

# VINCENTIANA

55<sup>th</sup> Year - N. 4

October-December 2011



## Correspondence

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION  
GENERAL CURIA

## Editor's Note

As the new editor of *Vincentiana*, I look forward to building on the fine tradition of this journal. For over fifty-five years, *Vincentiana* has served as the official record of communication from the Superior General and the Curia to the worldwide Congregation of the Mission. *Vincentiana* provides research and information on Vincentian history, spirituality, and matters of contemporary interest related to our charism. It is my intention to continue the fine work of this journal and to strengthen our understanding of the Vincentian charism for our community and the Vincentian Family.

As our cover indicates, this issue has “correspondence” as the theme. Since our last issue was entirely devoted to publication of the revised Statutes, there have been four circular letters from the Superior General. These, along with minutes from the October and December “Tempo Forte” meetings of the General Curia comprise the balance of content for this issue of *Vincentiana*. Like our Holy Founder, who left voluminous amounts of correspondence, recording official correspondence in circulars and minutes is needed not only for posterity, but for proper and timely dissemination of information and ideas.

At this time, I wish to offer my sincere thanks to our previous editor, Fr. Julio Suescun, C.M., for his service as editor, and his generous assistance to me in the time of transition. I am grateful for his advice as well as his prompt and helpful responses to my E-mails these past months. I welcome your ideas, comments and suggestions on ways to enhance *Vincentiana*. You may E-mail me at: [vincentiana@cmglobal.org](mailto:vincentiana@cmglobal.org). I look forward to serving you as editor of *Vincentiana* and Director of Communications and Publications for the Congregation of the Mission.

John T. Maher, C.M.

# GENERAL CURIA

## Beatification of Sr. Marguerite Rutan, D.C.

Dax, France, 19 June 2011

Reflections by

Evelyne Franc, D.C., and G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

**Sr. Evelyne Franc, D.C., Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity, and Fr. G. Gregory Gay, C.M. Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission were among the nine-thousand people who attended the beatification of Sr. Marguerite Rutan, D.C., in Dax, France on June 19, 2011. Hundreds of Daughters of Charity, Vincentians, and members of the Vincentian family were present for a series of weekend-long events, which culminated in the Mass of Beatification in the Maurice Bayou Sports Stadium in Dax.**

**Sr. Marguerite Rutan came to Dax in 1779 and founded a hospital, school, and shelter for abandoned young girls. She was martyred on April 9, 1794 at the height of the “Reign of Terror” during the French Revolution. Sr. Evelyne and Fr. Gay paused reflect on the meaning of Sr. Marguerite’s life for the Church and the world today.**

The beatification of Sr. Marguerite Rutan on June 19, 2011 in Dax, France was a moment of great joy for all members of the Vincentian family, particularly sisters, priests, and brothers in the “Double Family” of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. At this festive occasion, Sr. Evelyne Franc, the Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity and Fr. G. Gregory Gay, Superior General of the Vincentians reflected on the witness of Sr. Marguerite’s life and what her beatification means to the “Double Family” and the Church today.

Sr. Evelynne noted that Sr. Marguerite's life is a key way to understand her path to martyrdom: "During the 37 years of her life as a Daughter of Charity, Marguerite put her creativity, rich personality and professional know-how to serve the poor and the sick. Daily, she endeavoured to love, serve and forgive like Christ. In her 15 years of service in the hospital at Dax, Marguerite gave joyful witness of authentic friendship with everyone." Fr. Gay noted, "Sr. Marguerite kept her gaze fixed on Christ, which enabled her to be a serene and effective servant of the poor at a time of political and social upheaval."

Sr. Marguerite refused to buckle under to pressure put upon priests and religious in the French Revolution to renounce allegiance to the Church and their religious communities by taking the oath of loyalty to the civil constitution. Sr. Evelynne observed, "In those troubled times, Marguerite lived more intensely her gift to God and others. In spite of grave and imminent danger, she continued to follow in the footsteps of Christ with assurance. When it was impossible to work without risk, she stayed faithful to her religious convictions." Fr Gay noted, "Sr. Marguerite met violence with non-violent resistance. She was not only a servant of the poor, but a peace-maker who lived the Beatitudes in violent times."

