

TO THE VISITORS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

12 June 1999

My very dear Confreres,

The Peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you!

In response to the directives of the General Assembly of 1992, we established the Center for International Formation St. Vincent de Paul (CIF) in Paris. For the past 5 years at CIF, we have been running the “Vincentian Ongoing Formation Program” which has been aimed primarily at confreres between 35-50 years of age. The vast majority of the participants have given the program a very positive evaluation. This program will continue its good work.

The General Assembly of 1998 encouraged continued emphasis on formation, and particularly on the formation of our formators. The call for formation has been repeated many times in the last years by numerous provinces and confreres and by the General Council. In response to this call, with the consent of the General Council, I have decided to establish two additional programs at CIF and I am writing to introduce these programs to you and to seek your input. The titles of the programs are tentative and your input will influence the content.

1. 50+ Program (Vincentian Heritage Program): One program will be aimed at confreres more than 50 years of age who are seeking to grow in their appreciation of our Vincentian heritage and to renew themselves in our Vincentian charism. Many of the details of the program need to be determined in dialogue with the CIF team and possible participants, but, in brief, these characteristics will be present:

- 4 weeks in length;
- a single language for each session beginning with separate sessions in French, Spanish, and English, with the possibility of sessions in other languages, such as Italian, Portuguese, Polish, etc., depending on interest;
- 30 participants per session;
- the content will include some study of the works and life of St. Vincent, our Constitutions and Statutes, and the Vincentian Family; some visits to Vincentian sites; the sharing of experiences by the participants;
- the cost of this program would be about 1.150 Euros (\$1.250 USD) per participant.

2. Institute for Vincentian Specialists: A second program will be aimed at those confreres who would seek to be specialists in Vincentian studies. Every province could hope to have one or more confreres who are well-versed in Vincentian subjects.

These confreres are a boon both to the Province and the whole Congregation. This Institute will have the purpose of helping serious confreres to achieve this goal in part. It would certainly not be possible for a large number of confreres to participate in such an undertaking, but there are a few who could profit from it greatly and bring its fruits back to the Province. One special group which could be served by this Institute would be formators of our own who need to have a special appreciation of our Vincentian roots. This is intended to be an intense program with the primary emphasis on guided research and self-study. Among the characteristics of this program would be:

- a duration from 3 months to one year depending on the needs and competence of the participant;
- no minimum number of participants; one confrere is sufficient since the work is individual; no age limit for the program;
- acceptance to the program by the CIF Directors in collaboration with the Visitor and the General Council;
- objectives for the time of research designed by the participant in dialogue with the CIF Directors;
- a reading knowledge of French;
- a contract between the participant and the CIF team defining mutual responsibilities as well as the relationship between the participant and a mentor;
- the cost of the program for one-year would be about 9.300 Euros (\$10.000 USD); some scholarship help will be available for provinces with fewer resources, but the cost is significant, as is the goal.

On the attached sheets, please respond to a few questions on these two new programs. The calendar for the CIF programs, which is included, will cover the next 5 years (2000-2004). I ask you to indicate on these forms those confreres who will participate in all the CIF programs, and I take this opportunity to remind you that all confreres between 35-50 are expected to participate in the "Vincentian Ongoing Formation Program". Please return all these sheets by July 31, 1999 to Fr. John Rybolt, CM. even if you will not have any participants.

Fr. John Rybolt, CM
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Thank you for your cooperation in this matter as in so many others. I am confident that both of these new programs, like the "Vincentian Ongoing Formation Program", will be significant contributions to the deepening of our appreciation and understanding of our Vincentian tradition.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, CM
Superior General