

2 From the Superior General

Jubilee Year – 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism

Rome, 25 January 2017

To all the Confreres of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Confreres,

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

My heart is overwhelmed with thankfulness and joy for this “gift from Heaven,” allowing the Congregation of the Mission and the entire Vincentian Family to celebrate, throughout the whole of 2017, the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, which has left such deep marks of Jesus’s unconditional love on the world throughout the last 400 years and continues to do so today!

During this year, the Congregation of the Mission and the entire Vincentian Family will choose different dates for beginning the celebrations. Some have started already; some will begin later. But there is one date that is the source, the first reason for the celebration, as it is the beginning of the “way of Saint Vincent de Paul,” the beginning of the Vincentian Charism: 25 January 1617 in the village of Folleville in France.

It was in that small village that Vincent was touched by the tremendous spiritual poverty of people in the countryside. A few months later, he experienced the tremendous material poverty in the town of Châtillon. That experience gave birth to the Ladies of Charity, today known as AIC, who now witness so beautifully to the Vincentian Charism around the world. Vincent began by encouraging others to change their lives from within, as well as to reach out to the people around them, who had material needs. Meanwhile he

experienced his own personal conversion, leading him to dedicate himself totally to the spiritually and materially poor and bringing about the collaboration of so many, who followed in his footsteps, to make the Gospel a reality “here and now” for millions and millions throughout the 400 years that have passed since that time. This mission will not end until Charity is globalized, until Charity has embraced all corners of the world and touched the heart of every person!

The theme of the Jubilee Year, which will accompany us throughout the 12 months is: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me....”

Already there are numerous and incredible initiatives both within the Congregation of the Mission, as well as throughout the entire Vincentian Family, to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism in all corners of the world on the local, national, and international levels. And there are some initiatives still to come. All of these are keeping in mind Jesus’s words taken from Matthew 25:31-46 so dear to Vincentians and to all those who embrace the charism of Vincent de Paul: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me....”

As we look outward to the cry of the poor, we should not forget to look inward, to the cry of the poor within us, to the poverty within us that cries for help, for freedom, for redemption. It was Vincent’s acceptance and recognition of his own poverty that led him to purify his own heart, the heart that then beat so strongly for persons on the margins of society! Vincent’s approach to each person was not the approach of a theology from “above,” but rather an approach to the person from Vincent’s own poverty, the approach of a theology from “below.” To welcome the stranger within us, to recognize that he exists in every one of us, to embrace this stranger, accept him, and then give it all to Jesus to heal our wounds, to surrender completely to Him and trust totally in His Providence: this was Vincent’s way. Let it be the way of each one of us!



The lasting fruits of these 400 years are seen in the thousands and thousands of our confreres and other members of the numerous branches of the Vincentian Family who have walked before us, lived Vincent's way, the Vincentian Charism, to the best of their abilities. Now it is our turn.

Besides the many initiatives that we will be developing throughout the year 2017 to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, I would like to encourage and challenge each member of the Congregation, each one of us, with one more common initiative. The initiative is not new. Many will work very hard on various levels on this initiative in different parts of the world in a special way during this Jubilee Year. On the one hand, the initiative is old, very old; on the other hand, it is always new, ever new, like the Gospel!

I am talking about new vocations to the Congregation of the Mission, new vocations to Brotherhood and Priesthood. It is clear that the initiative always comes from Jesus, but we need to cooperate and help the person Jesus is calling to the consecrated life, in the fullest way possible, for that call to become a reality. To launch this initiative, I would like to use numbers as a source of our orientation.

The Congregation of the Mission presently has approximately 3200 members worldwide and a combined 800 seminarians in theology and philosophy, the Internal Seminary, and candidates.

The initiative is this: each one of us, collectively in groups or individually, will set himself this concrete goal: to pray, be attentive, look for, encourage, and invite one new candidate to join our forces during this Jubilee Year. Could we imagine 3200 new candidates to the Congregation of the Mission? Is this unrealistic? Is this a fantasy? With Jesus all is possible!

Through this initiative, hopefully many new vocations will come forward during the Jubilee Year. Others may join us in the years to come, as the fruit of the 400th Anniversary. Nothing is impossible



for Jesus, and we are invited to do all we can to cooperate with him. Providence will do the rest. The initiative and challenge for us is clear. Each confrere sets for himself this goal: I offer myself as a tool to Jesus to bring one new candidate to the Congregation of the Mission in this Jubilee Year. Nothing more, but nothing less!

