

THEME:

Preparing for the 2016 General Assembly

Preparatory Commission Update

January 2015

The Preparatory Commission for General Assembly 2016 met in Rome during the General Council's recent tempo forte, from December 2-5, 2014.

Our time together began with prayer and dialogue, using the materials suggested to local communities to help enter into their domestic assemblies. We shared our reflections, especially on where we have heard the voice of those living in poverty in our own lives and ministries.

Our work together began with a review of the preparations for the Assembly that have begun in Chicago. Much of the groundwork has already been laid there for June-July 2016. We also spoke about the reflection articles that have been written to assist confreres in their preparations for the upcoming assemblies. All these articles, and the preparatory documents for the General Assembly, will appear in *Vincentiana* in early 2015, and will be posted on www.cmglobal.org

We then studied the evaluations of GA 2010, the Visitors Meeting of 2013 in New York, and additional recommendations made by the Superior General and his Council for the smooth running of an international meeting of the Congregation. Using the results of these evaluations and comments, the Commission made recommendations to the General Council regarding the Directory, a schedule for the three weeks of the Assembly, the names of confreres to be invited to work on various committees to help with preparations, and other activities which needed to be addressed before the beginning of the provincial assemblies. Two letters went to the Visitors, and these will also be posted, along with the other Assembly documents, on www.cmglobal.org

The next meeting of the Preparatory Commission will be in Rome in early December 2015, after the work of the provinces has been sent to Rome. Please continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide the Congregation in all our efforts during this time of assemblies in preparation for the 2016 General Assembly.

PART ONE:

Resources to Assist Confreres and Provinces in Preparation for the General Assembly

1.

Letter from the Preparatory Commission
for the 2016 General Assembly to the Visitors of the
Congregation of the Mission

“To all whom I send you, you shall go”
(Jer 1:7)

March 25, 2014

Dear Confrere,

May the peace of Christ be with us!

The 42nd General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission will be held at DePaul University in Chicago, IL (USA) from June 27 - July 15, 2016. The motto of the GA2016 is **“Let us allow ourselves to be renewed by the missionary vitality of our Vincentian vocation”**. The Superior General with his Council, in a letter dated December 23, 2013, has announced that the theme of the Assembly will be:

***“The Congregation of the Mission:
four hundred years of fidelity to its charism
and the New Evangelization”***

We, the members of the Preparatory Commission, met in Rome for a meeting on March 10-14, 2014, to begin our planning. Enclosed in this packet are items which we know will be useful for your Domestic and Provincial Assemblies.

We have included a **“Reflection Sheet”** to guide your local communities and your Province in its preparation for GA2016. You will notice that the questions recall the history of our foundation, the work of our previous Assembly, and the challenges which lie ahead of us over the next 6 years. Your response to these questions will aid the Commission in planning the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the GA2016.

We have also included a simple instruction sheet which explains the process we ask you to use during your Domestic and Provincial Assemblies. Along with these instructions, you will find a prayer asking God’s guidance during this process of preparation. Please invite the Confreres of your province to make use of it.

Enclosed you will also find an article entitled “A Practical Guide to Provincial Assemblies”. It is meant to be an aid to you in your planning for your Domestic and Provincial Assemblies.

Some items are also provided to help you with the usual tasks:

1. “Indications for the Presentation of Postulates to the General Assembly”. Each Province and confrere has the right to present postulates to the Assembly.
2. “Certificate of the Election of the Delegates for the General Assembly”. Every Province elects delegates to the Assembly according to C. 139 and S. 89 §2.
3. “Data Sheet of Participants to the General Assembly 2016”. We ask that you fill out this form and provide us with a picture of each delegate.

We ask that your Province complete your Domestic and Provincial Assemblies by September 2015. All the results of your deliberations should be sent to the Secretary General so as to arrive at the General Curia no later than **September 30, 2015**. We also ask that all the material be sent by e-mail in Word format to the Secretary General (e-mail: ag2016@cmglobal.org). This will aid the Commission in its work.

The year 2017 marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of our charism. We encourage every Province to celebrate it both on local and Provincial levels. You will see in the “**Reflection Sheet**” that we have provided you with the opportunity to begin planning for these events.

Thank you for your cooperation. May God fill us with his light and strength so that we might continue to be witnesses to those people who are most in need. Through the intercession of St. Vincent de Paul may our missionary vitality be renewed.

Your brothers in Christ,

Joseph V. Agostino
Coordinator

Adam Borowski
Secretary

Orlando Escobar

Joaquín González Hernando

Fernando Mucavele

Robertus Wijanarko

2.

A Practical Guide for the Provincial Assembly

Joseph V. Agostino, C.M.
Eastern Province USA

A. Introduction

Approximately every three years, confreres gather for Provincial Assemblies (C. 144.1). When they are well organized and run, they can be moments of grace in the life of a province, thus fulfilling their purpose: to preserve and promote the spiritual and apostolic life of the province and thus of the Congregation (cf. C. 135). When done poorly, they can be counter-productive to the very community life they are meant to enhance.

An effective Provincial Assembly does not just happen. It takes months of preparation, not only on the part of the Visitor, but also on the part of all the confreres of the province. Confreres in their domestic assemblies, as well as all those who attend the provincial assembly, should participate fully in the task at hand. And the decisions made at the assembly, both as norms and as advice to the provincial, should be observed or responded to as their subject matter demands (cf. S. 82).

