

# Tempo Forte Circular

December 2012

My dear Confreres,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be forever in our hearts!

I write to share with you the proceedings of our most recent Tempo Forte meeting which was held from December 3-8 here at the General Curia in Rome.

We began our Tempo Forte with an ongoing formation session on Sunday 2 December by inviting the international student-priest confreres studying in Rome to join us for reflection and discussion on the relationship of New Evangelization and our Vincentian charism. We covered a great deal of issues in this particular Tempo Forte. I will list them in topical order, with shorter points for clarity and economy of style.

## **UPDATES**

**INTERNATIONAL VISITORS' MEETING:** The International Visitors meeting will take place at St. John's University in New York from 30 June to 13 July, 2013. We looked at the responses from the provinces regarding their implementation of the "Lines of Action" of the General Assembly. Although the responses were minimal, those who did respond offered rich subject matter for reflection, which will form the basis for further discussion at the Visitors Meeting. We also reviewed and approved a "logo" for the Visitors Meeting, which was designed by Fr. Alexis Cerquera of the Province of Paris.

**CONFRERES IN DIFFICULTY:** We reviewed a report from Fr. Javier Alvarez, Vicar General on the topic of confreres in difficulty. We are hoping to consider a proposal to initiate a program designed to help confreres in the Hispanic-speaking parts of the world.

**RECONFIGURATION:** We reviewed reports from provinces that met recently in France, Spain, Italy, the northern and southern zones of CLAPVI, the three provinces of Brazil, and the initiation of this process of provinces located in the Asia- Pacific region.

**RATIO FORMATIONIS:** We studied the first draft by the committee for the formulation of a *Ratio Fomationis*, setting aside the entire day of December 8 for discussion. A synthesis of this document will be presented at the Visitors Meeting.

**CM-NGO:** We had another discussion on creating an NGO for the Congregation to solicit funds in Europe while working in conjunction with the Vincentian Solidarity Office.

**POPULAR MISSIONS:** Fr. Thomas Lunot, our confrere who does translation work and resides at the General Curia presented us with a project detailing ways to revitalize the popular mission in France.

### **GENERAL CURIA - PERSONNEL**

**ARCHIVIST/LIBRARIAN:** We have named a new archivist and librarian for the General Curia, who will begin his work in March 2013. I am most grateful to Fr. Alfredo Becerra for over seven years of dedicated service as archivist and librarian, but also as a confrere who has undertaken various responsibilities for the Congregation and Vincentian Family. He is the second-longest serving current member of the Curia, and I am thankful for his generosity, and also to the Province of Mexico for allowing him to serve in Rome. An official announcement of the confrere replacing Fr. Alfredo will be forthcoming.

**PROCURATOR GENERAL:** We also named a new procurator general to replace Fr. Alberto Vernaschi who has done a wonderful job in this position, along with his other responsibilities for the Province of Rome. Fr. Vernaschi gave of his time most generously when we were in great need. Information regarding his replacement will also be forthcoming.

### **GENERAL CURIA - REPORTS**

**DC DIRECTOR GENERAL:** Fr. Patrick Griffin, Director General of the Daughters of Charity, visited us and made a report on his work as Director General. His visit gave us a chance to discuss clearly and thoroughly the role of our Congregation with the Daughters of Charity, both in terms of the provincial directors and on a general level. We discussed the possibility of a joint meeting between the General Curia Councils of the Congregation and the Daughters with the goal of strengthening our ties.

**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS:** Fr. John Maher, Director the Office of Communications reported that the revised web site for CM-Global would be “coming on-line” by January 25, 2013 in English, Spanish, and French. The work of revising and creating three new web

sites has been extensive and complicated, but it will result in a unified and easy to use web site for the Congregation. Fr. Maher reported that he has been working with Fr. Edward Udovic of DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, to have the past issues of *Vincentiana* available in the three languages digitally on "*Via Sapientiae*", the on-line library that DePaul manages for Vincentian related materials. This will encompass issues of *Vincentiana* dating from 1995 to the present day. The Curia is grateful to Fr. Udovic for his leadership and to DePaul University for their foresight in making *Vincentiana* accessible for members of the Congregation and the world-wide Vincentian Family.

Fr. Maher reported that the *Vincentiana* editorial board had met and approved themes for the 2013 issues of *Vincentiana*. He also reported that the SIEV board will meet at the General Curia in February, 2013 to discuss future directions of SIEV, and how to attract young confreres to engage in research and writing on Vincentian history and spirituality.

