

Ratio Missionum

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
GENERAL CURIA

Rome, May 1, 2002

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

A few years before his death, St. Vincent said to those gathered at St. Lazare:

Are we prepared to go to Poland, to Barbary, to the Indies, to sacrifice our lives and our satisfactions to him? If that it so, let us praise God ... Let us give ourselves to God to go throughout the whole world to spread his holy gospel and, wherever he may lead us, let us stay at our post, faithful to our commitment until we are recalled at his good pleasure. May difficulties not deter us ... It matters not if we die in the fight. But let us die with our weapons in our hands, and happy too, for by our death the Company will not be the poorer, because 'the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians.' For every missionary who gives his life out of charity, God will raise up others who will do the work he left behind (Abelly, Book II, Chapter I, 194-195).

As I introduce this *Ratio Missionum*, I thank God for the countless generous missionaries whom he has formed within the Congregation. Many have lived and died in the service of the poor in foreign lands. As I visit the provinces, I am struck again and again by the fidelity and creativity of our missionaries in preaching the gospel "by word and work."

The General Assembly of 1998, seeing a strong and renewed missionary drive among the members of the Congregation, asked the Superior General to name a special commission to write a *Ratio Missionum*. Soon afterwards, with the consent of the members of the General Council, I asked Frs. Antonius Sad Budianto (Indonesia), Dominique Iyolo Iyombe (Congo), Ángel Santamaría (Madagascar), Homero Elías (El Alto, Bolivia), Hugh O'Donnell (China), and Victor Bieler (General Curia) to serve as its members. The Commission met three times between January 1999 and the fall of 2000. After its first meeting, it consulted all the members of the Congregation of the Mission about the contents of a *Ratio*. Before drawing up its final draft, it further consulted all of the Visitors of the Congregation. It also met with the General Council on two occasions and asked our input at every

step. When the Commission finished its work and placed it in my hands, I then asked Fr. John Prager, who works in Panama, to serve as a final editor and unify the style of the document, the chapters of which had been written in various languages. When Fr. Prager completed the editing task, I reviewed the document once again with the members of the General Council, making a few final changes. We then unanimously approved it.

Today, with great gratitude to all of those who worked so hard in preparing this *Ratio Missionum*, I present it to you for your study. I encourage all the members of the Congregation to read this document, to meditate on it, and to search for ways in which it can shape the life and ministry of each of us. I ask too that it be studied carefully in all of our houses of formation. It should be one of the fundamental documents for those preparing for full membership in the Congregation of the Mission, since it responds to some basic questions concerning our ministry: What should a Vincentian foreign mission be like? What are its characteristics? What are the criteria for accepting and evaluating missions? How should candidates be prepared for them?

In presenting this *Ratio* today, I also ask the Visitors to organize study sessions or retreats in which the confreres and our candidates reflect on and digest the contents of this document. It will be helpful to all of us, whether we are younger or older, whether we are engaged directly in foreign missions or in other works.

As we begin to use this document in the Congregation, I think of our missionaries throughout the world. With you and for them, I join in a prayer that St. Vincent wrote spontaneously on September 27, 1647, at the end of a letter to Étienne Blatiron, who was the first of our missionaries to go to Genoa:

O God my Lord, please be the bond of their hearts; bring to flower the effects of so many holy affections you cause them to form, and give growth to the fruits of their labors for the salvation of souls. Water with your eternal blessings this establishment, like a new tree planted by your hand. Strengthen these poor missionaries in their fatigue. Lastly, my God, be yourself their reward, and through their prayers spread over me your immense mercy (SV III, 239).

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

RATIO MISSIONUM

Congregatio Missionis

Let us ask God to give the Company this spirit, this heart, this heart which will make us go everywhere, this heart of the Son of God, the heart of Our Lord, the heart of Our Lord, the heart of Our Lord which will dispose us to go as he went and as he would have gone if his eternal wisdom had judged it fitting to labor for the conversion of those poor nations (SV XI, 291).

Introduction

The following of Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor (C 1) is the driving force behind our Vincentian missionary vocation. Encounters with the most abandoned in places like Folleville and Châtillon changed St. Vincent's understanding of the gospels and led him to an ever deepening relationship with Christ the Missionary of the Father. With the aid of figures like Pierre de Bérulle, Francis de Sales and André Duval, he gradually discerned where the Spirit was leading him in life, and little by little he recognized his vocation was to participate in Jesus' mission to evangelize and serve the poor.

The first members of the Congregation shared Vincent's insight into the gospel. Inspired by his example and sensing how deeply his charism resonated in their own lives, they gathered around our founder to live out the vocation of following Jesus as evangelizers of the poor. Vincent told them: *In this vocation we live in conformity with Our Lord Jesus Christ who, it seems, when he came to this world, chose as his principal task that of assisting and caring for the poor (SV XI, 108).*

While the basic charism of the Congregation of the Mission was clear from the first days of its foundation, the structures and ministries which flowed from Vincent's original inspiration developed only slowly. Events, urgent needs and pressing requests constantly challenged the first Vincentians to broaden their understanding of how to live their vocation. The pioneer group of missionaries expressed the charism by preaching popular missions in the countryside. Within a few years they had assumed the work of forming the clergy. Gradually, missionaries went out beyond the borders of France to support the local Churches in Italy, Ireland, Scotland and Poland, as well as to small groups of enslaved Christians in North Africa. In 1648 Vincent, recognizing that the missions *ad*

*gentes*¹ were another, very important way to live our missionary vocation, sent the first of six groups to Madagascar.

Vincent frequently reflected on these developments in his conferences and letters, where we can note a growing appreciation for the place of foreign missions in the life of the Company. *How happy the situation of a missionary whose only limit for his mission is the inhabitable world. Why restrict ourselves to one place and impose limits on ourselves in one parish if our vocation is the whole circumference of the globe?*² On another occasion he remarks: *What does the word missionary mean? It means one who is sent, sent by God. God has said to you: Go out to the whole world to preach the Gospel to every creature* (SV XII, 27). To a group of missionaries being sent to Madagascar, he states:

According to the rules of our institute, we are obliged to attend to the salvation of souls anywhere that God calls us, above all, in places where there is a greater need and where workers for the Gospel are lacking and, knowing that in the Indies, especially in the islands of Madagascar ... there is a great lack of workers and the harvest is great ...we destine and send you to these people on the said islands and other parts of the Indies so that, according to the function of our Institute, you can devote yourselves to the salvation of souls with all your strength and with the help of God's grace (SV XIII, 314).

In a moment of enthusiasm, Vincent expressed to Charles Nacquart his profound appreciation for the foreign missions: *There is nothing on earth I would like better, if it were allowed me, than to go as your companion in place of Fr. Gondrée* (SV III, 285). Towards the end of his life, in December 1658, he made a passionate plea to maintain the ministries that had developed in the Congregation, especially the foreign missions. He defended them by pointing out that they responded to our basic call to evangelize the poor. He warned against those who would seek to curtail or abandon difficult missions because of distance, lack of personnel, or loss of missionary spirit. *There will be men who coddle themselves, men who have a narrow outlook, who confine their views and designs to a limited sphere within which they shut themselves up as in a tiny circle and are unwilling to leave it* (SV XII, 92).

Over the centuries the Congregation of the Mission has sought to be faithful to the legacy that St. Vincent has left us in the foreign missions. Responding to requests from local Churches and the Congregation for the

¹Strictly speaking, the missions *ad gentes* are missions in areas where the Gospel has never been preached. There is, however, a tendency to talk about all missions in foreign countries as *ad gentes*. This second, less technical meaning will often be used in this document.

²This citation, not found in Coste's French Edition of the works of St. Vincent, can be found in the Spanish Edition (SVP XI, 828-829).

Propagation of the Faith, missionaries went out to Asia, Oceania, Africa and the Americas. Inspired by the Vincentian charism, famous confreres, like Sts. Justin de Jacobis, John Gabriel Perboyre and Francis Regis Clet, and many other lesser known missionaries gave their lives to preaching the Gospel in new cultures. The same Vincentian missionary charism lives on in the members of the Congregation of the Mission at the beginning of the 21st century. This Ratio Missionum seeks to offer guidelines for those serving in our foreign missions in light of the many changes that have occurred in the Church and the world in recent years.

I. The Present Situation: a New and diverse World

A new world is being born. It has yet to take definitive shape as it struggles to emerge from the remnants of a former age. Like every human society, this new world has positive and negative elements, values and disvalues. It is the milieu in which today's missionaries are called to evangelize. A few aspects of the emerging future are these:

1.1 The Reality of Poverty and the Aspiration for Justice

A new economic situation is developing because of technological advances, rapid communications, new means of production, trade agreements, and other factors. Globalization of the economy affects every society and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. These changes have created unprecedented wealth for some few countries and for small groups in many nations.

This new economic situation has not translated into positive gains for large sectors of the world. National economies have been crippled by unpayable debts. Whole countries have been left behind in the rush to globalize because they lack raw materials or desirable agricultural and manufacturing products demanded by international markets. In practice, the so-called free market economy is dominated by wealthy nations which control access to the market, as well as the capital and technology needed to participate.