Let us then go forward in this Year of Grace with the words of Saint Vincent de Paul:

“I wish you a young heart and a love in its first bloom for Him Who loves us unceasingly and as tenderly as if He were just beginning to love us. For all God’s pleasures are ever new and full of variety, although He never changes” (Letter 288, CCD:I:408).

May the Jubilee Year be accompanied by the intercession of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Saint Vincent de Paul, and all the other Blessed and Saints of the Vincentian Family!

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

Lenten Letter

Rome, 22 February 2017



To all the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My dear confreres,

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

Let me take the opportunity, at the beginning of this letter, to thank each one of you wholeheartedly for your many Christmas and New Year's greetings, which I received by regular mail, e-mail, or through different social media! I admire the heroic witness and service of your ministering in difficult times and in remote areas of the globe. My heart is with each one of you as I accompany you daily with my thoughts and prayers.

The season of Lent is near at hand!

In my first letter as Superior General for the feast of our Founder on 27 September, I started to reflect on our main sources of inspiration besides the Holy Bible: our Common Rules and Constitutions. The Advent letter was a prolongation of it. In this year's Lenten letter, I would like to continue in the same direction by reflecting on the Common Rules and Constitutions. In fact, the Common Rules and the Constitutions will become the base and source of all the reflections in the Advent and Lenten letters, as well as the letter for the feast of our Founder, in the following six years, leading to our next General Assembly in 2022.

In both previous letters, I expressed my heart's desire, encouraged, and asked each member of our "Little Company" to embrace our Common Rules and Constitutions as an inseparable tool for the development of our vocation, our road to sanctity, and the mission entrusted to each one of us by Jesus, the Evangelizer of the Poor!

Since the first letter five months have passed.

Vincent himself, at the end of the Common Rules, asks each one of us to read them every three months. We now have our Constitutions, as well as the Common Rules. As I did in the past two letters, I would like to ask again, in this Lenten letter, the following questions of every single one of us:

1. Do I carry my Common Rules and my Constitutions together with my Holy Bible and my Breviary?
2. As I do with my Bible and Breviary, do I read-pray a small passage of the Common Rules or Constitutions every day?
3. Since the Feast of Saint Vincent five months ago, was I able to start reading-praying the Common Rules or the Constitutions in order to finish them at the conclusion of three months?

Dear confreres, with all my heart I encourage each of us to help one another to keep walking along this path, or re-embark on it. As I did in my Advent letter, I would like once more to encourage

all the Visitors, as well as the Local Superiors, to be the source of inspiration, encouragement, and example to the confreres on the local and provincial levels.

If the responses to the above three questions are negative, can I ask myself why I did not start the above-mentioned tasks? Why do I not take into my hands our basic sources of inspiration to follow Saint Vincent's charism and spirituality?

Because the identity of a missionary, of a member of the Congregation of the Mission, is so crucial for our mission, I hope and pray that there is not a single confrere in the whole Congregation who does not read and reflect a short passage from the Common Rules or the Constitutions on his own or in community every day.

In my Advent letter, I reflected on "the Incarnation" as one of the central mysteries of Saint Vincent de Paul's spirituality. In this year's Lenten letter, I would like to reflect on the mystery of the "Holy Trinity" as another of the central mysteries of Saint Vincent's spirituality.

Saint Vincent writes in the Common Rules:

According to the Bull which established our Congregation, we are bound to honor in a special way the Most Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, mysteries beyond words. We should therefore try to carry this out most faithfully and, if possible, in every way, but especially in these three ways: (1) frequently honoring these mysteries by a prayer of faith and adoration, coming from our inmost heart; (2) dedicating certain prayers and good works each day to their honor and, above all, celebrating their feast days with special dignity, and the greatest possible personal devotion; (3) trying constantly, by our teaching and example, to get other people to know these mysteries and to honor and worship them (Common Rules X, 2; CCD:XIIIA:454-455).

In our Constitutions, we find the following words:

As witnesses and heralds of the love of God, we ought to show special honor and devotion to the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation (Constitutions, IV, 48).

What is the message of the Holy Trinity for me personally, for the community where I live and to which I belong, for the people Jesus is sending me to serve?

Jesus helps us understand the Holy Trinity: the identity, mission, and purpose of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus helps us to understand the relationship among the three Persons, the inner connectivity among them, and the influence of the Trinity on each individual person as well as on society as a whole.