With these three themes (***preparation, participation, and implementation***), I propose this format as the structure for this article. Throughout the entire Assembly process it is important to keep our eyes fixed on the heart of the reason for our gathering: to discern how God continues to call us to the service of the poor as a province and Congregation. As Vincent de Paul has taught us, "Let's be courageous! Let's go wherever God may call us. He will be our provider, let's not fear anything" (Repetition of Prayer, 22 August, 1655).

B. Preparation

Our Constitutions clearly state what is to be the purpose and scope of this gathering: "The provincial assembly, as a gathering of members who represent the province as delegates, has the following functions:

1. To establish norms for the common good of the province, within the limits of universal law and our own law, which obtain obligatory force after being approved by the superior general with the consent of his council;
2. As a consultative organ of the provincial, to deal with matters which can promote the good of the province;
3. To act on proposals which in the name of the province are to be presented to the General Assembly or the superior general;

4. To elect delegates to the General Assembly, when required;
5. To make norms for domestic assemblies, within the limits of universal law and our own law, and these do not need the approval of the superior general" (C. 143).

"The Visitor, according to the norm of our own law, convokes the Provincial Assembly; he presides over it and dissolves it, with its consent. Likewise, the Visitor, having heard his council, sets the date and designates the place in which the Provincial Assembly is to be held" (C. 146; S. 95). Thus, the Visitor and Council share a primary responsibility to organize and plan the provincial assembly, so it may achieve the maximum benefit to enhance the Mission and mission and community life of the confreres.

The Visitor, having heard his Council, also sets the Agenda for the assembly. When a Provincial Assembly is being held in preparation for a General Assembly, its theme and much of its agenda would have come from the Superior General, his Council, and the Preparatory Commission. The effectiveness of the work of the General Assembly greatly depends upon the seriousness with which the provinces engage in the tasks requested of them by Rome.

When a Provincial Assembly is an intermittent one, more time becomes available for discussion on those matters important for future vitality. Reconfiguration, the quality of community life, apostolic works, vocations, and the missionary character of the Congregation are but some themes that a province might choose to explore in an assembly. Ample opportunity should be provided for ongoing formation, spiritual enrichment (which provides an opportunity for a greater conversion for the Mission), quality prayer and Liturgical celebrations, as well as those essential moments when confreres are able to share with one another their hopes and their struggles in the living out of our Vincetian vocation.

Themes such as the above highlight the importance of having an Assembly every three years. Together, the Visitor and the confreres are responsible for the life and vitality of their province, and thus of the Congregation in that region. Together they determine the directions in which they need to go to respond to the signs of the times and the call of the Church (cf. C. 2). Furthermore, our Constitutions remind us that: "We do this through mutual sharing of experience, open and responsible dialogue in which differences of age and outlook interact, so that common directions may surface and develop, and lead to making decisions" (C. 37.1).

Any or many of these themes are potential Lines of Action for a province's Provincial Plan. An Assembly is another opportune moment in which a province may engage in the planning process. When confreres work together beyond their local community houses they may

grow in a greater awareness of each other's ministries and the challenges facing a province as a whole. Any planning process should have begun well before the time of the Assembly. Ideally, the Assembly thus becomes the moment in which a draft of the Provincial Project is presented, modifications are made, and the plan is approved to guide the work of the province for the next few years.

Thus we can see that legislation is only one of many facets of this community gem. And in light of our call to live in a continual state of renewal through the continual evaluation of our works and ministries (cf. C. 2), it is essential for a province to hold an Assembly at least every three years, as is our law (cf. C. 144.1). By so doing:

- The confreres have a greater personal investment in the life and works of their province because of the level of their consultation and involvement in the decisions which effect their lives;
- The confreres have a greater opportunity to build upon their relationships with each other and not with just their local community or the Visitor;
- The Visitor has a greater opportunity to understand the mind and heart of the confreres and engage with them in a constructive process of dialogue. Thus he governs in collaboration with all the confreres of the province and not just his Council; and
- There is a greater chance for the smooth running of a province when there is a greater opportunity for consultation and dialogue.

In addition to convoking the Provincial Assembly, the Visitor also appoints a Preparatory Committee to assist in its preparation and in the accomplishment of its goals. The work of this body is crucial to the smooth functioning of the assembly. And the quality of its communication with the confreres of the province, as well as the Visitor, determines how well prepared everyone will be to participate fully in this event. Our Statutes remind us that "before and during the assembly there is to be fostered free communication of information regarding the matters to be decided and the qualities of those to be elected" (S. 84).

1. The Agenda of the Preparatory Committee

No one likes to spend an inordinate amount of time dealing with the underlying mechanics of an assembly. Doing so will take away valuable time from the actual work of the confreres in assembly. It may also cause tensions within a group which do not lead to creativity. If the Preparatory Committee has done its work well, the opening session of the Assembly should move quickly and smoothly. Among the tasks to be accomplished at the start of the Assembly:

