

October 20, 1995

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

I write to you today to appeal once again for volunteers for our international missions. A few days ago, at the very same meeting of the General Council in which we discussed this year's appeal, we also approved the new instruction on the vows. In reflecting on the vows in recent weeks, I was struck by how missionary an orientation St. Vincent gave them. He speaks eloquently of the need for mobility in the Company: "Let us imagine that He (Christ) says to us: `Go forth, missionaries, go forth. What, are you still here? Look at the poor people who are awaiting you...!'" (SV XI, 134). He holds up before the eyes of the Company the great missionaries of other communities who have gone to the Indies, to Japan, to Canada "to complete the work which Jesus Christ began on earth and never abandoned from the moment he was called" (*ibid.*). He is intensely aware that some things will hold the missionaries back, particularly the desire to have abundant material goods, pleasure, and honor (SV XII, 367). For that reason, he sees the vows as a liberating force in the life of the missionary:

Those who become detached from the desire for worldly goods, from the longing for pleasure, and from their own will become children of God. They enjoy perfect freedom. For it is only in the love of God that real freedom is found. They are people who are free, my brothers, who know no law, who fly, who go left and right, who fly still more. No one can hold them back. They are never slaves of the devil nor of their own passions. O, how happy is the freedom of the children of God! (SV XII, 301).

As I travel to visit our various missions, one of my great joys is to see so many confreres and Daughters of Charity who love so deeply that they are truly free.

Today, let me first give you a little news about the growth of our international missions over this past year. Then I will present my hopes for the coming year.

SOME NEWS

Last year I made an urgent appeal for help in Tanzania. I am very grateful to so many of you who responded. In a particular way I want to thank the Province of India, which has agreed to take on a special responsibility in regard to the mission in Tanzania. You remember that, at this time last year, Fr. Chacko was alone there. He is now accompanied by three confreres: Fr. Myles Rearden from Ireland, who will be working as Spiritual Director of the rapidly growing Sisters of Mercy of St. Vincent de Paul, and Fr. James Theikanath and Fr. Tirkey Prakash, who will be laboring among the poor of that area. The latter two have just completed the language and inculturation program in Morogoro. A fifth confrere, Fr. Johnson Nedumgadan, is arriving there from India as I write this letter.

Just this past month we opened a new mission at Charkib in the Ukraine where there are three missionaries: Frs. Jaroslav Jaššo of the Province of Slovakia and Jacek Dubicki and Jan Trzop of the Province of Poland. They are experiencing the usual start-up difficulties, but have been generously helped by others in finding lodging and in renovating an old building that will soon become a center for the apostolate, where the confreres will be working with the Daughters of Charity. I just received a very up-beat letter from the three confreres, filled with missionary enthusiasm!

As you know, the Province of Naples, with the help of the other provinces of Italy, has now taken over responsibility for the new mission at Rrëshen in Albania, with assistance too from the Province of Poland. I receive very positive reports from our missionaries and from the Nuncio, who hopes that we can expand our presence there. I continue to receive volunteer letters too.

I had the happy opportunity last June to visit the new mission at Xai-Xai in Mozambique, for which the Province of Mexico has taken responsibility. I spoke with each of the four missionaries there: Frs. Jorge Pedroza, Jesús Arzate, José Ramírez, and a lay man, César Alonso Saldaña Moreno. They are very happy in their new work at the minor seminary, even though they have had to struggle with malaria, lack of water, and slow progress in the construction of the seminary. The seminary is already filled, with the prospect

of many more candidates to come! The local bishop is delighted with their presence.

There are now four missionaries in El Alto, Bolivia, where Frs. Aarón Gutiérrez and Jorge Homero from the Province of Mexico have now joined Frs. Bernard Massarini and Bogus_aw Sroka. This is an extremely difficult mission. Since it lies at almost 13,000 feet above sea level, physical conditions are tough; apostolic conditions are even tougher. The missionaries wrote to me recently to tell me how shy the people are about contacting and communicating with them. They also related a painful story about a village celebration in which the people drank heavily and worked themselves up into a dancing frenzy in which they beat a local woman in the public square; the woman ultimately died from the abuse.

I receive very positive reports from Fr. Hugh O'Donnell, the Visitor, about our new missionaries in Taiwan, who are taking part in a language and inculturation program to prepare for possible future ministry on the mainland: Frs. Thomas Sendlein, Anton Budianto, Joseph Loftus, Peter Solis, and Dario Pacheco. I will be visiting them in January.

Just this morning I had a letter from Marcello Manimtim, who is the superior at our mission in the Solomon Islands. He tells me that Tom Hynes and Stanislaus Reksosusilo (who arrived just recently from Indonesia) are doing very well. Construction work on the seminary has begun. Several other confreres have offered to go there to teach specialized courses that are needed from time to time. I was delighted when, just a few days ago, Serafín Peralta, the Visitor of the Province of the Philippines, offered to take over responsibility for this entire mission. We will be discussing this matter in an upcoming meeting of the General Council.

As you can see, the news is mostly good. The confreres are enthusiastic. The missions are growing. Progress is being made in inculturation and language. At the same time, not all have found it possible to adapt to new cultures. Two of the new missionaries, after struggling to adjust, decided to undertake other works in the service of the poor. I am very grateful to them too for their efforts.

