

September 27, 1996

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

I wish you all a very joyful feast of St. Vincent, as we join in this day of prayer with the members of our extended Vincentian Family.

Thank you very much for your generous participation in the meeting of the Visitors in Salamanca. I deeply appreciate your presence and contributions during those days.

As you recall, Fr. Jack McKenna, who is President of our International Commission on Prayer, presented us with a provisional "Vincentian Book of Prayer" at that time. He pointed out that this book is "simply a sample or model of what you can do in your own language and culture." It is not meant to be an "editio typica," to be translated or followed literally in the various provinces. Rather, each province, or group of provinces, is asked to develop something similar to this resource book, adapted to your own language and culture. Hymns, prayers, celebrations, readings, etc. which are more fitting for your own cultural setting and which are recommended by the members of your province can and should be substituted for those suggested in the resource book.

Neither the book distributed in Salamanca, nor those which you will produce in the various provinces, is meant to replace the Church's Liturgy of the Hours, which remains the framework in which we generally pray. Rather, our aim is to provide another, more specifically Vincentian, option which you might use on occasion; e.g., once a week. When celebrations like the models provided in the book are used for morning and evening prayer, a confrere can consider them as substituting for the breviary's version of lauds and vespers for that day. In so far as a dispensation or commutation is necessary in this regard, I am happy to grant it.

In order to continue the process begun in 1993 with the appointment of the International Commission on Prayer, I ask you at this time to take the following steps:

1. Please appoint, as soon as possible, a commission on prayer in your province (or group of provinces) to develop something similar to the resource book handed out at Salamanca, but adapted to your own language and culture.
2. If it should seem preferable that the resource book be produced by a *group* of provinces sharing a similar language and culture, then I would ask the chairman of the Conference of Visitors for that region to contact the members of the Conference, so that an interprovincial commission might be appointed as soon as possible.
3. The mandate of the provincial or interprovincial commission is to produce a provisional resource book for prayer, adapted to your own language and culture, as described in the introduction of the model distributed in Salamanca.

4. I ask that your commission complete its work by September 1, 1997. At that time, please send a copy of your provisional book to the Secretary General.
5. In September 1997, each house of the province should begin to use such a resource book as an aid in its prayer; e.g., once a week.
6. After a year, i.e., around the time of the General Assembly of 1998, each province or group of provinces will evaluate the use of its own book making suggestions for the future. A copy of the evaluation should be forwarded to the Secretary General, who will send you a reminder at the appropriate time.
7. After receiving the samples and the evaluations from the various provinces and regions, the International Commission on Prayer will convene again and will make recommendations to the Superior General and his Council about the next step to be taken.

I deeply appreciate your help in guiding this process to its conclusion. As I know you understand, the goal is not a book, in any form. That is only an instrument. The goal continues to be to intensify and renew the prayer life of our Community in light of our Constitutions, offering "something beautiful for God" and attractive to the young. I thank you for your assistance in this matter, which is so crucial to the life of the Congregation. I hope that, by supporting one another in this project we can respond more fully to St. Vincent's words: "Give me someone who prays and he will be capable of everything" (SV XI, 83).

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General