

Tempo Forte Circular

March 1-8, 2015

Dear Confreres,

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

A full agenda: Our March Tempo Forte held a full agenda, so much so that we extended our meeting an extra day! We begin with a retreat day on the vow of chastity, presented by Fr. Joseph Geders, Econome General. A summary of our reflections on this vow will appear in the this Vincentiana. We also held our first domestic assembly in preparation for the General Assembly, with another in June to discuss Assembly documents.

Visits from new Visitors: We met with some confreres in leadership positions. These included Fr. Franz Kangler, Visitor of the new Province of Austria- Germany, Fr. Bernadin Yoka-Mongu, Visitor of the Province of Congo, Fr. John Prager, Visitor of the Province of Ecuador, Fr. Bernard Shoepfer, Director General of the Daughters of Charity, and Fr. Wlodzimierz Malota, former superior of the mission in Papua New Guinea.

General Assembly, 2016: We continued preparations for our General Assembly, setting up a committee to oversee submitted postulata. Chaired by Fr. Shijo Kanjirathamkunnel, Procurator and Postulator General, it includes Fr. Arkadiusz Zakreta, former Visitor of the Province of Poland, along with other confreres yet to be named.

Working with San Egidio: We decided as a house to participate in a project of the Community of San Egidio to assist homeless people, which involves providing a place to reside on the property of a religious house in Rome, giving them a mailing address and access to medical care and social services. We received Marek, who lives in his trailer on our property, and uses our bathroom facilities. On occasion, he joins us for Mass and a meal. This is an effort of San Egidio to address the problem of the homeless living in Rome. Pope Francis also affirmed this program as a practical way for religious houses in Rome to assist the poor. We welcome Marek.

Vincentian Family Commission: We approved a recommendation from the Vincentian Family Collaborative Commission to have a presentation at the General Assembly on the Vincentian Family. It will be

done as a video showing experiences of collaboration among the Vincentian Family, including the Vincentian Family Collaborative Action Program.

Vincentian Bishops: We prepared for our first gathering in Rome with confreres-bishops. We have almost half of thirty-five Vincentian bishops attending this three-day meeting. We welcome a chance to exchange ideas on living the Vincentian charism in the episcopacy; to provide insight on interacting with our Congregation; and discussions on spirituality and our Vincentian identity.

Reconfiguration report: We then resumed our discussion of reconfiguration, with updates from the Assistants General of the status of efforts in Italy, Spain, France, CLAPVI-North (Northern Latin America and the Caribbean), CLAPVI-South, and Asia-Pacific (the Province of Oceania and the Solomon Islands). We met with Fr. Franz Kangler, Visitor of the new Province of Austria-Germany (as of January 1), who gave us a report on integrating two provinces into one.

General Curia Personnel: Fr. Mario Di Carlo, house superior, experienced health problems in early February, resulting in a triple by-pass operation and rehabilitation. We are most happy to have him back among us. Fr. Vincenzo Zontak will complete his year of service in June. We are grateful for his many contributions, and we look forward to the arrival of Br. L'ubormir Zemla as a replacement. We are also glad to have Br. Gerardo Fajardo of the Province of the Philippines.

General Curia reconstruction: Fr. Joe Geders presented the cost of repairing the center and side stairwells outside the Curia building, a problem discovered while resurfacing and repainting of the external building surfaces. Due to steady structural deterioration over the years, both stairwells need significant outside repair, and window replacement. This unexpected problem will be a major added expense. We will be asking provinces for assistance in covering the cost.

Communications Office: We received our quarterly report from Fr. John Maher, Director of Communications. We are happy to accept the recommendation of Fr. Maher to appoint Fr. Aidan Rooney to succeed Fr. John Freund as Coordinator of the Vincentian Family web site (i.e. "FamVin"). We asked them to work out a transition plan. We see this website as being the charge of the new Vincentian Family Office to maintain and update the many social media facets of the FamVin Project such as Facebook, Pinterest, etc. Its "URL" is: (<http://famvin.org/>)

Fr. Maher will finish his four-year term in June and return home to the Eastern Province, USA. As Director of Communications, he has served as Editor of *Vincentiana*, chair of the Editorial Board, secretary to the SIEV Commission, as well as assisting the Superior General.

Fr. Jorge Rodriguez, who edits NUNTIA, will become Director of Communications upon Fr. Maher's departure. He offered us a communications plan with enhanced use of social media. We seek a confrere for editor of Vincentiana to work with Fr. Jorge after Fr. Maher's departure.

