

Tempo Forte Meeting Summary

December 1-5, 2014

Dear Confreres,

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

December signifies the start of *Tempo Forte*, but this time we decided to have the retreat day that introduces it at the end of the week, not the beginning. We made this adjustment to include our student-priest confreres studying in Rome who were coming to join us for Mass and a meal. Our topic for reflection was the *vow of stability*. Fr. Giuseppe Turati gave a conference and led a group discussion. Then we enjoyed the Eucharist, some fellowship, and a nice *pranzo* together.

We began *Tempo Forte* with updates on various aspects of governance of the Congregation. First, we reviewed preparations for the **2016 General Assembly**. With us during Tempo Forte was the *Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly* who were holding their second planning meeting. They presented us with a draft of the schedule for the assembly and redaction of the directory, both of which will go to the Visitors for review and comment. We also approved the “logo” for the General Assembly, which is accompanied with a video explaining its meaning.

The *Ratio Formationis* has been completed and approved by the General Council. Its promulgation with the text *will be published in the December issue of Vincentiana* in French, Spanish, and English. A meeting of **Vincentians who serve as Bishops** will take place in Rome June 23 to 25, 2015 at the Casa Immacolata. The coordinators for this gathering are Bishop Varghese Thottamkara, from the Apostolic Vicariate in Nekemte, Ethiopia; Fr. Javier Alvarez, Vicar General; and Fr. Shijo Kanjirathamkunnel, Postulator and Procurator General.

A first-ever meeting of all *Superiors serving in the International Missions* will take place in Rome in September 2015. Superiors from provincial and regional missions will also be invited. Coordinating this meeting is Fr. Mathew Kallammakal, the Assistant General, who oversees the International Missions, and Fr. Justin Eke, a missionary assigned to Papua New Guinea currently studying in Rome. The topics covered will include proper preparation for mission work; mission in a multicultural setting; the importance of enculturation; economic matters affecting the mission; and studying relevant documents of the Congregation, such as the *Ratio Missionum*, *Statutes for the International Missions* and a *Practical Guide for the Local Superior*.

Finally, the General Council has decided to undertake a group retreat in Jerusalem in May 2016 before we end our six-year term of service to the Congregation. This retreat will include a time of evaluation in order to prepare for the General Assembly, which starts soon after.

We received a report from Fr. John Maher, ***Director of Communications, who alerted us to ongoing problems in finding translators*** for our publications, web sites, and the Secretariat. Of particular concern is the dire lack of French translators. We need help with translating from French to English, French to Spanish, and English to Spanish. We were long on discussion but short on immediate solutions. Hopefully, confreres reading this circular will be sympathetic and assist us in doing this difficult, but essential work for the service of the Congregation. Volunteers are always welcome, and their contributions will insure the publications of the Congregation are available to more people. On behalf of the Council, I thank the confreres and members of the Vincentian Family who faithfully serve as translators. We depend on your help!

The Council asked Fr. Maher to continue moving forward the Fam-Vin website strategic plan. He is working with Fr. John Freund, web master, and Fr. Joe Agostino to revamp the Vincentian Family website. They are trying to form a team of persons who will represent various cultures and countries to make the website more international and strengthen our ongoing formation efforts for the Vincentian Family. The Council believes that a thorough revision of the Fam-Vin web site is a good way to promote our Vincentian charism and invite dialogue. Our yearly theme for 2015 is “Collaboration in the Vincentian Family.” As you know, this is the way we are integrating the “Lines of Action” from the General Assembly into the life of the Congregation.

We had discussion and evaluated the ***CIF (Center for International Formation) program***. I want to thank Fathers Dan Borlik and Adam Bandura for their report and the great work they have done in planning and evaluating various CIF programs. This year, CIF not only held its programs and workshops in Paris, but also went ‘on the road’ with a program in Eastern Europe. We will continue to evaluate CIF in 2015, as Fathers Dan and Adam will continue to collaborate.

We had our yearly meeting with ***Fr. Robert Maloney*** who serves as ***President of Franz Foundation***. We discussed the progress made in building up Patrimonial Funds for developing provinces. We spoke about ways the Congregation and Franz Foundation are working together to finalize our goal of fully funding the Patrimonial Funds. We thank God for a ***generous donation by the Province of Slovakia***, which brings us closer to attaining our Patrimonial Fund goal.

We discussed a project undertaken by the General Curia ***on helping provinces to become more self-sufficient***. This report will be sent to the Franz Foundation for their review. It is our hope that, with Franz

Foundation support, workshops on “Wise Asset Management Workshops” and assistance from DBI, a consulting firm, we can help provinces to become self-sufficient. At their January meeting, the Franz Foundation will discuss the viability of several project proposals we submitted concerning Vincentian parishes. We look forward to the results their review.

The Superior General reported on his recent meeting of the **Union of Superior Generals** that he attended. Topics discussed included impressions by the Superior Generals on the October Synod of Bishops on the Family, and a document the group is formulating on the relationship between the local bishop and those in consecrated life or societies of apostolic life. The Superior General also reported on “**Solidarity with South Sudan**”, a program spearheaded by the USG for religious congregations to work together and re-establish the Church in a new, unstable country.

I noted that our confrere, **Fr. Manuel Ginete** has been working in South Sudan under the auspices of this project of the USG for four years. I shared my impression of this project and my visit with him in South Sudan last November. Fr. Manny has concentrated his efforts in the area of pastoral education to assist bishops, clergy, and lay leaders in assuming leadership positions to fulfill the mission of the Church in South Sudan. He lives in a simple, inter-congregational community in Juba City, the capital of South Sudan. You can read about his work in the September 2104 issue of *Vincentiana* where he was interviewed.

