

Tempo Forte Circular

(5-10 December 2011)

Rome, 20 December 2011

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My dear brothers,

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

Our on-going formation session for this *tempo forte* was on Systemic Change, delivered by Father Robert Maloney and Father Joe Foley.

1. Updates:

- We discussed the final preparations for the New Visitors Meeting.
- We made the final arrangements for a meeting that we will have with the Commission of Systemic Change in March.
- The Superior General wishes to inform the members of the Congregation of the Mission that the prize for mission that was being awarded every two years has been cancelled for a lack of significant participation on the part of the provinces. Projects for start-up grants on Systemic Change can be presented to the Superior General; these, with projects from the rest of the Vincentian Family will be sent to the Commission for Systemic Change which makes the selection.
- We spoke about the Visitors Meeting that will be held in July 2013, discerning the location as well as the contents of the program.
- We discussed in general the theme of reconfiguration, beginning with a session that dealt with reconfiguration in the provinces of Italy held recently here in Rome. Present were Fathers Turati, Zeracristos and Gregory. We mentioned encouraging discernment in different provinces in Central America and the Caribbean and the Provinces of Brazil and Spain.

The Superior General will be writing a general letter focused on understanding reconfiguration as mission driven. We consider it to be much more than simply the fusion of provinces. As a result, the Superior General will be writing letters to particular groupings of provinces that have initiated processes of reconfiguration or will be invited to initiate these processes.

- We discussed the topic of confreres in difficulty. During January, a reflection paper will be sent to all the Visitors so that they might study this with their Provincial Councils and formators. We would like these reflections be returned to the General Curia by July 2012 in order that we might be able to elaborate more material on this subject for the Preparatory Commission of the next meeting of Visitors in 2013.
- We received information from the Secretary General regarding our on-line catalog and its progress. Hopefully it will be ready for viewing at the beginning of the new year. My apologies for the delay in this process, but converting things to digital format is not as easy as it may seem. Hopefully in the future the information regarding our catalog will be much more accurate and up-to-date and demanding less time in preparing it.

2. General Curia:

- New personnel: Brother Leopold Myamba from Tanzania arrived 15 December. We will have two new members of the house who will make up part of our translation team: Father Felix Álvarez from the Province of Madrid and Father Thomas Lunot from the Province of Paris. They will be involved in written translations and will assist in gatherings where simultaneous translation into Spanish and French are necessary.
- We discussed matters from the Union of Superiors General. Father Zeracristos and Father Gregory shared their reflections on the recent Assembly where the themes discussed were Authority as Service, Formation and New Evangelization. The Superior General was elected as a delegate for the *Synod of Bishops on New Evangelization*, taking place in October 2012. Father Javier Álvarez and Father Zeracristos gave a report on a meeting that they attended entitled "Europe Embraces Africa."

It was decided that Father Stanislav Zontak would participated in the next on going formation session offered by the Union, titled General and Provincial Chapters (Assemblies) which will be held in March 2012.

- We discussed information that we received from Fr. John Maher, Executive Secretary of SIEV. Fr. Maher noted that Fr. Elie Delplace confirmed his willingness to continue as a member of the SIEV

board, as did Fr. Marcelo Manimtim and Fr. Eugene Curran. They will continue on the board through 2014. We reviewed a letter promoting the SIEV Program on Vincentian Spirituality taking place in Dublin in February 5-10, 2012.

- We discussed information received from Fr. John Maher, Director of Communications, regarding his proposal of a framework to organize, communicate, and infuse the 2010 General Assembly document "Lines of Action" in the years 2012 through 2016. Fr. Maher's proposal addresses ways of reinforcing the overall theme of "Creative Fidelity to the Mission." The proposal sets specific yearly goals taken from the "Lines of Action." All will be involved: the Superior General, the Curia, the Office of Communications, the National Conferences of Visitors, Provinces and individual confreres. We are making a serious effort to insure that the Final Document of the General Assembly is well understood and assimilated by all the members of the Congregation of the Mission.

- We received a report from the Director of Development, the VSO office, Father Miles Heinen. The VSO-USA Corporation is now established. The corporation is recognized by the government of the United States and allows donors to make deductions from their income tax for donations made. A select group of confreres will receive personal calls from the Superior General in order to solicit their help in the Patrimonial Fund Project. There has been some response to the request made to individual confreres soliciting possible donors. The Vincentian Solidarity Office continues to develop a relationship with former seminarians and alumni of Vincentian Universities in the United States.

3. Economic Issues:

- We received and approved the economic reports and budgets for the Curia and our international missions.
- We did a study of our whole operation because it was noted by the Econome General that we are spending far beyond what we should. We have looked for ways to counteract this by cutting our budget and reconsidering the amount that is requested of the provinces regarding their support of the General Curia and the decisions made by the General Assembly.

4. Missions:

- We received an e-mail from a member of the Mission in Chad, our confrere from Nigeria. He stated that they are doing well. They have divided the parish into three zones and are working hard at learning the local language.

