

2

From the Superior General

The Programs of Formation

Rome, 10 April 2017

To the Visitors and Vice-Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear confreres,

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

This Jubilee Year of the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism invites us, in a special way, to give thanks to Jesus for our vocation, for the call to follow Him in the footsteps of our Founder.

Filled with inner fire, we are called in stability, chastity, poverty, obedience, simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification, and zeal to fulfill the mission entrusted to each one of us by Jesus. It comes so naturally that, as we fulfill this mission, it is our hearts' desire to have new members join us. Jesus' words, expressed more than 2000 years ago, remain so relevant today: "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38). Jesus himself confirms the fact that the mission entrusted to us is enormous and that there are not enough missionaries to carry out the task. At the same time, however, he invites and challenges us to ask for new laborers, new missionaries, and to trust that he can deliver in the fullest sense of the word.

The *Final Document* of the 42nd General Assembly speaks of our formation and straightforwardly places before us the importance of developing a clear understanding of who we are as members of the Congregation of the Mission and of being equipped with all the

tools to fulfill our mission in the best possible way. The General Assembly, as the highest authority in the Congregation of the Mission, made a clear statement that formation in all its stages is for us a source of renewed energy. It is also a way of preparing our members holistically, so that they will grow in knowledge of who a missionary of Saint Vincent de Paul is and of our spirituality and charism, our place in the Church and in the world.

Having in mind the mandate given us by the last General Assembly and the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, I would like, in this letter, to touch on three points:

- Initial Formation
- Formation of Formators
- Plans, Strategies, and Initiatives in Pastoral Work for New Vocations

To respond to this mandate, the General Council would like, in the coming six years, to understand better the overall situation in the areas of Initial Formation, Formation of Formators, and Pastoral Work for New Vocations on the level of the whole Congregation.

We would like to collect all the programs on the level of Initial Formation from all the different steps: Candidacy, Internal Seminary, Philosophy, Theology, and Year of Pastoral Placement that are already in place at the provincial, interprovincial, and international levels. In the same way, we would like to put together the different programs and initiatives that are in place on the provincial, interprovincial, and international levels in the area of Formation of Formators. The third point concerns the programs, initiatives, and plans taking place in the area of Pastoral Work for Vocations on the provincial, interprovincial, and international levels.

With this in mind, I ask the Visitors and Vice-Visitors to send the following programs, initiatives, and plans of your province or vice-province to the General Curia (cmcuria@cmglobal.org) no later than 15 May 2017:

- The General Plan for Initial Formation being implemented at the provincial, interprovincial, or international level of which your province or vice-province is a part.
- The General Plan for the Formation of Formators being implemented at the provincial, interprovincial, or international level of which your province or vice-province is a part.
- The General Plan for Pastoral Work for New Vocations being implemented presently at the provincial, interprovincial, or international level of which your province or vice- province is a part.

Speaking of new vocations to the Congregation of the Mission, on a few occasions, I came across the fact that in some provinces, vice-provinces, and international missions there are many potential vocations to the Congregation, but, because of a lack of financial resources, they cannot be invited and accepted to join us. I am convinced that if Jesus is calling those young men in different parts of the world to follow him in our Congregation, we must be open to Providence. Therefore, we will do all in our power to remove the financial obstacles that some are facing in the field of recruitment to the Congregation of the Mission.

I ask the Visitors, Vice-Visitors, and the Superiors of International Missions, who are experiencing financial hardships and are without the resources needed to put in place a pastoral plan for new vocations or have seminaries who cannot accept all the candidates because of lack of funds, to send us information on your present financial situation. Please include your assessment of how to go forward in order to carry out, in an optimal way, the pastoral plan for new vocations, as well as the implementation of the initial formation plan.

Let me thank each of you with all my heart for all your tremendous efforts and initiatives in the three above-mentioned fields that are in place in the Congregation. I would like to emphasize that all of us,

who serve in the General Curia, will do everything possible to keep supporting each of you in these so crucial and central ministries of the Congregation of the Mission.

