

THE PRE-MISSION PREPARATION

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The Paules' Popular Mission is a distinct and special missionary activity of the Congregation, inspired immensely by St. Vincent de Paul who was greatly affected by the very sad and pitiful conditions of the poor in his beloved people. St. Vincent made the amelioration of suffering lives his special mission. Thus, our Popular Mission has become, for us, St. Vincent's distinct and effective way of serving the Church in her work of evangelization.

In order to be true to the nature God envisioned for her the Church has to be a missionary and to effectively be able to get its work done, her sons and daughters, specifically we the religious have been called to work in her vineyards and make known and manifest God's message of love and salvation.

Here is how we of the Philippine Province conduct our Popular Missions.

The Popular Mission has three phases: 1) The Pre-Missions or Preparation, 2) Mission Proper, and 3) Post Mission or Evaluation and Follow Up.

I will share with you the Pre-Missions Preparation, which normally lasts from three to four months and involves planning, training and discussing with members to:

- a) plan for the forthcoming mission
- b) "immerse" with the people in the target areas; and
- c) select and train area/community/chapel leaders to assist in all areas of the undertaking

The Mission Team follows this procedure:

1) **Initiative of the Parish Priest.** A formal letter of invitation is sent by the Parish Priest to the Mission Team asking them to conduct a Mission in his Parish. The letter indicates the areas (to be involved, proposed time, and such other information) that would be of help to the missionaries.

2) **Immersion in the Areas.** After deliberation among the members of the Mission Teams, representatives are sent to meet with the Parish Priest to discuss the proposed Parish Mission. The Parish Priest himself facilitates and presides over this meeting. He accompanies the representatives to the areas and stays there for several days. During the immersion, they conduct social investigations (SI), ocular surveys, interviews, dialogues with the community/barangay, chapel and homeowner leaders, and home visitation. The very purpose of this is to know where the people are at. Religious, political, cultural, economic

and educational backgrounds of the people and also their concerns, and needs in the areas have to be known, addressed and utilized for future planning of the team.

The Team recognizes the importance and valuable contribution of the youth to the Mission. Before their departure, a night will be spent together by those to be involved. This activity aims to solicit support and to encourage them to take an active role during the Mission.

3) **Evaluation and Planning of the Mission Team.** After the immersion, the team goes back to their Mission base to evaluate the just concluded immersion. To have a grasp of the condition of the people, an evaluation is necessary. The possibility of the Mission is likewise discussed and a program proposal is made, where the date, personnel, follow-up programs and other details are specified. After careful and lengthy deliberations, the mission team finalizes everything and comes up with a decision, whether to push through or not. If the answer is affirmative, the director of the Mission Team or anyone of the members pays a visit to the Parish Priest or sends a written summary of the meeting.

4) **The Program Proposal is presented to the Parish Priest and the Parish Pastoral Council.** A representative is commissioned to meet the Parish Priest and the Pastoral Council to discuss and explain the proposed Mission program for clarifications and approval. If no alteration is necessary and the proposed program is approved, then a meeting of all the area leaders is called. In the meeting, the Mission Team representative explains the plan, wherein accommodation, schedule of leadership training, campaign, finances and other details are finalized. This is done on the last week of the second month or the first week of the third month of the preparation.

5) **Information Campaign begins.** Two things with regard to the information campaign. First, on the Parish level, the whole Parish should be involved. The Parish Priest and his pastoral council take the responsibility in informing the people/his parishioners about the forthcoming Mission. This could be done through announcements at all Masses, posters, streamers, banners and meetings. Second, on the area level, the leaders should be the prime movers in the neighborhood. They do house visitations, prepare posters, banners, announcements in the community bulletin boards and community meetings. All the parishioners are asked to pray and offer sacrifices for the intention of the mission.

6) **Training of Leaders.** The third month of preparation is reserved for the training of leaders. On all Sundays of the month, at their most available time, all the community leaders are required to attend the training, to be held in the Parish. They have to know that they will be working closely with the Missionaries for the whole time of the Mission. Therefore, skills training should be done prior to the Mission. They need to know certain skills, like handling small group discussions, facilitating community meetings and Bible sharings.

7) **Securing Faculties and Team Preparation.** While the Parish Priest is securing permission for the missionaries and faculty for the Priests from the Local Ordinary, the Mission Team prepares all the talks and homilies and other materials needed for the mission. The mission team director sends letters of invitation to the rector of the seminary asking for volunteers for the Mission. Likewise, he sends invitations to the Priests of the Congregation and Daughters of Charity.

8) **Orientation Seminar.** This is the immediate preparation for the Mission. A week or a few days immediately before their departure for The Mission, all the participants of the Parish Mission will undergo a three-day orientation seminar. The Mission Team leader schedules this orientation preferably in the parish where the Mission will be held. The area leaders are also invited to attend. Final directions are given and questions are answered.

Then the Mission, involving Divine assistance, begins.