

To the Visitors and the Missionaries of the Congregation of the Mission

Rome, October 12, 2015

May the power and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit be with you so that you might fulfill your episcopal mission

Dear Visitor,

From this city of Rome, I extend to you my heartfelt greeting, especially during this month of October when the Church asks us to support and to celebrate her involvement in the missions. At the same time you are also aware of the fact that the delegates at the Synod on the Family have just concluded their first week of deliberations. We hope that the discussions at this Synod will be helpful to the Church and also provide much hope to many families.

As you know, during the month of June (23-25) the First Encounter of Vincentian Bishops was held here in Rome. Most of the bishops were able to participate. During the October *Tempo Forte* we reflected on the evaluation which the Bishops offered to us. We were happy to know that they experienced much satisfaction with regard to that gathering: a fraternal environment, good content with regard to the material that was dealt with, well-planned liturgies, the overall condition of the house, the attentiveness of the Sisters, etc. At the same time we viewed in a very positive manner their great concern for the Congregation, their identification with our Vincentian spirit, as well as their desire to strengthen the bonds with the Congregation and to continue to deepen the living of their life in accord with our proper spirit.

Allow me, at this time, to present to you some proposals, suggestions or reflections which the Bishops offered during their meeting:

First, the juridical condition of the Vincentian Bishop: as long as the Bishop is the titular bishop of a Diocese, he lives in a house in said diocese, outside the community and the province. He has neither active nor passive voice but he continues to be a member of his province of origin.

A bishop emeritus can continue to live in the Diocese where he ministered or he can return to the community. If he opts to live in a community house, he immediately regains active and passive voice and enjoys the same rights and obligations as the other Missionaries.

Second, some Vincentian Bishops are willing to share their pastoral experiences with the members of their Province when they gather

together in a Provincial Assembly and are also willing to participate in a meeting of the provincial council (in both of these situations the Visitor must extend an invitation to do so).

Third, during the gathering it was suggested that the Bishops create a commission that would, among other things, organize future gatherings of the Vincentian Bishops. Unfortunately, there was not enough time for further reflection on this matter: How would this commission function? What would be the relationship of this commission with the Congregation? What would be the objectives of this commission? Etc.

Fourth, another suggestion was presented during the gathering: when the Superior General is given two proposals with regard to the establishment of an International Mission, one from a Diocesan Bishop and another from a Vincentian Bishop, it would seem logical and reasonable that priority would be given to the proposal of the Vincentian Bishop.

Fifth, with regard to the question: how frequently should there be a gathering of the Vincentian bishops?... There were many varied responses. The General Council has reflected on this matter and has decided that such encounters should be held once every six years (one meeting for each six-year period of the superior general). Nevertheless, given the fact that in 2017 we will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the origin of the Vincentian charism, the General Council has proposed that CIF organize a four-day meeting of the Vincentian Bishops in Paris where there would be an opportunity for reflection as well as for visiting some of the Vincentian historical places.

Know that you are in my prayer and I ask you to continue to pray for me,

Sincerely in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General