What lessons can the life of Sr. Marguerite Rutan hold for the Church and world today? Sr. Evelynne noted, "Marguerite Rutan lived deeply this conviction: when Jesus Christ sends one on mission, he also gives the strength to accomplish it. Today, the witness of her life is like a beacon which enlightens our way toward unwavering fidelity to Christ." Fr. Gay added: "Sr. Marguerite is an apt model for today's world as one who stood up for her faith while still serving the poor. She never gave in to the forces of fear and intimidation. Today, when Christians are attacked and persecuted for the desire to live their faith, Sr. Marguerite's life and death challenge us to resist the culture of violence and to strive to be peace-makers and servants of the poor."

Sr. Evelynne concluded her comments on Sr. Marguerite's beatification with a thought all members of the Vincentian Family can take to heart: "Sr. Marguerite's life shows us Christ leads us on the way of unconditional Love toward the true face of the Father, who is both Gift and Pardon."

# Marguerite Rutan, Daughter of Charity: An Ordinary Saint

Mass of Thanksgiving, Beatification,  
Monday, 20 June 2011

Homily of

Patrick Griffin, C.M.  
*Director General*

at the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Beatification  
of Marguerite Rutan

Last month, much of the world – Catholic and otherwise – had its attention focused on Rome and the event taking place in St. Peter's Square. It was the beatification of Pope – now Blessed – John Paul II. This good man had captured the imagination of many people during his long pontificate, and now he offered the world one more lesson around the Catholic practice of honoring our saints. Perhaps, Pope Benedict had this beatification in mind when (around the same time) he ended his two year catechesis on the saints and martyrs of the Church. His last talk was on what is most essential for sanctity, and he pointed to three elements: Sunday Eucharist, daily prayer, and observance of the commandments. Pope Benedict's repeated emphasis was that sanctity should be ordinary – something available to everyone. Towards the end of his presentation he offers this encouragement to all of us:

"I would like to invite you to open yourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit, who transforms our life, to be, we also, pieces of the great mosaic of holiness that God is creating in history."

Today, once again, our Church calls us together in celebration for one of our number who lived a life of faithful service and has, as Pope Benedict describes, become "a piece of the great mosaic of holiness that God is creating in history." As we all know, Sr. Marguerite Rutan, a Daughter of Charity, was martyred during the Revolution. Yesterday, we declared her "Blessed" which is our technical way of recognizing what she was and is. And, I would like to suggest that her holiness was

“ordinary.” No, not ordinary in the sense that it was unimportant or colorless, but ordinary in the sense that she accepted martyrdom for carrying out her daily role as a Daughter of Charity to the end of her life. It was ordinary in the sense that any Daughter of Charity could be expected to act in the same way for the sake of her fidelity to her charism and her poor. It was ordinary in the sense that any of us could aspire to live out our particular ministry and our unique vocation faithfully, and come to a similar sanctity. Marguerite offers us a model for our own lives.

The biblical readings which the Church offers for our consideration today point to an ordinary path of holiness. Each offers a different perspective, but all point to that same goal.

The first reading is taken from the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament. It is presented to us as the instruction of a father to his son on how to live a good life. At the heart of biblical Wisdom literature is the realization that God has ordered this world for the good, and people should seek to live according to this order. One should live one's life well. The instruction is always practical, always doable, and always specific. One could easily say “ordinary.” This is how a normal person should live in order to please God and keep the commandments.

Just listen again to the guidance which is offered:

*A hungry man grieve not....  
Delay not to give to the needy.  
A beggar in distress do not reject;  
Avert not your face from the poor.  
From the needy turn not your eyes....  
Give a hearing to the poor man,  
and return his greeting with courtesy....*

One can hear in these directives the ways of a Daughter of Charity and the character of Marguerite Rutan as she ministered to her sick. One can also hear the kind of summons to which each of us is invited to be faithful: a call to holiness by being wise in a most ordinary way.

