

November 22, 2001

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Brothers,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

I write today, with considerable enthusiasm, to give you some news about the first International Meeting of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, held here in Rome on October 22-26, 2001. For your information, I am enclosing a copy of the Final Document.

As you can see from this document, the participants made a number of commitments at the end of the meeting as they looked toward the future. They also made five proposals to me, as Director General. In the months ahead, I will try to act on these.

Sixty-eight Vincentians, Daughters of Charity, and lay men and women took part, coming from 28 countries. Each day they listened to presentations, worked in discussion groups, and formulated proposals for promoting the life and works of the Association. I was very glad to be there myself to celebrate the opening and closing Masses, and to give a conference as well. I regret that my participation in the Synod kept me from being with the group full-time, as I had originally planned. Happily, we were able to get very good tickets for the closing Mass of the Synod. The members of the Association had seats right behind the concelebrating bishops, very close to the main altar in St. Peter's and to the Holy Father.

The commitments which the participants made focus on deepening the spirituality of the members of the Association in imitation of Mary the Mother of Jesus, on forming the members better, on motivating them to respond concretely and effectively to the needs of the poor, on disseminating the Miraculous Medal and extending the Association in the many countries where the Vincentian Family exists, on collaborating with the other branches of the Family, and on formulating National Statutes in the countries to which the Association is spreading. I ask your help in assisting the members of the Association to meet these goals.

St. Vincent encouraged us to have a deep devotion to Mary, the Mother of the Church and Mother of the Poor. He says that: “She, better than anyone else, penetrated the substance (of the gospel) and put it into practice.” With you, I pray that Mary, who is our mother too, will bless the Vincentian Family.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

A New Image for a New Millennium
Final Document

**First International Encounter of
the Association of the Miraculous Medal**

Rome, October 22-26, 2001

To all the members of the Association of the Miraculous Medal

Invited by Father Robert Maloney, C.M., Director General of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, and representing 28 countries, we 70 members of the International Vincentian Family (laity, Daughters of Charity, and Missionaries) gathered in Rome. Our purpose was: *“to reflect on the reality and identity of the Association of the Miraculous Medal in the world, and to commit to some common approaches even as we embark on new roads.”* Our motto was: *“A New Image for a New Millennium.”*

1. Identity of the Association

- The Association of the Miraculous Medal (AMM) began soon after the appearances of the Virgin Mary to Saint Catherine Labouré in 1830. Later, in 1909, its Statutes were approved and confirmed officially by Pope Pius X.
- It is an ecclesial, Marian, and Vincentian Association;
- It is a living and enduring reminder of the Immaculate Virgin Mary's apparition in 1830 (Statutes 1);
- It has the purposes of: *“recalling Mary conceived without sin; and also the sanctification of its members, integral formation in the Christian life, and the apostolate of charity, especially toward the most abandoned. Mary's Holy Medal, both by the symbolism which it shows and by the power it enjoys, offers both a model and assistance for those purposes.”* (Statutes 2)
- The members of the AMM very frequently repeat the words that appear on the Medal (Cf. Statutes 8). They keep in mind that true devotion consists neither in fruitless and passing emotion, nor in a certain vain credulity. On the contrary, it proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to recognize the excellence of the Mother of God and are moved to love her as her children and to imitate her virtues. (Cf. Statutes 8; *Lumen Gentium* 67)

2. Reality of the AMM in the world

Millions of people that wear the Miraculous Medal form the Association, which is made up of general members and particular members. The AMM is present in more than 30 countries, of which 7 have received approval of

particular statutes from the Director General. In the last few years the AMM has experienced a quick growth and expansion. A significant diversity exists in the organization and apostolate of the AMM in the different countries where it is present.

The work and experience that we shared as participants in this Encounter have led us to the **convictions, commitments, and proposals** we offer here, with the intention that they serve as a basis for the creation and strengthening of the Association in each country. We are confident that they will contribute to a stronger unity of the AMM and to creating a new Image of the AMM in the New Millennium.

3. Convictions and Commitments

3.1. Spirituality

A. Convictions

1. Jesus is the center of our life;
2. The Holy Spirit enables us to live in relationship with God and with our brothers and sisters;
3. Mary, our mother, leads us to Christ and is a teacher of the spiritual life;
4. The Word of God is the starting point in our Marian reflection;
5. The liturgy, especially the Eucharist, is the summit and source of the Christian life (Cf. *Sacrum Concilium* [SC] 10);
6. Our age requires Christians of deep faith and intense prayer life;
7. Faith is born, lives, is shared, and is celebrated in community;
8. Affective love of God is closely connected to effective service of the poor.

B. Commitments

1. To pray with Mary and to pray like Mary;
2. To live, following the example of Mary, like true disciples, listening to the Word of God and docile to the Spirit;
3. To make our centers “schools of prayer for those who know the experience of God” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte* [NMI] 33);
4. To live like Mary, in true solidarity with the poor;
5. To practice meditation and silence;
6. To be joyful witnesses of deep faith.

