

# FROM THE GENERAL CURIA

## Tempo Forte Meeting

October 6-10, 2014

Dear Confreres:

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be forever in our hearts!

This is a summary of the major points covered at the recent Tempo Forte. We began with a day of reflection and prayer on the theme of the vow of poverty, including the Statute on Poverty in our Constitutions, and a discussion of our style of life at the General Curia. Moving from a general discussion to specifics, we reflected on how to live more simply as Vincentians. Visiting us at Tempo Forte were new members of the SIEV group. Fr. Miles Heinen made a presentation as Director of the Vincentian Solidarity Office. Details on both are in this report.

### **UPDATES**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY PLANS:** We focused on plans in progress for the 2016 General Assembly at DePaul University in Chicago, USA. Fr. Joe Geders, Econome General and I made a site visit to DePaul to review the places we will utilize for the assembly. Fr. Dennis Holtschneider, DePaul's President and his staff graciously received us. Plans are moving forward as the Preparatory Commission for the Assembly will meet in Rome during the next Tempo Forte. We also finalized our list of confreres who will serve as translators at the assembly.

**NEW VISITORS MEETING, 2016:** The date of this bi-annual workshop for new Visitors will be in January 2016. As in past years, it will be held at the Casa Maria Immacolata in Rome.

**RECONFIGURATION:** We had an ongoing discussion of reconfiguration, studying reports of the provinces in Brazil and status updates for the provinces of Italy, France, and Spain. We also reviewed the reconfiguration plans of CLAPVI-North for Central America and the Caribbean.

**RATIO FORMATIONIS:** We had a discussion of the final draft of the 'Ratio Formationis' which the Council accepted for promulgation. It has been translated into all three languages of the Congregation and will be published in Vincentiana. I offer my sincere appreciation to the confreres who served on the Commission of the Ratio Formationis:

Fr. Gerard Luttenberger, chair, and Fathers Orlando Escobar, Jan Martinec, Robert Petkovsek, and Joy Thuruthel. I also express my gratitude to Fathers Jaime Corera and Antoine Douaihy, who translated the 'Ratio' into Spanish and French and labored many long hours over this text.

**MISSIONARY PARISH THRUST PROJECT:** We studied seven proposed projects received from the newly created "Missionary Parish Thrust" for parishes sponsored by the Congregation. Upon review, we approved all seven and sent them to the Franz Foundation, who will select and fund the proposals they consider best in line with the goals of this project.

## **GENERAL COUNCIL PROJECTS**

We discussed several projects under consideration by the General Council.

*PROVINCIAL SECRETARY POSITION:* The Superior General issued an ordinance requiring all provincial offices to employ the services of a secretary, (either a confrere or layperson), to assist in their internal organization and to facilitate better communication between provinces and the Curia. The Secretary General asked provinces if they wanted the Curia to sponsor a meeting for provincial secretaries. Due to the slight response, we sent out a questionnaire to assess their needs. Our goal is to have provinces employ a provincial secretary to improve their internal operations and communication with the Curia. We stand ready to assist provinces in any way.

*CENTER FOR CONFRERES IN DIFFICULTY:* The second project we discussed was possibly opening a center in Mexico for confreres experiencing personal difficulties. Here the response was also slight, with few provinces responding. Thus, we will not pursue this particular project.

*SELF- SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT:* We discussed a "Self Sustainability Project," sponsored by the Eastern Province, USA, and Fr. Elmer Bauer, Provincial Econome. At an international meeting, Fr. Elmer was sought out by a number of provinces for help on this matter. Two provinces followed up, and one eventually made a suitable proposal. As of now, they are moving forward with the help of a company well versed in self-sustainability. We also recommended other provinces to Fr. Elmer that we believe could use his help to become self-sustaining. We are grateful to Fr. Elmer for this work, which benefits the entire Congregation.

*CANON LAW CLARIFICATION OF 'MISSIONARY PRIVILEGES':* We studied a project to consider the canonical privileges given to mis-

sionaries according to Canon Law. This came from a request by a confrere engaged in missionary work. After the appropriate consultation, we will compile a letter to spell out the missionary privileges considered acceptable by the Holy See.