CIF Program: We received a report from Fr. Stanislav Zontak, Assistant General responsible the CIF program, (Center for International Formation) who informed us that the next CIF session begins April 10 in Paris. Fathers Dan Borlik and Adam Bandura serve as CIF co-directors. They sent us a list of the CIF programs for the coming year, including one on the Vincentian Family. This is very timely as we prepare for the "Year of Collaboration with the Vincentian Family."

Vincentian Solidarity Office: We had a report from Fr. Miles Heinen, Director of the Vincentian Solidarity Office. (VSO) We are in the final fund-raising phase of the Patrimonial Fund Project (PFP), which ends in 2016. For successful completion of the campaign, we have asked provinces that can contribute to do so, and provinces that benefit from the PFP to contribute. The response has been very positive. We are half a million dollars away from our goal of five million USD, needed to receive a matching grant. We spoke about continuing the work of the VSO after its funding ends in 2016. The Franz Foundation and USA Provinces have generously assisted the VSO. We considered seeking funds from a wider range of sources. Lastly, we stressed a need for donations to VSO "micro-funds" to promote projects for missions and developing provinces.

Special Projects for 400th Anniversary: The Superior General presented two special projects for the General Council to consider for discussion at the General Assembly. They are geared to help celebrate the 400th anniversary (in 2017) of St. Vincent's inspiration to found the Congregation. The first project involves formation of African seminaries for mission in the Congregation. We hope this project will be carried forward with the accompaniment of the Eastern Province, USA.

The second project is to consider an expansion of the Congregation into Muslim areas such as North Africa or Turkey. The Daughters of Charity serve in North Africa, as do two confreres in our Tunis Mission. Fr. Claudio Santangelo will undertake a research project on the feasibility of taking on a ministry in Muslim areas. He once served at St. George's School in Istanbul, staffed by confreres from Germany and Austria, a possible entry point for this work.

Union of Superior Generals: We discussed matters concerning the Union of Superior Generals, particularly a report from Fr. Shijo, who attends the Union's Commission for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity

of Creation. From this report, we are reviewing human rights issues in West Papua New Guinea, with help from Fr. Robertus Wijanarko, Visitor of the Province of Indonesia

United Nations Report: We received a report from Fr. Joseph Foley, NGO representative at the United Nations, who gave us an update of activities he and other religious undertake to keep a presence in a large, bureaucratic organization. Fr. Foley has a good working relationship with NGO representatives of the Daughters of Charity and Sisters of Charity, USA.

Econome General Report: We went over the report of Fr. Joe Geders, Econome General, of his March meeting with the Financial Committee. This group includes two laymen from the USA; Tom Beck and Aric Clelan, and three confreres, Fathers George Busieka, Treasurer of the region of Kenya, Fr Raphael Eloriaga, Province of the Philippines, and Fr. Philippe Lamblin of the Province of Paris. Other business discussed included ways to use the vacant house on the Curia grounds, and provide additional training for provincial economies.

International Missions Report: We received a report from the mission in **El Alto, Bolivia** from Fr. Aidan Rooney, with news that the mission raised funds to purchase new vehicles for the mission. We congratulate Fr. Rooney for obtaining the needed funds, and Fathers Cyrille de la Barre de Nanteuil and Diego José Plá Aranda. The confreres are hoping for another missionary.

We had a report from the **mission in Papua New Guinea (PNG)** from Fr. Jacek Tendej the acting superior and seminary rector in Bomana. He reported that Fr. Justin Eke, is concluding his studies in Rome and will soon return to Bomana. Fr. George Maylaa, who served in the Waitape section of the PNG mission, is finishing his term and will return to his Province of the Orient. He will be a formator in a new interprovincial ministry of the Conference of European Visitors. We thank Fr. George for his service in the mission, and wish him well in his new ministry.

Fr. Homero Marin, a long-serving missionary in PNG, has returned to the Diocese of Alotau-Sideia, after a well-deserved sabbatical. Fr. Marceliano Oabel has also returned there after working in formation for a year. Fr. Emmanuel Lapaz now serves in a parish in Bomana. The newest arrival to the PNG mission is Fr. Neil Lams of the Province of Oceania. He works with Fr. Jacek as Prefect of Students. Fr. Malota of the Province of Poland will take a sabbatical to renew his missionary spirit. The PNG mission will soon receive two new confreres from Poland.

