

# Tempo Forte Circular

(3-7 October 2011)

Rome, October 2011

*To the members of the Congregation of the Mission*

My dear brothers of the Congregation of the Mission,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

We began our *tempo forte* meeting with an ongoing formation session with one of the members of the community of Sant'Egidio.

## 1. General Curia:

- Our regular business began with a discussion of the **New Visitors Meeting** which will take place 3-11 January 2012. Sharing regarding the *Practical Guide for the Visitors* will be done by the members of the General Curia. Invited guests are Director of the Vincentian Solidarity Office, Father Miles Heinen; a video conference with our representative before the United Nations, Father Joseph Foley; and the webmaster, Father John Freund. Other invited guests will be, Father Alberto Vernaschi treating legal matters and Father Joe Agostino who will focus on planning at the different levels of the province. Members of the Curia, Father Juventino Castellero and Father John Maher, will share with us matters regarding communications, Vincentiana, SIEV and the Vincentian Family. We are expecting about 15 new Visitors for this meeting.
- Father Javier Alvarez shared with us the minutes of the meeting that was held in Paris of the Commission for the **Center for Vincentian Historical Studies**. The mission of the Center is to serve the international Vincentian Family by supporting research and scholarship in Vincentian history, especially by highlighting the importance of the historical resources of the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission.

The Commission has three priorities: to encourage, support and welcome scholars who come to Paris for research; to establish a welcome center for Vincentian pilgrims to the Maison Mère in Paris; and to offer periodic workshops and/or symposiums on var-

ious aspects of Vincentian history for scholars or members of the Vincentian Family in general.

- We treated the ongoing work of elaborating a ***Practical Guide for the Parishes***. At this point we are finalizing a letter to be sent to all Visitors and their Councils for discussion on the local level and then for further discussion at our Visitors meeting of 2013.
  - We discussed the **Visitors Meeting** to be held during July 2013. We have solicited a number of countries that might be interested in hosting us. The Preparatory Commission has been formed with members representative of the five continents: Latin America, Silvano Calderón, Visitor of the Province of Mexico; Africa, Dominique Iyolo, former visitor of the province of Congo; Asia-Pacific, Simon Kaipuram from India North; Europe, Josef Lucyszyn, former visitor of Hungary and United States, Joseph Agostino.
  - We also discussed the new **Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission**. The Superior General has issued an Ordinance and the statutes, in five languages, will soon be in the hands of all the confreres through the services of *Vincentiana*. All the Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission will be included: those that were not touched, those that were revised and those that were newly created. They will be official documents together with the Constitutions. Any province that wants to republish the Constitutions and Statutes will have them available.
  - We also noted that many members of the Congregation of the Mission ask the continual question about the **catalogue**. As you know, we have initiated a process of putting the catalogue on line. It is a long process, but we hope that in the long run it will make less work for the Secretariat in the future. We ask for your patience because it is now in its final stages. It will be published online in a secure fashion. It can be downloaded if provinces want to publish it for those who do not have access to the internet.
  - We discussed the question of **members of the General Curia**. As you know, Fathers Luis Moleres and Julio Suescun of the Province of Zaragoza have finished their respective responsibilities in the General Curia. Father John Maher from the United States has replaced Father Suescun in his role as Director of Communications. We are forming a new team of translators: Father Felix Álvarez from Madrid will become member of the General Curia community for at least one year and Father Charlie Plock, Eastern Province, who will work from his office in the United States.
- In late September, Brother Joseph Luu Xuan Minh finished his responsibilities in the General Curia and returned to Vietnam. We are grateful for the service he has provided us. He will be replaced by a confrere from the Province of Southern India from

the mission in Tanzania, Brother Leopold Myamba. He will be arriving at the Curia as soon as his documentation is processed.