*VINCENTIAN BISHOPS:* We received a letter from our bishop-confrere in Ethiopia, Bishop Varghese Thottamkara, who offered some recommendations that the Council found favorable. These included calling Vincentian bishops together for a meeting; inviting a confrere-bishop to attend the General Assembly to celebrate the Eucharist and reflect on its theme; and inviting a confrere-bishop to speak at the 2016 New Visitors Meeting on the relationship between the visitor and local bishop, as seen in a section of the *Practical Guide for Visitors Handbook*. We also discussed possible reconsideration of the request to provide financial support for apostolic vicariates where confrere-bishops and confreres serve. There are a number of such apostolic vicariates where the Congregation provides personnel and at times, financial assistance.

*CHARISM/SPIRITUAL FAMILY WORKSHOP:* We received an invitation to attend a meeting of religious congregations with wider spiritual families (similar to our Vincentian Family.) The Superior General and Fr. Jorge Rodriguez will attend this meeting to discuss how 'spiritual families' can assist the religious congregations they are affiliated with in living their charisms.

## REPORTS TO THE GENERAL CURIA

*OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS:* Fr. John Maher, Director of Communications offered his report. He proposed new ways to advance the visibility and use of the "FAM-VIN" website and to increase participation of members of the Vincentian Family from various language groups. We were happy to learn that a new website created to highlight the International Missions is now fully functional. Titled "*The Joy of the Gospel*," its web address is [www.gospel-joy.org](http://www.gospel-joy.org). I invite all confreres to visit this site, and to learn about our missions and men in the Congregation who serve. The website also provides a secure way of communicating with confreres in these missions, so you can leave a message or offer words of encouragement through this website.

Regarding Vincentiana, the final edition of 2014 will be devoted to publication of the *Ratio Formationis*. The first edition of 2015 will be a commentary by confreres on the various sections of the Ratio, which we hope will help us provinces to better understand and apply the Ratio in programs of initial and ongoing formation.

*SIEV MEETING:* The re-formed SIEV commission met at the Curia during Tempo Forte. They began by meeting briefly with the Council to go over guidelines. We discussed with them the purpose of SIEV,

summarized in three goals. First, SIEV is a group that reflects on historical and spiritual Vincentian themes. Secondly, SIEV is responsible for preparing and promoting new specialists in Vincentian studies. Finally, SIEV undertakes responsibility for Vincentian publications. The SIEV Commission revised their statutes to reflect their new purpose. The coordinator is Fr. Corpus Delgado, Province of Zaragoza. The confreres serving on the SIEV Commission include: Fathers Franciscus Eko Armada, Province of Indonesia; Dan Borlik, Western Province, USA from the CIF program; Neil Hoffman, Province of Slovakia; Andres Motto, Province of Argentina; Nelio Pereira Pita, Province of Portugal; Jean Rufin Mokelo, Province of Congo; and Vinicius Teixeira, Province of Rio de Janeiro. Fathers Javier Alvarez serves as liaison to the Council, and Agus Heru is Curia archivist and librarian.

*CIF PROGRAM:* Fr. Stanislav Zontak, Council Liaison, led a discussion on the CIF program in Paris. We discussed our experiences in giving presentations to confreres in the CIF program. This was done by Fathers John Maher, Giuseppe Turati, Javier Alvarez, and the Superior General. Overall, we found the CIF program well run. Confreres were enthusiastic. Programs included systemic change, five Vincentian virtues, and collaboration with the Vincentian Family.

*VSO REPORT:* We had a report from Fr. Miles Heinen, Director of the Vincentian Solidarity Office, who told us that associate director Teresa Niedda has left the VSO to work closer to home. The Superior General and Council express our thanks to Teresa for her dedication to the VSO and devotion to the Vincentian charism. In other news, because of a lack of available funds, the program for awarding micro-projects has been suspended until further notice. This is a setback to provinces and missions seeking funding. Once again, I appeal for confreres to donate to fund these micro-projects. In the past, due to the generosity of the confreres, we built up a fund. I appeal not only to confreres who have contributed, but I ask those who have not donated to consider doing so. These funds help developing provinces to become self-sustaining.

On a more positive note, we are near completion of the first phase of our Patrimonial Fund Project. Following that milestone, we will evaluate whether to move to a second phase. This will occur when we have reached our goal of five million dollars with a promise of matching funds.