Two-thirds of the world still lives in poverty. Twenty-eight thousand people die everyday from hunger, not to mention the millions who are chronically undernourished. Incredible percentages of the populations of some countries have been infected by AIDS, malaria, and other lethal diseases. Most of the world still has either no access to adequate medical attention, education and potable water or has substandard possibilities for meeting these and other basic human needs. Underlying this necessarily very general description are real individuals and families that suffer.

There are signs of hope in the midst of this rather bleak picture. There is a growing awareness, at least in theory, of the value of the human person. Fostering respect for the value of each person has been one of the important struggles of our time. In almost every country, groups have been formed to promote and protect human rights, civil liberties and political participation. Individuals, small groups and whole peoples endeavor to create just economic and political structures which permit the development of the human person. These are all signs of a new world struggling to emerge.

1.2 Reaffirmation of Cultural Diversity

Anthropology and sociology have pointed out the importance of culture in the life of individuals and communities. Culture provides the context within which human beings understand and relate to the world. It is a system of inherited patterns of meanings and behaviors that orient a group or a society. It involves symbols, myths, beliefs and norms of conduct that are formally and informally transmitted in a society. Culture defines the way one learns, lives and acts in relationship to others.

One of the beneficial results of the passing of the old colonial system is that recently liberated peoples have demanded respect for their cultures. This has brought to the fore a recognition of the diversity of cultures and the meaning of that diversity. The right of a people to develop its own culture has only recently begun to enter mainstream consciousness. This creates the possibility for relationships of respect and sensitivity between peoples of different cultures.

Affirmation of cultural diversity has not emerged without difficulties and setbacks. Cultures interact as peoples from different societies come together. Diversity of meaning and interests often causes misunderstanding and conflict between individuals and peoples. Not everyone recognizes the right of others to develop their own culture. This has led to the marginalization of some cultures and the dominance of others.

1.3 Religious Revival

In many parts of the world, a postmodern culture is coming to birth or already exists, often as a reaction to today's unfulfilled promises of progress, equality, and inclusion. This new culture questions the assumptions of contemporary society and its reliance on the rational. It highlights the individual. It is uneasy with established structures. It distrusts the promises of authority, both civil and religious. This often results in disinterest in traditional social, political, and religious processes.

But, although postmodernism, secularism and individualism have had an impact on the religiosity of many peoples in the world, it is also evident that in many countries a religious awakening has taken place. The rich liturgies of Africa, the focus on inter-religious dialogue and contemplative prayer in Asia, Basic Ecclesial Communities and movements to promote the liberation of the poor in Latin America, the birth of new religious communities in Europe, and the increasingly active ministerial role of lay persons in North America are evidence of this in the Catholic Church. The rapid growth in the number of Evangelical Christians is an indication of a thirst for religious expression. The resurgence of Islam, the expansion of Buddhism and renewed interest in Hinduism are also

signs of a new religious interest. Frequently, religious revival has taken the form of fundamentalism, but nonetheless, this too points to a search for meaning and a desire for deeper union with the Divine.

This religious revival has had a profound impact on missionaries. In some instances it has provoked tensions and divisions. But it has also been an opportunity for reflection and growth. It has made possible deeper reflection on the values present in other religions, and it has highlighted the increased need for inter-religious dialogue. It has also given rise to questions about the nature of evangelization and the role of missionaries.

1.4 Different Regional Realities

1.4.1 The Southern Hemisphere (Africa and Latin America)

The countries of the Southern Hemisphere in Africa and Latin America share some characteristics and have frequently been categorized as belonging to the Third World. Both continents have well-known colonial pasts. Both experience the poverty of large sectors of the population because of social, economic and political factors which often are a result of unjust structures. In both continents governments have often been unstable and corrupt.

Latin America is a continent whose culture has been strongly influenced by the Catholic Church, although in recent decades Evangelical Christians have made their presence felt significantly. The Catholic Church has made notable efforts to address the disparity between rich and poor, not without conflicts. It has sought to articulate and concretize the Church's fundamental option for the poor.

In Africa the Church is vibrant and strong, but at the same time challenged by fundamentalist sects and the growth of Islam. In some countries large portions of the population belong to traditional religions. Violent internal and regional conflicts, the spread of AIDS, and malaria and tremendous levels of poverty continue to afflict the continent.

1.4.2 Asia and Oceania

Asia is sometimes included with the countries of the South because some nations have the same economic and political difficulties as Africa and Latin America. Nevertheless, in many ways, the situation of Asia and Oceania is unique. The great ancient religions of Asia dominate the social and cultural horizon. Catholics are a small minority, except in a few places like the Philippines, Lebanon, Kerala, Timor, and the Tamils. Faced with being a minority in a world of various cultures and religions and of multifaceted poverty,

the Church is challenged to promote the dignity of the human person as the foundation for the common well-being of the people. The Asian Church is intent on building an inclusive human community encompassing persons of all religions, ethnic groups and socio-economic levels. In some places, like Vietnam and China, a vital Church exists, despite restrictions in its freedom.

1.4.3 Northern Hemisphere (Europe and North America)

The countries of the North Atlantic, often called the First World, dominate the world economy with their wealth, technological advances, and military resources. Despite increasing prosperity, the gap between rich and poor in these countries continues to grow as well. While freedom and human dignity are highly prized, individualism, depersonalization, consumerism, and secularization are all also present.

Europe is a vast region, stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals. Besides the highly developed countries of the West, it also includes the former Soviet Block countries of Eastern Europe. These nations have their own social, political and economic difficulties partly inherited from the days of the Communist past and partly created by new interaction with a free-market economy.

Europe sent missionaries throughout the world for centuries. Today such missionaries are much fewer and the continent that was for centuries the heart of Christendom is now considered to be in need of a new evangelization.

Over the last century North America also sent numerous missionaries abroad. But today the North American Church is at a different stage of development and, though religious practice remains strong, the Church there is beginning to experience difficulties similar to those of Europe.

The Churches of the Northern Hemisphere face the challenge of preaching the Gospel in the midst of wealth and global influence. Part of the challenge is to find ways to direct wealth, power, and technology to the service of a just society.

II. A New Missionary Paradigm

The Second Vatican Council has had a profound effect on the way the Church perceives its mission in the world. The fathers of the Council, especially in the documents *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Ad Gentes*, pointed the Church in new directions and created an impetus for the development of a new model for mission. The new paradigm for mission, which is still being refined and developed, envisions the Church as a communion of local Churches in union with Rome, each in service of the other. The missionary endeavor, in this perspective, becomes multidirectional. The new paradigm does not just envision established Churches sending personnel to the so-called young Churches; rather, it contemplates multiple contexts for evangelization. It sees evangelization as beginning whenever a missionary leaves his or her own culture and crosses a human frontier (geographical or social) to announce the Gospel in a new culture. The missionary not only proclaims the mystery of Christ, but is evangelized too as he or she accompanies others in the process of discovering the Spirit of the Lord already acting in a local Church or culture.

Among the elements present in the new missionary paradigm, four can be highlighted:

2.1 Evangelization

Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN 27) describes the content of evangelization in this way: “Evangelization will always contain – as the foundation, center and at the same time summit of its dynamism – a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made Man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all as a gift of God’s grace and mercy ... a salvation which indeed has its beginning in this life but which is fulfilled in eternity.” *Redemptoris Missio* (RM 11) adds: “We know that Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person and all humankind, and opens up the wondrous prospect of divine filiation.” The same document, focusing on the Church’s missionary activity, states (RM 44): “Proclamation is the permanent priority of mission.... All forms of missionary activity are directed to this proclamation, which reveals and gives access to the mystery hidden for ages and made known in Christ (cf. Eph 3:3-9; Col 1:25-29), the mystery which lies at the heart of the Church’s mission and life as the hinge on which all evangelization turns.”

Jesus announced the advent of the kingdom of God. *He has sent me to preach Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberation to captives and sight to the blind, to give freedom to the oppressed and announce a year of God’s favor* (Lk 4:18-19). The Good News he preached was the presence of this Kingdom in his person and his ministry, touching the human person at every level so that we can become a new creation. Paul VI wrote in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN 9): *As the*

kernel and center of his Good News, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift of God, which is liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the Evil One. This Kingdom, God's reign in our lives, transforms the world through truth, freedom, love, justice and forgiveness, and it points to a future not yet fulfilled.

The Church, the community of Jesus' disciples, continues his evangelizing mission. The Church is not identical with the kingdom, but cannot be separated from it. *The Church is ... at the service of the kingdom (RM 20).* It proclaims the Good News of the Kingdom through word and work, just as Jesus did. The goal of its proclamation is that people encounter Christ. Through this encounter they come to fullness of life.

The proclamation of the Kingdom involves communication. The Good News can be communicated in many different ways, as Paul VI noted in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. A frequent means is verbal communication – preaching, catechizing, works of education, sharing the scriptures, theological reflection. Modern media provide a variety of instruments – radio, television, Internet, books, newspapers, magazines.