- a) The convening of the assembly by the Visitor;
- b) The presentation of the Preparatory Committee;
- c) The presentation of the moderator of the assembly (who has been nominated by the Preparatory Committee and appointed by the Visitor) by the coordinator of the Preparatory Committee. The moderator is most often a CM either from the province or from another province. This role is essential for the success of an Assembly. Without creating a job description the responsibilities of a moderator include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Explaining the process of the Assembly to the delegates and making sure that the Directory is understood;
 - ii. Maintaining the rhythm and flow of the Assembly, keeping it on track, on task, and on schedule;
 - iii. Maintaining order during the meetings with the assistance of the parliamentarian and timekeeper. The moderator guarantees that no one person or group dominates the floor of the Assembly and that everyone is given an opportunity to speak so that all voices may be heard;
 - iv. Knowing how and when: to extend the time allotted for a topic to be discussed, to move a discussion to a vote, or to simply move on to the next topic; and above all
 - v. Remaining as even-handed as possible (even neutral) regardless what postulata is being presented or what topic is being discussed.
- d) A roll call of the delegates by the moderator;
- e) The nomination and election of a secretary. In my experience, it is best for the Preparatory Committee to have already surfaced a viable candidate for this role, a confrere who has already agreed to undertake the task. That confrere is nominated from the floor by a member of the Preparatory Committee. Since there are usually very few people willing to take on this job, and capable of doing it well, that person is often quickly accepted by the assembly. It is also a best practice to have only one secretary for the entire assembly. This guarantees both the consistency and the quality of the final minutes which will be submitted.
- f) The presentation of the parliamentarian by the moderator (who has also been nominated by the Preparatory Committee and appointed by the Visitor). He has the important task of assisting the moderator of the Assembly with the smooth operation of the gathering. In his role, he assists the confreres in their following of the Directory which they will approve, knowing how to be both flexible and direct as circumstances may dictate.

- g) The presentation of the time keeper by the moderator (who has also been nominated by the Preparatory Committee and appointed by the Visitor). He also assists the moderator and the parliamentarian in the smooth running of the Assembly. By timing the interventions of the confreres (usually no more than two minutes and no second intervention until all who wish to speak have spoken), he helps to guarantee that the voice of all will be heard.
- h) The presentation of the proposed Rules and Procedures (the Directory) for the Assembly. When these have been simply and clearly drafted by the Preparatory Committee and presented to the delegates well in advance, they are often easily accepted by the assembly. A Provincial Assembly's vote on the Directory is binding (S. 101). We have found that a simplified version of Roberts Rules of Order has worked well for us in the Eastern Province and allows for both the discipline and the free-flow of discussion that constitutes a successful gathering. I have attached (at the end of this article) the Directory from a 2013 Assembly of a province as an example of how it may be formulated. It is by no means the only way to formulate a Directory.

The Preparatory Committee is also responsible to name and coordinate other confreres who will be responsible for various aspects of an assembly: vote counters (usually the two youngest confreres at the assembly who work with the elected secretary), small group facilitators and table secretaries (if needed), presiders and homilists for Eucharistic celebrations, etc. Finally, the Preparatory Committee sets the timetable and the Agenda for the work of the confreres in Domestic Assemblies as they prepare for the Provincial Assembly.

2. The Domestic Assembly

The Constitutions, Article 147 states: “§ 1. – The domestic assembly is convoked by the superior of the house or by the assistant who is exercising the total office of superior, and is held to prepare for the provincial assembly. § 2. – All those having active voice are to be called to the domestic assembly. § 3. – It is the function of the domestic assembly to deal with those things which the house wishes to propose to the provincial assembly as well as those things which the preparatory commission for the provincial assembly has proposed for discussion, and to deliberate about proposals”.

It is in the local community that every confrere has an opportunity to be engaged in the process of the assembly. Normally, more than one session would be required to accomplish the work sent from the Preparatory Commission. Thus it is very important that the Domestic Assembly is well planned:

- that the schedule and agenda for the assembly be published in advance,
- that the confreres have the materials for the sessions with ample time to prepare them,
- that a house secretary be appointed to record the minutes which need to be sent to the Preparatory Committee, and
- that the sessions be scheduled, to the greatest extent possible, so that every confrere in the house can attend them.

A review of Provincial Norms is often an agenda item for these assemblies. It is important for every confrere's voice to be heard, both in the review of the Norms as well as in the proposal of postulata for the Provincial Assembly. Creating an inviting atmosphere in which these discussions can take place is the responsibility of both the local superior as well as each confrere of the house.

Domestic Assemblies also provide an opportunity for the confreres to address those matters which most impact their missionary vocations.

- a) As a province explores the demands of reconfiguration, these local assemblies become an opportunity for the men to freely express their hopes and fears, their support and their resistance to the changes which are being proposed. It is at the local level where confreres will begin to understand how reconfiguration will impact their personal lives and ministries. It is also here that they will begin to experience the necessity for it and the benefits that will come from the creation of a new entity. Most importantly, the Domestic Assembly can underscore the fact that the confreres are in this together in order to be more effective in their service of the poor.
- b) Hopefully, the Provincial Assembly will allot time for ongoing formation on a theme of importance for the life of the province. The Domestic Assembly enables the confreres to prime the pump, so that the input given at the Provincial Assembly can have the greatest possible impact on the life of the province.

When well executed, the Domestic Assembly sets the stage for the work of the Provincial Assembly. The Preparatory Committee is responsible to communicate the results of these assemblies to the confreres so that all can benefit from the wisdom of each local house.

C. Participation

Both the Constitutions (146) and the Statutes (97-100) speak of our rules regarding delegates to the Provincial Assembly. In every case, the participation of as many confreres as possible in the work of the Assem-

bly should be greatly encouraged by the Visitor. In light of this call from our Constitutions, and given the reality of the size of most of our provinces, there is little reason why every confrere of the province should not be invited to attend an Assembly.