The second reading offers us Paul's famous reflection on Christian love in First Corinthians, chapter thirteen. It draws our attention away from what we do, and puts the emphasis on how we do it. Paul reminds us that everything must be done with love. Actions which seem to be marvelous, but which are not motivated by love are useless. When we stop and think, that is an extraordinary statement. The end, the goal, is not what is most important, but how one gets there. All one's efforts need to be driven by the desire to serve the other in love. Love is patient and kind and rejoices in the truth. Even the surrender of one's life

– “handing my body over” in Paul’s graphic text which echoes Marguerite’s surrender – is pointless unless it is done in love. The motto of the Daughters of Charity insists that it is not pride or stubbornness which motivates their actions, but that the “charity/love of Christ urges” them. This was Marguerite’s motivation for her resolute decision. The love of those whom she served in the hospital and elsewhere kept her faithful to her responsibilities and from that fidelity arose her condemnation. She was motivated daily by love and she offers us a model in that same regard as we carry out our call to sanctity.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus teaches the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. These commandments of the New Covenant confront us once again with the means for leading a holy, a “blessed” life; the call is not intended to be extraordinary. The meek, the just, the merciful are called “holy”; this way of living is within the possibilities of any of us. Among the beatitudes, we can recognize a particular way in which Marguerite expresses her sanctity; Jesus proclaims:

“Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

Her willingness to submit to the persecution in her day for the sake of her following of Christ is a clear fulfillment of this Gospel directive. It is no wonder that we call her “blessed.” She has tread the path before us, and shown the way with clarity and courage.

The celebration of Marguerite offers us a wonderful opportunity to reflect upon a life well-lived and the path to holiness. Pope Benedict’s description of the path to sanctity leading from the Eucharist, through prayer, and into Gospel living describes her well. All three of the Scripture readings can be held out as an answer to the question “How do I become a saint?” All three can be used to describe the life of Marguerite Rutan. She gives flesh and blood to the biblical images in her ordinary and faithful living as a Daughter of Charity. We thank God today for her example and we ask the Lord for the grace to respond well to the call for holiness so that we too can be counted among the “blessed.”

# Letter of the Superior General on Communications

Rome, 25 August 2011

*To the members of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear Confreres,

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

The vision of the 2010 General Assembly aims to serve the marginalized more effectively in the next six years. Last January, I asked each confrere to reflect on preparing to minister in a digital world with all its new opportunities and challenges. In this letter, I offer you the reflections of the Curia on these issues and some of the actions we are undertaking.

Just as last century's missionaries began to use automobiles for pastoral work and telephone to maintain communication, today's technology can enhance and improve how we minister. Technology, be it new hardware, software, video-conferencing, E-mail, voicemail, texting, social networking, and other new digital frontiers; all can be utilized as tools to advance the mission of the Church and the apostolates of our congregation. Properly understood, technology today can help us to assess what we do and how we can do it better.

There are ways that community leadership on the international, provincial, and local levels can use technology to enhance administrative practices and improve communication. In this letter, I would like to focus on one specific area: our web site, [www.cmgglobal.org](http://www.cmgglobal.org). It is the desire of the Curia that this web site play a key role in coming years as a significant resource for ministry. To this end, we are asking Fr. John Maher, our new Director of Communications, together with his assistant Fr. Juventino Castillero, to work with Fr. John Freund to develop this web site as a major vehicle for information and communication. Their focus will be three-fold:



- 1. News.** In addition to official documents, [www.cmglobal.org](http://www.cmglobal.org) will offer expanded news section to foster an international vision and sense of belonging among confreres and provinces, and to the wider Vincentian Family. Our vision, as expressed in the General Assembly's *Creative Fidelity for Mission* calls us to "foster theological reflection on the challenges and good that arise from sharing our charism with the laity" (III, 3.3., p. 4).
- 2. Resources for ministry and formation:** It is our plan to make [www.cmglobal.org](http://www.cmglobal.org) a "virtual Vincentian library" without the traditional limits of borders or buildings. Thus, it will be available for use in formation programs world-wide. This central digital resource will identify and provide links to key Vincentian resources in multiple languages. Formation programs, both initial and on-going, will have on-line access to quality resources to educate all learners about specific areas of Vincentian concern, including our charism, theology, missionary theory and practice, and systemic change. Furthermore, as part of the revision of our *Rationis Formationis* undertaken by Fr. Stanislav Zontak, Assistant General, formation programs at all levels will be required to address both the personal use of technology and its prudent and effective use in ministry. Such formation will include an analysis of the strengths and challenges digital technology offers confreres in ministry. As our *Ratio Studiorum for Missions* stresses the need for enculturation (cf. Ch. 2), digital technology provides exciting, new ways to understand "enculturation" in today's world. Our missionaries have always endeavored to learn the language and customs of the people they served. Today is no different, and digital technology can be a vibrant partner for mission, formation, and enculturation.
- 3. Collaboration:** During this administration, we will identify confreres in our major language groups who are currently involved in the use of technology for ministry and have interest and desire for further training. Our web site, [www.cmglobal.org](http://www.cmglobal.org) the on-line source for formation, will devote significant space to resources for formation and ministry, including the promotion of systemic change and the tools necessary for its effective utilization. It is our hope this web site will also assist provinces with technical assistance when possible, and provide access to secure video conferencing facilities to save time and money involved in meetings at the international and provincial levels.