But proclamation also occurs in nonverbal ways. The sacraments and sacramentals play an essential role. The arts (painting, sculpture, music, dance, film, theater, and architecture) are other ways to communicate the message of Jesus.

People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories (RM 42). Evangelization, a process which begins with proclamation, inaugurates a way of life in which the values of the Gospel are *practiced*. The message that is preached becomes a message that is lived, a way of life that gives witness to the Good News. The ways that the Gospel can be translated into Christian action are without limit. Works of charity, the struggle for justice, the promotion of human rights, community building, and projects for human development are only some of the possibilities.

Redemptoris Missio envisions three situations for carrying out the Church's evangelizing mission. The first is that of missions *ad gentes*. Strictly speaking, missions *ad gentes* are those in which the Gospel is preached to people who have never heard it. This is sometimes called primary evangelization. The second situation is evangelization in areas where the Christian community is already established, but needs nurturing. The final situation is that of peoples who have a long Christian tradition, but where many have never effectively been confronted by the Good News. In this third context, Pope John Paul II talks about the need for a new evangelization: new in its ardor, new in its methods, new in its

expression. *Redemptoris Missio*, while describing these three different situations, also notes that, in practice, it is often difficult to maintain such clear distinctions.

2.2 Inculturation

Sensibility to culture and to inculturating the Gospel is an important priority for the Church. Pope Paul VI states in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN 20): *The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times.* Culture is the context through which people understand the world. It includes a whole spectrum of ideas, beliefs, symbols and values that are shared by a people. Everything learned, including the message of the Gospel, is affected by it. People cannot be truly evangelized unless they are addressed within the context of their culture.

The modern world has become more aware of cultural diversity. Cultures are not static, isolated entities. They change and develop. All cultures have values and disvalues. Cultures constantly come into contact with each other. These encounters can be mutually enriching, but can also be confrontational.

The reality of cultural pluralism has influenced the new missionary paradigm. The Second Vatican Council stated that:

The Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, any particular way of life or any customary way of life recent or ancient. Faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission, she can enter into communion with the various civilizations, to their enrichment and the enrichment of the Church herself (Gaudium et Spes, 58).

The difficulty for missionaries is that, although the Gospel is not identified with any particular culture, it is always communicated through the medium of culture. Missionary evangelization, therefore, always implies the meeting of cultures. At times missionaries have confused the Good News of Jesus with the way their culture has embodied Jesus' message. They imposed their culture along with the Gospel.

Today's missionary paradigm highlights the importance of communicating the Gospel in terms of the local culture. Pope Paul VI put it this way: *What matters is to evangelize human culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots), in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in Gaudium et Spes, always taking the person as one's starting-point and always coming back to relationships of people among themselves and with God* (EN 20).

In this way the Gospel permeates the culture and becomes incarnate in it. This creates a dynamism which enables God's Word to transform the culture by promoting values already present in it, while also questioning what is not of God within a culture and what violates the human person.

The missionary crosses not only geographical but also cultural boundaries to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Inculturation of the Gospel is not merely the translating of theological propositions into a different language, as if the Good News was a set of ideas to be learned. It is communicating the message of the Kingdom by word and work in such a way that people can encounter the person of Christ and become disciples.

Missionaries, while being faithful to the message of the Gospel, must also seek to discover the seeds of the Word in the local culture. Inculturation is a long and difficult process. It requires study and reflection. It calls for dialogue, respect and humility. It involves a conscious awareness of one's own cultural values, meanings and prejudices as well as an understanding of the local context. The encounter between cultures which always accompanies evangelization can be mutually enriching, but only if a dialogue of cultures takes place in an atmosphere of respect, openness and sensitivity.

2.3 A Polycentric Church

A logical consequence of inculturating the Gospel is recognition that there are many ways to live faith in Jesus. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* points this out:

The universal Church is in practice incarnate in the individual Churches made up of such or such an actual part of mankind, speaking such and such a language, heirs of a cultural patrimony, of a vision of the world, of an historical past, of a particular human substratum. Receptivity to the wealth of the individual Church corresponds to a special sensitivity of modern man (EN 62).

The alternative, an approach focused on Western culture or any other single culture, in the long run will render the universal Church's evangelizing mission impossible.

The new missionary paradigm places much responsibility for evangelization on the local Churches. Much of the initiative and creativity for devising ways to inculturate the Gospel and the practice of faith must come from local Christian communities. The paradigm envisions a communion of local Churches which support each other as equals by sharing concerns and by responding to each others' needs. The flow of missionaries, then, is not only from North to South, but multidirectional.

The polycentric Church lives in worldwide communion through its faith in the person of Jesus, the bonds of charity that draw its members together, and a unifying ecclesial structure – the college of bishops, in union with Peter, that continues Jesus’ ministry of teaching, governing, and sanctifying. The Catholic Church is both one and universal. It is a sign of unity within diversity. Pope Paul VI noted in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

Let us be very careful not to conceive of the universal Church as the sum, or, if one can say so, the more or less anomalous federation of essentially different individual Churches. In the mind of the Lord the Church is universal by vocation and mission, but when she puts down her roots in a variety of cultural, social and human terrains, she takes on different external expressions and appearances in each part of the world (EN 62).

The role of the college of bishops, in union with the Bishop of Rome, is to promote the unity of the Church, but a unity in diversity. The concretization of how this diversity takes shape in liturgy, law and practice requires much dialogue between the local Churches and the Holy See. This is a perennial challenge for the Catholic Church as a missionary Church.

2.4 Respect for Other Religions and Ecumenism

In every country the Catholic Church encounters people who are members of different ecclesial communions or religions. *Inter-religious dialogue is a part of the Church’s evangelizing mission (RM 55)*. Because the Church itself is called to continual conversion it welcomes dialogue with men and women of other faiths. *Dialogue does not originate from tactical concerns or self-interest (RM 56)*. It is a consequence of the Church’s respect for human freedom. Sharing with people of other faiths can be mutually enriching. It can provide both parties with insight into God’s action in the world and create new sensitivity to different experiences of life.

This mutual enrichment comes about through respect, understanding, and a common search for the truth. Missionaries must be aware that truth also resides beyond the confines of the Catholic Church. Other religions with deeper roots within a country often have more insight into local cultures than we do. From the wisdom of other religions we can learn much that will strengthen our own Christian faith and make us aware of God’s presence in ways we had never previously considered.

Inter-religious dialogue does not imply abandoning the Church’s mission to evangelize. Self-identity is an essential part of any sincere dialogue. While

calling for dialogue, the Holy Father cautions against relativizing Christ and his message. Christians cannot speak about God's action in history and the world without reference to Christ. Dialogue will discover areas of agreement and mutual concern. It will also uncover points of divergence and disagreement.

Missionaries in dialogue always need to recall that *the Church proposes, she imposes nothing* (RM 39). Faithfulness to Christ and the Gospel does not involve intransigence towards other faiths. On the contrary, Christian witness involves love, respect and freedom.

III. Our Present-Day Response as Sons of St. Vincent

3.1 Missions Already Established by Provinces in Collaboration with the Local Church

The new context for evangelization and the new missionary paradigm described above require a renewed response on our part as members of the Congregation of the Mission.

Throughout our history, many provinces of the Congregation have responded to the Church's call to send missionaries to areas where the Gospel had not yet been preached. Along with members of other missionary congregations, our confreres have helped establish the local Church in many parts of the globe. Some provinces have long histories of supporting already constituted local Churches by sending missionaries and material assistance.

Even though local Churches now exist in almost every part of the globe, many still have significant need of personnel, finances and professional expertise. The dialogue between provinces sponsoring missions and the local Churches about their needs and about our capacity to respond to them is an ongoing one.

Superiors General have often appealed to our provinces and confreres to respond to missionary appeals. Very many have done so generously.

3.2 New International Missions

In order to respond to requests from various local hierarchies, in recent years the Superior General has established international missionary teams in Albania, Rwanda, Burundi, Ukraine, Russia, Bolivia, the Solomon Islands and Tanzania. Volunteers were also sent to established missionary provinces in China, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Cuba. Since at this time in our history individual provinces were unable to respond to these appeals, the establishment of international missionary teams was providential. Not only have they aided local Churches, but they have been a source of blessing for the Congregation itself. Through the new international missions we have experienced belonging to a worldwide community in a new and deeper way. In many provinces the international missions have enkindled a new interest in the foreign missions. The members of the international teams have given eloquent testimony to the universality of the Church and the possibility of building a fraternal community that crosses cultural boundaries.

Some of the confreres on the international mission teams have become full members of established provinces. Some belong to teams that depend directly on the General Curia or depend on a particular province. The missions in Ukraine,

Russia and Byelorussia have become a vice-province. The mission in Albania is now the responsibility of the Province of Naples, with help provided by the other provinces of Italy. The mission in Tanzania is now the responsibility of the Province of Southern India. The goal is that, as the international missions take root, they become part of a particular province. This does not, however, eliminate the need for international structures which will capitalize on the new energy unleashed by the new international missions.

