

Foundation Day Letter of the Superior General Announcing Strategic Plan

Rome, 25 January 2012

Foundation Day of the Congregation of the Mission

To all the Members of the Congregation of the Mission

My dear Confreres:

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

Happy Foundation Day! As the Church observes the feast of the conversion of St. Paul on this date, we celebrate an anniversary of the life-changing experience of St. Vincent. After preaching at Folleville, Vincent saw amazing results that led him to found our Congregation:

“But there was such a great crowd that I could not handle it with just the one other priest who was helping me.... Father Portail, another priest, and I took residence at the College des Bon Enfants.... From there all three of us would go around preaching and giving missions” **Conf. 180, 2, Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents, Paris 1920-1925, Vol. XII, Vol. XI.**

As we celebrate Foundation Day, we recall with gratitude the mission and community entrusted to us by St. Vincent from 1617. To be true to our heritage, I believe Vincent would want us to concentrate on how in this present day we can better follow Christ, the Evangelizer of the poor.

The General Assembly took the theme “Creative Fidelity to the Mission,” formulating “Lines of Action” to guide the Congregation for the next six years. In reflecting on the work of the Assembly, the Curia has devised a strategic plan with a theme and yearly objectives to put into practice the good work of the Assembly. This strategic plan is a practical way to integrate and infuse the “Lines of Action” into our

provinces and apostolates. Foundation Day is the most opportune time to announce this plan, and to beg God's blessings in bringing it to fruition.

“Creative Fidelity to our Mission and Ministries in following Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor”, is the overarching theme to guide the five years of this strategic plan. The plan sets yearly objectives and specific strategies for Visitors, provinces, and confreres. The full plan, its objectives and strategies for all five years are listed in an addendum to this letter, and can also be found on our web site, www.cmglobal.org. In this letter, I will focus on the objectives and their applicable strategies for 2012. They are “Dialogue with the Poor” and “Systemic Change.”

2012-2016: DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR

To enable confreres to listen to the voices of the poor in ministries, and to make practical and ongoing efforts to participate in their lives. *Applicable strategy from Lines of Action: To share with the poor the dynamics to enable them to become subjects of their history, protagonists of their destiny and agents of their freedom.*

This strategy runs throughout the length of the plan, so it appears in each year as an essential part of the overarching theme of ***“Creative fidelity to our Mission and Ministries in following Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor.”*** Dialogue with the Poor and Systemic Change are well matched, as the latter objective provides a concrete, practical methodology to enter the world of the poor and to offer them not only hope and solidarity but actual assistance.

2012: SYSTEMIC CHANGE

To educate and equip confreres in the means and methods to promoting systemic change in their provinces and apostolates. *Applicable strategies from the Lines of Action:*

- *To favor works that promote systemic change in society, develop local self-government, formation of self-help groups and indigenous micro-credit programs.*
- *To support at the provincial level challenging works, favoring teamwork and networking.*
- *To form missionaries with a methodology & spirituality that favor personal, conversion, pastoral, and structural change.*
- *To provide legal assistance for the defense of the poor and the promotion of justice.*

- *To create programs that counter human trafficking and assure the promotion of life, access to universal health care, care for the environment, the dignity of women and children, the rights of migrants, and participation in civil society.*

On this Foundation Day 2012, I ask Visitors, conferences, provinces, local communities, and confreres to focus on these dual objectives of *Dialogue with the Poor* and *Systemic Change*. Reflect in earnest on ways you can apply these “Lines of Action” to your local community, apostolate, and province. This strategic plan is designed for collaboration between provinces and with the Vincentian Family, with a variety of suggested strategies that fit provinces of all sizes.

As we give thanks to God for the gift of our Vincentian vocation, we see in the life and example of our Holy Founder one with a genius for doing the “practical and possible” against great odds. Through the intercession of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, may we be creative in fidelity to our mission and ministries in following Christ, the Evangelizer of the poor.

Sincerely 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 start and "C.M." at the end.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

ADDENDUM TO 25 JANUARY LETTER THE STRATEGIC PLAN AS DEVELOPED FROM THE "LINES OF ACTION" OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Overarching theme for 2012-2016: Creative fidelity to our Mission and Ministries to follow Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor calls us to....

Yearly Objectives:

The yearly objectives in their order of implementation are:

- 1. 2012-2016: *DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR***
- 2. 2012: *SYSTEMIC CHANGE***
- 3. 2013: *RECONFIGURATION AS A PATHWAY TO CREATIVITY IN OUR MINISTRIES***
- 4. 2014: *INITIAL AND ONGOING FORMATION***
- 5. 2015: *DIALOGUE WITH THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY***
- 6. 2016: *ASSESSMENT YEAR AND PREPARATION FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY***

1. 2012-2016: *DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR*

Enable and assist confreres to listen to the voices of the poor in all ministries, and make practical and ongoing efforts to participate in their lives. This yearly objective will run concurrently with each theme for the next four years.