As we discover and develop, with God's grace, an unbreakable bond between the Trinity and the individual person, between the Trinity and the community, between the Trinity and humanity, we will get ever closer to the ideal model of "relationships," basic components of our lives. We were created not as islands, separated from one another, but as social beings and as a family, where, in the depth of our being, we are one with God, which means, with the Trinity and with each other.

The Trinity remains a mystery for us. Jesus communicated to us what we know about the Father, Son, and Spirit. Jesus presented the Trinity to us as the ideal model of "relationships."

Our reflection on the Trinity needs to be accompanied by the wish and goal of incarnating that ideal model of "relationships" in the concrete life situation in which I find myself, in the community where I live and to which I belong, with the people to whom Jesus is sending me to serve.

The Holy Trinity is the ideal model of "relationships"! Jesus shows us the ideal.

- The mutual relationship between the Father and the Son.
- The mutual relationship between the Father and the Spirit.
- The mutual relationship between the Son and the Spirit.
- The relationship among the Father, Son, and Spirit.

What can we see in these "relationships"?

1. We can see that the attention is always directed to the other person and not to oneself.

2. We can see that the priority is always given to the other person and not to oneself.
3. We can see that praise, thankfulness, admiration are always given to the other person and not to oneself.
4. We can see that each one of the three Persons of the Trinity always expresses the need for collaboration with the other Person to fulfill the mission.
5. We can see that each of the three Persons of the Trinity always clearly expresses that it would be insufficient and ineffective for each of them to act alone.

What does the model of relationships in the Trinity say to me about my own life in:

- a. my relationship with God,
- b. my relationship to the community,
- c. my relationship with those to whom Jesus is sending me to serve?

Because we are not islands, but beings belonging to the human family, “relationships” are an inseparable part of our mission. The ideal model of the Trinity, that Jesus left us, is the model to follow.

Saint Vincent de Paul made the ideal model of the Holy Trinity one of the foundations of his spirituality. In this year’s Lenten Season, we are invited to take new steps toward the ideal model of “relationships” given to us through Jesus.

If each of us would put the other person first, put him or her before oneself, before one’s own desires, before one’s own interests, before one’s own personal wishes; if each one would give attention to the other person, share time, thoughts, experiences, hardships, doubts, sufferings, joys, etc. by following the ideal model of “the Trinity’s relationships,” then someone would do the same for each of us. In this way, a wonderful and miraculous set of relationships will take shape, where we together, in the best and most effective way possible, will accomplish the mission entrusted to us by Jesus.

To help us reflect on this ideal model of “relationships,” let us use two more passages from Saint Vincent on the Trinity, as well as a short reflection by our confrere Getúlio Mota Grossi:

If we want to have within us the image of the adorable Trinity and a holy relationship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, let's establish ourselves in this spirit. What creates unity and single-mindedness in God, if not equality and the distinction of the Three Persons? And what creates Their love if not Their resemblance? And if there were no love among Them, what would be loveable in Them, said the Blessed Bishop of Geneva? So then, there's uniformity in the Blessed Trinity: what the Father wants, the Son wants; what the Holy Spirit does, the Father and the Son do and act the same way; They have only one power and one way of acting. That's the source of holiness and our model. Let's make ourselves uniform; we'll be many as if we were only one, and we'll have holy union in plurality. If we already have a little, but not enough, let's ask God for what we lack, and see in what we differ from one another in order to try to resemble one another and be equal; for resemblance and equality engender love, and love tends toward unity. So then, let's all strive to have the same likings and to be in agreement regarding the things that are done or are allowed to be done among us (Conference 206 of 23 May 1659 on Uniformity; CCD:XII:210-211).

Live together as having but one heart and one soul (cf. Acts 4:32) so that by this union of spirit you may be a true image of the unity of God, since your number represents the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

I pray for this to the Holy Spirit, who is the union of the Father and the Son, that He may be yours likewise and give you profound peace in the midst of contradictions and difficulties, which can only be frequent among the poor. But remember also that this is your cross, by which Our Lord calls you to Himself and to His peace. Everyone has a high opinion of your work, and good people acknowledge that there is no other work on earth more honorable or holy, when it is performed faithfully (Letter of 30 July 1651 to Sister Anne Hardemont, in Hennebont; CCD:IV:238-239).