We received a verbal report from Fr. Maloney on the “**Wise Asset Management**” workshops that he and a team have conducted. They have made presentations in the **Provinces of North and South India**. Their next workshop is in the new **Region of Kenya**, which is affiliated with the Western Province, USA. It will be open to Vincentian Family members in Nairobi. These workshops are designed for superiors, local or provincial economies, and people who want to learn how to write grants or learn how to seek funding to advance the Vincentian charism. These workshops are held twice a year, so we recommended various provinces over the next two years.

In terms of economic issues, **we reviewed the budget proposals for 2015**. We approved the budgets for the International Missions. Fr. Joe Geders, Econome General, distributed a **document to the Council from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life**. It provides valuable and practical information on how to administer the economic goods of a Congregation, and gives guidelines for proper financial procedures and controls according to current best practices. We also approved **new members for the Finance Committee** for the Congregation in place of those who finished their terms of service.

We shifted our discussion to the *International Missions of the Congregation*. By January 25, our mission in Angola will increase to four members, which we believe will help stabilize both the community and its mission work. We studied *reports from the Missions in Tunisia, Chad, and Benin, and the future mission in Alaska, USA*. To help stabilize our international missions, and to help our confreres there mature in their ministry, *we have proposed a workshop for the superiors of the International Missions in 2015 in Rome*.

In addition, *we are initiating a course in formation in our International Missions*. Both proposals were the work of Fr. Stanislaw Zontak, Assistant General. With Council approval, they will be enacted by Fr. Mathew Kallammakal, Assistant General who oversees the International Missions. The course for new missionaries will involve instruction at Pontifical Universities in Rome, such as the Gregorian or the Urbaniana. There will also be preparation and discussion of Vincentian missions and administrative aspects of life in the missions from the perspective of the Congregation. We will begin this new venture in fall, 2015 with at least two confreres who are preparing for the International Missions.

We reviewed *three applications of confreres wishing to go to the International Missions*. We also reviewed *two requests from Bishops for missionaries* to serve in their dioceses: one from *Central Africa*, and another from our confrere Bishop in *Madagascar*. We were unable to respond affirmatively to either request. If confreres from provinces located in these mission areas wish to come forward and volunteer to serve there, we would be supportive. But *we have decided as a Council not to accept any new missions now*, so we can concentrate on stabilizing and better developing our current International Missions.

As for *Vincentian Family* matters, Fr. Joseph Agostino, the Coordinator of the *Vincentian Family Haitian Initiative*, has asked that the Superior General reappoint Fr. Joseph Foley to this board for another three-year term, which he did. Fr. Faustino Burgos, Visitor of the Province of Puerto Rico, has agreed to serve on this board, replacing Fr. Raphael Verlux. I thank Fr. Raphael for his three years of service on this commission.

We had a report from various Conferences of Visitors. Most noteworthy was a report of the *National Conferences of Visitors, USA*, which brought news of an active discussion occurring about reconfiguration between the Eastern Province and the New England Province. We then had an interchange of information regarding our calendars for the next three months, and we took time to map out and schedule various canonical visitations that will occur through the end of this administration in 2016. We also finalized the dates of General Council meetings in 2015, and those of the Tempo Forte meetings as well.

The following is the schedule of the Superior General for the next three months.

As in past years, he will go to Paris On December 31 to visit the Daughters of Charity and offer a New Year's Day conference. Then he will visit with a local community of confreres in the Province of Paris. From January 3-8, he will visit the Province of the Congo. From January 10-12 he will be back in Paris to meet with the Vincentian Family Executive Committee, consists of the heads of the four branches of the Family: the Congregation of the Mission, Daughters of Charity, International Association of Charity (AIC), and Society of St. Vincent de Paul. From January 14-18, he will go to Madrid, Spain to meet with the International Council of the Vincentian Marian Youth. January 21-27 he will be in Bogotá, Colombia for the International Council meeting of MISEVI (Vincentian lay missionaries.) At this time, he will join confreres in the Province of Colombia on January 25 for the annual celebration of Foundation Day.

For most of the month of February, the Superior General will visit the Northern and Southern Provinces of India. While there, he will participate in the meeting of the Asia-Pacific Visitors Conference, and will take part in the annual Vincentian Family gathering in India. He returns to Rome for meetings and Tempo Forte from March 2-6. Following these meetings, from March 12-22, he and Fr. Stanislav Zontak will travel to Africa to visit the International Missions in Benin and Chad. On March 25, the Superior General will be in Paris to celebrate Mass and give a conference to the Daughters of Charity as they renew their vows. From March 26 to April 12, he will visit Bolivia to celebrate Holy Week with the Daughters of Charity taking part in their unique "evangelization river boat." This will be followed by a visit and retreat with confreres of El Alto and Cochabamba, two sites of the international mission in Bolivia. His time there will conclude with a gathering of the Vincentian Family.

As we enter into and enjoy the blessed seasons of Advent and Christmas, I pray that the Lord's deep and abiding love may be with you and bring you peace. Recall the Scripture we proclaim on Christmas vigil Mass; "*The grace of God has appeared, offering salvation to all*" (Ti. 2:11). May God's grace and peace be yours this holy season and throughout the year ahead.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General