3.2. Formation

A. Convictions

1. Formation is the greatest challenge that the AMM faces today;
2. Formation involves a continuous process of development;
3. Formation is vital to strengthen the identity and image of the Association;

4. Formation is a responsibility of the whole group and of each member in the Association;
5. Formation is nurtured by prayer and the Word of God;
6. The knowledge of Mary's mission in the history of salvation sheds light on Christian life and apostolic commitment;
7. Formation is necessary for competent and effective service.

B. Commitments

1. To promote a formation that enables our own growth and the growth of others;
2. To offer the members of the Association a basic human and Christian education;
3. To work for an integral formation that feeds the ecclesial, Marian and Vincentian dimension of the Association;
4. To promote knowledge of the social teachings of the Church and to apply them in our pastoral projects;
5. To enhance the formation of lay leaders so that these in turn may form and lead others in the Association;
6. To demonstrate good stewardship of the Association's funds, giving priority to formation of members and the needs of the poor.

3.3. Apostolate and mission

A. Convictions

1. Mary inspires our commitment to the poor;
2. The AMM is a privileged place where lay people of all ages can live their vocation;
3. Growth in sanctity determines apostolic success: "a person of prayer will be capable of everything" (SV XI, 83);
4. This is the age of the laity in the Church and the world;
5. Christian charity today calls for "even greater resourcefulness ... a new creativity" (NMI 50): "love is inventive unto infinity" (SV XI, 146 / ES XI, 65);
6. The AMM is an instrument of good news and of hope for our world;
7. The monthly "Home Visit" of the small Miraculous Medal shrine is an effective way to evangelize the family.

B. Commitments

1. Like Mary, to be an evangelizing presence wherever we are;
2. To practice listening to the Lord and to the poor;
3. To give preference to working with families, so that each family becomes a "domestic church";
4. To participate actively in the life and apostolate of local Churches;

5. To encourage members of the Association to respond to the needs of the poor “at the same speed that one would run to put out a fire” (SV XI, 31 / ES XI, 724);
6. To adopt a lifestyle such “that the poor feel at home” among us (NMI 50);
7. To take on among the poor a respectful, kind, and meaningful presence that elevates their dignity and promotes their human and Christian condition;
8. To testify with words and works to our union with Christ.

3.4. Dissemination and devotion

A. Convictions

1. Mary is the center and source of the AMM;
2. The Miraculous Medal is a loving sign of the care and Providence of God;
3. The Medal brings a message of salvation to the world and has the power to evangelize;
4. Authentic devotion to Mary consists in the imitation of her virtues;
5. Mary helps us to build a Christian community of brothers and sisters.

B. Commitments

1. To disseminate the Miraculous Medal as Mary requested of Saint Catherine Labouré;
2. To deeply appreciate the rich symbolic content of the Miraculous Medal;
3. To make a “re-reading” of the Miraculous Medal from the perspective of the poor;
4. To extend the AMM into countries where the Vincentian Family is active;
5. To take advantage of the Web pages of the Vincentian Family and of the AMM for disseminating the Association and spreading devotion to the Miraculous Medal;
6. To be creative in the search of funds for the different purposes of the Association.

3.5. Vincentian Family

A. Convictions

1. The Miraculous Medal is related to each one of the branches of the Vincentian Family;
2. The Vincentian charism enriches the AMM.

B. Commitments

1. To grow in our sense of community and ownership of the Association;
2. To understand the other branches of the Vincentian Family and to appreciate the wealth in their diversity;
3. To collaborate with the Vincentian Family in evangelization and common projects for the service of the poor.

3.6. Advisors and accompaniment

A. Convictions

1. The ministry of an adviser in the AMM is to care for the spirit and the purposes of the Association, to promote formation, to encourage caring relationships, to maintain an attitude of listening, and to facilitate dialogue and discernment;
2. An authentic advisor of the groups of the AMM serves as a companion both to the members and to the group, promoting growth, dynamism, and creativity;
3. The good adviser will always be a humble and simple servant.

B. Commitments

1. To encourage and support the development of pastoral projects that respond to the needs of the Association and situation in each country;
2. To assure the planning, completion, and evaluation of projects;
3. To enliven and accompany members and groups;
4. To serve in an advisory role that is liberating, one that avoids paternalistic and authoritarian attitudes;
5. To assist in developing national statutes.

4. Proposals for the Director General

1. To create an organized international structure for the Association;
2. To revise the International Statutes, based on the new reflection and analysis that we have made during these days of Encounter;
3. To elaborate some general guidelines for formation in the AMM and to offer supporting material for newly created groups;
4. To convene a new International Encounter or General Assembly for the Association in the next 4 years;
5. To create an international bulletin of formation and information.

O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you!