3.3 Organization of our Missions

Sound organization is required to make our missions effective. This demands hard work and the formulation of specific criteria. These criteria are not only necessary for new missions, but can also be helpful for older, established missions:

3.3.1 Criteria for Accepting and Evaluating a Mission

Local Churches have many, varied needs. As members of the Congregation of the Mission, we seek to respond to those needs in *fidelity to the Vincentian charism of evangelizing the poor*. This criterion is the principal one for accepting or refusing missions that are offered to us by bishops. Article 12 of our Constitutions spells out quite clearly some other criteria which need to be taken into account:

- clear preference for apostolates among the poor,
- attention to the realities of present-day society,
- sharing in the condition of the poor,
- a true sense of the communal nature of our apostolic work,
- a readiness to go anywhere in the world,
- ongoing conversion.

In accepting a mission dialogue with the local ordinary is indispensable since he is the leader of the local Church. From the beginning a written contract should be agreed upon and signed. The contract should spell out the expectations, rights, and responsibilities of all parties as concretely and specifically as possible. This will help avoid misunderstandings and will also provide clear guidelines for life and ministry in the mission.

3.3.2 The Character of a Vincentian Mission

While offering clear general criteria describing what a Vincentian mission should be like, our Constitutions leave ample space for creativity in developing specific ministries on our missions in the service of the poor. A typically Vincentian mission should be characterized by:

- **Evangelization by “Word and Work” (SV XII, 87):**
 - by word: catechizing, preaching, educating, building Basic Christian Communities, organizing Popular Missions;
 - by work: offering human promotion programs, standing with the poor in their struggle for human rights, organizing projects for combatting hunger, training the young in basic human skills, establishing health care facilities, initiating programs for promoting the dignity of women and the care of children.
- **Formation:**

Since the end of the Congregation of the Mission is realized not only by evangelizing the poor, but also by assisting the clergy and the laity in their formation in order that they too might evangelize the poor, our missions should have a special focus on the formation of leaders for the local Church: clergy, sisters, lay men and women.

Our missionaries should actively involve the people themselves in both the ministry of the word and the ministry of works so that they might be active agents in their own human and Christian promotion.

3.3.3 Candidates for the Missions

3.3.3.1 Selection

Individual provinces have their own missions and may invite confreres from other provinces to participate in them, following the procedures described in the Constitutions and Statutes. The Superior General also has the right and responsibility to invite and send, in dialogue with the provincials, confreres to international missions (cf. Statute 3 approved by the 38th General Assembly, 1992).

Candidates for the missions should possess a number of human, Christian and Vincentian qualities: psychological and relational maturity, good physical health, flexibility and the capacity to respect other cultures. Language skills are also essential. A spirit of self-sacrifice, service, humility, and simplicity are necessary, along with a sense of community and identity with the Church.

3.3.3.2 Preparation and Entry into the Mission

Entry into a new culture is difficult. Confreres sent to the missions need adequate preparation. Besides basic theological and Vincentian formation, their preparation should include anthropological and sociological study. An understanding of inculturation in general and study of the specific culture and language are essential.

Even the best prepared missionary finds the transition to a new culture a difficult enterprise. *New missionaries need to be accompanied.* A mentoring program or apprenticeship period should be designed to assist them in their entry into the mission. Experienced missionaries should set aside time to listen to the fears, difficulties, doubts and other feelings that inevitably arise in a new missionary when entering a foreign culture. Spiritual direction is a very valuable and, unfortunately, frequently untapped resource.

After a suitable period of apprenticeship, during which language training and an initial understanding of the culture are emphasized, the new missionary will assume his new assignment. Dialogue with the new missionary himself and with the other confreres will help the superior of the mission determine the best placement.

The relationship between the missionary, the new mission to which he is sent, and his province of origin ought to be clearly defined by a contract or letter of agreement. This contract should specify among other things: his apostolic assignment on the mission, its duration, where he enjoys active and passive voice, who bears economic responsibility for his life and work, health insurance, social security, and vacation periods.

3.3.4 Financial Plan

Each mission must have sufficient economic resources to support its works of evangelization and formation and to provide for the well-being of the confreres. It should work toward the goal of moving beyond the stage of economic dependence and advancing toward financial independence and self-reliance. For that reason, it is important to find ways of capital development in each mission.

In the long run, the struggle against poverty and the quest for economic justice, at the national and international levels, are essential for overcoming economic dependence in mission countries. In the meantime, we must be creative in developing means for promoting relative economic autonomy for our missions, with a view toward a progressively more stable future.

On the local level, each mission should have a budget, taking into account the works, initial and ongoing formation, the care of aging missionaries, the needs of all the confreres, and the lifestyle of the local poor. Financial transparency

among the confreres on the mission is essential. The creation of sources for raising capital and making investments for the future should be planned. The Treasurer General, provincial treasurers and lay advisors can be of great assistance through their counsel in this regard.

At the level of the worldwide Congregation, financial collaboration is being more and more encouraged, flowing from the communitarian nature of our vow of poverty, which envisions solidarity with one another and with the poor. Our Constitutions explicitly state: *Provinces and houses should share their temporal goods with each other so that those who have more help those in need* (C 152, § 1). This is already being accomplished in a number of ways. Hopefully even more can be done. One means is the ***International Mission Fund***, which is used to provide money for specific projects in our missions and our poorer provinces. Provinces with greater economic resources are encouraged to include in their yearly budget money to be donated to this fund. Another means of financial collaboration is the direct response of provinces to projects and petitions presented by missions and poorer provinces. This not only promotes solidarity, but highlights the international nature of the Congregation.

Yet another means of collaboration and of promoting the economic independence of missions and poorer provinces is the setting up of ***patrimony funds***. These are funds established by a donor province or several provinces to help a missionary province with its formation needs, its works in the service of the poor, and its care of aging and infirm confreres. The donor province collaborates with the receiving province in helping prepare it to take over responsibility for the management of the fund. After a period of time, the fund is turned over completely to the receiving province.

3.3.5 Community for Mission

Community life has been a special characteristic of the Congregation and its usual way of living... (C 21, § 1). Confreres called to the missions should be conscious that our mission is carried out in community. In fact, our community is a community *for* mission. A shared life characterized by fraternal love, cordiality, respect for differences and reconciliation creates a context within which evangelization of the poor can be more effectively accomplished. Our works should, as far as possible, be community works. The undertaking of purely personal works, in isolation from other confreres, is not in the spirit of our vocation.

Our community is not only a community for mission, but also a community of prayer in which we seek the Lord with one another faithfully, especially in the daily celebration of the Eucharist and in daily mental prayer.

Our houses should be a place where faith-sharing and mutual exchange about human, pastoral and spiritual experiences will foster the growth of the members. Much will depend on a spirit of trust among all our members.

Our Constitutions do not impose a single type of community structure. Various styles are possible. In some places all of the confreres of a house live under the same roof, are involved in the same ministry, and have the same schedule. In other places, the confreres live together, but work in different zones or villages. In still other places, they live in different localities because of the needs of the mission, but belong to one canonical house, striving to create community through regular gatherings for prayer, common pastoral reflection, and recreation. Each of these situations demands active interest in the well-being of other confreres and an effort to share life and ministry with each other. The development of a community plan is an important means for promoting communal bonds in these different settings.

It is important for the community to hold frequent meetings for evaluation of the various facets of our life and ministry. Evaluations must not become mere formalities. They should be carried out in a spirit of truth and charity, so that, with one another, we can assess the high points and the low points, the lights and the shadows of our life and ministry on the mission. The frequency of meetings is established in the local community plan. At times, our meetings might include co-workers, especially those serving with us in our pastoral ministries.

3.3.6 Vocational Promotion

If the Vincentian charism is to be inculturated and the mission of the Congregation continued, local vocations need to be fostered. The example of joyful service to the poor in community is in itself attractive to young people. But we should also establish programs for vocational promotion. Young people should be invited into our houses to experience our community life and prayer and should be incorporated into our ministries so that they might experience for themselves the joy of serving the poor. Discernment houses and groups can also be an effective way to promote vocations.

Of course, only some young people are called to the Congregation. Vocational discernment should take into account other callings as well: lay ministries, diocesan priesthood, religious life. Promotion of all such vocations is a singular service to the local Church.

3.4 Collaboration between Provinces

The new international missions, as well as our older established missions, are very positive instances of collaboration among the provinces of the

Congregation. The developing of bonds between the mission and the province that provides it with personnel and other resources should be fostered. The experience of the missionaries, their successes and failures, their breakthroughs and insights should be shared with the confreres in their home countries, so that the spark of the missions will enkindle a fire in the hearts of all. All members of the Congregation of the Mission should sense that the missions are a special way of living out our charism.