Applicable strategy from the Lines of Action:

- To make an effort to share with the poor the dynamics that will enable them to become subjects of their history, protagonists of their destiny and agents of their freedom.

2. 2012: *SYSTEMIC CHANGE*

Educate and equip confreres in the means and methods to promoting systemic change in their provinces and apostolates, **and *DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR***.

Applicable strategies on systemic change from the Lines of Action:

- To favor works that promote systemic change in society, develop local self-government, formation of self-help groups and indigenous micro-credit programs.

- To support at the provincial level challenging works, favoring teamwork and networking.
- To form missionaries with a methodology & spirituality that favor personal, conversion, pastoral, and structural change.
- To provide legal assistance for the defense of the poor and the promotion of justice.
- To create programs that counter human trafficking and assure the promotion of life, access to universal health care, care for the environment, the dignity of women and children, the rights of migrants, and participation in civil society.

3. 2013: RECONFIGURATION: A PATHWAY TO CREATIVITY IN OUR MINISTRIES

Examine the necessity of regional and provincial re-configuration, and with Conferences of Visitors, provincial councils, and input from confreres, to act decisively, *and* **DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR.**

Applicable strategies on reconfiguration from the Lines of Action:

- To explore locally, province-wide, and Visitors' conferences reconfiguration both as an "intra" and "inter" provincial sense, and its importance for the future of the CM.
- To cultivate a vital and concrete sense of belonging to the Congregation that goes beyond the local and provincial communities; To create spaces for inter-provincial collaboration administratively, and to share human and financial resources.
- To foster personal availability and mobility to participate in new missionary projects.
- To review our ministries and the structures of our community life to enhance their missionary dimension.
- To go to the most distant (*Ad Gentes*) and to draw near to the most withdrawn.

4. 2014: INITIAL AND ONGOING FORMATION

Regional and provincial evaluation of the resources available and quality of initial and ongoing formation in the Vincentian charism of the CM, *and* **DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR.**

Applicable strategies on initial and going formation from the Lines of Action:

- To study, disseminate, and implement the revised *Rationis Formationis*.

- In utilizing the *Rationis Formationis* and the “best practices” of provinces, to create formation programs that strengthen our fidelity to the vocation and our response to the needs of the 21st century.
- To assume ongoing formation as our daily commitment, embracing prayer, reflection, on our experiences in living out our ministry.
- To foster openness to opportunity offered by new languages and techniques of the digital world in view of the Mission.
- To foster interchange of formation experiences with Conferences of visitors and all CM’s.
- To foster in the congregation reflection on the vocation of the Vincentian brother.
- To support pastoral practices centered on the Word of God, attention to the signs of the times, and a central role for the laity.

5. 2015: *DIALOGUE WITH THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY*

Encourage confreres to have serious, strategic dialogue with Vincentian Family members in order to foster collaboration in provinces and apostolates, and **DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR**.

Applicable strategies on Vincentian Family Dialogue from the Lines of Action:

- To raise awareness of resources and programs provided by the Vincentian Family Office at the General Curia.
- To raise awareness of the existence and activities of the Vincentian Family Leadership Commission and highlight formation programs they provide.
- To foster theological reflection on challenges and good arising from lay collaboration.
- To intensify collaboration with the Vincentian Family in formation; esp. in Vincentian spirituality, social doctrine of the Church, and lay leadership to assure their transforming presence on behalf of the poor.
- To commit ourselves to evangelize the poor with members of the Vincentian family and other ecclesial groups, and to participate in defense & promotion of the poor.
- With assistance from the Vincentian Family, to undertake new works of evangelization in the area of new emerging cultures, ecumenical, and religious dialogue.

6. 2016: ASSESSMENT YEAR AND PREPARATION FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY

To assess our attainment of the previous yearly objectives (systemic change, dialogue with the poor, systemic change, reconfiguration as a pathway to creativity, initial and ongoing formation, and dialogue with the Vincentian Family), and to prepare for the General Assembly.

- How have the yearly objectives and “Lines of Action” outlined in this plan enabled Visitors Conferences, provinces, apostolates, local communities, and confreres to exercise “Creative Fidelity to our Mission and Ministries” over the last five years?
- What remains undone or incomplete in incorporating the yearly objectives and strategies of this plan from the “Lines of Action” into a Conference of Visitors or a province?
- What “next steps” will be needed for the 2016 General Assembly to more fully incorporate these objectives into all levels of the Congregation of the Mission?