No doubt, Article 146 speaks of those who should participate by virtue of office. However, it also clearly leaves each province considerable discretionary room in choosing delegates to a provincial assembly. In addressing this issue, the Eastern Province USA, developed the following Norm 17 to guarantee the greatest possible inclusion of confreres:

17. *Membership of the provincial assembly:*

- a) *The membership of the provincial assembly is constituted in the following manner:*
 1. *All incorporated members are invited to attend and participate, with the right to vote, provided that they are present from the beginning and remain for the duration of the assembly.*
 2. *The provincial superior, the provincial consultors, and the provincial treasurer are ex-officio members of the assembly.*
 3. *Every house must ensure that at least one member of the house will attend the assembly. If the members of a house find that this is not feasible, the superior may petition the provincial for an exemption.*

In addition, any confrere who wishes to participate in the Assembly (even if he is unable to stay for its duration) is welcomed. Though he does not have the right to vote, he is invited to speak on the Assembly floor if he so chooses.

If a Norm such as this is not feasible in the context of a particular province, it is important that the province find a way to guarantee that all of its members are well represented: the young and the old, brothers and priests, the ministries of the province, etc.

At least one month in advance, all delegates should receive a copy of all the materials for the gathering. These may include, but not be restricted to:

- the schedule for the assembly,
- a list of delegates and visitors,
- the proposed rules of order (the Directory),
- Provincial Norms, as well as proposed Postulata, Advice to the Provincial, and comments from the confreres, and
- materials needed for the work of the assembly and/or ongoing formation.

Many provinces deal with postulata at all their assemblies. A major task of the preparatory committee is the gathering and organizing of this material. A necessary function of the Preparatory Committee is the proper vetting of what is submitted by the houses. Approval by a local community may not guarantee that a house's recommendation properly falls under the category of "postulata" or "advice to the provincial".

Unless otherwise noted, the postulata compiled by the Preparatory Committee would have been originally proposed by houses. They do not require a second on the floor of the Assembly. The Preparatory Committee should clearly state the preference that every confrere submit his postulata through their local house. And if the house votes no, that postulata does not move forward.

The Preparatory Committee designates postulata under one of the following categories. A delegate may move to reconsider the action of the Committee and propose a new designation. This motion is debatable and requires a simple majority.

NORM: a norm is a general rule which becomes binding in the Province after a positive vote by the Assembly and approval by the Superior General.

ADVICE TO THE PROVINCIAL: This is voted by the Assembly.

COMMENT: Comments are printed in the compilation of postulata for the benefit of the Provincial and the Assembly, but are not debatable nor voted.

The distinction is made following the prescriptions of our Constitutions (143) and Statutes (91).

Every confrere has the right to submit Postulata on the floor of the Assembly. The Moderator needs to make sure that it is written in proper form and correctly presented with necessary details. Postulata proposed by individual confreres require a second before consideration. They should not be treated before the Postulata or Advice to the Provincial that have gone through the Domestic Assemblies.

Some provinces have chosen to use the occasion of a Provincial Assembly to hold the election of a new visitor. Arguments can be stated both for and against such a procedure. In its favor, confreres could say that since the entire province is present at a Provincial Assembly, it becomes an opportune moment to allow everyone to participate in the election process. An election would further dignify the purpose of an Assembly and give even more reason for its being called.

However, those who oppose such a move would argue that the power and authority of a provincial assembly is quite different than that of a General Assembly. There is the danger that an election during it might degenerate into a popularity contest or a struggle for power between factions or groups in a province. There is not enough time for adequate

discernment about the qualities of the candidates, which again raises the issue of the cult of personality. And, an election at this may unduly hamper the Superior General and his Council in the confirmation and appointment of a Visitor (cf. C. 124; S. 68).

In light of these concerns, if a province chooses to elect a visitor at its assembly, it might want to carefully consider the following:

1. That the election take place at the end of the Assembly and only as the conclusion to a process that had begun months before the start of the gathering;
2. That the Assembly itself allow sufficient time for discernment and prayer before moving to election;
3. That the process used be clearly outlined for the General Council before it is begun; and
4. That confreres be clear that a new visitor has not been named until he has been confirmed by the Superior General and his Council.

A province may be well served if the Preparatory Committee becomes the Steering Committee of the Assembly. I would like to offer a number of reasons for this recommendation:

- a) Many details arise during the planning process which need to be carried out in the course of the Assembly. The members of this Committee are best prepared to anticipate what is needed for its smooth flow;
- b) The Committee remains in the background of the Assembly while it is convened. It is the function of the moderator, parliamentarian, and time keeper to direct the work of the gathering;
- c) There can be a serious gap in the process of the Assembly when those who have constructed its methodology are not able to assist with its execution;
- d) The rules pertaining to a Provincial Assembly are not the same as the rules pertaining to a General Assembly.

No doubt, there are those who would argue against such a move. Those reasons would include:

- a) There is the danger of putting too much control in the hands of too few people, allowing for the Assembly to take on a character that the confreres might otherwise not desire;
- b) It is good to involve many people in many parts of the process so that confreres feel invested in the work of the province;
- c) There is a danger that a Visitor or a group of confreres could attempt to manipulate the work of the Assembly so that it is not truly representative of the will of the entire province.

If there is a hesitancy to ask the Preparatory Committee to serve in this dual role, one possible solution would be for the confreres, at the opening of the Assembly, to elect one or two additional confreres to serve on the steering committee. This goal could also be achieved through an Assembly's approval of its parliamentarian and time keeper, who would, by role, be part of the administration of an assembly. What now follows are a number of recommendations that the Preparatory/Steering Committee, as well as a Visitor, might want to consider in the practical conducting of an assembly.

