



Decree of the Establishment of a New Region: Venezuela

Decree # 0003/2016

Congregation of the Mission Vincentian Missionaries Province of Colombia

The Establishment of a New Region

The undersigned Superior General, in accord with the use of his legal faculties as stated in the Constitutions (# 103; 107, 3°)

CONSIDERING

That the region is a territory with at least one house, which belongs to a province or depends directly on the Superior General (Statute 78, § 1);

That the region is erected by the Superior General with his Council or by the Visitor with his Council. The region is confided to a regional superior (Statute 78, § 2);

That one can set up the region either in order to have its own autonomy to transform itself into a Vice-Province or Province, or to become a region since it cannot maintain its autonomy as a Province or a Vice-Province (Statute 78, § 6);

That after consulting the confreres from the Provinces of Venezuela and Colombia at the time of their Provincial Assemblies and after having received the placet of both provinces;

That having engaged in a legal process of consolidation by means of an Interprovincial Commission that elaborated the Regional Statute, which was approved by my predecessor,

IT IS DECREED

To establish the local communities located in the Republic of Venezuela and the house in Valdemoro (Spain) as a Region of the Province of Colombia (Statute 78, § 2).

Said Region will be under the authority of the Visitor of Colombia and will be dependent on the Province of Colombia (Statute 78, § 1).

Given in Caracas, Venezuela, the 17th day of September in the year 2016.

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

Message of the Superior General on the Occasion of the Establishment of the New Region of Venezuela

Caracas, 17 September 2016

First of all, I want to extend my fraternal greeting to all of you, but especially to Father Orlando Escobar, CM, Visitor of Colombia; Father Henry Kristen, CM, Visitor of Venezuela; Sister Nubia Quintero, DC, Visitatrix of the Province of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Bogota-Venezuela; all the confreres; Daughters of Charity; and members and friends of the Vincentian Family here present.

In December 1951, the Superior General, Father William Slattery, CM, wrote to Father Ramón Gaude, CM (Vice-Visitor, dependent on the Visitor of Madrid) and stated the following: *Father Ojeda (the Visitor of Madrid) has just spent a few days with us at the Motherhouse in Paris. He spoke with us about his trip to America and it is clear that he was impressed by the prosperity that he experienced in Venezuela. Based on his edifying account of events in that country ... the Council of the Congregation has decided to elevate the Vice-Province to the status of a Province and you have been appointed its first Visitor.*

Sixty-five years later the story has changed in a dramatic manner, not only for the Province of Venezuela, but also for the greater part of the Congregation, which has been called to participate in a process of reconfiguration. This is, indeed, one of the signs of the times that demands creativity, mobility, and sacrifice.

During its history, the Province of Venezuela, inspired by the Vincentian charism, ministered in six diocesan seminaries located in Barquisimeto, Ciudad Bolívar, Calabozo, Cumaná, Valencia, and Maracaibo. In order to support themselves financially, the confreres ministered in high schools, where they dedicated themselves to teaching and instructing children and adolescents who were lacking in their knowledge about the things of God.

At the same time, at the request of the bishops, the confreres accompanied some far distant parish communities during the Christmas and Lenten Seasons, as well as during Holy Week. They proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

The popular missions have provided support to parishes and other places that were difficult to access. Some of the missionaries traveled by horse and mule, which enabled them to minister at least once a year in those various far-distant regions of the country.

As the ministry of the formation of the clergy began to wane, the confreres began to take on commitments in urban and rural parishes. Today the majority of the confreres are involved in parish ministry.

From the beginning, the promotion of native vocations and the formation of candidates for the Congregation has been a weakness. The confreres focused on promoting vocations for the diocesan seminaries that had been entrusted to them by the bishops. At that time, there was no urgency for native vocations because missionaries were being sent from Spain, where the seminaries were full and vocations were flourishing.

This situation, however, did not continue for very long. Soon there was a reduction in the number of priests, who were being sent forth from Spain to the missions. When the pressure was felt to promote vocations, the results did not measure up to expectations. One of my calls today is that this challenge of vocations be confronted with new creativity and in collaboration with the whole Vincentian Family so that there will be the necessary vocations. Jesus gives us hope when he tells us: *pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the fields.* With the help of God, the harvest will be plentiful.

At the present time, the Province of Venezuela has 38 confreres: 22 from Spain, 13 from Venezuela (11 priests and two brothers), two from Colombia, and one from the Dominican Republic. The median age is 65.

In recent years, there has been a focus on popular missions, which have been fortified by the various branches of the Vincentian Family. These missions have been developed in different parts of the country and have produced positive results. One of the fruits of these missions has been the admission of some young men into our house of formation.

As a result of the process of reconfiguration, the seminarians are engaged in their philosophical studies in Venezuela, and then they complete their studies in Colombia. This sharing has been a very enriching experience.

At this time of the 400th anniversary of the origin of our charism, I encourage you to remain hopeful despite the difficulties that you may have to confront. Do not be afraid, continue to move forward, and be hopeful that better times will come.

At this time of reconfiguration, which is very important for all the confreres of Colombia and Venezuela, I ask our Lord, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Saint Vincent, and all the Vincentian saints and blessed to bless you, to keep you united, and to enable you to continue to extend the Kingdom of God during these difficult, yet challenging and hopeful times.