Saint Vincent's devotion to the Trinity was not an intellectual exercise but a search from his heart. It led him and leads us, as a Congregation still living the charism of the Founder, to a two-fold experience:

a) To imitate the mutual relations of the three Persons. *The Church finds the ultimate source of its life and action in the Trinity. The Congregation, within the Church, does the same (Constitutions II, 20).* We are called to be an image of the Trinity, the merciful and compassionate God of Love (cf. Conference 152 of 6 August [1656] on "The Spirit of Mercy and Compassion"; CCD:XI:308-309.), the God of the Poor, the least, the weakest, to whom we are destined by our charism. This is true for us, the Daughters of Charity, and the whole Vincentian Family.

Called to union in love; uniformity in plurality; communion of life; unity in the diversity of gifts; animated by the Holy Spirit; sent, like Jesus, for the missionary charity of evangelizing the poor, a charism inspired by the Spirit in Saint Vincent, given to the Company and inherited by us, we are challenged to creative fidelity to the charism of following Jesus, evangelizer of the poor.

b) Therefore, our devotion to the Trinity, like that of Saint Vincent, **must be connected to the Mission** (cf. Conference 118 of 23 May 1655, Repetition of Prayer; CCD:XI:172-174), to the proclamation of the mystery of God's love for the poor, for their salvation (cf. *ibid*, 173). The Word was incarnated, sent out of love by the Father (cf. John 3:16), conceived by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 1:35) in the womb of Mary, and anointed by the same Spirit to bring the good news to the poor. In the Incarnate Word, present in the poor, Saint Vincent saw the most perfect manifestation of the love of God (cf. John 3:16, 14:9), the preferential love of the Triune God for the least of this world (Getúlio Mota Grossi, CM).

We are celebrating the 400th Anniversary of Saint Vincent de Paul's charism. May this Jubilee Year bring us abundant fruit. With total trust in Providence, through the intercession of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Saint Vincent de Paul, and all the Saints and

Blessed of the Vincentian Family, we continue the path inward toward our own self, and outward to our communities and to the people Jesus is sending us to serve, to those who may not know the charism yet or to those places where the charism has still to take root.

I hope and pray that this year's Holy Week, Easter, and Easter Season celebrations will bring additional joy and meaning to us and our life's mission as we reflect on the Trinity and take new steps toward the ideal model of "relationships."

May we continue praying for one another!

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

To all the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

Rome, 8 March 2017

Dear Confreres,

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

It is with great joy that I share with you the news of one of the initiatives for the 400th Anniversary Jubilee Year. A worldwide Vincentian Family Symposium will be held in Rome on the weekend of 12-15 October 2017. Our Jubilee theme, “Welcome the Stranger,” is the focus of this event.

I believe it is a gift from God to us to celebrate this event together with Pope Francis, who will join us on Saturday, 14 October. We too will be privileged to have the reliquary with the Heart of Saint Vincent, which has begun its journey throughout the world, with us in Rome for that weekend. What a beautiful opportunity for us to be renewed in our missionary zeal!

With this in mind, I would like wholeheartedly to invite all the members of the Congregation of the Mission, all the members of the branches of the Vincentian Family, all those who live the Vincentian charism without belonging to a particular branch – parishioners, school and university communities, healthcare and social service collaborators, etc. – to come to Rome for this Symposium.

Thinking of our own Congregation, I would like to extend this invitation to the Symposium to our men in formation. More details about this will follow shortly. It is my hope that this event will animate them and kindle in them a deeper love of the charism and their missionary vocation.

I know that provinces, which presently have many, many vocations, may not have the financial resources to pay for such a trip to Rome. Therefore, we have established a special fund to help these seminarians at all levels of formation to come to Rome in the largest number possible. Please let us know the number you hope to bring and your needs. Together, we will work out a plan for them.

So that this invitation to participate in the Symposium be extended to as many members of the Vincentian Family as possible, I ask that you see to it that every confrere receives a copy of this letter. We hope that they will spread the word to all the corners of the globe, mobilize, and organize those with and for whom they work and serve or collaborate in different groups to come to Rome and participate in the symposium.

We also extend a special invitation to youth (ages 18-28). We hope that the Symposium will be a powerful time to animate them in the Vincentian vocation.

The Symposium will take place from Thursday (for registration only) through Sunday, 1:00 pm (13:00). Details about the Symposium are on the attached Information Sheet. As you will see, we also will be celebrating a prayer vigil in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls, as well as a closing Mass on Sunday in Saint Peter's Basilica.