Our web site, [www.cmglobal.org](http://www.cmglobal.org) will also provide opportunities for the sharing of information and dialogue with members of the wider Vincentian Family. As "*Creative Fidelity for the Mission*" reminds

us, with the laity, we will “commit ourselves to work in the evangelization of the poor together with members of the Vincentian Family” (III, 3.5.).

Web sites provide digital access to today’s “global village” and tools for collaboration. They also offer wonderful opportunities to tell the stories of the people we serve, something Vincent did so well. These stories in turn attract others to their service. In this digital age, let us pray we may support and encourage one another to learn new, exciting ways to serve God’s people and to deepen our understanding of our Vincentian charism.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

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

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

# Letter of the Superior General on Parishes

Rome, October 2011

*To the Visitors and their Councilors,  
to the Presidents of the Continental Conferences,  
and to all the Confreres of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear Confreres:

May the grace and peace of Jesus Christ be with us always!

The General Assembly of 2010 approved a postulatam that was directed to the Superior General, requesting that a study be done of our Vincentian ministry in parishes, and that we explore the possibility of publishing a *Practical Guide* for this ministry. After studying this issue in a meeting of the General Council, I sent a questionnaire to all the Provinces so that, beginning with the reality, we might reflect on this theme and the possibility of formulating a *Practical Guide for Parishes*. Only twenty-three (23) Provinces sent me a response and I am grateful for this generous and wonderful collaboration.

The Council and I studied all the material that we received. I now present some of the significant reflections that I found in the responses that were sent. At the same time I present here the decisions that we have made in this regard.

1. The reports that were received reveal that parishes are a very significant reality in our ministry. In this regard we are dealing with a complex reality, one that is numerically significant in almost all the provinces and one that involves many confreres. At the same time the reality of the parishes is quite varied depending on the pastoral-social reality of each continent, of each country and each province. There is no unanimity with regard to the question of what constitutes a “conventional parish” or a “missionary parish” even though there is a concern and interest to adapt this pastoral reality to the specifics of our Vincentian missionary vocation. Today we are also aware

of those who propose putting aside this terminology because theologically and pastorally it is considered imprecise and improper.

2. Despite the limited number of responses and the vast diversity of experiences, the reports that were sent to us presented a great variety of elements that reveal the complexity of the theme and the need to deepen our understanding of this reality and to discern and evaluate our Vincentian ministry in parishes:

*a)* In general, the reports reveal an common awareness of our missionary nature, of our mission toward the poor, of our commitment to the formation of the clergy and the laity, of the need for ministry developed in accord with our Vincentian spirit, of the need to encourage Vincentian ministries and pastoral practices that are in greater conformity to our charism. This common awareness, however, is understood and concretized in so many different ways that there is the risk of justifying and legitimizing all our parishes so that ultimately our Vincentian identity is weakened and becomes devoid of meaning.

*b)* Some of the reports alluded to an awareness of the missionary nature of the whole Church and presented specific experiences, characteristics and demands that could be used to define our Vincentian identity in parishes. These significant elements can provide us with criteria, insights and new possibility for our reflection and ministry:

- The Vincentian missionary parish ought to be located among the poor, preferably among those persons who are most poor, and/or ought to be fundamentally oriented toward service of those who are poor. From the perspective of evangelizing the poor, it is important to be aware of the new forms of poverty and of the need to form the clergy and the laity. People who are poor, with their need for a holistic evangelization, are at the geographical, social and pastoral center of every Vincentian missionary parish.
- In fidelity to the spirit of Saint Vincent, the Vincentian missionary parish ought to be a “place of mission”: there one does not simply attempt to maintain and encourage the Christian faith of the parishoners, but rather one becomes committed to those situations in which the needs of the poor and the needs of the Church are most urgent; one becomes committed to those situations where there is a lack of clergy and other pastoral ministers. The Vincentian missionary parish ought to be in an on-going state of mission and ought to go forth to encounter the poor who are most abandoned and forgotten.
- The missionary parish ought to be characterized by pastoral action that is in accord with the Vincentian spirit, a spirit that

inspires all its activity. Said parish should not limit its activity to customary or usual practices but rather it should exert every effort to engage in on-going renewal, should be attentive to the signs of the time and most urgent needs of the poor and the Church. Without neglecting that which is uniquely Vincentian, our ministry in the parish should be accepted, planned and carried out in community, in harmony with the guidelines of the local church. Life and ministry in the parish ought to be done in conformity with the five Vincentian missionary virtues and our commitment to the parish ought to be defined by a specific timeframe.

- The missionary parish ought to develop as a priority those Vincentian ministries and pastoral programs that are in greater conformity with our spirit, for example: holistic evangelization that involves service of the Word and the practice of charity; promotion, formation, and participation of the laity in the pastoral mission of the Church; development of the Church's social and charitable dimension on behalf of those who are poor; development of a prophetic ministry and attention to the new forms of poverty, to minorities who are excluded and alienated; in the parish's social action, the study and the application of the methodology of systemic change and the Church's social doctrine should be utilized; support groups of the Vincentian Family through collaboration and joint action; collaborate with and support the diocesan clergy; develop a community spirit so that the parish becomes a network of communities; promote, collaborate with and support popular movement and outreach ministry.
- c) The existence and the permanent character of many parishes in the provinces seem to be the result of different historical events, different social, ecclesial and social realities, and the multiple challenges that surface during the process of evangelization. Understanding the situational context of our parishes raises other questions that are connected to this theme and that need further study and reflection, for example: the aging of the confreres and their missionary activity; financial support of the provinces; the Vincentian presence within the present ecclesial setting of each country or continent; formation for new forms of missionary ministry today, etc.
- d) In some provinces efforts are being made to put in place structures and initiatives on a provincial as well as a local level that will encourage, cultivate and develop the Vincentian identity of the missionary ministry in parishes, for example: gatherings of confreres who are engaged in parish ministry; creation of Provincial Commissions for parishes; evaluation of works that seek involvement in ministries that have greater Vincentian significance; formulation of a Provincial Pastoral Plan for parishes; signing of contracts with the

Diocese and thus establishing a commitment that is limited to a specific period of time; formation of confreres for parish ministry; formulation and evaluation of local pastoral plans. These initiatives are useful and necessary in order to engage in a dynamic Vincentian parish ministry.

3. The different elements that were submitted in the reports present many questions, distinct experiences and paths that demand serious reflection. Given the complexity of the theme and the small number of responses to the questionnaire I believe that this is not the opportune moment to formulate a *Practical Guide for Parishes*. I propose that we engage in a broad process of reflection on the distinct levels of the Congregation. More specifically:

- a) That all the Continental Conferences promote the study of this theme, presenting specific points that will help the confreres understand and evaluate in a better way this ministry and enable them to do this in light of our Vincentian missionary charism.

- b) All the Visitors with their Council should promote in their provinces a serious study of the Vincentian parish ministry. This should be done with a sincere and courageous evaluation of the ministries of the Province.

- c) *Vincentiana* will publish a special edition on parishes in order to encourage and enlighten our reflection on this theme.

- d) This theme will be studied and reflected on during the 2013 Meeting of the Visitors. It is hoped that at that time we will be able to gather together the results of the reflections in the provinces and then formulate proposals for appropriate and effective action.

4. I understand that this theme is of fundamental importance for growth in our creative fidelity to the mission. We are dealing with a question that has been expressed on many different occasions but that needs greater discernment and study. At this time, when the whole Congregation is making an effort to accept and put into practice the conclusions of the 2010 General Assembly, I believe that it is opportune to study this ministry of the parishes and to do this with the courage, seriousness, and responsibility that it requires.