Belonging to the universal Church and to a truly international Congregation demands real solidarity among the members and communities of the Congregation of the Mission. One way that this solidarity might be expressed is by common reflection on the theological presuppositions and pastoral perspectives that flow from being a community for mission. Dialogue among the provinces can be mutually enriching. Some simple, practical steps for promoting interprovincial sharing might be: creating opportunities for the members of various provinces to meet one another, to listen to one another's needs and concerns, to share experiences of working with the poor, to develop common pastoral plans and to pray together. Information can also be communicated by exchanging provincial bulletins and by posting news on the Vincentian Family web site (www.famvin.org).

Solidarity must move beyond the level of reflection and become concretized in collaborative action. Sharing human resources is an important step in collaboration between provinces. An international vision of the Congregation and a sense of solidarity with other provinces pave the way for creative initiatives for mobilizing personnel. Missionaries are still needed in the Southern Hemisphere and in Asia. But missionaries from there might also be sent to participate in the New Evangelization of the North.

Mutual financial assistance among the provinces is indispensable. Our vow of poverty calls us to solidarity. Provinces should not only give of their surplus, but should also at times feel the sting of giving what seems very valuable to them, so that they might share the burden of the mission.

3.5 Collaboration with the Vincentian Family

Collaboration within the Vincentian Family for the service of the poor has dramatically increased in recent years. Each branch of the Vincentian Family has its own identity and autonomy, which must always be respected by others. But we have much in common too. Our mutual cooperation will be much more effective to the degree that we have regular contact with one another at local, national and international levels. This will facilitate the channeling of our energies and resources toward the goal we all share: the service of the poor.

New ways of including lay Vincentians and young volunteers in our missionary teams should continue to be explored. Lay missionaries, like all missionaries, need preparation. The integration of lay missionaries into our foreign missions will require adjustments and sacrifices on our part and theirs. But the benefits for the poor, for the Vincentian laity and for us far outweigh the difficulties.

IV. Formation for Mission

4.1 Urgency and Importance

The new situation of missions today requires us that we reexamine the formation of our missionaries. The vocation to the foreign missions is a special calling, which demands serious preparation and specific competence. Good will is not enough. Nor is it enough simply to have been ordained a priest or taken vows as a brother. Our Statutes point out the importance of a solid missionary formation:

Those sent to the foreign missions should be carefully prepared to undertake the special works there by knowledge of the reality of the region where they will labor, so that the pastoral work which they take on may effectively meet the needs of the local Church (S 6).

4.2 General Missionary Formation

At some point in the process of initial formation general courses in missiology should be offered. Pope John Paul II writes:

Theological training cannot and should not ignore the Church's universal mission, ecumenism, the study of the great religions and missiology. I recommend that such studies be undertaken especially in seminaries and in houses of formation for men and women religious, ensuring that some priests or other students specialize in the different fields of missiology (RM 83 § 3).

It is especially important that such courses be part of the formation of members of a Society of Apostolic Life which has many men working in missions *ad gentes* (Ratio Formationis for Theology, 38).

Courses offered during initial formation should also treat inculturation and should reflect on the human adjustments needed for entering other cultures. This is important not only for those who work in the missions *ad gentes*, but also for those who work among the poor in contexts. Courses should also explore the ways of doing theology in different cultures.

A knowledge of the social sciences (sociology, economics and politics) will be helpful in our accompanying the poor, and in analyzing the underlying causes of poverty, and in working to eradicate them.

Study, however, is not the only preparation necessary. Attitudes of flexibility and openness need to be developed, as well as a mobility that is not just geographical, but also cultural and social. The Constitutions speak of it in this way:

These are the characteristics to be kept in mind in this work of evangelization which the Congregation proposes to carry out: ... readiness to go to any part of the world, according to the example of the first missionaries of the Congregation... (C 12 § 5).

Solidarity with the poor, expressed in a simple lifestyle, is an essential element of the Gospel that needs to be fostered sooner rather than later. A real danger facing missionaries is the possibility of living a lifestyle far removed from the poverty of the people they evangelize. This becomes an obstacle to inculturation and evangelization because it isolates us from the poor.

4.3 Specific Missionary Formation

General formation for the missions is important, but it is necessary that the future missionary receive a specific preparation that will prepare him to adjust to the realities of the region where he will live out his missionary vocation. The confreres already working in the region, who have first-hand experience, can be particularly helpful in devising a plan for this specific formation.

Learning the language is indispensable for communicating the Gospel and developing relationships in a new country. But language is only part of the way people communicate within a culture. Missionaries need to understand the customs, symbols, values and world-view of the people they serve. This involves not just an appreciation for folklore and the arts; rather, it is an insight into the ways that the local people express their deepest concerns and aspirations and structure their lives. It is advisable that new missionaries attend missiological programs, pastoral institutes and centers for cultural study which focus on direct preparation for living and working in the specific region. Such programs exist in almost every country, often sponsored by the local Church.

Formal study of a new culture is an essential, but not sufficient, preparation for entering that culture. Because outsiders never completely capture the essence of a culture, the process of inculturation is ongoing. Missionaries often need to suspend judgment about cultural expressions and approach new situations with humility and openness. There is much to be learned from the local people, and this can only occur where a spirit of respectful dialogue exists. Missionaries bring their own cultural experiences with them. The culture in which one was formed always influences the way one thinks and acts. The goal of the missionary is not to completely abandon his native culture. Rather, it is to understand how his own culture influences, facilitates or impedes his encounter with people of a different

culture. A crucial part of the missionary learning process is to understand how one reacts in a new cultural setting.

Missionaries seek to become facilitators of a process by which people can hear the message of the Gospel, encounter Jesus Christ, and become his followers. This is possible only when the Gospel is inculturated by those who receive the message and assimilate it in their lives as Good News. Missionaries need to learn how to discern the presence of the seeds of the Word and the action of the Spirit in the local culture, while respecting the integrity of the Gospel message. In a sense, they live with one ear towards the people and one ear towards the Gospel. They need to develop skills that will enable them to accompany a local people as it decides which elements of their culture are consistent with the Gospel and which are not.

4.4 Vincentian Formation

Confreres who go to the missions do so as sons of St. Vincent. Their lives must radiate the Vincentian charism. A solid Vincentian formation will help them do that. This task begins in the Internal Seminary (cf. *Ratio Formationis for the Internal Seminary*). But members of the Congregation of the Mission need to study and reflect continually on the charism of St. Vincent.

The Vincentian tradition contains a wealth of resources for missionaries. Certainly knowing the life and spirit of our founder is essential. The history of the foreign missions of the Congregation contains positive and negative elements that are worth reflecting on today. There is much to be learned from the lives of some of our outstanding missionary predecessors (cf. *Ratio Formationis for the Internal Seminary*, III, A).

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Vincentian tradition is in the area of missionary spirituality. Vincentian spirituality is a spirituality for mission. Vincent de Paul was convinced that Christ is present in the poor (SV IX, 252; X, 332). He tried to prepare his missionaries to discover Christ among the poor and walk in Christ's footsteps in the mission. Much of his correspondence and most of his conferences were addressed to men and women engaged in or preparing to live a missionary vocation. He offered them a way to live the Gospel in the mission. Belonging to a Society of Apostolic Life like the Congregation of the Mission involves learning to come to holiness through relationships of charity and service.

It is in this context that the *Instruction on Stability, Chastity, Poverty, and Obedience in the Congregation of the Mission*³ proposes that we see the evangelical counsels as means to be freer for mission. The same might be said of

³ In *Vincentiana* 40 (1996) 1-68.

the five characteristic virtues. St. Vincent frequently spoke about them as virtues for mission, helping us to be better evangelizers of the poor. Missionaries should reflect constantly on the ways that growth in simplicity, humility, gentleness, mortification and evangelical zeal can make us more capable of serving on the mission well.

Missionary spirituality involves allowing oneself to be evangelized by the poor. Called and sent to share the lives of a new people — their joys and sufferings, their sorrows and victories — a missionary also receives the gift of their culture. A new cultural context is a challenge to live the Gospel in new ways through new relationships. The missionary is evangelized in the measure that he responds to the call to conversion that comes from accompanying the poor.

4.5 Continuing Education

Education and learning are lifelong endeavors. It is especially important that the confreres on the foreign missions make time for ongoing formation. Individually and as communities, confreres need to identify areas of life — personal, spiritual, pastoral and theological — where more study and reflection are needed. Some missions and many provinces organize regular workshops and courses for confreres. Others take advantage of courses at local centers or send men to study outside the country. It would be prudent for missions and provinces to set aside time and money for continuing education.

4.6 Returning Missionaries

Many missionaries eventually return to their province of origin (cf. Statutes 29, 30, 32). Returning to one's native country or province is not just an administrative or juridical act. Missionaries who have been overseas, especially for long periods of time, need to readapt to their home culture and reestablish relationships with the members of their original province. They are coming back to a different world. Much attention has been paid to preparing missionaries to go out, but less has been given to receiving back those who return. Provinces should consider ways of easing the transition for returning missionaries. In some countries formal programs exist to aid in this task. But even where such programs exist, the provinces themselves should search for ways to help returning missionaries reconnect with their confreres and native country. Listening to the returning missionaries and dialoguing with them about their experience of coming home is surely a positive first step.