1. Do the work necessary to create appropriate spaces for the confreres during an assembly. When at all possible, the places for prayer, for small group and large group work, for meals, and for recreation should be distinct and prepared in such a way as to create the proper ambiance for what will occur within those spaces.
2. Utilize a variety of discussion methods during the course of the assembly. The right combination of small and large group dynamics, as well as reports and other presentations, will meet the needs of the majority of confreres.
3. The Provincial Assembly is advisory to the Visitor. The provincial and his council should allow the delegates to freely offer their advice without feeling a need to dominate the floor of the assembly. This is a prime moment when those in provincial authority have an opportunity to listen to the voice of their confreres.
4. Provide adequate time in the schedule for in depth discussions of questions of major importance to a province. The Congregation is not well served when major issues such as reconfiguration or apostolic activity are not well processed during an assembly. These dialogues should incorporate a multiplicity of methods that result in some concrete resolutions being made.

Every six years, the provincial assembly elects delegates and alternates to the General Assembly (C. 143, 4; S. 102). These confreres are being chosen for a very important task on behalf of the worldwide Congregation. Thus the members of the Provincial Assembly need to carefully discern the qualities of the men whom they will elect. General Assembly delegates need to be imbued with the missionary character of the community, able to see beyond the realities of a particular province to the international nature of the Congregation.

They are servants of the poor who have a clear understanding of the needs of persons living in poverty in today's world. Elected delegates ought to be collaborative, able and willing to work during the General Assembly with their confreres in a multicultural and multilingual envi-

ronment. They know and live our Vincentian charism. And they need stamina to meet the demands of a General Assembly. Needless to say, this election is neither a popularity contest nor a reward for past service. General Assembly delegates are the prophetic voices of the Congregation's future response to the mission that has been entrusted to us by St. Vincent and the Church.

Unfortunately, too many assemblies appear to occur in a vacuum. Rarely are the decisions made at a previous assembly taken into consideration during the current assembly. This can lead to a feeling on the part of many confreres that assemblies are a waste of time and money, with no tangible results to show for them. There are a number of correctives which can be put in place to address this sentiment.

- As the first order of business, the Visitor can present the decisions of the previous assembly and address how they have been implemented in the interim.
- As the last order of business, the confreres should be asked to evaluate the assembly so that its strengths can be built upon and its weaknesses corrected. This evaluation is the last document that the Preparatory/Steering Committee should prepare for the Visitor and his council and the first document that the next Preparatory Committee should receive as it begins its mandate.

With the approval of the delegates, the Visitor closes the Provincial Assembly (C. 125, 7) and begins the task of promulgating its norms (C. 145).

D. Implementation

At the conclusion of the assembly, the Steering Committee becomes the Evaluation (or wrap-up) Committee. It collates the results of the delegates' evaluation of the assembly, and submits it to the Visitor together with the Secretary's Minutes of the Assembly and the approved *Postulata* and *Advice* to the Provincial.

After the conclusion of the Assembly, the Visitor studies with the council the *Advice* he has received as well as any other recommendations that may have been made during the course of the gathering. The Visitor is responsible to report to the Province on the results of this study.

The Visitor sends the norms of the assembly to the Superior General, who should communicate a decision within two months after receiving them (S. 96). The *Practical Guide for Visitors* recommends: "In order to facilitate the work of the Superior General and the General Council, it is advised that the Visitor send a document in which he clearly lays out the text of the former Norm, and next to it, the totally new text or the changes in the original text, however small. If it is also

decided to send to the Superior General the minutes of the Assembly, as information, it should be sent in a document apart from the Norms” (Paragraph 220).

Norms approved by the Superior General bind the Visitor, as delineated in universal law and our own law (cf. S. 94). Norms remain in effect until they are revoked by a subsequent Provincial Assembly.

E. Conclusion

Assemblies, be they Domestic, Provincial, or General demand much work on the part of many confreres. Through their collaborative efforts, in an atmosphere of free and creative exchange, the life of the Congregation is strengthened and renewed.

The greatest fruit of an assembly is the rekindling of the missionary zeal of the confreres. “So then, let’s have this constant desire that the kingdom of God may be extended, and the zeal to work with all our might at it so that, having obtained the kingdom of God on earth, we may go to enjoy it in heaven. Let’s keep this lamp always lit in our hearts” (St. Vincent on *Seeking the Kingdom of God*, 21 February, 1659).

In these times when reconfiguration is a major theme for most of the Congregation, an assembly can be a powerful tool for moving us forward in response to the pressing needs of the poor and of the Church today. Vincent de Paul reminds us that we are far from the “final form” that our Congregation will take. Gathered together in prayer, discernment, and dialogue confreres can more easily hear and respond to the Spirit who ever calls us to new creativity in the proclamation of the Gospel to the poor. May we remain ever true to that prophetic mission that has been entrusted to us by our Founder.

May, 2014

3.

**A Possible Directory for Running a Provincial Assembly:
*Notes from a Recent Provincial Assembly****The Responsibility of a Delegate:*

1. To be present during the course of the entire Assembly, from the opening on _____ until the closing on _____;
2. To participate in all discussions and Assembly processes;
3. To vote on all matters that are presented for the Assembly's consideration.

The Responsibility of a Participant:

1. To be present for as much of the Assembly as possible;
2. To participate in all discussions and Assembly processes;
3. A participant does not vote.

To be voted upon at the Assembly*Proposed Rules and Procedures:*

1. Every confrere present will be able to speak on the proposals. Participants need not wait until all delegates have had an opportunity to speak before they request to speak.
2. There will be a time limit of two minutes each time a confrere speaks.
3. No one can speak twice before others who want to speak have had an opportunity to do so.
4. The Steering Committee may set time limits on debate. Any delegate can move to extend debate. A second is required. The motion is non-debatable and requires a simple majority.
5. The voting is done only by delegates. The delegates include those elected and all incorporated members who have notified the Provincial that they will be in attendance from the beginning and for the duration of the Assembly.
6. Voting on the postulata will take place in the order suggested by the Preparatory Committee as approved or revised by the body.
7. If an amendment is proposed, all debate will be directed toward the amendment until it is resolved.
8. Voting will be done by a show of hands. If the decision of the Assembly is abundantly clear by a show of hands, the votes will not be counted unless requested by a delegate.

