

January 25, 1997

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

I am writing to let you know that, after a long, detailed study, we have decided to hold the General Assembly here in Rome once more. Let me offer you a brief account of the process leading to this decision.

As you recall, during the Visitors' Meeting in Salamanca a number of sites were suggested: Rome, Dublin, Niagara Falls, Rio, Indonesia, and Taiwan. Almost immediately after the meeting, upon further investigation, the Visitors of Ireland, Indonesia, China, and Rio informed me that the proposed sites in their countries did not seem feasible. Several other sites, however, were proposed spontaneously by various Visitors: Lebanon; Camarillo, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and two other possibilities near Castel Gandolfo. I sent a questionnaire to each of these places, plus several other sites within Rome itself, asking information about the number of rooms they could provide, the availability of bathrooms and showers, simultaneous translation facilities, air-conditioning, proximity to an airport, the daily cost of rooms, meals, equipment, etc. We also asked a travel agency to assist us in estimating the cost of transportation from our 48 provinces to various sites. It quickly became evident that the cost of the General Assembly would vary very significantly in relationship to the different sites. In our final meeting we narrowed the choice down to two options, ultimately arriving at Rome once again. The members of the General Council judged that, overall, Rome had the most advantages, though we were conscious of some of its disadvantages (the heat of summer, some inconveniences in the living facilities).

The Assembly will be held, as in the past, at the Casa Maria Immacolata, Via Ezio 28. We will be lodged both there and at the Collegio Leoniano. In order to obtain these two facilities, it was necessary to shift our dates somewhat. The Assembly will begin at 9 a.m. on Monday, July 6, 1998 and we anticipate that it will end at supper time on Friday, July 31. Hopefully, therefore, we will finish before the arrival of the torrid August days! I would ask that all arrive in Rome by Sunday, July 5 in order to begin immediately on the morning of the 6th.

I am somewhat embarrassed that after such a long study we arrived at the same place. I am conscious that some (including myself) had been envisioning other sites for the General Assembly. But the evidence led us back to Rome. In any event, it is a wonderful city with significant advantages. For many of the delegates it will be their first time here (at the Assembly of 1986, 67% of the delegates were new).

By now you will have received the document of the Preparatory Commission. I ask the Lord to be with all of you as Domestic and Provincial Assemblies get underway.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General