

FROM THE GENERAL CURIA

Tempo Forte Circular

5-9 October 2015

*What we have seen and heard we
proclaim now to you (1Jn 1:3).*

Dear Confreres,

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

We gathered for our *Tempo Forte* Meeting from 5-9 October. On the 10th, the General Council had a special session in which we dealt with the future of evangelization in Europe, especially Western Europe. During our *Tempo Forte*, we had reports given by the Director of the Vincentian Solidarity Office, Father Miles Heinen, and also the Director of Communication, Father Jorge Rodríguez.

A. Updates concerning our international Congregation

1. Meeting of the Vincentian Bishops held in June, the first of its kind. The evaluation of the event was substantially positive. It was clear that a good number of the bishops present desired maintaining contact with the Congregation of the Mission and receiving, through this event, the opportunity for ongoing formation as Vincentian bishops. The General Council made the following recommendations: that we continue an event like this once in each administration, that is, every six years, and that it be for a period of four days. We are hoping that the next event may be held in Paris in 2017 and the CIF team may be able to put together a program of approximately four days for visiting the Vincentian places, while also animating the bishops with Vincentian formation. All the bishops of the Congregation and all the Visitors, as well as confreres of the Congregation will be sent a letter to indicate the different aspects of this event.

2. Meeting of Superiors of International and National Missions, which also was the first of its kind and a great success. All but one of the international missions had a superior present and a good number of our mission superiors from different provinces or regions of provinces was also present. The international missions are considered by the General Council to be one of the most significant ministries of the Congregation, allowing us to live faithfully the charism we have been

given by Saint Vincent de Paul. For that reason, the international missions need greater attention in terms of both long-range and short-range preparation of missionaries. One of the challenges we face in the international missions is precisely the strong sense of provincialism, whereby it is difficult for confreres to see beyond the boundaries of their own provinces and their needs, rather than helping to deepen within each member of the province a missionary spirit with the possibility of going out. We had a lengthy reflection about the Mission Appeal Letter, which the Superior General writes every October. Rather than making it sound as if we are asking for volunteers, we want to be more proactive in encouraging confreres to live out their missionary spirit by accepting possible assignments to our international missions. This will be a theme that we will discuss in our 2016 General Assembly. We recommended that the next administration continue this experience and organize at least one gathering in the six-year period. At the same time, we will see if CIF can offer on a regular basis, perhaps every two years, formation for those in mission.

3. Preparation for the New Visitors' Meeting 10-20 January 2016.

4. Continuing preparation for our 2016 General Assembly. To date we have received only 20 of the reports that are to be sent in by all the provinces and vice-provinces in preparation for the General Assembly.

5. Reconfiguration. Among the different situations, we spent a good deal of time speaking about the Region of Albania, which will soon become the responsibility of the newly formed Province of Italy. We consider it to be a priority for the new province to reinforce the efforts of evangelization and formation in this region. The three Provinces of Spain that are involved in reconfiguration have chosen a date, which will be 25 January 2017. The provincialate will be in Madrid, in the house that is the property of the Province of Salamanca. As you may know, the Province of Italy and the new Province of France both will be formed and inaugurated on 25 January 2016, prior to our General Assembly. Then on 7 February, the Region of Cameroon, under the responsibility of the Province of Paris, will become a Vice-Province. The Superior General and/or his Assistants will be present at these different events.

6. The Privileges of the Congregation of the Mission, a text that our Procurator General, Father Shijo, has put together based on the previous materials prepared. He and the Vicar General will be procuring the publication of a text that will be available to all the members of the Congregation of the Mission.

B. The General Curia

1. Personnel. We discussed the ongoing question of how to respond to not having a superior in the house. The Superior General has appointed, as the animator of the community, Father Stanislav Zontak, in support of the Assistant Superior, Father Agus Heru. Father Agus will continue to carry out the details of being Assistant Superior and Father Zontak will be his principal support person, along with the collaboration of all the members of the General Curia in helping us to live a more harmonious community life.

2. A report from the **Director of the Office of Communications**, Father Jorge Rodríguez, who has developed a project, with the assistance of Father John Freund, entitled, C.M. Communications. The intention is to help promote greater networking and collaboration among the different institutions of the Congregation. That would be SIEV, CIF, the Vincentian Family Office for its different projects, such as systemic change, etc. The Office of Communications is also at the disposition of the provinces in order to help them make better use of means of communication. The Director also will prepare a guideline for the members of the Curia, helping us to improve our in-house communication process. All information received from the Vincentian Family and the Congregation of the Mission throughout the world, by way of bulletins, magazines, etc., will be channeled through the Director of Communications for his review. He will also prepare an organogram that will help to visualize the relationship of the different offices of the Congregation of the Mission together with the various commissions of the Vincentian Family.