9. A “simple majority” means more than half the votes say “yes” or “no”. Invalid votes and abstentions are not counted. With an equal number of yes and no votes, the motion fails.
10. A “two-thirds majority” means two-thirds or more of the valid votes saying “yes” or “no”. Invalid votes and abstentions are not counted. If there is exactly two-thirds, the motion carries.
11. An “absolute majority” is more than half the number of valid votes.

Types of Postulata

Unless otherwise noted, the postulata compiled by the Preparatory Committee will have been originally proposed by houses. They do not require a second. Postulata originally proposed by individual confreres require a second before consideration.

The Preparatory Committee designates postulata under one of the following categories. A delegate may move to reconsider the action of this Committee and propose a new designation. This motion is debatable and requires a simple majority.

NORM: a norm is a general rule which becomes binding in the Province after a positive vote by the Assembly and approval by the Superior General.

ADVICE TO THE PROVINCIAL: This is voted by the Assembly.

COMMENT: Comments are printed in the compilation of postulata for the benefit of the Provincial and the Assembly, but are not debatable nor voted.

The distinction is made following the prescriptions of our Constitutions (143) and Statutes (91). Norms are “general rules applicable to all cases described in them”. The Assembly is consultative to the Provincial in matters reserved to him by law or “by his executive power necessary for carrying out his office”.

Rules of Order

The rules of debate, voting and procedure will be moved at the beginning of the Provincial Assembly. They may be discussed and amended. They will be enacted by a simple majority. Once enacted, they may be suspended by a two-thirds majority. When motions are proposed by a house or committee, they do not need a second. When introduced by a single confrere, they do. Postulata proposed to the Preparatory Committee by a single confrere are designated as such in the Assembly materials.

Other motions, in order of precedence, are:

Motion	Debatable or not?	How it is done
Raising a point of order	- not debatable	- chair recognizes
Dividing the motion	- not debatable	- simple majority
Suspending the rules	- not debatable	- two-thirds majority
Reconsidering an action taken	- debatable	- simple majority
Taking from the table	- not debatable	- simple majority
Ending debate	- not debatable	- two-thirds majority
Extending debate	- not debatable	- simple majority
Referring to committee	- debatable	- simple majority
Amending	- debatable	- simple majority

Types of Legislation

NORMS – The Provincial Assembly may “establish norms for the common good of the Province, within the limits of universal law and our own law, which obtain obligatory force after being approved by the Superior General with the consent of his Council” (Const. 143.1). “They remain in force until they are revoked by a subsequent Provincial Assembly or by the Superior General” (Stat. 94).

ORDINANCES – It is a function of the Provincial, “with the assent of his council, to enact ordinances for the good of the Province” (Const. 125.2). “The ordinances of a Provincial remain in force until the next Provincial Assembly, unless another provision has been made by the Provincial or his successor” (Stat. 71).

PROVINCIAL PLAN – “It is the function of the Provincial, in accord with the provincial norms and the consent of his council, to establish the provincial plan” (Stat. 69.1). An Assembly’s action on this is “advice to the provincial”.

4.

**General Assembly 2016:
“Reflection Sheet” for Domestic and Provincial Assemblies**

**THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION:
FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF FIDELITY TO ITS CHARISM
AND THE NEW EVANGELIZATION**

“To all whom I send you, you shall go”

(Jer 1:7)

I. 400 years as a Congregation allows us to remember our history

“God is the one who calls us and who, from all eternity, has destined us to be Missioners, since He didn’t bring us to birth either one hundred years earlier or later” (SVP XI, 98, Conference of 29.10.1638).

“You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things” (Vita Consecrata, 110).

1. Share with the confreres your experience in the Congregation (origins, crucial moments, joys, sorrows, etc.).
2. The Congregation of the Mission is called to follow Christ, evangelizing the poor. As we look at our life as Vincentian:
 - 2.1. at the local level:
 - 2.1.1. how do we manifest the charism?
 - 2.1.2. how not?
 - 2.2. at the Provincial level:
 - 2.2.1. how do we manifest the charism?
 - 2.2.2. how not?
 - 2.3. at the level of the Congregation:
 - 2.3.1. how do we manifest the charism?
 - 2.3.2. how not?
3. What recommendations do you have for the celebration of the 400th anniversary of our foundation:
 - 3.1. on the local level?
 - 3.2. on the Provincial level?

II. 400 years as a Congregation invites us to renew our Vincentian missionary vitality

“The Vincentian community is, therefore, organized to prepare its apostolic activity and to encourage and help it continually. And so, members, individually and collectively, should strive to fulfill their common mission through a wholehearted spirit of renewal in fraternal union” (C. 19).

Community and mission

4. In what ways is the communal life in your province sustaining the Vincentian missionary vitality of your apostolates?
 - 4.1. How not?
5. In what ways does the apostolate support community life?
 - 5.1. How not?

The Lines of Action of General Assembly 2010

In 2010 the members of the Congregation of the Mission resolved to develop the following Lines of Action:

- *Formation (initial and ongoing)*
 - *Reconfiguration*
 - *Dialog with the poor and with the Vincentian Family*
 - *Creativity in our ministries*
 - *The methodology of Systemic Change*
6. How have the Lines of Action helped us to renew the Vincentian missionary spirit of our Province?
 7. Which elements mentioned in the Lines of Action do we need to continue to develop over the next 6 years for the continued growth of our Congregation?