Fr. Mathew Kallammakal, Assistant General for the PNG mission, visited there February 17-23. He met with the Apostolic Nuncio, the

Archbishop of Port Moresby, and diocesan bishops of Bereina and Alotau-Sideia. They spoke about the vast improvement in Holy Spirit Seminary in Bomana since our confreres took over. They believe the atmosphere has greatly improved under our administration. As proof of their approval, the Nuncio and Bishops asked for more confreres! Although the life in this mission is difficult, all confreres in the PNG mission are truly dedicated.

We had a report on the **mission in the Solomon Islands**. The Council agreed with the recommendation that the confreres appoint Fr. Varghese Ayyampilly as parish priest and formator for our Vincentian candidates. Fr. Raul Castro has been named by the Bishops as the Rector of Holy Name of Mary Seminary. Fr. Thomas Christiawan, mission Econome, is now the moderator of the Vincentian Marian Youth. Soon to arrive in the mission is Fr. Antony Punnoth.

We received an urgent request from confreres in the Solomon Islands made to the Asia-Pacific Visitors' Conference. (APVC) They need confreres qualified to teach philosophy and theology. The Superior General and Council have requested the Province of Oceania take over administration of this mission. The request is under review by APVC. If Oceania assumes its administration, the General Curia will still provide financial support. The mission is open to all.

We received a brief report from the **mission in Angola**. The newest addition is Fr. Marcos Gumieiro of the Province of Curitiba. He joins three other confreres at this mission: Fathers Roberto Perea Martinez, Jose Ramirez Martinez, and Jason Cristian Soto Herrera. We are grateful to the Province of Curitiba for sending Fr. Marcos, and we thank the Provinces of Mexico and Central America for sending Fathers Roberto, Jose, and Jason to serve in Angola. This mission was established to support the Vincentian Family and Daughters of Charity there. The VSO has provided a car, yet we still need funds for "mobility in mission."

We received a report on the **mission in Chad**, which will be discussed after the visit of the Superior General and Fr. Stanislav Zontak. They will meet with the bishop of the Diocese of Moundou, who has requested confreres for formation and parish ministry. We had a report from the international **mission in Punta Arenas**, awarded a \$12,000 USD grant in a project of the Congregation for Vincentian missionary parishes. The confreres in this mission are Fathers Angel Ignacio Garrido, Margarito Severino Martinez Gonzalez, and Pablo Alexis Vargas Ruiz.

We had an update from our **newest Mission in Anchorage, Alaska USA**. Deacon Arnold Hernandez from the Western Province, USA has been in Alaska since January, preparing for the arrival of Fathers Pedro Nel Delgado Quintero and Jesus Gabriel Medina Claros from the Province of Colombia. Their entry visas are being processed and they should

soon be in Alaska. The confreres will be there to meet the pastoral needs of a growing Hispanic community. Deacon Arnold is formulating a pastoral plan for the Archdiocese of Anchorage to develop lay leaders.

Volunteers for International Missions: We studied offers from confreres who have volunteered to go to the missions. A major concern now is to assist the **Vice Province of Mozambique**. To staff all their ministries, they need 29 confreres, according to the Visitor, Fr. Jose Luis Azevedo Fernandes. Currently they have 19 men. Thus, we asked four of the six men who volunteered for the missions to go to Mozambique. We also invite other confreres to consider serving there.

Vincentian Family: We studied a large volume of material on the Vincentian Family after the meeting of the Vincentian Family Executive Committee (VFEC) in January. A major issue discussed was a proposal to create a Secretariat of the Vincentian Family. We have proposed it be the *Office of the Vincentian Family* and temporarily located in Philadelphia at the Provincial House of the Eastern Province. They have offered free use of a large renovated space with staff to make it a fully functioning office. A confrere will serve as Coordinator of the Office. The final approval will be made by the VFEC. We hope the location of the office outside of Rome will encourage better coordination and participation by commissions of the VFEC. Eventual plans include moving the Office of the Vincentian Family to places where the Family is active.

Vincentian Family Haiti Initiative: We reviewed a report by the Coordinator of the Vincentian Family Haitian Initiative (VFHI). Things are moving ahead. They have several major projects, including a fish farm to bring food and income to the poor; improving the quality of education in elementary schools; and sponsoring programs to empower women through education. At their request, we reviewed the VFHI Statutes and those of their National Advisory Council.

Vincentian Family Collaborative Commission: We had a report from the Vincentian Family Collaborative Commission (VFCC), coordinated by Fr. Joe Agostino. They are coordinating the celebration of the “*Year of Collaboration of the Vincentian Family*” starting Pentecost Sunday May 24, 2015 through Pentecost May 15, 2016. Ideas on observing this “*Year of Collaboration*” have been sent to Visitors and leaders of Vincentian Family branches in two of my recent letters.