As we turn to Jesus, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Saint Vincent, and all the Blessed and Saints of the Vincentian Family for intercession, it came mind to suggest that we also turn to our deceased confreres to intercede for us and for new vocations. Many of you probably are doing so already with regularity and so much faith. In my letter of 25 January 2017, I asked each of us, as well as all the branches of the Vincentian Family, to invite one new candidate to join us during this Jubilee Year. We definitely have thousands and thousands of confreres in heaven who have joined us already in this campaign or are eager to join us if we ask them.

May the Lenten journey keep bringing us many blessings. May we continue praying for one another.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

The UN. VIN-JPIC: Vincentine International

Rome, April 19, 2017

To all the visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Brother,

May the grace of our lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

In our last council of tempo forte we welcomed father Guillermo Campuzano from our office at the United Nations to present his proposal for a Vincentian unified network that channel the collective efforts of the members of the Congregation of the Mission especially in the field of political and social advocacy. After listening to the council, I have approved the creation of the **VIN-JPIC: Vincentian International Network for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation**. This initiative is inspired by best practices of congregations that have presence at the UN.

I have asked father Guillermo to move ahead with the implementation of the VIN-JPIC; as you may remember this was one of the issues we discussed within our 2016 General Assembly and is expressed in our final document as a call to action (Cfr. Lines of Action and Commitments, in the 3rd part). I hope that this initiative will continue to advance our work with the poor and our agenda of positive systemic change.

This will be further aided by the network's unity of our collective efforts in trying to influence social policy and the promotion of structural change at all levels. As you will read in the document attached, the main structure of the new network implies that you select a confrère to represent your province in VIN-JPIC; as soon as Fr. Guillermo has these names he will send the appropriate list to each Conference of Visitors and ask them to name a regional coordinator from among those on the list. These five coordinators will work directly with Father Guillermo in the implementation of the network. All the details of the work (collecting and sharing information, online distribution of pertinent materials, advocacy training, etc) will be directly explain to the confreres you select as the representatives of your provinces. This confrere do not need to be freed from other ministries to render this service, hopefully he is a man curious and interested for social and political issues. **Please send the name directly to Father Guillermo Campuzano (gcampuzanovelez@gmail.com) no later than July 1st 2017.**

“There is no act of charity that is not accompanied by justice or that permits us to do more than we reasonably can.” (St Vincent's letter to François du Coudray, In Toul, 17 June 1640)

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

Beatification of the new Spanish Vincentian Martyrs

Rome, 18 May 2017

To the Members of the Vincentian Family

“That ... is what a Christian is made of, and that’s the courage we must have in order to suffer and to die, when necessary, for Jesus Christ (Vincent de Paul speaking about the death of Pedro Borguñy, CCD:XI:290).

My dear brothers and sisters,

We just received a letter from the Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid, Carlos Osoro Sierra, in which he communicates great news to the Vincentian Family in Spain and throughout the rest of the world. On 11 November 2017, 60 witnesses of the faith, men and women who shed their blood and who are members of our large Vincentian Family, will be beatified in Madrid.

- 40 are members of the Congregation of the Mission (24 priests and 16 brothers)
- five are diocesan priests (Diocese of Murcia) who served as spiritual advisors to the various lay Associations of the Vincentian Family
- two are Daughters of Charity
- seven are members of the Children of Mary (today known as the Vincentian Marian Youth)
- six are members of the Miraculous Medal Association.

All of these individuals were martyred during the religious persecution that took place at the time of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Happily, the event of the beatification takes place during the 400th Anniversary of the origin of the Vincentian Charism. We all know that Vincent de Paul, as a result of his experience in Folleville and Châtillon, discovered the need for mission and charity. Those are the most significant elements that will lead the Vincentian Family to its fullness and holiness. It is in that same missionary context and with that same option for the most vulnerable members of society, that we must place the courageous witness of these new martyrs. With calmness, they professed their faith in Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord; and with courage, they defended the values that are proclaimed in the Gospel. They made the heroic act of forgiving their executioners, thus imitating Jesus himself. Our Founder once asserted, *there is no greater love than martyrdom*.