Fr. Maher also proposed to the General Council that they consider having an ongoing formation on the role of communications in the life of the Congregation at a 2013 Tempo Forte meeting. The Council agreed, and so Fr. Maher will now formulate a session to assist the Council in the role digital communication to enhance the work of the apostolate and life in the Congregation. Lastly, Fr. Maher proposed the Council do an annual evaluation of the 2011 Strategic Plan (based on the 'Lines of Action' of the General Assembly) which focuses on an annual theme for provinces and confreres to reflect upon and implement. The Council has agreed, and asked Fr. Maher to devise a process to facilitate this evaluation.

**CIF:** We had a report from the Directors of the Center for International Formation (CIF). Frs. Marcelo Manimtim and Dan Borlik have prepared a job description for a new assistant director who will be named at a later date. Dan Borlik has generously agreed to be next CIF director, and will assume that responsibility in 2014. Meanwhile, he and Marcelo will continue to coordinate different ongoing formation programs designed for confreres and the branches of the Vincentian Family. We asked both the director and sub-director to be present at our March Tempo Forte meeting for an in-depth program evaluation.

**SYSTEMIC CHANGE:** The Commission to Promote Systemic Change submitted a report, along with the announcement of their annual systemic change project award for three sites to receive funding. The first recipient was the "Agro - Care Cooperative", a project of the Congregation in Rwanda. Another project funded was for the Vincentian Family, located in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, USA. A third funding award for the Vincentian Family went to "Daybreak", a homeless center in Macon, Georgia, USA.

We also discussed how the Commission will prepare for a transition in leadership and membership. In the next three years, the Commission will undergo a rotation of two founding members leaving and two new members coming aboard. The two new members in 2013 will be Mr. Jim Claffey, of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul USA, and Ms. Kerry Anthony, of DePaul International. They will replace Fr. Norberto Carcellar of the Province of the Philippines, and Rev. Mr. Gene Smith, a deacon and former President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the USA. Both have served from its start seven years ago. I am most grateful for the service that they have rendered to the Vincentian Family.

The 2013 workshops for the Commission will be held in February in India; August in Salamanca, Spain; and November in Lebanon. In addition, the Commission has collected ten new testimonies on systemic change which will be published on the "Fam-Vin" web site. ([www.famvin.org](http://www.famvin.org)). There will be a new story every week for 10 weeks. Also in 2013, the Commission will develop a pre-systemic change type of program.

In addition, the Commission will be training "teams" on different continents to give systemic change workshops. It was recommended that a systemic change approach be integrated into the training of all Vincentian Family formators. In addition, the book "Seeds of Hope" will be made available on-line. Two of our Assistants General will participate in systemic change workshops this year. Fr. Zeracristos will attend the one in India, and Fr. Eli Chaves will participate in the Salamanca workshop.

**SOUTH SUDAN:** We had a discussion about a project initiated by the Union of Superior Generals entitled *Solidarity with South Sudan*. Fr. Zeracristos will represent the Congregation at their meeting, and offer to be a candidate for their board of directors. At this time, Fr. Manuel Ginete (a former member of the Curia and delegate for the Vincentian Family) participates in this inter-congregational project in Southern Sudan.

**ALETEIA:** We have also joined ALETEIA, a new initiative of the Church, which is an organization formed in response to the request of Pope Benedict XVI to utilize modern communication in order to advance the New Evangelization. Their web site is [www.aleteia.org](http://www.aleteia.org). The General Council decided to align ourselves with ALETEIA to promote the Year of Faith and New Evangelization in the context of our Vincentian charism.

**VSO:** Fr. Miles Heinen, the Director of Vincentian Solidarity Office sent us a report. The VSO sponsored a project with the Province of China, arranging a visit to China for different members of the Vincentian Family to explore the possibility of establishing a presence there.

The VSO funded a new project for our new international mission in Benin. Unfortunately, we have a shortage of funds now available for micro-projects, with currently less than \$4000 on hand. **Please consider making a donation to the Vincentian Solidarity Office** so these micro-projects can continue. Fr. Miles reported that the funding of a micro-project in Hungary, which involved the renovation of a school, has been completed after many years of planning and execution. Congratulations to Fr. Miles and the VSO staff on this achievement!

**PATRIMONY FUND:** Fr. Miles continues to build up our Patrimonial Fund Project, which depends on donations from confreres and persons confreres know who may want to contribute in order to promote the Vincentian charism in different parts of the world. As you know, this Patrimonial Fund (also known as the Vincentian Endowment Challenge) has been made possible through the help of a donor. It calls for us to raise \$5 million with a matching gift, and the deadline is soon coming. As of this writing, we are far from our goal.