The 400th anniversary of the charism provides us with a unique opportunity to celebrate our Vincentian heritage, to give thanks for all that has been done, and to develop ideas and plans for the future. The consideration of our changing demographics and social contexts, the pressing needs of the poor, and our ability to respond best to these as a Family are of great importance.

After receiving the "Save the Date" announcement a few weeks ago, a number of groups began to organize group travel and/or pilgrimages, which would include the Symposium. I ask you to encourage your confreres and their ministry groups – parishioners, schools and their alumni, etc., – as well as members of your volunteer groups, affiliates, and other collaborators to think along those same lines.

The attached Information Sheet includes details about some travel agencies, which may be able to assist you with lodging and transportation.

There is no registration fee for the Symposium. Each participant is responsible for his/her own expenses for travel, lodging, and food.

We have developed a website through which we will update you on the events occurring over that weekend: <http://famvin400.info/>.

To register please click on:

English form:

<https://depaulhousingforms.wufoo.com/forms/z1435kgz00dvph4/>

before 1 September 2017. For questions regarding the Symposium please write us at: info.symposium@cmglobal.org.

Please note: if you require a visa to enter Italy and, consequently, a Letter of Invitation in order to obtain that visa, please click on this link:

<http://famvin400.info/blog/2017/03/03/letters-of-invitation/> by 1 July 2017.

I look forward to being with you soon in Rome!

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

Vincentian Family Symposium: Welcome the Stranger

Information Sheet

REGISTRATION: There is no fee to register for the Symposium!

To register:

<https://depaulhousingforms.wufoo.com/forms/z1435kgz00dvph4/>

For questions: info.symposium@cmglobal.org

LETTERS OF INVITATION: If you must present a Letter of Invitation to enter Italy, please fill out the attached request form. We are not able to provide letters stamped by the Secretary of State, except for members of the Congregation of the Mission and Daughters of Charity. If this is a requirement of the Embassy in your country, please seek alternative means to receive the documentation that is required of you.

If your country requires a hard copy of this form (as opposed to an emailed copy), you are asked to send €30 Euros (\$32 USD) to cover the DHL cost. Please follow this link:

<http://famvin400.info/blog/2017/03/03/letters-of-invitation/>

ACCOMMODATIONS, MEALS, TRAVEL: Participants are responsible to arrange for their own accommodations, meals, and travel. If assistance is required, you may wish to contact one of the following travel agencies, or one of your own choosing:

- TMC Travel, Daniela Fecchio Email: vfs@tmctravel.it
Telephone: +39 06. 85304600
- ERNESTO TRAVEL: Wojciech Goj
Email: poland@ernesto-travel.pl
Telephone: +48 12633 6556 Website: <http://ernesto-travel.pl>

- Perillo Tours: Email: info@learningjourneys.com
Telephone 855-784-7687
- Catholic Journeys: Jimmy at jimmy@catholicjourneys.com or
Ann Marie at office@catholicjourneys.com.
Website: <http://catholicjourneys.com/>
- Speed System: Renata Azevedo or Lilian de Paula
Telephone: 0055313298-1000
Website: <http://www.speedsystem.com.br/>

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Participants are responsible to secure their own travel insurance for medical emergencies. Residents of the European Union may obtain the European Medical Insurance Card (E-111).

ROME TRAVEL TIPS:

Currency: The Euro is the currency in Italy.

Electricity: The electrical current in Italy is 230V 50 Hz. Please make sure to bring your own charger.

Climate: In October, the average temperature starts off at around 19°C (66°F) and gradually drops until it reaches 14°C-15°C (57°F-59°F) at the end of the month.

Visit this website for additional information as you prepare for your trip to Rome.

<http://www.fodors.com/world/europe/italy/rome/travel-tips>

Please visit the Symposium website at <http://famvin400.info/> for the latest updates!!

Schedule

We ask that you please plan to be present for the entire Symposium

Thursday, October 12:

9:00 AM - 9:00 PM (21:00) Registration at the Collegio
Apostolico Leoniano;
Via Pompeo Magno, 21; Rome (RM)

Friday, October 13:

9:00AM: Conferences
12:00 M: Break and Lunch
3:00 PM (15:00): Conference and Opportunity for Questions
and Answers
5:00 PM (17:00): Celebration of the Eucharist
Evening Free

Saturday, October 14:

Celebration of the Eucharist in private
8:30 AM: Paul VI Auditorium (at the Vatican) opens
9:30 AM: Symposium Program begins
11:30 AM: Session with Pope Francis followed by
Break and Lunch
8:30 PM (20:30): Prayer Vigil at the Basilica of St. Paul
outside the Walls

Sunday, October 15:

8:30 AM: St. Peter's Basilica opens
10:30 AM: Celebration of the Eucharist in St. Peter's Basilica

Celebration of the Eucharist: Priests are requested to bring their own albs and stoles for the celebrations of the Eucharist during the Symposium.

