Madagascar.

4. The National Conference of Visitors (**NCV**) of the United States has temporarily suspended its joint project of theology, as well as the Interprovincial Formation Committee. It is preparing for celebrations marking the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the Vincentians in the United States. The activities will take place around the time of the General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission and at other significant moments. The General Council discussed the future of the NCV, considering the fact that it might be reduced from three provinces to two. We will be soliciting, once again, from the current Visitors, possible solutions regarding mergers with other Conferences of Visitors.

H. Updating of our calendars

We looked at the calendars of each of the Assistants General and the Superior General, along that of the next canonical visitations, of which only three remain in three different parts of the world. We also reviewed our upcoming General Council meetings, as well as *Tempo Forte*. The calendar for the Superior General for the next three months is as follows. For the rest of December, Father Gregory will be in Venezuela from 16-22. After Christmas, he will be in Belgium, visiting the confreres and the Daughters of Charity. He will then have a brief visit to Paris to ring in the New Year with the confreres and, particularly, the Daughters of Charity. Following that is the International Council Meeting of Vincentian Marian Youth in Madrid, from 6-10 January. The New Visitors' Meeting in Rome is from 10-20 January. There is a Vincentian Family Executive Committee meeting on 22 January, followed by the formation for Vincentian Family leaders on 23-24 January. On 25 January, together with Father Giuseppe Turati, he will participate in the celebration for the new Province of Italy. The Vicar General, Father Javier Álvarez, along with Father Stanislav Zontak, will be participating in the inauguration of the new Province of France. At the end of January, the Superior General will have a meeting with the International Team of MISEVI in Madrid on 29-30. Then the Superior General will move to Paris to participate in the meeting of the New Directors of the Daughters of Charity, as well as accepting from the Superioress General the request for the renewal of vows. On 6-7 February, together with Father Stanislav Zontak, the Superior General will fly to Cameroon for the celebration of the inauguration of the new Vice-Province of Cameroon. Then from 10-11, he will be in Madrid, to participate in the meeting of the Councils of the Daughters of Charity of Spain. From 12-21, he will be in Ecuador, visiting the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, and the Vincentian Family. On the 22 and 23, he will be in Philadelphia for the meeting of the International Association of the Miraculous Medal. Following that is the next *Tempo Forte* Council Meeting.

“Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, as we begin the fourth centenary of our Vincentian charism, help us to bring the joy of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, so that no periphery will be deprived of your light, and the poor will again be in the center of the Church and of our lives” (from the “Prayer for the Time of Assemblies”).

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General