With regard to the Secretariat, I am sad to announce that Sister Mary Hale, the English-speaking secretary, will be finishing her services at the beginning of December. I am most grateful for the service that Sister has provided us for the past four years. Unfortunately she will not be replaced by another Daughter of Charity because of the unavailability of personnel. Her responsibilities will be assumed, at least on an experimental basis, by Father John Maher and by one of the staff of the Curia.

• We discussed **ongoing formation for the General Council.**

We have the opportunity to participate in a workshop in March 2012 that will deal with general and provincial assemblies: their preparation, evaluation, spirit of collegiality, elections. The Superior General and Father Zeracristos will participate in a formation session with the theme of Passing on the Faith; Authority, Formation and Evangelization. To prepare for this meeting, the General Council answered a series of questions that were presented by the Union of Superiors General.

• Fathers Zeracristos and Thottamkara reported on a meeting that they both participated in with the visitor and others of the **Province of Holland** concerning the present and future of this missionary province of the Congregation of the Mission.

2. The SIEV project of Interreligious Dialog on Islam in Indonesia 7-17 August was reported on. The Commission that worked on that project submitted a proposal to form an ongoing commission for interreligious dialog which the Council approved asking that the membership of this Commission include other members of the Vincentian Family. We congratulate those who organized the workshop for its success. The SIEV committee recommended that the workshop be published in *Vincentiana*.

Prior to our *tempo forte meeting*, **the members of SIEV** met in the General Curia. Present were Eugene Curran, Alexander Jernej, and José Carlos Fonsatti; the new Executive Director, John Maher and the liaison for the General Council, Javier Alvarez. In that meeting a number of decisions were made. The membership of the committee will be Eugene Curran, Alexander Jernej, and Elie Delplace.

SIEV has planned two conferences that will be held in Dublin. The first will be a seminar on Vincentian spirituality and the academic and historical study of spirituality which will be held, 6-10 February 2012. Information on how to participate will be forthcoming. The second seminar will focus on Vincentian topical research and will be held 30 June - 8 July 2012. This will be for emerging and present researchers on Vincentianism, both in the Congregation of

the Mission and the Vincentian Family. Our hope is that it will act as a laboratory to help develop Vincentian researchers.

3. We heard reports from both the **Procurator General**, Father Alberto Vernaschi and the **Postulator General**, Father Luigi Mezzadri as well as a report from our **Archivist**, Father Alfredo Becerra.
4. We received a report from the Director of the **Vincentian Solidarity Office**, Father Miles Heinen. We discussed the different projects of the VSO as well as the development of the patrimonial fund project. In order to help promote support for our developing provinces through the patrimonial fund project, a select group of confreres will receive personal calls from the Superior General to solicit their help or their knowledge of people who could help.  
The VSO has also begun an initiative of developing our relationships with former seminarians in the United States. Our hope is that such a relationship could be carried out throughout the whole Congregation because those who are former seminarians continue to share the charism of St. Vincent de Paul and may be willing to support the projects that we have in favor of the poor. In addition there is a plan for a Vincentian Solidarity Day which was suggested by one of the provinces. I recommend that all confreres continually keep themselves updated regarding the Vincentian Solidarity Office by reading their bulletin which is found on their website [www.cmglobal.org/vso](http://www.cmglobal.org/vso). At the same time, in the mission Appeal Letter, I am requesting that if you are unable to offer yourselves as a missionary in a needed place, you would support any projects for the poor in and through the Vincentian Solidarity Office with your generous donations.
5. We had a **report from the Econome General** who proposed reformulation of our Investment Committee which was accepted by the General Council. We then studied the mid-year financial report and took an initial look at a budget for next year. We also made a decision, following a proposal of the Econome General, to separate funds into short term and long range in order to make them more serviceable for our distribution of funds.
6. **International Missions:**
  - We reviewed the requests that have come from different places throughout the world. They will be included in the Mission Appeal Letter of October.
  - We discussed reports from the different international missions of the Congregation beginning with **El Alto and Cochabamba in Bolivia**.