- We examined and improved the budgets of our international missions. We studied information received from those international missions, such as Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea. We ask your prayers for the Superior of the Mission in Papua New Guinea, Father Homero Marin, who is experiencing some health issues. They are anticipating the arrival of one new missionary, Father Georges Maylaa from the Province of the Orient at the beginning of the new year. He has finally been given his work visa.
- We have received a number of requests from confreres from around the world to participate in mission adventures. A total of five requests were reviewed and studied. All confreres will receive a response. We will name a number of them to new missions within a year's time. And others will be asked to wait; their names have been placed on the list of volunteers.
- I am happy to announce the opening of a new mission in Angola. It was decided by the Superior General and the Council, after having reflected on a report from Father José Maria Nieto, from the Province of Madrid and Father José Peppe Ramírez Martínez, from the Province of Mexico, to choose the mission Lombe in the Diocese of Malanje. For the time being the two missionaries to initiate this mission are Father José Maria Nieto and Pepe Ramírez. Their responsibilities will be pastoral as well as giving attention to the Daughters of Charity and other branches of the Vincentian Family throughout Angola. Our hope is that the mission can open at the beginning of the New Year. Sometime next year a third missionary will be named.
- We have received more requests from Bishops in different places, including Angola, Bolivia, Brazil, Tanzania and Mozambique. We decided to place a moratorium on opening any more new missions in order to reinforce existing missions.

5. Vincentian Family:

- Father Eli Chaves gave a report on the up-coming meeting that will be held in Rome, Via Ezio, of the Vincentian Family Leaders around the theme of *Frederick Ozanam and the Social Doctrine of the Church*, January 13-15, 2012. We are expecting 30-35 people to attend from different branches of the Vincentian Family who have been meeting regularly for a number of years and are now involved in this process of on going formation every two years. At the same time it serves as an opportunity to share information concerning different activities in the Vincentian Family throughout the world.
- The Superior General spoke about a new Commission on Leadership for the Vincentian Family. That Commission has been given

the mandate to think how to reinforce the question of leadership in the Vincentian Family. They formed a sub-commission to design a program for Vincentian Family Leadership. The coordinator of this program is Father Joe Agostino, C.M., Eastern Province USA. Involved in the leadership team are the branches of the Vincentian Family: Daughters of Charity, Congregation of the Mission, AIC, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the Vincentian Marian Youth.

The Design Team is being supported with membership from our five Vincentian Universities: St. John's, DePaul, and Niagara in the United States; Adamson in the Philippines; and All Hallows in Ireland. That team is also joined by Fathers Hugh O'Donnell and Dan Borlik and a Daughter of Charity, Sr. Kieran Kneaves.

- We received a report from the Assistant, Father Zeracristos concerning a workshop that he participated in New York to learn about the workings of our NGO and those of other branches of the Vincentian Family. We had a face-to-face report from the representative, Father Joe Foley who joined us for an on-going formation session with Father Maloney on Systemic Change.

Father Foley made a proposal that each of the Conferences of Visitors select a confrere who would be a grass-root level representative in matters of justice and peace, and who could be contact persons for him at the UN. The Superior General will be encouraging the presidents of the Conferences of Visitors and/or Provinces to follow through on this request.

- We also studied a report from Father Alfredo Becerra concerning the Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation commission of the Union of Superiors General, particularly their Department of FAO (Food, Agriculture Organization) of which Father Alfredo is coordinator.

- From CIF, we received two reports from the Director, Father Marcelo Manimtim on the leadership session that was held this past year as well as the formal two-month session. We had planned a special session for the confreres of Eastern Europe; however, it was decided to cancel this effort now because of the lack of participants.

- We heard from the Assistants and the Superior General regarding their relationship with the different conferences of Visitors and/or Provinces of the Congregation of the Mission.

- The Superior General shared with the council a report from a meeting that he had with two of the Visitors and the three Presidents of the Vincentian Universities of the United States, wherein they agreed to join together with our two other Vincentian Universities, All Hallows in Ireland and Adamson in the Philippines to

continue to discuss how they might strengthen the Vincentian charism in and through the university world and beyond.

- We interchanged our calendars for the next three months; the visits of the Superior General from January-March 2012 are as follows: He will be in Rome for the new Visitors Meeting 3-10 January and the Vincentian Family Leaders 13-16 January. 23 January - 12 February he will visit the international mission of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. 15-19 February he will be in Madrid for the annual international council meeting of Vincentian Marian Youth. 20-29 February he will be in Vietnam on the occasion of its being erected to a Vice-Province and the naming of the new Vice-Provincial. He will be in Rome 2-12 March for *tempo forte*. From 13-22 March he will visit with the Assistant, Father Stanislav Zontak the Daughters of Charity and Confreres in Greece, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo. At the end of March he will be in Paris for the renewal of vows for the Daughters of Charity. 26-29 March he will be in the United States fund-raising for the Congregation of the Mission.

Thank you my brothers for your attention to these matters in our circular of this *tempo forte*. I take this occasion to wish you all a happy and blessed Christmas at this most holy time of year when we remember the incarnation of God among us in the person of Jesus. You can see a video message from the General Curia on www.cmglobal.org/en

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. Gregory Gay, C.M.". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "G." at the beginning and "C.M." at the end.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General