I thank you for the invitation to accompany you at this historic moment in which we establish the new Province of Colombia and the new Region of Venezuela.

Translated: Charles T. Plock, CM

General Secretariat

Rome, 11 October 2016

To all the Visitors, Vice-Visitors, and Superiors of the International Missions of the Congregation of the Mission.

Dear Confrere,

We just finished the first *Tempo Forte* of the new General Council, elected at the General Assembly last July in Chicago. In it, the new Council took note of the general situation of the Congregation and its various problems. Among these, there is also the infrequent use of the *Online Catalog*, which is, in fact, a powerful tool for real-time knowledge of the situation of the Congregation.

On 21 November 2013, Father Gregory Gay, CM, then Superior General, wrote a letter to all the members of the Congregation, launching the new *Online Catalog* and supplying the information necessary for its use.

After three years, I realize that this *Catalog* is still little known and little used. That is a real shame, because it has considerable advantages. We do everything possible to keep it updated in real time. You can easily access it from a *smartphone and a tablet* (at the address: cmdb.cmglobal.org) and it is, therefore, possible to have it always with you, in addition, obviously, to being able to consult it on your own desktop computer.

In case you have forgotten the access password, or never inserted it, I invite you to ask it of me again by writing to catalogus@cmglobal.org. As soon as possible, I will generate a new password and send it to you along with the instructions for changing it, at the first entry, to one that you prefer.

A final request. In case there is incorrect data, I ask you please to inform me, using the same email address, so that the person in charge of updating the data will be able to revise it promptly.

I thank you for your collaboration.

Fraternally,

Giuseppe Turati, CM
Secretary General

Letter of the SG Concerning Communication with the General Curia

Rome, 13 October 2016

Dear Visitors,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be always with us!

During the *Tempo Forte* session with the new General Council that just ended, we devoted several days to analyzing the situation of the Congregation as a whole and in its different aspects. One of these, to which I think it is important to pay due attention, concerns communication between provinces and the General Curia. After seeking the advice of my General Council and the Secretary General, I now would like to present to you some matters that I consider useful for improving such communication.

- 1) All correspondence addressed to the Superior General should be sent directly to the Curia (cmcuria@cmglobal.org), which is organized in such a way that the mail is checked daily and, in an emergency, is forwarded to me immediately. Even those who wish to write to me personally (superiorgen@cmglobal.org), should CC it to the Curia (cmcuria@cmglobal.org), so that the correspondence is archived and can be retrieved subsequently when needed. This is the usual way of proceeding. However, in very confidential matters, if a confrere wants to write personally to the Superior General, this possibility is assured (but, in these cases, email is not the safest means and I recommend using ordinary mail). Please note that circulars from the Superior General will be sent by the secretary, who has her own address (secret4@cmglobal.org); therefore, to send something to the secretariat you should not click “reply,” but use the official address (cmcuria@cmglobal.org).

- 2) E-mail is certainly the fastest way to send correspondence to the Curia. However, e-mail is just a method for sending, not a document (a bit like an envelope with postage stamp). The document to be sent or a letter that you want to send to the Superior General should be written on letterhead paper, dated, with the subject of the communication, and the full name and signature of the sender. Everything should be sent in PDF as an attachment to the email. Compliance with this procedure allows us to archive all the documentation clearly and to be able to find it again later, if necessary. When emails arrive with varied contents, perhaps even added to previous emails (thread), it is not possible to archive them in an orderly manner.
- 3) When someone asks the Superior General for a leave of absence from the Congregation (cf., C. 70), such a request must be accompanied by the opinion of the Visitor and his Council, and, if the one making the request is a priest, even the consent of the local bishop where the confrere intends to live (as indicated in *A Practical Guide for the Visitor*, n. 123). In the absence of any one of these documents, the request cannot be discussed in the General Council.
- 4) For some years we have been using the online *Catalog*, which is a useful tool because it allows us to have knowledge of the Congregation in real time. Obviously, however, this depends on the accuracy and timeliness of the data communicated by the provinces to the General Secretariat. I encourage you to appoint a person (the Provincial Secretary or some other) to be entrusted with the delicate and important service of communicating the assignments of confreres and the changes to be made in the *Catalog* regarding your own province.
- 5) It is also important that the Secretary General be notified promptly of new appointments, using the forms found in Appendixes 14-17 of *A Practical Guide for the Visitor*. It is sufficient to send such notifications by e-mail except for the Certificate of Taking Vows, which must be sent by regular mail, with the signatures of the one who took vows and those who witnessed them.

- 6) Even copies of any agreements or collaboration between provinces, involving a temporary or long-term transfer of a confrere from one to the other, must be sent to the General Secretariat.
- 7) Finally, a copy of the leave of absence from the house that a Visitor grants to one of his confreres (cf., C. 67) must be sent to the Secretariat.

Compliance with these procedures may seem merely bureaucratic, but it is very important for me and the General Council to have good knowledge of individual situations, which allows us to make appropriate decisions, in addition to being a clear sign of a strong sense of belonging to the Congregation, overcoming that provincialism, which was so often lamented by my predecessor and various confreres, even during the last General Assembly.

I thank you for your collaboration.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General