*SYSTEMIC CHANGE COMMISSION:* Fr. Giuseppe Turati, coordinator for the Commission for the Promotion of Systemic Change, gave a report to the General Council on recent activities. In July, they held a follow-up workshop in the Philippines after one previously presented. This fall, they will meet in Rome to evaluate and plan. They will then go to the Ukraine to do a workshop.

*UNION OF SUPERIOR GENERALS:* A General Assembly of the Union of Superior Generals will be held November 26-28. Its theme is "New Relationships for a Culture of Encounter." We will discuss the "Relatio" of the Synod of Bishops on the Family, and elect new USG officers.

*VINCENTIAN HISTORY PROJECT:* Fr. John Rybolt presented to the Council a fifth volume of his work on the history of the Congregation. The Council then discussed the progress of his "Commemorative" volume to be made available in English, Spanish, and French in time for the General Assembly. However, Fr. Rybolt is having difficulty obtaining pictures from some of the provinces for this last volume. We want this commemorative volume to be truly representative of the entire Congregation, so please respond to Fr. Rybolt's next request when you receive it.

*CONFRERES IN DIFFICULTY:* We reviewed a document prepared by the Secretary General on those confreres absent from the Congregation in this calendar year, 2014. The document also contains information about confreres who have left the Congregation since 2011.

*REPORT OF GENERAL ECONOME:* Fr. Joe Geders updated us on various matters, including a possible sale of a house on our property at the Curia, formerly used as a convent. Due to the alternations made by previous tenants without our knowledge, we must submit to re-inspections by the Commune of Rome, and gain approval to sell the building, for which we do have a buyer.

## **INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS**

We evaluated our International Missions with the goal to strengthen them in the long term.

We decided that as a follow-up to the 2013 promulgation of the revised International Missions Statutes, the Superior General and Council would begin a program for new missionaries, designed to meet their individual needs. Fathers Mathew Kallammakal, Assistant General for the Missions, and Stanislav Zontak, Assistant General for Ongoing Formation, will coordinate formulating this program. At next Tempo Forte, they will present a draft of their proposal.

This program will include in-house materials on our charism, a study of the International Mission Statutes and document on missions, and academic resources on missiology. It was also recommended we organize a gathering of the mission superiors. We are tentatively considering holding such a meeting in September 2015 in Rome. The focus will be on the above-mentioned matters, and the "Practical Guide for the Local Superior." We envision this type of meeting to be held every six years to coincide with the administration of a Superior General and Council.

Finally, we will study more in-depth the reports sent by mission superiors that are submitted to us twice yearly. The reason for this closer examination is to bring about greater stability and maturity in these missions for the good of the Congregation.

*STATUS REPORTS ON MISSIONS:* We then studied specific reports on the status of our International Missions. *From El Alto, Bolivia*, all seems well at this time with the mission and confreres. *From Cochabamba:* We reviewed the community plan presented by confreres of this mission. *From Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands*, we carefully studied reports from both these missions. Both places are seeking greater stability in each mission. Thus, we need confreres willing to do seminary formation (particularly teaching philosophy and theology), and parish and pastoral work. *From Puntas Arenas:* We reviewed an evaluation of the first months of this new mission, which is being done in collaboration with the Province of Chile. The confreres have a solid contract and a good working relationship with the local Bishop.

*From Angola:* This mission has been undergoing some transitions. Fr. José Ramirez Martinez returned after the death of his dear mother. Fr. Jason Christian Soto Herrera assists him. Both are awaiting the arrival of two other missionaries in the process of getting their paperwork and visas. *From Tunisia:* Fr. Narcisse Djerambete Yotobumbeti is the latest arrival in Tunis. From the region of Cameroon, he is originally from Chad. He joins Fr. Firmin Mola Mbalo of the Province of Toulouse. *From Chad:* They are making progress in this mission, building a school and a parish building. It is a great help, as they had been celebrating Mass outdoors and under a tree. *From Benin:* The three Polish confreres at this new mission are working well. Things are calm, and confreres live a simple lifestyle, working steadily to increase their outreach to the poor.

As you know, the recently released Mission Appeal Letter lists details on these and other needs of the International Missions. Please reflect on them and be generous in your response.