III. 400 years as a Congregation invites us to discover the possibilities and challenges for the New Evangelization

“We need to let ourselves be evangelized by the poor. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church’s pilgrim way” (Evangelii Gaudium, 198).

8. *“All of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth’. Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out” (Evangelii Gaudium, 20).* Today, after 400 years, which five specific contributions should the Congregation offer to the New Evangelization?

9. Pope Francis invites us to be “*Spirit-filled Evangelizers*” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 259).
 - 9.1. What aspects of our Vincentian spirituality should be reinforced today?
 - 9.2. How vibrant are the ministries of preaching and reconciliation in our lives and apostolates as Vincentians?
10. What should we do to help in the formation:
 - 10.1. of the clergy?
 - 10.2. of the laity?
11. “*Our gracious Father wants to hear the cry of the poor*” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 187). How does the cry of the poor resound in/affect you?
12. “*All of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel*” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20).
 - 12.1. Where are the peripheries in which your Province is serving?
 - 12.2. What are the peripheries to which your Province should move?
 - 12.3. What are the peripheries to which the Congregation should go?
13. “*The Congregation of the Mission... should take care to open up new ways and use new means adapted to the circumstances of time and place*” (C. 2). Furthermore, the New Evangelization reminds us that both as Church and Congregation we are international and multicultural, called to work in a spirit of collaboration and solidarity.
 - 13.1. In regard to collaboration (personnel and projects) and solidarity (economic resources):
 - 13.1.1. what is your local community doing?
 - 13.1.2. what is your Province doing?
 - 13.1.3. what more can your Province do?
 - 13.2. In regard to multicultural and international nature of the Congregation:
 - 13.2.1. what are the challenges for your local community?
 - 13.2.2. what are the challenges for your Province?
 - 13.2.3. what are the challenges for the Congregation?
 - 13.2.4. should the Superior General and his Council promote the International Missions as a way to strengthen our international missionary vocation?
14. What other suggestions would you like to offer to your Province and the Congregation for consideration over the next 6 years?

5.

Instructions for the Reflections by the Domestic and Provincial Assemblies

Before the Domestic Assemblies:

The Preparatory Commission would recommend that the local communities spend some time in recollection together before beginning their work. We offer the following to guide this time of prayer:

Exodus 3:7-10

SVP, Conference of October 29, 1638 (SVP XI, 98)

Constitutions 2 and 19

Vita Consecrata, 110

Evangelii Gaudium, 20, 187, 198, 259

Please end your time of reflection with the “Prayer for the Time of Assemblies”.

The Domestic Assemblies:

The Preparatory Commission recommends that each local community gather for as much time as necessary to consider the questions that have been posed in preparation for both the Provincial and General Assemblies. All confreres should bring with them to the Domestic Assemblies a copy of the Lines of Action of GA 2010 in order to respond to Questions #6 and #7. Question #1 is designed to be shared by the confreres in the local communities only. This sharing does not need to be sent to either the Provincial or the General Assemblies. We ask that a summary of the responses of the local communities to the rest of the reflection questions be submitted to each Province’s Preparatory Commissions, so that they may be discussed during the Provincial Assemblies. Each local house should also submit any postulates that it may have for GA 2016 for consideration by its Provincial Assembly.

The Provincial Assembly:

The Preparatory Commission requests that each Province send to the General Curia in Rome the synthesis of the responses to the questionnaire except for #3 which is meant for provincial use. We ask that these responses be as concrete and practical as possible, so that they may help us to formulate realizable goals for the future. At the same time we ask that each Province submit any postulates that it has approved for GA 2016.

Please send these responses to the Curia (ag2016@cmglobal.org) before **September 30, 2015**.

6.

Prayer for the Time of Assemblies

O God, merciful Father,
who has sent your Son as Savior of the World,
you have chosen us to announce the Gospel to the poor,
our Lords and Masters.

We give you thanks for having called us to this missionary vocation.

We are on our journey to the 42nd General Assembly
of the Congregation of the Mission.

We ask you to give us the light of your Spirit to enlighten our minds,
to strengthen our wills, and to make us docile to your inspirations,
so that we can be attentive to the call of the Gospel
and of the Church,
and to discern the signs of the times.

Open our hearts to your divine grace.
May this be a time of communion and of participation,
so that we can be prophetic witnesses
of your love to the whole world.

Living in this continual state of renewal
may we remain faithful to the charism of St. Vincent
in this age of the new evangelization.

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal,
as we begin the fourth centenary of our Vincentian charism,
help us to bring the joy of the Gospel to the ends of the earth,
so that no periphery will be deprived of your light,
and the poor will again be in the centre of the Church
and of our lives.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

7.