Appendix I

Words from St. Vincent about the Missions

1. With reference to what has just been said about the gift of tongues, I think we would do well today to ask God to give us the grace to learn foreign languages well, for the sake of those to be sent to distant lands. The reason is that since it has pleased his divine Majesty to raise up this little Company to do throughout the world a little of what the apostles did, we have to share with the apostles the gift of tongues, since it is so essential to teach the people the doctrine of the faith. For, if faith enters by hearing, as St. Paul says, *fides ex auditu*, then those who proclaim it will have to make themselves understood by those on whom they wish to shed this divine light. Now the variety of languages is very great, not only in Europe, Africa and Asia, but even in Canada, for we see in the reports of the Jesuit Fathers that there are as many languages as there are tribes. The Hurons do not speak like the Iroquois, nor do they speak like their neighbors, and someone who understands one group does not understand the others.

How then can missionaries, with these differences of speech, go throughout the world to proclaim the gospel if they know only their own language? And how could they learn others if they did not ask God's help or not apply themselves to study? What does "missionary" mean? It means "sent." Yes, my confreres, missionary means "sent by God." Our Lord was talking to you: *Euntes in mundum universum, prædicate Evangelium omni creaturæ* [Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature]. For this reason, he wants you to study the needed languages. God never calls someone to some state of life unless he sees in him the needed qualities, or at least unless he plans to give them to him. For this reason, my brothers, let us hope that if he is pleased to call you to distant lands, he will grant you the grace to learning their language. Put your trust in him. He does not want the end without the means, and if he asks the one of you, he will give you the other.

(SV XII, 26-27, N° 183, 9 June 1658)

2. Then, gentlemen and my brothers, what joy will God experience in seeing amid the ravages of his Church made by heresy, or by the fires of concupiscence, some few persons who will offer themselves to carry off the remains of the Church, if I may speak this way, or to preserve it where it remains? O Savior, what joy you receive to see such servants and such

fervor to stand fast and to defend what is still good here, while others go out to gain new lands for you! Oh, gentlemen, what a joy!

You will see conquerors leaving one part of their troops to guard what remains, while they send off others to gain new territory for you! This is what we must do, maintaining courageously the goods of the Church and the interests of Jesus Christ, and still working for new victories, and making him known even to the most distant peoples.

(SV XI, 354-355, N° 154, September 1656)

3. And what of ourselves, gentlemen and my brothers? Are we ready to accept the pains that God sends and repress the movements of nature to live only the life of Jesus Christ in us? Are we ready to go to Poland, Barbary, the Indies, to sacrifice our own satisfaction and our very lives? If so, let us bless God. If, on the contrary, anyone should fear some inconvenience, or be so weak as to complain at any item that may be lacking, or so fragile that he would wish to be changed from house to house because the climate is not good, or the food is poor, or because we are not free enough to come and go as we please, if in a word, gentlemen, if some among us are still slaves of nature, given to sensual pleasures like this miserable sinner who speaks to you, who at the age of 70 is still so worldly, let them count themselves as unworthy of the apostolic vocation to which God has called them. They should be ashamed at seeing their confreres fulfilling this ministry so worthily, while they remain so removed from their courageous spirit.

What do our men have to bear in that country? Famine? Yes. The plague? Yes, both, and more than once. War? They are surrounded by armies, and have experienced living amid enemy soldiers. God has tried them by all these scourges. And we live here like shut-ins, without heart and with little zeal. We see others braving dangers in the service of God, while we are as timid as wet hens. O misery! O wretchedness! Look at 20,000 soldiers who go to war and suffer all sorts of ills. One will lose an arm, another a leg, and some their very lives, all for uncertain hopes. Yet they have no fear, and set off as though they were going after a treasure. To gain heaven, gentlemen, scarcely anyone will lift a finger, and those who say they are seeking to gain heaven, lead a life so lazy and sensual it is unworthy not only of a priest or a Christian, but even of a rational man. If there are any such among us they would be merely the corpse of a missionary. O God, be forever blessed and glorified for the graces you have given to those who abandon themselves to you. Praise be to you for giving to this little Company these two holy men.

(SV XI, 411-412, N° 170)

4. Do you know the thought that occurs to me when I am told of the distant needs of the foreign missions? We hear about them; we feel some affection for them; we think Fr. Nacquart, Fr. Gondrée and all those other missionaries blest who have died like apostolic men for the establishment of a new Church. Indeed, they are happy, for they have saved their souls by giving their life for the faith and for Christian charity. This is beautiful; yes, this is holy. Everyone praises their zeal and their courage. And then that is all. But if we had that spirit of indifference, if we did not cling to this and that trifle which we love, to a certain reservation we have, who would not volunteer himself for Madagascar, for Barbary, for Poland, or for any other place in which God is pleased to be served by the Company?

(SV XII, 241, N° 205, 16 May 1659)

5. Let us ask God to give the Company this spirit, this heart, this heart which will make us go everywhere, this heart of the Son of God, the heart of Our Lord, the heart of Our Lord, the heart of Our Lord, which will dispose us to go as he went and as he would have gone if his Eternal Wisdom had deemed it fitting to labor for the conversion of those poor nations. He sent his apostles to do that; he sends us, like them, to bear this divine fire everywhere, everywhere. *Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur* [I came to cast fire on the earth; how I wish it would be set alight]; to bear this divine fire everywhere, this fire of love, of the fear of God, throughout the whole world: to Barbary, to the Indies, to Japan.

(SV XI, 291, N° 135, 22 August 1655)

6. Ah! gentlemen, let us all ask God fervently for this spirit for the whole Company, this spirit that will carry us everywhere, so that when men see one or two missionaries they can say: “There are apostolic men about to leave for the ends of the earth to bring the Word of God.” Let us pray to God to grant us this heart. There are some of us who, by the grace of God, possess it, and all such are servants of God. But to go there, O Savior! Not to allow oneself to be stopped, ah! that indeed is something. We should all have this heart, all the same heart, detached from all things so that we may have perfect confidence in the mercy of God, without taking thought, without growing uneasy, without losing courage. “Will I have such or such a thing in that country? How can I obtain it?” O Savior! God will never fail us. Ah! gentlemen, when we hear of the glorious death of those who are there, O God! who would not desire to be in their place? Ah! who would not wish to die like them, to be assured of an eternal reward! O Savior! is there anything more desirable? Let us not be tied down to this or that. Courage! Let us go where God calls us. He will

be our provider. Let us fear nothing. Well, then, blessed be God! Let us pray for that intention.

(SV XI, 291-292, N° 135, 22 August 1655)

7. God has chosen us as instruments of his boundless and fatherly love that desires to be established in and to replenish souls. Ah! if we only knew the meaning of such a holy manner of living. We shall never clearly see it in this life; for if we did, oh! how differently we would act; at least, a wretch like me would. Our vocation, then, is not to go to one parish, or even to one diocese, but throughout the whole world, and for what purpose? To inflame the hearts of men, to do what the Son of God did. He came to cast fire on the earth, to inflame it with his love. What else have we to desire save that it burns and consumes all? My dear confreres, let us please reflect on that.

(SV XII, 262, N° 207, 30 May 1659)

8. Now, if it be true that we are called to spread God's love in all directions, if we are bound to kindle it among the nations, if it is our vocation to spread this divine fire throughout the world; if that is so, I mean, if that is so, my brothers, how should I myself not burn with this divine fire!

(SV XII, 263, N° 207, 30 May 1659)

9. Yes, Gentlemen, we should be all for God and the service of the public; and we should give ourselves to God for that end, and wear ourselves out for that end, and give our lives for that end. We should strip ourselves bare, so to speak, to clothe ourselves anew; at least we should desire to be so disposed, if we are not so already. We should be ready and disposed to come and to go as it pleases God, either to the Indies or somewhere else. Finally, we should put ourselves at risk for the service of our neighbor and to extend the empire of Jesus Christ in souls. I myself, old and aged as I am, should not cease having this disposition in my heart, even to set out for the Indies to win souls to God there, even though I were to die on the way or aboard ship. For what do you suppose that God is asking of us? The body? Oh! not at all. And what then? God is asking for our good will, an honest and true disposition to seize every opportunity to serve him, even at the risk of our lives, to have and foster in ourselves this desire of martyrdom, which God sometimes finds as pleasing as if we had actually suffered it.

(SV XI, 402-403, N° 167, 17 June 1657)

10. After I have gone away, there shall come ravening wolves and false brethren shall rise up among you who will proclaim perverse doctrines and teach you the opposite of what I have taught you; but do not listen to them; they are false prophets. In the same way, my brothers, there will be corpses of missionaries who will strive to introduce false maxims to ruin, if they can, these foundations of the Company. Such men must be withstood....