3. The week before *Tempo Forte*, the nine members of **SIEV** gathered here for their annual meeting, together with Father Javier Álvarez and Father Agus Heru of the house. While here, they presented different articles, which were later discussed among themselves and will be published on the CMGlobal website, as well as in a book. There was also a discussion on a possible two-year Masters program in Vincentian Studies, hopefully with the help of one of our universities. This project would be carried out online. The SIEV team hopes that this would help encourage the development of our Vincentian experts, both of the Congregation of the Mission, as well as other branches of the Vincentian Family. They also discussed their relationship with other institutions of the Congregation of the Mission and/or the Vincentian Family with the hope of strengthening those ties. The SIEV team would also like to develop a working relationship with the Conference of Vincentian University Presidents. They recommended the development of a program for the archivists of the Congregation of the Mission. This recommendation will be passed on to the next administration of the Congregation.

4. A report from the **Director of the Vincentian Solidarity Office** (VSO). Miles Heinen and the Superior General reported on a visit they made to one of the agencies that is very supportive of our works among the poor, especially in projects related to systemic change. There is hope that the funds of the VSO will continue to be replenished in 2017 for the new administration. Thus, a letter will be prepared for 2016, asking the participation of a number of the provinces of the Congregation in this project of giving a certain amount of money over the next five years to help continue the operation of the VSO.

5. We had a discussion concerning our relationship with the **Franz Foundation** and in preparation for our meeting with its president during our December *Tempo Forte*.

6. **United Nations Representative**. We received a final report from Father Joseph Foley, the outgoing representative, as well as a vision-mission report from the incoming representative, Father Guillermo Campuzano.

7. Father Claudio Santangelo presented two reports, one dealing with our **Project for the Expansion of the Congregation into Muslim Countries**, a project that will be presented at the 2016 General Assembly and another giving us an update on the **Working Group on Interreligious Dialog**, which will have its first meeting in the General Curia at the end of our *Tempo Forte* Meeting in December.

C. Economic questions

We received a report from the Treasurer General and we also discussed possible candidates to assist him in carrying out his responsibilities. We likewise suggested the names of candidates who might, eventually, replace the present Treasurer General, when his term is finished. Regarding the house on our property, the Casa della Nocetta, we have made the decision to rent it at a very low cost to a group of Sisters from Brazil, who are beginning their Congregation and operation, a group known to a number of members of our Congregation in Brazil.

D. International Missions

1. We received a report and evaluation of our mission in **El Alto, Bolivia**, after twenty years of presence of the Congregation of the Mission. The situation in El Alto, as many know, is complex, but there is good dynamism in the carrying out of the mission and great missionary zeal on the part of the three confreres present. Our desire is to continue this mission with the further support of other missionaries,

especially from Latin America, but also other members of the worldwide Congregation. With regard to the International Mission of **Cochabamba**, we reappointed the superior, after having consulted the members of the house. Therefore, Father David Paniagua was confirmed for another three-year period, concluding his role as superior in 2018.

2. The International Mission of **Papua New Guinea**. We had to make the painful decision to ask the missionaries of PNG not to continue recruiting candidates for the Congregation of the Mission until we have a province of the Congregation that is able to accompany them in this formation process. How to resolve this matter will be entrusted to the members of the APVC. We also considered a request from the former superior of the mission in PNG, Father Vladimir Małota, a request for financial assistance to the mission in Wiotape because of hunger, as a result of the famine that has affected the area. That request has been accepted and contact is being made as to how to channel money to the mission.

3. A report from the Assistant General for PNG and the **Solomon Islands** after his most recent visits there; at present the situation in the Solomon Islands is looking brighter than it had been. We now have one confrere who has reported to the mission and two who are waiting to arrive. Two of the confreres are from India and one is from the Province of Indonesia. As has been previously mentioned, there will be a number of confreres from this mission departing at year's end. One of the former members of the Solomon Islands, Father Teclémicael from the Province of Saint Justin De Jacobis, is presently taking a year's course in spirituality and formation here in Rome and then will be reporting to the seminary for which we are responsible in Papua New Guinea.

4. We studied the report from the Assistant General for the International Mission of **Angola**, as well as the Community Project and their Pastoral Plan. Both of these were approved. Presently there are three confreres on the mission and they are doing a good job at firming up our presence with the wonderful support of the Daughters of Charity and in collaboration with other branches of the Vincentian Family. They too are beginning to attract vocations and we have asked that, for the time being, they provide for the accompaniment of these young men up to and including philosophy. We will investigate with other provinces the possibility of who can assume the responsibility for the formation of these young men.

5. We studied a request from the superior of the mission of **Tunisia** and also discussed the matter of other missionaries for this mission in northern Africa.

6. We received an updated report from the superior of the new mission in **Alaska**, Father Andrew Bellisario, with the presence of three confreres and a fourth one soon to be expected when the visa process for entering the United States is completed.