Instructions for Presentation of Posulata to the General Assembly

1. Every confrere, community, province or region of the Congregation of the Mission has the legitimate right to send its wishes, suggestions and petitions to the General Assembly (cf. Code of Canon Law, Canon 631, 3°).
2. Not every wish, suggestion or petition presented to the General Assembly is, per se, a postulate. A postulate, properly so called, is every petition, desire or suggestion legitimately sent to the General Assembly by a physical or moral person of the Congregation, **in view of the good of the entire Congregation** or of almost the entire Congregation, be it according to the Constitutions and Statutes, be it against the Constitutions and Statutes, be it outside the Constitutions and Statutes, and which the General Assembly must treat. Concretely, the following constitute material for a postulate:
 - Requesting some modification in the Constitutions (cf. C. 137, 4°), or in the Statutes (cf. C. 137, 3°);
 - Asking to have a Decree promulgated (cf. C. 137, 3°);
 - Requesting the authentic interpretation of some point of the Statutes (cf. C. 137, 5°);
 - Asking that the authentic interpretation of some point of the Constitutions be requested of the Holy See (cf. C. 137, 5°);
 - Requesting a declaration of doctrinal or exhortative character;
 - Requesting that the General Assembly include some particular theme in the project of the Congregation for the next six years.
3. The General Assembly, as the supreme authority of the Congregation, has the right to determine which of those presented as postulates it desires to treat during the Assembly itself and which it does not, referring the latter, as it sees fit, to other forums (Superior General, General Council, Visitor, Provincial Council or Assembly, etc.).
4. Before the General Assembly, the Preparatory Commission studies the postulates received and makes appropriate recommendations to the Assembly as to how those postulates should be studied, always safeguarding the right of the Assembly to discuss and study them as it wishes (cf. Directory of the General Assembly).
5. Postulates are approved by an absolute majority of the valid votes, with the exception of those which suppose an amendment to the Constitutions or request an authentic interpretation which must be

sent to the Holy See (cf. C. 137, 4° and 5°), for which a majority of two-thirds is required (cf. Directory of the General Assembly).

6. To facilitate the work of the Assembly, it is helpful that the postulates be formed with attention to these **formal criteria**:
 - 6.1. Each postulate must be limited to presenting only one point and must be drafted on an independent sheet.
 - 6.2. The postulate must be written in a positive/declarative sense, in such a way as to allow one to pronounce clearly with a YES or a NO.
 - 6.3. Each postulate must be motivated in a clear and precise way, distinguishing between the postulate properly so-called and its motivation. The name of persons or communities (province or region) who present it must also be included in the presentation of the postulate.
 - 6.4. It is not convenient to be lavish in the presentation of postulates, nor to propose to the General Assembly that which could be the result of taking into account the principles of co-responsibility, unity in diversity, subsidiarity and decentralization (cf. C. 98).

8.

Certificate of the Election of the Delegates for the General Assembly

PROVINCE OF _____

Date of the election of the delegate(s) _____

Number of confreres with active voice in the Province on the election day _____

The Province, in conformity with the Constitutions (art. 139) and Statutes (art. 89 § 2) of the Congregation of the Mission, elected as delegate(s) and substitute(s) for the 2016 General Assembly the confreres:

Delegate(s):

Family Name and first (Christian) name	Date of birth	Date of vows

Substitute(s):

Family Name and first (Christian) name	Date of birth	Date of vows

The delegate(s) and the substitute(s), duly elected, accept their election and declare their willingness to be present at the General Assembly, which will begin on 27 June 2016 at DePaul University in Chicago, IL (USA).

Signatures of the Visitor, the Secretary of the Assembly, the delegate(s) and substitute(s).

Date of the Certificate and seal

9.

Data Sheet of Participants to the General Assembly 2016

- 1. Name & Family Name: _____
- 2. Status: Brother: _____; Priest: _____; Other: _____
- 3. Birth: Date _____
 Place _____
- 4. Province: _____
- 5. Address: _____

- 6. Date of Vows _____
- 7. Date of Ordination (Priest): _____
- 8. Present Ministry: _____
- 9. Apostolic Experiences (Work, Place, Year):

- 10. Principal Responsibilities in the Congregation of the Mission, indicating the years (for example, as superior, council member, formator, etc.):

- 11. Languages: Spoken _____
 Written _____
- 12. Any other information that you would like to give about yourself.

(Please send your response, together with your passport size color picture, to the General Curia on or before **September 30, 2015**. Thank You.)

10.

Letter from the Preparatory Commission to the Visitors

CONGREGAZIONE DELLA MISSIONE
CURIA GENERALIZIA, ROMA

Rome, 12 December 2014

Dear Visitor,

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us!

During the second meeting of the Preparatory Commission for General Assembly 2016, we reviewed the process for the election of the Superior General outlined in the Directory. Article n. 36,1 states:

At least six months before the Assembly, the Preparatory Commission of the General Assembly will send a letter to all the Visitors of the Congregation asking them, together with their Councils, after having consulted the confreres they wish, to present three possible candidates for the office of Superior General in order of preference...

We encourage you to consult as many confreres as possible in this process. Some of you may choose to do so during your Provincial Assemblies.

Please email the three names of your candidates along with the results of your Provincial Assembly before **September 30, 2015**. Please send all your documents to the Curia at the following address: ag2016@cmglobal.org .

Thank you for your continued collaboration.

Your brothers in Christ,

Joseph V. Agostino
Coordinator

Adam Borowski
Secretary

Orlando Escobar
Joaquín González Hernando
Fernando Mucavele
Robertus Wijanarko

11.

Letter from the Superior General to the Visitors

CONGREGAZIONE DELLA MISSIONE
CURIA GENERALIZIA, ROMA

Rome, 12 December 2014

To all Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

RE: Postulata for the General Assembly 2016

Dear Visitor,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your heart now and forever!

In order to assist our confreres in the formulation of postulata for General Assembly 2016, I ask that every Visitor appoint a confrere, an expert in canon Law, to evaluate the postulata submitted from the province for General Assembly in 2016. If necessary, please ask your local expert to help formulate what is submitted in the proper form of a postulata, so that it can be brought to the floor of the Assembly. Thank you for your collaboration in this task.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General