AN APPEAL FOR THE COMING YEAR

I continue to receive many appeals from bishops throughout the world (right up until yesterday at lunch, when an Asian bishop whispered in my ear that he needs missionaries for a minor seminary!). Many of the requests focus on formation personnel. Let me relate to you some of the most urgent needs. I know that I do not need to appeal to your generosity, since I have found that this is abundant in the Congregation. Rather, I ask you to weigh these needs before God in the context of your own life, your health, your gifts, the Lord's urgings, and the needs of your own province. If you should sense that the Lord calls you to respond to one of these needs, then please do not hesitate to write, following the guidelines given at the end of this letter.

1. **Rwanda** - As I make this appeal, I feel as if I am calling for martyrs since, as you know, many missionary men and women have died there, including two postulants for the Daughters of Charity. Recently, the Mother General asked me if some of our priests could accompany the sisters in Rwanda. Thirty-four Daughters of Charity work there and in the refugee camps at the border of Zaire. At the beginning, our ministry might take the form of a small missionary parish near the Daughters, with outreach into various villages. As the number of volunteers grows, we might be able to staff a minor seminary. The language is French.

2. **Mozambique** - As mentioned above, I visited Mozambique last June and July. I was deeply moved by the poverty I saw. After so many years of civil war the basic structures of the country have been destroyed. Even though there has now been peace for three years, conditions are still dreadful. Schools and hospitals are in terrible disorder. Tuberculosis, dysentery, and AIDS are rampant. Things are so bad that Mozambique is now often described as the poorest country in the world. Our confreres there have huge needs. Their numbers are very few (there are only 18). Some are experiencing health problems. Others find themselves worn out and rather isolated. I am very eager to send them reinforcements. The prospects for ministry are enormous, but the laborers are very few. There are a good number of students in formation. The start-up language is Portuguese. In many places, one must also learn the local language.

3. **Cuba** - Here too, as in Mozambique, the people, as well as the confreres and Daughters of Charity, suffer under very trying economic and social conditions. Food is scarce. Ministry is difficult. Our confreres are very few (there are only nine), whereas pastoral opportunities are increasingly great. Huge numbers of people come to our churches and centers. Land and a

building for a house of formation have just been purchased. The language is Spanish. A missionary should have very good health, since life is quite tough.

4. **Cameroon** - Here too, for various reasons (societal conditions, health problems, etc.), our numbers are very few. There is urgent need for a French-speaking confrere who has pastoral experience and who would be capable of animating a parish center with outreach into a series of small village communities. The mission has a number of students in formation and could also use the help of a French-speaking confrere with experience as a formation director.

5. **Siberia** - At the most recent meeting of our General Council we accepted Bishop Joseph Werth's offer to send a team to Nizhniy Tagil at the foot of the Ural Mountains in Siberia. The Provinces of Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia have generously pledged their assistance in staffing this mission, but it would be very helpful if the team could have members from other nations. The initial language for pastoral contact in that region is German; at the same time the learning of Russian is indispensable. Living conditions there are rough, because of the cold and the isolation.

6. **Zaire** - The new Province of Zaire has a large number of candidates in formation for the Congregation. It has appealed to me several times for help in providing experienced formation personnel to collaborate with our Zairian confreres in the formation of our seminarians. The language is French.

There are many other needs. Our confrere, Demerew Souraphiel, who last year was named Prefect Apostolic of Jimma-Bonga in Ethiopia, has very few priests. There is also a request for confreres to work in Denmark, where until now the Province of Holland has been sponsoring a mission. The Bishop of Trujillo in Honduras is also seeking help for the region of La Moskitia, a very poor mission area where confreres from the Province of Barcelona, as well as Daughters of Charity, are already working.

I am deeply grateful to you, my brothers, for your generous response to the appeals that I have made for the missions over the last several years. It is wonderful to see how strong the missionary spirit is within the Company and how willing confreres are to go to distant, often difficult, parts of the world. I ask your help once again today. As we prepare for the canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre, which will probably take place toward the end of 1996 (the date is not yet certain), we have been focusing on his vocation both as a formation director and as a missionary. Many of the appeals above, you will

note, coincide with that vocation. I hope that the year ahead, with its various celebrations and reflective moments, will be a stimulus to all of us to follow in the footsteps of this heroic brother of ours. He will be canonized not simply because he laid down his life in the service of the gospel, but because he lived it to the full in the Vincentian tradition.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

SOME INFORMATION AND CRITERIA FOR THOSE WHO WRITE

1. If you should wish to volunteer, please send your letter in time to arrive in Rome by December 15, 1995.

2. So that I might read the letters all at once and so that they might be carefully organized, would you please address the envelopes as follows:

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
MISSIONS
Congregation of the Mission
Via dei Capasso, 30
00164 ROMA
ITALY

3. It is, of course, helpful to know the language beforehand, but it is not absolutely necessary. A period of cultural and language training will be provided for the missionaries. Details will vary according to the particular mission.

4. While we have decided that no automatic age cut-off would be established, it is surely necessary that the missionary have reasonably good health.

5. Confreres who volunteer, by sending a letter to the Superior General, should inform the Visitor that they have done so.

6. Your letter should give some background about your person, your ministerial experience, and your training. It should also express any particular interests that you have, such as what mission you would like to take part in.

7. Even if you have already written in the past, please do not hesitate to contact me again.