- For the international missions of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, we reviewed a report given by Father Varghese Thottamkara after his visit there during his participation in the ordination of our new Bishop Rolly Santos in Papua New Guinea. The Superior of the mission of **Solomon Islands** is presently participating in the ongoing formation program of CIF in Paris. Father Marsup Augustinus has been confirmed by the bishops of the Solomon Islands as the new Rector of the Seminary, and Father Raul Castro has been named by the Superior General and his Council, after having consulted APVC and the missionaries in Solomon Islands, as the Director of Formation for our candidates.
- We discussed the various reports received from the mission of **Papua New Guinea** and approved a renewal of the contract for another three years for Father Vladimir Malota of the Province of Poland, working in the mission of Woitape. He is expecting the arrival of a companion, Father Georges Maylaa, Province of the Orient. They also are awaiting the arrival of Father Jude Lemeh, a confrere from the Province of Nigeria. Father Manny LaPaz from the Philippines has already arrived. Because the response to the mission in Papua New Guinea has been good, the mission is expanding to include the territory of Rolly Santos who has requested missionaries. This is reported in the Mission Appeal Letter.
- We received and discussed e-mails regarding our possible new mission in **Angola** from Father José Maria Nieto together with Father José Ramirez.
- We discussed some information that we received from the missionaries in our new international mission in **Tunis**: Father Firmin Mola Mbalo and Brother Henri Escurel. It is a mission under the responsibility of the General Curia who have worked out a very solid contract with the Bishop of Tunis.

## 7. Vincentian Family:

- Father Eli Chaves, the assistant responsible for the Vincentian Family, shared with us the programs and different phases of preparation for the meeting of the **Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family** that will take place 12-13 January 2012 prior to the ongoing formation session for all the leaders of the Vincentian Family which will be held in Via Ezio, Rome 13-15 January.
- The Superior General shared with the General Council the minutes and proposal of the newly-formed **Vincentian Family Leadership Commission**, which recently met in Rome. Membership is from different branches of the Vincentian Family; that is, Father Manny Ginete Congregation of the Mission; Mark McGreevy, DePaul International; Sister Denise LaRock, Daughters of Charity; Denise Khoury, Vincentian Marian Youth; Yasmine Cajuste, International President

of Vincentian Marian Youth; Natalie Monteza, Executive Secretary of AIC; and Eduardo Marquez Almeida, Society of St Vincent de Paul. The Superior General participated in the meeting.

The Commission made a proposal to develop a program to form leaders for the Vincentian Family. More information on this Vincentian Family Leadership Commission can be found in the Vincentian Family webpage.

- We reviewed a report from the representative of the Congregation of the Mission for the **Vincentian Family in Haiti**. Our confrere from the Congo, Jean-Pierre Mangulu, reports that the Vincentian Family gathered to celebrate the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul and to talk about the fruits of the Jubilee Year. I encourage all members of the Congregation of the Mission to become knowledgeable of the good work that we as Zafen are doing in order to help alleviate the situation of suffering in Haiti.
8. We discussed a report that we received from the **Commission for Systemic Change**. The Superior General had requested the Congregation of the Mission be able to apply for start-up grants for systemic change from the Commission. The Visitors will be receiving a letter from the Superior General asking them to submit projects to the Curia.
  9. We had a video conference with the **webmaster, Father John Freund**, where he shared with us some of his ideas that revamp cmglobal to make it more serviceable for the Congregation of the Mission as was mentioned in the letter that I wrote on communication. We want to encourage all confreres to review with more frequency cmglobal because you are the primary audience. There will be four sections that will deal with information and current news events, as well as a library. There will also be development of our Strategic Plan or Lines of Actions as we discussed them in our General Assembly, and ways to follow through on online collaboration. But conscious of the fact that we also have a secondary audience, the wider Vincentian Family, there will be a section developed about the Congregation of the Mission, so people can understand our vocation and mission more clearly.
  10. We reviewed the report from our **United Nations representative**, Father Joseph Foley. He reports on the following matters. First of all the situation in the Horn of Africa. Besides the quest for peace in the Middle East, the United Nations is preoccupied with the famine in the Horn of Africa. Ten million people across the Horn of Africa plagued by years of conflict are now facing the greatest threat of all. Father Foley also reported on the 66<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly of the United Nations which will focus on:

- the prevention of conflict through mediation,
- an absolute necessary reform of the Security Council,
- improving disaster prevention and
- focusing on sustainable development.