*VINCENTIAN FAMILY:* Fr. Eli Chaves, the Assistant General for the Vincentian Family, gave the Council an update. The Vincentian Family in Brazil had a follow-up workshop on systemic change, and in Columbia, moderators of the Vincentian Family met, including confreres, Daughters of Charity, and laity. In Italy, members of lay missionary groups gathered to form MISEVI Italy, with the hope they will join MISEVI International. Finally, an ongoing formation session for the Vincentian Family in Latin America will be held in Guatemala in March 2015.

*PROPOSED SECRETARIAT FOR THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY:* The Superior General gave an update on the status of the recent proposal

for a Secretariat of the Vincentian Family. This new secretariat would entail a shift from the responsibility of the General Curia in Rome to that of the Vincentian Family, although the Superior General would oversee its functioning. The Vincentian Family Executive Committee will meet in January 2015 to discuss and decide on this proposal.

*AIC GENERAL ASSEMBLY:* The General Assembly of AIC will be held in Guatemala later this year. The Congregation has contributed a donation to the supplement some of their expenses.

*DEPAUL INTERNATIONAL:* We received a letter of resignation from Fr. Dan Borlik from the Board of Directors of Depaul International. Fr. Dan served as the board representative of the Superior General. He recommended Fr. J. Patrick Murphy of the Western Province (USA) to succeed him. The Council supported submitting this recommendation for approval by the board.

*CONFERENCES OF VISITORS:* The APVC (Asia Pacific Visitors Conference) will meet in February 2015. The Superior General and Fr. Mathew Kallammakal will attend to participate in a Vincentian Family meeting in India. In the report received from CEVIM (Conference of European Visitors), Fathers Stanislav Zontak and Giuseppe Turati described a meeting organized for young confreres last summer in Krakow. Over thirty attended, and the next gathering is in Barcelona in April 2015. The next meeting of CLAPVI (Conference of Latin American Visitors) is in Medellin, Colombia this fall and Fr. Eli Chaves will attend.

We received a report from COVIAM (Conference of Visitors in Africa and Madagascar). They met in July in Alexandria, Egypt, and announced that their program for formators would be moving from Kenya to either Nigeria or Tanzania. COVIAM expressed gratitude to the confreres of the Province of the West, USA for their years of service to formators of their provinces. The Superior General gave a brief update on the status of the NCV (National Conference of Visitors, USA.) The new conference president is Fr. Ray Van Dorpe, Visitor of the Western Province. The Eastern and New England Provinces are in discussion of possible reconfiguration.

## **CURIA CALENDAR THROUGH 2014**

The Council reviewed our calendars from October to December, along with our upcoming canonical visitations, ordinary scheduled Council meetings, and to set the dates for Tempo Forte meetings in 2015. What follows is a summary of the schedule of the Superior General in the coming months. In October, the Superior General visited the Province of the Orient (Lebanon) to attend meetings in Jerusalem. After that, he traveled to Sardinia, Italy to attend a celebration of the

feast of Blessed Giuseppina Nicola, a Daughter of Charity who served the poor in that region. Then the Superior General and Fr. Stanislav Zontak made an informal visit to countries in Eastern Europe, including Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.

In November, the Superior General will participate in the first General Assembly of the Association of the Miraculous Medal in Rome at the Casa Immacolata. He will then go to Haiti to attend the wedding of Yasmine Cajuste, who is the International President of the Vincentian Marian Youth. Then he will make a visit to South Sudan to meet with Fr. Manuel Ginete of the Province of the Philippines, to see the work he is doing to reestablish the Church there through a program sponsored by the Union of Superior Generals. After he returns to Rome, he will attend meetings of the Societies of Apostolic Life and the Union of Superior Generals.

In December, The Superior General will be in Rome for Tempo Forte meetings, along with the annual gathering of Mass and a meal with our priest-confreres studying at the Leonine. He will then visit the Daughters of Charity in Northern Africa, soon to join the newly reconfigured Province in Southern Spain. He will also visit with our confreres in Tunisia. A visit with the Daughters in Algeria will occur in Mauritania, as the Algerian government does not easily grant visas. He will spend Christmas at the Curia with the confreres. On January 1, 2015, the Superior General will go to Paris for the annual New Year's Day address to the Daughters of Charity.

Please know of my good wishes and prayers for each of you. May the Lord Jesus bless and sustain you and may St. Vincent continue to intercede for the good of our Little Company.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General