Please remember: all meals are on your own.

Further details will be provided as registrations are finalized.

<http://famvin400.info/>

TEMPO FORTE Circular

(27 February – 3 March 2017)

Rome, 24 March 2017

To all the confreres of the Congregation of the Mission

The Vincentian charism, today as in its beginnings, is based on the discernment of the signs of the times, and is expressed in the creativity of its responses. It joins evangelization and charity; preaching with promotion: dimensions of the same missionary action that seeks the salvation of every human person, and of the whole human person, in service of the Kingdom (Final Document, 2016 General Assembly, # 2.4.).

My dear confreres,

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

On Sunday, 26 February 2017, we began the *Tempo Forte* with a time for reflection that was directed by Father Luigi Mezzadri, CM. Father used an icon (painted by the Polish artist, Mariola Zajączkowska-Bicho), which depicts Vincent de Paul as a young man, holding the Bible in one hand and bread in the other. Through means of this icon, Father Mezzadri spoke with us about the beauty and the relevance of our charism.

The remainder of the morning was spent in personal prayer. We concluded this time of reflection with the celebration of the Eucharist, which was presided by Father Shijo Kanjirathamkunnel, CM. Father Shijo took advantage of this time to thank the members of the Curia for their kindness during the three years that he served as Procurator and Postulator General. The following day, 27 February, Father travelled to the Mission in Alaska where he will now minister. Thank you, Father Shijo, for your ministry at the Curia and may God bless your ministry in Alaska!

Cardinal Franc Rodé, CM, joined us for dinner. It was a fraternal encounter during which we were able to exchange opinions with regard to current Church news and world politics.

DECISIONS OF THE GENERAL CURIA WITH REGARD TO THE CONGREGATION

1. Presentation of Strategies (continued)

During the time of our first *Tempo Forte* (29 September – 10 October 2016), the General Council, in accord with the *Final Document* of the 2016 General Assembly and in accord with the concerns of the Congregation, selected eight objectives or lines of action that we will focus on during the years 2016-2022. The objectives are: initial formation, international missions, confreres in difficult situations, the Vincentian Family, solidarity (*ad intra* of the Congregation), reconfiguration, a sense of belonging to the Congregation of the Mission and our Vincentian identity.

In the following *Tempo Forte* meetings of the General Council, we will look for appropriate strategies in order to move forward with these eight priorities. At this present meeting, we decided on the following strategies:

- In the area of initial formation, Father Javier presented for dialogue a proposal with regard to formation in Europe. Afterwards, we decided to send this proposal to all the Visitors in Europe and ask them to study it. At the same time, CEVIM will study this proposal. The ultimate objective of this is “*to rethink Initial Formation in Europe (Internal Seminary and Major Seminary).*” Commitment # 4 of CEVIM taken at the 2016 GA, understood in the light of this line of action: “To organize intercultural houses of formation on the interprovincial and intercontinental levels” (2016 GA, 3. Lines of Action and Commitments, 3.2, a). From this proposal, we will establish a dialogue between CEVIM and the General Council in order to develop a plan with regard to initial formation.

At the same time, the Superior General has sent a letter to the presidents of the other Conferences and to their respective Visitors in order to communicate to them the desire of the General Council to enter into dialogue with them about a common project in the area of initial formation and in the area of the formation of formators.

- To promote solidarity in the Congregation of the Mission, Father Miles presented a new proposal, which included suggestions that were made during the previous *Tempo Forte*, especially with regard to the names of persons who could be members of a commission charged with preparing a Solidarity Plan. All the Visitors and provincial councils would then study this Plan in order to arrive at a definitive plan.
- In the area of international missions, Fathers Zeracristos, Aarón, and Mathew presented a first proposal, based on an objective evaluation of the present missions. However, in order to arrive at a true plan, it has to be enriched by themes like the following: sensitization and missionary formation in the provinces; providing greater stability to these missions; written agreements regarding the administration of these missions; relationships among the missionaries and the laity, the bishops, with the missionaries' provinces of origin, with the Superior General and his Council; preparation and formation of new candidates; vocations that began to emerge in these international missions; movement from an international mission to a mission dependent on a Conference or a province, etc. In the next *Tempo Forte*, a new draft of this proposal will be presented in order to arrive at a plan of action that the Council will undertake during the coming years.
- With regard to the priority of confreres in difficult situations, Father Turati's proposal (in draft form) has been enriched and, during the next *Tempo Forte*, this plan of action will be completed.