### ***ECONOME GENERAL***

Fr. Joe Geders, Econome General, offered a detailed report on the financial position of the General Curia, and in particular, the financial statement of the general fund. We also approved the 2013 budget, and made some significant changes in order to improve the service we provide to the Congregation.

### ***REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS***

**BOLIVIA:** We reviewed reports from the international missions beginning with **El Alto, Bolivia**, which has a VSO project firmly established. You can view it on the web at: [www.saytasim.org](http://www.saytasim.org). It could be a model program for human, spiritual and local economic development. They have begun a five-year fundraising plan called "A Miraculous Impact". You can also view it on their web site: [www.vocesvicentinas.org/donate](http://www.vocesvicentinas.org/donate). The confreres have a solid working relationship with the diocese: one serves on the Presbyterial Council; another provides ongoing formation materials; and one assists with liturgical music in Ayamara. There are three missionaries in this large and demanding area of El Alto, which is always open for new recruits.

In **Cochabamba**, we are happy to announce the arrival of a new missionary from the Province of Chile: Fr. Luis Miguel Montano Flores. Fr. Luis is a native of Bolivia and speaks the local language. He will accompany Fr. David Paniagua and Fr. Jorge Manrique.

**SOLOMON ISLANDS:** We received a communication from the international mission in the Solomon Islands. A recent arrival is Fr. Jose Manjaly from the Province of India-South. Leaving the mission is Fr. Agus Setyono, who returns to his Province of Indonesia, and Fr. Udochukwu Nwaorgu returning to his Province of Nigeria. I thank them for their ministry in this mission in the Solomon Islands. Fr. Michael Walsh, Visitor of Australia, has informed us that the former Visitor, Fr. Greg Cooney, has accepted an assignment to the Solomon Islands and will arrive in 2013. I offer thanks to Greg Cooney for his fine example of missionary spirit. We renewed our contract with the Bishops of the Solomon Islands and will continue to serve at the Holy Name of Mary Seminary.

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA:** News from the international mission in Papua New Guinea includes the following: the former superior of the mission, Fr. Homero Marin, is now working in the Diocese of Alotau-Sideia, where our confrere Rolly Santos serves as Bishop. Our confrere Justin Eke from the Province of Nigeria is soon to depart for his sabbatical year. A newly arrived confrere in Papua New Guinea is Fr. Jude Lemeh, another member of the Province of Nigeria.

**TUNISIA:** Fr. James Thomas Kunninpurayidam of the Province of India-South arrived in November after completing his studies in Rome. The Superior General, together with Fr. John Maher, Director of Communications visited our confreres there in December. The superior of the mission is Fr. Firmin Mola Mbalo of the Province of Toulouse.

**HAITI:** The mission in Haiti, which is coordinated through the Province of Puerto Rico, recently received Fr. John Baptiste Nsambi E Mbula from the Province of the Congo.

**CHAD:** Fr. Roch Alexandre Ramilijaona of the Province of Madagascar, pastor and superior of the mission in Chad, reported on the state of the parish mission for the past year. A parish assembly was held from 11-13 October. This will be discussed at the next meeting of COVIAM. The President of COVIAM, Fr. Guillaume Leukeumo, visited Chad along with Fr. Fanta Getahun, Visitor of the Province of Ethiopia.

**ANGOLA:** Fr. José Maria Nieto, former Assistant General, and Fr. Jose Ramirez of the Province of Mexico are working in Angola, another new international mission. They had hoped to receive a third missionary. Fr. Henry Kristan. However, he was named Visitor of the Province of Venezuela, so have considered another confrere.

We have signed a contract with the Diocese in Angola. As with many parts of Africa, the diocese is quite limited financially and thus unable to fund some of the usual necessities, such as insurance and stipends for vacation. Nevertheless, we have entered into a contract with them

for three years. We hope that the contribution of the Congregation will awaken in the Christians of Angola a call to generosity. Besides carrying out pastoral activities in the diocese, they will support the Vincentian Family and Daughters of Charity throughout the country.

**BENIN:** The two missionaries in the new mission in Benin are Frs. Stanislaw Deszcz and Rafal Brukarczyk, both from the Province of Poland. They report that the mission is well underway, and they are enjoying their experience. Unfortunately, Fr. Rafal recently had a motorcycle accident, suffering a broken leg in several places, and is now in the process of a long recovery. We pray for him and we thank them both for their generous service. We also offer thanks to the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal who invited us to open this mission.

### ***VOLUNTEERS: INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS***

This year we were blessed with an opportunity to review letters from 12 confreres who volunteered for the various missions. Of these, we assigned five to the international missions for 2013. The remainder will be reviewed again for service in 2014. We had two requests from bishops for missionaries, but at this time we are unable to respond. However, we have forwarded the bishops' requests to provinces to see if they can offer assistance.