Should it happen that, at some future time, someone would suggest that the Company abolish this practice, leave that hospital, recall the laborers from Barbary, stay here and not go there, give up this work and not hasten to distant needs, those false brethren should be boldly told: "Gentlemen, leave us in the laws of our fathers, and in the state in which we are. God has put us here and he wishes us to remain." Hold firm.

"But the Company," they will say, "is overburdened by such or such a work." Alas, if in its infancy the Company managed this and bore all those other burdens, why will it not succeed in them when it is stronger? These must be told: "Leave us, leave us in the state where Our Lord was on this earth; we do what he did; do not stop us from imitating him." Warn them, you see, warn them and do not listen to them.

But what sort of men will they be who will try to turn us away from those good works we have begun? They will be freethinkers, freethinkers, freethinkers. They ask for nothing but pleasure and, provided they have a good dinner, they do not trouble themselves about anything else. Who else? They will be... It is better not to say it. They will be men who coddle themselves (saying this, he stuck his hands under his armpits, imitating the lazy), men who have only a narrow outlook, who confine their views and plans to a fixed circumference, within which they close themselves up in one spot. They never want to leave it. And if they are shown something outside and come close to consider it, at once they withdraw to their center, like snails into their shells.

(SV XII, 91-93, N° 195, 6 December 1658)

11. There will be some who will oppose those works, have no doubt about that; and others who will say that it is far too much to undertake sending men to distant lands, to the Indies, to Barbary. But, my God, but, my Lord, did you not send St. Thomas to the Indies and the other apostles throughout the world? Did you not entrust them with the care and guidance of all the peoples in general and of many persons and families in particular? No matter; our vocation is *Evangelizare pauperibus*.

(SV XII, 90, N° 195, 6 December 1658)

12. The departure for Madagascar has been delayed again until the month of September. Since we have waited this long, we can easily wait another four or five months; a great good is worth being long desired. You, who have received from God a strong attraction for this mission, should keep yourself in the same disposition because that is a sign of a calling. Furthermore, the Company has designated you for that place from the beginning and still intends that you go there, which is a second sign. And a third sign is that, you have not only been named in Rome, as I wrote you previously, but have been sent the usual faculties granted to those going to work for the conversion of unbelievers, and we are holding them here for you.

After all that, Monsieur, there is no reason to doubt that God is relying on you for such a holy work. You will do well, then, to keep the resolution you made of not thinking about the Carthusians any longer, especially since you wrote me that, if it is God's good pleasure to make you an artisan rather than for you to transfer to that holy Order, you would willingly do so because you have so much respect and love for the adorable Will of God. Offer yourself anew to him, since you are a worker whom he is calling to the loftiest, most useful, and most sanctifying service on this earth, namely, that of drawing souls to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and of going to extend his empire in places where the demon has reigned for so long. The apostles and several great saints considered themselves most fortunate to spend themselves for that end. Even now we see many monks leaving their cloister and many priests leaving their country to go and preach the gospel to unbelievers, and if there were none to be found, the Carthusians would have to leave their solitude to be sent there. Consequently, Monsieur, I ask you, in the name of Our Lord, to wait patiently until the time comes which he has marked out for your departure. In the meantime, you are serving God very effectively where you are.

(SV IV, 368-369, N° 1489, 24 April 1652 [English edition, 363-364])

13. Your chief concern, after striving to live among those with whom you will have to get along amicably and in an exemplary way, will be to help these poor people, born in the darkness of ignorance of their Creator, to understand the truths of our faith, not by subtle theological reasoning, but by arguments taken from nature. You have to begin in that way, trying to let them see that you are only developing in them the signs of himself that God has left on them and which corrupt nature, long accustomed to evil, had effaced in them. To do this, Monsieur, you will often have to turn to the Father of Lights, repeating to him what you say to him every day: *Da mihi intellectum ut sciam testimonia tua* [Give me discernment that I may

know your decrees]. In your meditation, set in order the lights he will give you, in order to demonstrate the truth of the First and Sovereign Being, the appropriateness of the mystery of the Trinity, and the necessity of the mystery of the Incarnation, which causes a second, perfect man to be born in us, after the corruption of the first, so that we may improve and reform ourselves on him. I would like to make them see the weaknesses of human nature in the disorders which they themselves condemn, for they have laws, kings, and punishments.

Although there are a few books dealing with these matters, such as Granada's catechism or some other which we will try to send you, I can only repeat to you, Monsieur, that the best one will be the prayer, *Accedite ad eum et illuminamini* [Come to him and be enlightened], abandoning yourself to the Spirit of God, who speaks in these circumstances. If his Divine Goodness is pleased to give you the grace to cultivate the seed of the Christians who are already there, living with these good people in Christian charity, I have no doubt whatsoever, Monsieur, that Our Lord will make use of you there to prepare an abundant harvest for the Company. Go then, Monsieur, and since your mission is from God, through those who represent him for you on earth, cast your nets boldly.

(SV III, 281-282 N° 1020, 22 March 1648 [English edition, 280-281])

14. God has given the grace of being prepared and disposed to go to foreign lands to spend their lives there for Jesus Christ! History tells us of the many martyrs who have sacrificed themselves for God. And if we see that so many men in armies expose their lives for a little honor, or perhaps in the hopes of a little earthly recompense, with what far greater reason should we not expose our lives to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the most distant lands to which his Divine Providence calls us!

(SV XII, 51, N° 188, 30 August 1658)

15. Our missionaries in Barbary, and those in Madagascar, what have they undertaken, executed, carried out and suffered? One single man takes care of a whole galley on which there are sometimes 200 convicts; he gives instructions, hears general confessions both of the healthy and of the sick, day and night, for two weeks. And at the end of that time, he gives them a treat; he goes off himself and buys a cow. He has it cooked and gives them a party. One single man did all that! Sometimes he goes to farms where slaves are at work; he seeks out the masters and asks them to let him work to instruct their poor slaves. He takes their time and teaches them to know God. He renders them fit to participate in the sacraments, and at the end has a little banquet prepared for them.

He also spoke about Brothers Guillaume and Duchesne. After being enslaved, they were redeemed with the help of the consul because of the zeal with which they were animated in their work among the poor slaves.

Fr. Vincent also said: In Madagascar, the missionaries preach, hear confessions, and teach the catechism continually from four o'clock in the morning until ten, and then from two in the afternoon until nightfall. They spend the rest of their time in reciting their Office and visiting the sick. These men are workers; these are true missionaries. May it please God's goodness to grant us the same spirit that animated them, a great heart, vast and ample! *Magnificat anima mea Dominum!*

(SV XI, 203-204, N° 125, 26 July 1655)

16. It is now time for this seed of the divine call to take effect in you. For behold, by authority of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, of which the Holy Father the Pope is head, the Nuncio has chosen the Company to go and serve God on Saint-Laurent Island, also called Madagascar. The Company has cast its eyes on you, as the best offering it has, to do homage to our Sovereign Creator and to render him this service, together with another good priest of the Company.

O my more than dearest Father, what does your heart say to this news? Does it have the shame and confusion suitable for receiving such a grace from heaven, a vocation as lofty and adorable as that of the greatest apostles and saints of the Church of God, and the fulfillment in you, in time, of eternal plans? Humility alone, Monsieur, is capable of bearing this grace, and perfect abandonment of all that you are and can be, in exuberant trust in your Sovereign Creator, must follow. You will need generosity and sublime courage. You also need faith as great as Abraham's and the charity of St. Paul. Zeal, patience, deference, poverty, solicitude, discretion, moral integrity, and an ardent desire to be entirely consumed for God are as appropriate for you as for the great St. Francis Xavier.

(SV III, 278-279 N° 1020, 22 March 1648 [English edition, the same])

17. Be that as it may, Monsieur, we have deeply regretted the loss of these good servants of God, and have had great reason to admire in this last unexpected event the unfathomable reasons for his ways of acting. He knows how willingly we have kissed the hand that struck us, humbly submitting to these blows, to which we were so sensitive, although we could not understand the reasons for such a swift death in men who were

so promising, in the midst of a people asking for instruction, and after so many obvious signs in them of a vocation to Christianize that people.

Nevertheless, this loss, like previous ones and the events that have occurred since then, has not succeeded in the least in undermining our determination to assist you, or in shaking that of the four priests and the Brother who are on their way to you. They feel drawn to your mission and have asked us over and over again to be sent there....

I do not know who will be more consoled by their arrival — you, who have been waiting so long for them, or they, who have such an ardent desire to join you. They will see Our Lord in you and you in Our Lord and, with this in view, they will obey you, by his grace, as they would obey us. I ask you, then, to guide them in this. I hope that God will bless both your leadership and their obedience.

You would not have been left so long without some relief, were it not for two unsuccessful departures. One ship was lost on the river at Nantes; two of our priests and a Brother, who were on the ship, were saved by the special protection of God; but nearly a hundred persons were lost. The other ship set sail last year, was captured by the Spaniards, and four of our priests and a Brother who were on board came back home.