2. Meeting of New Visitors

This meeting will take place at Casa Maria Immacolata (Via Ezio) from 8-17 January 2018. Currently, there are 14 candidates who ought to participate in this meeting. The Vicar General and the Assistant General, Father Zeracristos, are responsible for developing a draft for this meeting for the next *Tempo Forte* in June.

3. Practical Guides for the Visitor and for the Local Superior

It seems apt to prepare a third edition of *A Practical Guide for the Visitor*. The two previous editions date from 1998 and 2005, respectively. The material proposed for the next New Visitors' Meeting (January 2018), the suggestions that will be made during the meeting, and other observations that have been suggested in the General Council will help prepare this new edition.

Given that there are only a few remaining copies of the *Practical Guide for the Local Superior*, it is planned to revise it and, later, publish a new edition of this *Guide*. The General Council will make the revision. The new edition is expected to be ready for the meeting of new Visitors in January 2018.

OFFICES DEPENDENT ON THE GENERAL CURIA

[1] Father John Rybolt, CM, after a careful examination of our archives and our library, has proposed contracting a lay archivist (full-time) and a librarian (part-time) to organize all these materials in the way that they should be. The Council has endorsed this proposal.

[2] Father Jorge Rodríguez, Director of the Office of Communication, after a meeting with the Vatican's Office of Communication, presented us with an updated plan for communication. In order to implement this plan, we have a grant that a foundation has promised over the next three years. This support consists of a matching grant. The Superior General will request funds for this from some province.

[3] In order to deal with questions concerning CIF, the Director, Father Andrés Motto, CM, and the Sub-Director, Father Adam Bandura, CM, joined us. They explained to the Council the manner in which CIF has functioned and also presented some suggestions with regard to the present and future operations of CIF.

[4] The Office of Vincentian Solidarity (VSO). Father Gregory Semeniuk, CM, is the new Executive Director of this office as of January 2017. He was at the meeting of the General Council to speak about the activities of the VSO during the past three months. He also presented us with a simpler way of approving projects, presented to the VSO, regarding the international missions. The General Council approved this new method, which consists of evaluating those projects in dialogue with the superior of the respective mission, with the Treasurer General, and with the Assistant General responsible for said mission. This will eliminate the need of having to present these projects to the Superior General and his Council. At the same time, and as proposed by Father Gregory, we approved an additional 50,000 dollars in order to complete an already-approved project for the Province of Nigeria.

[5] Father Guillermo Campuzano, CM, the representative of the Congregation to the United Nations, was also at our meeting. He gave an extensive report on his mission. The Congregation of the Mission has the status of an NGO at the United Nations. Currently, the Vincentian Family has five representatives at the United Nations, with ten employees and five separate budgets. According to Father, the power of the Vincentian Family would be stronger and more effective if there were one representative of the Vincentian Family.

Father Guillermo is attempting to develop an international Vincentian network on behalf of *Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation* (Commitment 3.1.d – *Final Document 2016 GA*). This would be composed of a representative of each Conference of Visitors, the Coordinator of the Commission for the Promotion of *Systemic Change*, the Director of the VSO, the Coordinator of the VFO, and, naturally, the representative of the Congregation at the UN. He also proposes forming another network that would be

an international coalition for *advocacy*. The objective of these two suggestions is to develop an efficient information network in the Congregation. These projects will be studied more carefully during the next *Tempo Forte*.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Financial Commission, composed of Mr. Thomas Beck, the Treasurer General, and Fathers Philippe Lamblin, CM, Rafael Eloriaga, CM, and George Shitsukane Busieka, CM, met on Saturday, 25 February 2017, for its annual meeting. On Monday, 27 February, Mr. Thomas Beck, President of the Commission, gave a detailed report to the council, about the work carried out over the two previous days. The Commission decided that, in addition to its annual meeting, it would have a video conference in the middle of the year; thus two meetings a year: one with everyone physically present and another through video conference.