**PUNTA ARENOS:** In response to the mission appeal, two confreres began their work as missionaries in Punta Arenos in southern Chile. They are Bruno Enzo Tonelli from the Province of Argentina, and Pablo Vargas Ruiz from the Province of Chile. They are settling in and excited about starting up this new mission

### ***VINCENTIAN FAMILY NEWS***

Fr. Eli Chaves, Assistant General and delegate of the Superior General to the Vincentian Family, gave us a report on the development and perspectives of the Vincentian Family. The Vincentian Family Office formulated a questionnaire for those who serve as moderators of the Vincentian Family throughout the world. The response was well received, as there were 60 returns to the questionnaire. Here is a brief summary:

- In over 80 countries on five continents, there exist initiatives and collaboration among different branches of the Vincentian Family. More than 60 branches of the Vincentian Family are engaged in some type of organization and interaction.

- Members of the Vincentian Family are part of a new Commission for Christian-Muslim Dialogue, which met in October 2012, and is planning activities for 2013.
- We have begun to put together the Vincentian Family Collaboration Program, which will launch a pilot program as a workshop in May 2013 in Paris.

However, there are challenges and difficulties that leaders and members of the Vincentian Family face. Among these mentioned in the questionnaire were a need for greater participation and commitment of a number of the Vincentian Family branches. Some branches of the Family are still enclosed in their own personal and group interests, with the result being indifference and a lack of awareness of the need for formation and collaboration.

In a positive light, many who answered this questionnaire noted that today there is truly a process of renewing our Vincentian identity and vocation. The challenge is to imprint our charism and heritage in the hearts and lives of the all members of the branches of the Vincentian Family. Today, we must accept that challenge to promote and intensify projects for collaboration, using the methodology of systemic change.

The call to collaboration surpasses conventional practices, goes beyond traditional congregational and provincial frontiers, and requires new practices, new methods, and new structures. All of these are expressions of actions called for in the New Evangelization, proposed in this "Year of Faith". The results of the questionnaire will be published in the three languages and serve as a resource for planning.

## **INVITATIONS/VISITORS' CONFERENCES**

**VINCENTIAN VOLUNTEERS, ITALY:** We received an invitation from the Vincentian Volunteers of Italy to participate in its 13<sup>th</sup> National Congress. We will be represented by Fr. Giuseppe Turati, Secretary General. The theme for the congress is "*In the footsteps of St. Vincent—the courage to grow through change*".

**OZANAM ANNIVERSARY:** We were extended an invitation to participate in the major celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Blessed Frederic Ozanam in Paris on 19-21 April 2013. Three members of the General Curia will join in the celebration.

**VISITORS' CONFERENCES:** The APVC, CEVIM, and CLAPVI conferences will have group meetings during the International Visitor's Meeting at St. John's University in July. The COVIAM conference will meet 1-6 May 2013, and will focus on the theme of the Vincentian parish today. The NCV, will meet with the Superior General in his canonical visit of the Province of the West in February, 2013.

## **CALENDAR**

We reviewed the calendars of the Superior General and Assistants General, firming up dates for Council Meetings, canonical visitations, and Tempo Forte meetings for 2013. Our next on-going formation will be 9 March, with a theme focusing three main areas:

- The statute on the vow of poverty which is unique to our Congregation;
- The economic outlook of the Congregation today and projections for the next five years;
- A review the economic situation and financial stability of provinces in the Congregation.

## **SUPERIOR GENERAL'S CALENDAR**

On 1 January 2013, the Superior General made his traditional visit to the Rue du Bac to deliver a conference at the Eucharist on New Years' Day with the Daughters of Charity. On 12 January, there was the annual meeting of the Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family in Paris. On 15 January, the Superior General visited the interprovincial internal seminary in Teruel, Spain. This was followed by a meeting of the international Council of the Vincentian Marian Youth. From late January through February, the Superior General will do the canonical visitation of the Province of the West in the United States.

The Superior General will return to Rome in March for the Tempo Forte meeting and then will give a mission in his home parish of St. Stephen's in Bradshaw, MD. He will celebrate Holy Week in Bolivia with Daughters of Charity in a remote mission area, reachable only by riverboat. After Easter, the Superior General will visit the confreres stationed in El Alto and Cochabamba, Bolivia.

New year, I ask our loving God to bless each of you, along with your local communities and provinces. As we celebrate together the "Year of Faith", may 2013 be a year of grace and favor, so like Jesus and St. Vincent, we might become new evangelizers of the poor.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General