The martyrdom of these 60 Vincentians is a gift, a grace, and an example that encourages us to fidelity: *Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad for your reward will be great in heaven* (Matthew 5:11-12). In a world characterized by caprice, short-term plans, and the search for well-being at whatever cost, these martyrs become points of reference who speak to us about the beauty of a life given to God and about disinterested service on behalf of others. It is clear that the witness of the martyrs is not some form of improvisation but, rather, is the result of a life oriented towards the Gospel or, to say this in another way, martyrdom is the fruit of permanent fidelity, the heroic act of mature individuals and of convinced and principled Christians.

It is most probable that none of us will have to face a bloody martyrdom. Persecutions today are carried out in a “more civilized” manner. Nevertheless, we are all called to cultivate, strengthen, and value the gift of fidelity, which is the basis of all martyrdom. Indeed, fidelity, understood in a dynamic way, always will give new

life to our vocation as evangelizers and servants of the poor. The beatification of the new martyrs on 11 November and this Vincentian Jubilee Year can stimulate us to grow in “creative fidelity.” May we live our vocation in a creative way in the midst of this world of unbelief, in the midst of this world in which so many of our brothers and sisters experience misery as an everyday reality. This ongoing dedication is what the Church and the world expect of us as Vincentians: *Take care of your poor life. Be content with consuming it little by little for Divine Love. It is not your own; it belongs to the Author of Life, for love of whom you must preserve it until He asks it of you, unless an opportunity arises to offer it, like a good priest, eighty years of age, who was just martyred in England after cruel torture* (CCD:II:211-212).

Like Saint Vincent, we also believe that the Vincentian Family is not weakened by the cruel death of several of its sons and daughters. From the history of the Church, we know that the exact opposite is true. As Tertullian pointed out in the second century, *the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians*. The Church has grown and spread thanks to the silent preaching of her holy martyrs. The same can be said of our Family, *for one who will suffer martyrdom, many more will come; his blood will be like the seed that brings forth fruit, and fruit in abundance* (CCD:X:443).

Your brother in Saint Vincent

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General

Invitation, on 12-15 October, for a Vincentian Family Symposium

Rome, 23 May 2017

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Confreres,

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

In March, you received an invitation to join us in Rome, on 12-15 October 2017, for a Vincentian Family Symposium. As you know, there are many activities planned for this event, including an audience with Pope Francis. The website developed for this event, <http://famvin400.info/>, contains all the information you need to know regarding the Symposium, including a link to the Registration Form.

I am writing to check with you on how the promotion of this event is developing in your provinces. Our confreres are in so many of the locations where the leaders of the Vincentian Family in your provinces work. They are an essential link in getting information to the lay branches of the Vincentian Family and in encouraging their participation in the Symposium. In this regard, I would like to encourage you to ask our pastors to organize their parish groups to participate in the Symposium. Please encourage all the confreres of your province to participate in the Symposium in the largest number possible.

You received information a few months ago that, because of a wonderful gift from a donor, the General Curia will be covering the

flight expenses for three young confreres – brothers or priests – and one seminarian from each province that is in need of financial help. The provinces concerned already have received this information.

Where it is financially possible, please encourage the participation of all the youth groups within your province for whom we have scheduled a special gathering. Please encourage all the high school principals in your province to invite students, staff, and alumni to attend.

Along with the branches of the Vincentian Family, please encourage the participation of all those who feel close to the charism of Vincent, our Vincentian collaborators, to join us at the Symposium. Please encourage your men in different stages of formation – candidacy, internal seminary, seminary, etc. – to participate in the Symposium. We have scheduled a special gathering just for them.

Please make use of social media, websites, newspapers, radio, and TV to announce the Symposium in the areas of your province.

The registration for the Symposium started a few weeks ago. Please register as soon as possible and urge all the different groups to do likewise. This will be a tremendous help for the organizing committee, so it knows in advance the number of participants and will be able to prepare the logistics, in addition to the whole Symposium, as well as possible.

In this Jubilee Year of special grace, let us try to do all that we can to spread the word about the Symposium and encourage people to participate, trusting in Providence that all these efforts and all this work will also bring new young men to join us in our mission to evangelize the poor.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General