Other matters presented: criteria and the results obtained from investment strategies, presentation of the 2017 budget, possible formation courses for future Treasurers General, insurance coverage of the Alaska mission by the Western Province of the United States, etc.

The discussion on financial matters concluded with some recommendations for the near future. At the end of this discussion, Father Joseph Geders, CM, made a final recommendation and bid farewell to his mission as Treasurer General. Thank you, Father Geders, for the work done and we wish you the best in your new mission! We welcomed the new Treasurer General, Father Paul Parackal, CM.

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

Bolivia: On 1 August, Father Aidan R. Rooney, CM, will conclude his service as superior in the El Alto mission. His replacement is being considered.

Fathers Julio César Villalobos Laos (Province of Peru) and Andreas Medi Wijaya (Province of Indonesia) have spent the last three months in Beni (a multi-nationality department of Bolivia),

studying the possibility of establishing a new international mission. Their report indicates positive reasons for opening it. The mission would begin with two missionaries. We will make an appeal to see if other confreres wish to collaborate in this mission.

Father Aarón Gutiérrez, Assistant General, will soon travel to Bolivia in order to meet with all the missionaries and dialogue with them about some themes related to this mission.

Angola: There are currently two confreres ministering there. We hope that very soon there will be a third missionary. Several vocations already have arisen. Bishop Alfonso Cabezas Aristizábal, CM, is very interested in promoting these vocations and collaborating with them from a distance.

Punta Arenas (Chile): On 16 June 2017, Father Ángel Garrido concludes his mission as superior. He has stated that he would like to return to Spain. We are considering the appointment of a new superior, as well as a fourth missionary. When Father Aarón Gutiérrez, Assistant General, visits Bolivia, he will also visit this mission.

Alaska: On 22 May 2017, Father Pedro Nel Delgado, CM, will leave this mission and return to his province (Colombia).

VINCENTIAN FAMILY

Father Aarón Gutiérrez, the delegate of the Superior General to the Vincentian Family, presented some specific guidelines in order to accompany the Vincentian Family in coordination with the Vincentian Family Office in Philadelphia. These guidelines, concretized with the verbs “to inform,” “to motivate,” “to accompany,” and “to participate,” were the object of dialogue in the Council and will guide its work with the Vincentian Family.

The Latin American Council of the Vincentian Family, known as FAVILA, is preparing for a meeting in Cochabamba (Bolivia) and it is expected that all the Latin-American Branches of the Family will participate in this meeting. These meetings are held every three years. The last meeting took place in 2015 in Guatemala.

During the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family (VFEC) on 6-7 January 2017, a megaproject, focused on the homeless, was approved for the whole Family. It is hoped that the project will begin on 1 July, as a way to celebrate our Jubilee Year and is expected to continue at least until 2030, to coincide with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Father Giuseppe Turati, Coordinator of the Systemic Change Commission, informed the Council about some workshops carried out recently and about perspectives for the future.

CONFERENCES OF VISITORS

On 17-25 February 2017, the Asia-Pacific Visitors' Conference (APVC) held its annual meeting in Vietnam. The program was quite varied and there was dialogue about the *Final Document* of the last General Assembly, the Vincentian Jubilee Year, and the new evangelization. There was also an opportunity to reflect upon the reality of each one of the provinces of this Conference, as well as upon the international missions of the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

The other Conferences have scheduled their annual meetings for the coming months: the United States (NCV), beginning on 19 April; Europe (CEVIM), from 23-27 April; Africa (COVIAM) from 1-8 May; Latin America (CLAPVI) from 22-29 October. We hope that all the Conferences have fruitful gatherings.

CALENDAR OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

For the next *Tempo Forte*, each member of the General Council will present his plan for the canonical visitations that correspond to him. This will enable the Superior General to plan his visits in coordination with each Assistant.

Beginning in June, the ordinary Council meetings will be held – in principle – on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. This will facilitate the Council's planning.

The *Tempo Forte* concluded with a brief dialogue on the functioning of the Council itself.

N.B. I would like to make note here of the dialogue between Father David Kinnear, Secretary General of the *Union of Superiors General* (USG) and our Council, on Friday, 3 March 2017. In a wide-ranging exchange, we reflected on the situation of consecrated life today and on the common problems between our Congregation and consecrated life in general.

Lord, Merciful Father, who instilled in Saint Vincent de Paul a great concern for the evangelization of the poor, infuse your Spirit in the hearts of His followers (Prayer for the 400th anniversary of the Vincentian Charism).

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General