Commission for the Promotion of Systemic Change: We had a report from Fr. Giuseppe Turati, Coordinator of the Commission for the Promotion of Systemic Change. They sent us their ideas on the Vincentian Family Office and recommendations on the future composition of the VFEC.

FamVin Web Site: The website for the Vincentian Family (<http://famvin.org/>) will be under the newly established Office of the Vincentian Family. As Superior General, I am most grateful for the work that Fr. John Freund has pioneered over the last two decades. I congratulate Fr. John and his associates for their innovative achievements in making our Vincentian charism a digital and accessible presence worldwide. As Fr. Freund steps down, I am pleased to report that Fr. Aidan Rooney will become the Coordinator of the “FamVin” website. Fr. Aidan serves in the mission in El Alto, Bolivia and will continue to do so. They have a transition plan for continuity and increasing social network outreach on this quality, multi-language web site.

Islam-Christian Dialogue: We discussed the shape and form of a working group on Christian and Islam dialogue. This group will be under the Superior General and the Congregation. It will raise consciousness in the Vincentian Family on practical questions of dialogue between Muslims and Christians, to offer a means of responding in a Christian way to current conflicts.

One way to accomplish this goal is by workshops. It was also suggested this working group expand beyond Islam to become more inter-religious. The Superior General named Fr. Claudio Santangelo as coordinator of this working group. Fr. Claudio will draw membership from confreres interested in this area. Fr. Claudio was appointed to represent the Superior General on the Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue, sponsored by the Union of Superior Generals.

Conferences of Visitors: We moved into a discussion on the Conferences of Visitors, and began with the **Asia-Pacific Visitors Conference (APVC)**. Fr. Mathew Kallammakal attended their February meeting in India, with the Superior General, who was there for the opening. Among the topics discussed was the international Missions of Papua New Guinea, under the responsibility of the General Curia and the APVC. They spoke about their program of ongoing formation and they evaluated the effectiveness of their integration of the “Lines of Action” from the 2010 General Assembly. Finally, they spoke about the structure of the APVC and ways of reformulating it.

We received a letter from the President of the **European Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission (CEVIM)** asking the Superior General to write a letter of encouragement to members of CEVIM, so they might move forward and work cooperatively as provinces in Europe. Fathers Eli Chaves, Stan Zontak, and J. Alvarez will participate in the April CEVIM meeting in Barcelona.

We had a report from the Southern part of the **Conference of Latin American Vincentian Provinces (CLAPVI-South)** regarding the process of reconfiguration between the Provinces of Argentina and Chile. They also described their activities common among CLAPVI-South,

such as shared personnel for popular missions and co-sponsoring the Internal Seminary. We received a report **CLAPVI-North** on their recent meeting in Guatemala, where they discussed the inter-provincial internal seminary. They also discussed reconfiguration among their provinces.

The **Conference of Visitors of Africa and Madagascar (COVIAM)** meets in April to discuss the possibility of a common theologate. From the **National Conference of Visitors, USA (NCV)** a reconfiguration between New England and Eastern Provinces is being considered. The Superior General was asked to make a video to assist this process. Also, the NCV is making plans for celebrations of the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the Vincentians in the USA.

Council Calendars: The following is the calendar of the Superior General for the next three months. In March, he and Fr. Stanislav Zontak visit the International African Missions of Benin and Chad. He will go to Paris to participate in the Vow Renovation of the Daughters of Charity.

For Holy Week, the Superior General will be in Bolivia on the Daughters of Charity "Evangelization Boat." Easter week, he will join in the spiritual exercises of confreres in Bolivia. After this, he will gather with the Vincentian Family in Bolivia. He will then go on to Guatemala to visit the inter-provincial Internal Seminary, the Daughters of Charity and confreres of the Province of Central America, where he was Visitor before election as Superior General.

In early May, the Superior General will visit the Province of Madagascar. From mid-May until mid-June, he will participate in the General Assembly of the Daughters of Charity in Paris, and attend a meeting of the Union of Superior Generals in Rome. Then he will open the meeting of Vincentian Bishops. Afterward, he will visit the International Mission in Punta Arenas, Chile.

I pray this Easter Season will deepen in you a gratitude for the gift of our Vincentian vocation, with a renewed zeal to serve Christ as he reveals himself in our Lords and Masters, the poor!

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General