And so God did not permit any help or consolation to reach you from here but willed that these should come to you directly from him alone. He wanted to be the one to act in that divine, apostolic work to which he has applied you, in order to show that implanting the faith is his own affair and not the work of men. That is how he acted when he began to establish the universal Church, choosing only 12 apostles, who went their separate ways throughout the world to announce the coming and the teachings of their Divine Master. But once this holy seed had begun to grow, his Providence increased the number of workers. It will do the same for your infant Church which, growing little by little, will at last be provided with priests who will survive to cultivate and extend it.

(SV VIII, 158-159, N° 3013, November 1959 [English edition, 182-184])

- 18.** Go, gentlemen, in the name of our Lord, for it is he who sends you. You begin this voyage and this mission for his service and his glory. He will guide, help, and protect you. We hope for this from his infinite goodness. Remain always faithfully dependent upon his faithful guidance. Have recourse to him everywhere and in every encounter. Throw yourselves into his arms, recognizing him as your loving Father, completely confident that he will help you and bless your work.

(Abelly, Book III, chapter 3, p. 12 [English edition, Book III, chapter 3, p. 22])

19. Is there anything closer to what our Lord himself did, when he came to earth to deliver men from the captivity of sin, and to teach them by his word and example? This is the example all missionaries must follow. They must be ready to leave their country, their conveniences, their rest to imitate our confreres in Tunis and Algiers who are so completely given to the service of God and neighbor in those barbarous and infidel lands.

(Abelly, Book II, chapter 1, pp. 142-143 [English Edition, Book II, chapter 1, sect. 7, part 12, p. 124])

20. Monsieur, how very precious is a good Missionary! God must raise him up and fashion him; that is the work of his omnipotence and his great goodness. That is why Our Lord has specifically recommended that we ask God to send good workers into his vineyard; for in fact there will be no good ones if God does not send them, and very few of these are needed to accomplish a great deal: 12 sufficed to establish the universal Church, despite human wisdom, the power of the world, and the rage of demons. Let us ask Our Lord, Monsieur, to give the apostolic spirit to the Company, since he has sent it to carry out that ministry.

(SV VII, 613, N° 2879, 20 June 1659 [English edition, 626])

Appendix III

Models for Contracts

1. Model contract for work in a missionary parish – some possible conditions

Contract between the Diocese of _____ and the Congregation of the Mission

The Diocese of _____, represented by Bishop _____, and the Congregation of the Mission, represented by _____, have agreed to the following contract:

Pastoral Activity

The bishop entrusts to the Congregation the administration and pastoral care of the parish of _____ with its respective chapels.

In order to help with the sustenance of the missionaries and to maintain the works of the parish and its communities in their care, the bishop concedes to the Congregation all the income from the parish, except for special collections (e.g., Pontifical, National, and Diocesan collections).

The bishop will assist in seeking the funds necessary for the building of new chapels, facilities, and other works required in the future for the proper exercise of the pastoral activities of the mission.

Any explicit directions regarding the pastoral work (for example, the parish will try to become a model in the formation of the laity, the formation of the communities based in the Word of God, the service of the poor, missionary outreach, etc.) should be mentioned in this section.

Other possible conditions:

The bishop will provide a vehicle(s) for the use of the missionaries in carrying out their pastoral activities.

Personnel

The Congregation will provide _____ (2, 3, 4) missionaries necessary to attend to the parish and communities mentioned above.

The Congregation will make necessary changes in personnel and will inform the bishop at the appropriate time.

The Congregation will present the missionaries to the bishop so that he can name them and give them the rights necessary to minister in the diocese.

The bishop will take responsibility for the necessary arrangements with the civil authorities regarding the stay of the missionary in the country.

Other possible conditions:

The bishop will provide the economic assistance necessary for the new missionaries to attend a program to learn the local language and culture.

Stipends

The missionaries will receive the monthly stipend of _____ amount, in accord with the Diocesan practice of the stipends for priests (or other pastoral agents) working in the diocese.

In case there is no stipend for the priests or other pastoral agents in the diocese, some other condition can established concerning the remuneration, if any, of the missionaries.

Insurance

The missionaries will be covered at the expense of the diocese by the medical insurance that is provided for all the pastoral agents of the diocese.

In the case that the diocese has no medical insurance for its pastoral agents:

All the missionaries should have health insurance. The superior of the mission will consult with the bishop and his own superiors as to the best way to accomplish this.

Housing

The bishop will provide suitable housing for the missionaries. The missionaries will have the use of _____ for their residence. The diocese will provide the funds for necessary repairs to the house.

Holidays

The missionaries are entitled to ___ weeks of vacation every year.

The missionaries are entitled to ___ (weeks/months) of vacation every ___ years to return to their country of origin.

The bishop will provide the round-trip cost of travel for missionaries returning on vacation to their country of origin every _____ years.

Other

The bishop recognizes the right of the Congregation to recruit young people who wish to enter the Congregation.

Duration of the Agreement

This agreement is binding for ___ years only, from _____ to _____. At the time of renewal amendments to the agreement can be discussed and agreed upon. In the interim, if either party wishes to change any part of this agreement, it must give ___ months notice in writing before any change can be made, and then only if there is mutual consent.

If at the end of the duration of this agreement either party wishes to cancel the Contract, this should be communicated in writing to the other party ___ months before its termination.

Signatures

For the Congregation of the Mission

For the Diocese of _____

*Visitor of the Province, or
Superior of the Mission, or
the Superior General,
if it is an international mission*

Bishop of the Diocese

2. Model contract for missionary work in a seminary - some possible conditions

Contract between the Diocese of _____ and the Congregation of the Mission

The Diocese of _____, represented by Bishop _____, and the Congregation of the Mission, represented by _____, have agreed to the following contract:

Seminary Ministry

The bishop confers on the Congregation the conducting, on behalf of the Diocese of _____, the _____ Seminary.

The bishop undertakes to provide for the necessary plant, equipment and funding necessary for the conducting of the seminary.

The Congregation will provide the following staff positions for the Seminary: _____.

The Congregation for its part will do all it can to ensure that the seminarians entrusted to its care will be given sound formation for their future lives as priests.

Each student admitted will be the financial responsibility of the diocese accepting him as a candidate for the priesthood.

A budget will be made yearly for the running of the seminary and each diocese will contribute proportionally, according to the number of its students enrolled, to meeting the budget. An annual financial report will be made to the bishop by the rector.

The Rector will ensure that records are kept concerning all the students who enter the seminary. He, or a person delegated by him, will keep the records of the permits needed to enter, reside and work in _____ (*country*) for foreign staff and will ensure that their permits are renewed when they fall due. The bishop will assist in working with civil authorities to obtain the necessary permits for staff members.

Any explicit directions regarding the functioning of the seminary should be mentioned in this section.

Other possible conditions:

The bishop will provide the economic assistance necessary for new staff members of the Congregation to attend a program to learn the local language and culture.

Stipends

Each staff member from the Congregation of the Mission will receive from the diocese a monthly stipend of ____ . He will receive a further ____ towards a retirement fund. From this stipend he is expected to meet his own food, laundry, and personal expenses. The amount of this stipend is to be reviewed annually.

The cost of electricity and water are included in the housing provided by the diocese for the Congregation staff members. Permits to enter, reside and work in the country will be paid for by the diocese.

Pastoral Activity (if any) within the Diocese of _____

Pastoral expenses which will be incurred in assisting with Parish Work within the Diocese of _____ will be met by the diocese.

Insurance

Each member of the Congregation working in the seminary will be covered by Medical Insurance. The cost of this insurance will be the responsibility of _____ (*the diocese, the Congregation, or a combination*).

Housing

The diocese will house the members of the Congregation working in the seminary within the seminary complex for the entire year, even when the seminary is not in session.

Holidays

The Congregation staff members are entitled to ____ weeks of vacation every year.

The Congregation staff members are entitled to ____ (weeks/months) of vacation every ____ years to return to their country of origin.

The bishop will provide the cost of travel of Congregation staff members returning to their country of origin for vacation every ____ years.

Care of Seminary Property

The upkeep and maintenance of the seminary and the staff residences will be the responsibility of the diocese. All buildings used by the Congregation remain the property of the diocese. No part of the plant or its equipment may be exchanged or sold without permission of the bishop.

Property of the Congregation

If the Congregation acquires, or brings to the country, any property which can rightly be call property of the Congregation of the Mission or of any of its members, it must clearly identify such property, so that it will not be confused with seminary property.

Duration of the Agreement

This agreement is binding for ___ years only, from _____ to _____. At the time of renewal amendments to the agreement can be discussed and agreed upon. In the interim, if either party wishes to change any part of this agreement, it must give ___ months notice in writing before any change can be made, and then only if there is mutual consent.

If at the end of the duration of this agreement either party wishes to cancel the Contract, this should be communicated in writing to the other party ___ months before its termination.

Signatures

For the Congregation of the Mission

For the Diocese of _____

*Visitor of the Province, or
Superior of the Mission, or
the Superior General,
if it is an international mission*

Bishop of the Diocese

Appendix II

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