7. We talked about **missions in general**, reviewing the requests we have received from different confreres from around the world who desire to be part of the international missions, as well as requests that we have received from bishops. We received seven requests from missionaries desiring to participate in one of the international missions or missions/provinces in need. Our hope is that six of these will be released from their provinces of origin in order to exercise this missionary role in our international missions. The problems of communication, documentation for visas, etc. are some of the things that delay integration into the missions. All that calls for great patience. The Superior General received a visit, and later a written request, from the Bishop of Tunisia for further accompaniment of the Congregation of the Mission in his diocese in a very multicultural situation. This request will be presented for the consideration of the confreres of the Congregation of the Mission in the upcoming October Mission Appeal Letter. Because of its new format, it may not be in the hands of the missionaries until the latter part of this month. The hope is that each missionary will have an opportunity to review and discern how the Lord might be calling him to serve in the best possible way. As Pope Francis says: to go out to bring the Good News in a joyful way to those in need of God.

E. The Vincentian Family

1. We received some information from the new **Director of the Vincentian Family Office** in Philadelphia, Father Joseph Agostino, as well as a response to a request made by the Superior General to the Visitor of the Eastern USA Province. He has most generously approved of receiving, for the Vincentian Family Office, a new permanent member, as of January 2016, Father Flavio Pereira. He is already in Philadelphia, studying English and becoming accustomed to the office. He comes from the Province of Central America, which has generously offered the international Congregation his services for the Vincentian Family Office. He will be working with Joe Agostino. Besides covering Flavio's room and board, the Eastern Province has also generously offered start-up money for the Vincentian Family Office until the directors can begin to solicit funds from the rest of the Vincentian Family who, under the auspices of the Vincentian Family Executive Committee, is responsible for this newly developed office. The office is behind the provincial house of St. Vincent's Seminary, in the same building with the Archives of the Eastern Province, the Vincentian Solidarity Office, and the office of the former Superior General, Father Robert

Maloney, where he carries out a number of different operations for the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission. We are thankful for the generosity of the Eastern Province in providing these services and this opportunity for the development of our relationship with the Vincentian Family throughout the world.

2. A report from the **Coordinator of the Systemic Change Commission**, Father Giuseppe Turati, Secretary General of the Congregation; they are in search of a representative for the commission from the area of Africa. We have made some recommendations and those contacts are being made. Further requests may go out to other branches of the Vincentian Family to help fill this most important position for the Systemic Change Commission.

F. The Conferences of Visitors

1. Under **APVC**, we discussed a draft regarding its relationship with the International Mission of the Solomon Islands. In addition, a request is being made of its members as to who will be responsible for the formation of the candidates of Papua New Guinea.

2. With regard to **CEVIM**, the Conference of Visitors in Europe and the Middle East, Father Stanislav Zontak gave us a report on the ongoing formation program that will be held in Italy after Easter week. CEVIM has also been asked to study how best to respond to the urgent need of migrants in Italy and, hopefully, in other parts of Europe.

3. Father Eli Chavez gave us a report on the conference of provinces of **CLAPVI**. He participated in a workshop for young confreres that was held in Santo Domingo with the theme of “A Sense of Belonging.” Unfortunately, a number of provinces did not participate. We also made a request of CLAPVI to consider taking on a new mission, which, hopefully, it will be able to do as a way of celebrating the 400th anniversary of the inspirational founding of the Congregation of the Mission.

4. Regarding **COVIAM**, it has begun the common formation program, that is, the theologate in Nigeria. But because of many difficulties with getting visas, etc., only a small percentage of the possible candidates have begun this process thus far. The regular program for the Formation of Formators, which was to be held in Cameroon, is not going to happen because of a lack of available participants.

G. Updating of our calendars

1. We began with a discussion of **calendars for the next three months**, but I will only insert here the information regarding the Superior General. From 14-16 October, the Superior General will be in Paris,

partly for the CIF program and partly for a commitment with the Province of Paris. From 18 October to 18 November, he will carry out the canonical visitation in the Province of Mexico. From 19-21 November, he will visit the new mission of the Daughters of Charity in the country of Belize. From 25-27 November, he will participate in the Union of Superiors General Meeting in Rome. From 27-29 November, the Superior General will be in Seville, Spain for the reconfiguration of the Province of Southern Spain with that of North Africa of the Daughters of Charity. He also will visit the mission of the Daughters of Charity in Morocco from 30 November to 2 December. From 16-22 December, he will visit Venezuela. From 27-29 December, he will visit the Daughters of Charity and confreres in Belgium and then travel to Paris for the celebration of the New Year with the Daughters of Charity at the Rue du Bac.

2. With regard to the calendar for the remaining **canonical visitations** for the Congregation of the Mission, the Superior General will have one more canonical visitation, that of the Province of Mexico. Father Javier Álvarez still has to visit Puerto Rico, which will be in October and November 2015, and the Province of Rio in March 2016. Father Stanislav Zontak will visit the New England Province of the United States in October and November of 2015. Father Zeracristos Yosief will visit the Province of North India in January 2016. Father Eli Chavez will visit the Province of Madrid in October and November 2015 and the Province of Saragossa in March 2016.

3. For the **visits of the International Missions**, the Superior General will visit the Solomon Islands during Holy Week 2016 and Papua New Guinea in Easter Week 2016. The Superior General will visit the International Mission of Angola in April 2016 and that of Tunis in May 2016.

“Proclaim the gospel to every creature”

(Mk 16:15)

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General