

October 1, 1996

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

Today, in accord with Article 107, 4_ of our Constitutions, I am convoking the 39th General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission. It will be held from June 22 until July 18, 1998. We have not yet chosen the place for the Assembly since we await further information on several possibilities suggested by the Visitors during our recent meeting in Salamanca. The theme for the Assembly is:

The Worldwide Vincentian Family and the Challenges of the Mission in the Third Millennium

This theme could, as you can imagine, entail the discussion of many sub-topics; e.g.,

- fostering greater unity and closer cooperation among the various branches of our family (Vincentians, Daughters of Charity, AIC, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, the Miraculous Medal Association, and other groups) in carrying out the mission God has given us through St. Vincent,
- prioritizing the fields for our evangelization and service of the poor,
- discerning the causes of poverty and the ways of acting for the promotion of justice and peace,
- forming candidates for the Congregation's mission in the 21st century and assisting the other branches of the family in their formation.

Today, at a meeting of our General Council, we also named five confreres to the Preparatory Commission for the Assembly. They will hold a first meeting here in Rome from December 1-15, 1996. The principal work of the Commission is to assist the Congregation in preparing for the Domestic Assemblies, the Provincial Assemblies, and the General Assembly. On December 30 of this year, after its first session, the Preparatory Commission will send you materials as a help for preparing your Domestic and Provincial Assemblies.

In the meantime, in order to assist the Commission, I would ask that you, with the members of your council, complete the attached brief questionnaire and return it to me so

that it arrives here in Rome by November 15. In addition to the questionnaire, I am also enclosing a timetable of the events leading up to the General Assembly. Feel very free to use this with flexibility, depending on the circumstances of your province. It is imperative, however, that all provinces meet the deadlines in submitting materials to the Preparatory Commission. Otherwise a province's work could go unused as we prepare for the General Assembly.

Assemblies bring all of us a lot of work. But, right from the time of St. Vincent, they have also been moments of significant renewal and decision-making. Our worldwide Vincentian Family has more than 2,000,000 members. It can be a huge force in the service of the poor. I ask you to join with me in praying, over the next two years, that the Lord will give us the wisdom and zeal to channel our energies effectively to that end.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

QUESTIONNAIRE

To be filled out by the Visitor with his Council.

The completed questionnaire is to arrive in Rome by November 15, 1996.

The theme of the General Assembly of 1998 is:

The Worldwide Vincentian Family and the Challenges of the Mission in the Third Millennium

1. Under this general theme, what are the two or three principal points that you would like to see treated by the General Assembly?
2. How would you judge, at present, the level of unity and cooperation in regard to evangelization and the service of the poor among the various branches of the Vincentian Family within the area of your own province:
 - a) between the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity,
 - b) between the Vincentians and the AIC (Ladies of Charity),
 - c) between the Vincentians and the Vincent de Paul Society,

- d) between the Vincentians and the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups,
 - e) between the Vincentians and the members of the Miraculous Medal Associations,
 - f) between the Vincentians and other groups in our extended family (e.g., Sisters of Mercy, Daughters of Providence, various lay associations)
 - g) do the various groups listed above cooperate well with one another?
3. What suggestions do you have in regard to the *methodology* to be used during the General Assembly? (It is not necessary at this time to offer your detailed comments on the Directory, since the Preparatory Commission will ask you for your thoughts in that regard at a later date).
4. Do you have any other suggestions in regard to the General Assembly?

TIME-TABLE

October 1, 1996

Preparatory Commission is named. A brief questionnaire is sent out to the Visitors and their Councils, announcing the theme and asking input, which is to arrive in Rome before *November 15*.

December 1-15, 1996

Preparatory Commission meets to prepare points for discussion in Domestic and Provincial Assemblies.

December 31, 1996

Materials for Domestic and Provincial Assemblies are sent to Visitors.

March 1 - May 31, 1997

Domestic Assemblies are held.

June 1 - November 30, 1997

Provincial Assemblies are held.

Visitors send results, so that they arrive in Rome *before December 30, 1997.*

January 30 - February 15, 1998

Preparatory Commission meets for second time.

February 15, 1998

Materials are sent to Visitors and delegates to the General Assembly.

June 22 - July 18, 1998

General Assembly is held.