The global economic crisis continues to shake businesses, governments and families around the world. Joblessness is rising, social inequalities grow wider, too many people live in fear. So we need to decide in favor of sustainable development, saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty and advancing economic growth.

Fr. Foley reported on the Earth Summit, popularly titled Rio+20, which will take place in June 2012. The official discussions are focused on two main themes: how to build a green economy to achieve sustainable development and how to improve international coordination for sustainable development.

Fr. Foley mentioned also his role in systemic change. I would like to quote him: "The Sisters of Charity of Halifax accept the gospel challenge to be a prophetic congregation. We are moved by the pain of the world and energy of our charism. We commit ourselves to prayer and dialog, collaboration and action to bring about structural change in the unjust systems that cause poverty in all its forms. We embrace the personal and corporate transformation to which this calls us." Certainly this is at the heart of systemic change and what we hope to move toward throughout the whole of the Vincentian Family.

Finally, Fr. Foley mentioned that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has NGO accreditation. He has spoken with the international President Michael Thio concerning ways the Vincentian Family can cooperate.

11. We studied a report from Marcello Manimtim the Director of the **CIF program** which held a leadership session this summer. He mentions that they are most happy to have Dan Borlik as a new member of the team. Dan will be replacing Father José Carlos Fonsatti who has given us a number of years of fine service as Assistant Director. Many thanks to José Carlos for his work. Presently there is a CIF session going on in which there are 15 participants including two CMM brothers. I will be present for the closing of the session.
12. We reviewed different matters from the **Conferences of Visitors and/or Provinces**. I would like to note that for a number of years, Father Sy Peterka of the Eastern Province, USA, has assisted the Superior General and the Council in matters regarding formation for COVIAM and particularly dealing with their formation program

for formators and visiting the different provinces to provide oversight of the formation programs. Father Sy has now finished his responsibility and I thank him for his generous service. He leaves us final recommendations for COVIAM in matters that are important for all of us throughout the Congregation of the Mission; that is, to continue the development of formators with a greater sense of stability, to have greater collaboration among the formators and Provincials, to understand the importance of learning different languages, to investigate ways of carrying out common formation, and a specific request to deal with formation of Brother candidates.

13. We discussed our **calendars** through December. I will report here on the role of the Superior General. On 7-9 October, the General Council, together with the Superior General met outside of Rome to discuss three topics: evangelization and systemic change, economic solidarity, and a concrete proposal to form an ONLUS, especially to solicit funds in Europe. A Commission was formed, made up of Fathers Giuseppe Turati, Giuseppe Carulli, and Father Alfredo Becerra, to study the matter.

With regard to the discussion on evangelization and systemic change, the General Council accepted an invitation from the Commission for Systemic Change to have a meeting in March 2012, in Rome in order to discuss with the General Council the practices of systemic change.

Other visits of the Superior General include a conference for the Vincentian Family in London 16-17 October, a visit to the province of Chile mid-October to early November, the closing of the CIF session in Paris 3-4 November, a meeting of the international council of the Association of the Miraculous Medal in Madrid 12-13 November, a meeting of the University Presidents of the United States 15-19 November. Then I will return to Rome to participate in the activities of the Societies of Apostolic Life and the Union of Superiors General 22-25 November. After the next *tempo forte* I will make a trip to the missions of the Daughters of Charity in Ghana and Burkino Faso.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." with a stylized, cursive script.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General