- a) I encourage all the confreres to make every effort to reflect on and enter into a process of discernment on this important challenge. I invite you to engage in this process with the attitude of Vincentian conversion and fidelity. I especially invite the Visitors, the Vice-Visitors and their councils to make every effort to promote this reflection in their provinces and to make, calmly and courageously, the necessary decisions to enable our action to be truly missionary.

*b)* I ask that by August 31, 2012 you send me the results of your reflections and the decisions that you make in this regard so that together with the General Council we might study and reflect on this ministry.

I close this letter and ask God, through the intercession of Saint Vincent de Paul, to provide us with the light and the strength that will enable us to move forward together with joy as we recommit ourselves to be missionaries for the poor.

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

# 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



# Mission Appeal

Rome, 11 October 2011

*To all the Members of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear Confreres,

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

My brothers, we once again are in the month of October, the time when traditionally the Superior General makes an appeal to missionaries throughout the world in order to respond to the needs of our own international missions or requests that have come from particular provinces or from Bishops.

I would like to begin this Mission Appeal Letter with an experience that I had in September. I was invited to participate in the 100<sup>th</sup> anni-





versary of the Province of Madagascar. I and Assistant General Father Zeracristos participated in many of the activities to celebrate this memorable time in the history of the province. As we all know, the mission of Madagascar was well loved by Saint Vincent himself, even in his old age having the desire to want to go there, but realizing its impossibility. It is a place where Vincent himself sent over 30 missionaries, both priests and brothers, all of whom did not survive the experience, giving their lives for the mission, an admirable gesture on the part of these confreres.

Madagascar has once again come to life after that first experience of missionaries as a province that is now made up of missionaries from various nations and cultures as well as native Malgasy. One of the fruits of their being a province for 100 years is a sufficient number of missionaries to send to other provinces in need.

On 25 September, in the cathedral of St. Vincent de Paul in Tolagnaro, we celebrated the mission Mass of four confreres. Roch Alexandre Ramiligaona is going to the international mission in Chad where the Province of Madagascar with other members of COVIAM, will work in collaboration with the Daughters of Charity and the Christians of that area. A missionary from Cameroon and another from Nigeria have already begun the mission there.

Sedy Rabarijaona has responded to the call in my last Mission Appeal Letter in which the Province of Puerto Rico asked for confreres for the urgent needs of Haitians, especially those in diaspora. Sedy will go to the Dominican Republic, working with Haitians together with confreres from the Province of Puerto Rico.

Father Calvin Tsimangovy and Brother Joseph Razafindrabe are going to initiate a mission in La Reunion, a joint mission of the Provinces of Paris and Madagascar. In the history of Madagascar, Vincentians were sent to La Reunion with the hope to one day reenter



Madagascar after they had left there. Currently there is no presence of the Congregation of the Mission in La Reunion. I am delighted to see that as is the tradition within the Congregation, a brother joins the missionary efforts.

Without a doubt Madagascar in itself is a missionary country. I am very grateful for the wonderful work that the missionaries from Poland, Spain, Italy, France, Slovenia, have from the beginning and continue to exercise together with our Malgasy confreres. Yet the missioning to other countries for me is a sign of the maturity of the Province of Madagascar where the confreres are conscious of the fact that although formed in Madagascar they are missionaries for the Congregation of the Mission and therefore available to go wherever they may be called and wherever there may be a need.

With that in mind, I thank the Province of Madagascar for its example to the rest of us in the Congregation of the Mission and I encourage all to reflect seriously upon the contents of this Mission Appeal Letter. It gives an update on the actual missions that we have, introduces new invitations that we have received and highlights some special missions. At the end of the letter is the procedure that you are asked to follow when you want to consider offering yourself as a missionary beyond the limits of your own province.

There is always the opportunity my brothers, to respond to the requests of the Superior General as well as different provinces in order to strengthen our collaboration in the worldwide Congregation. Our General Assembly document calls us to respond in greater creativity to the mission and charity. I would like to highlight three responses Our Lines of Action call us to:

- to foster personal availability and mobility;
- to participate in new and challenging missionary projects, to undertake new works of evangelization in the area of new emerging cultures, ecumenical and religious dialog;
- to go to the most distant missions *ad gentes*.

Our General Assembly, my brothers, has called us to these actions and I pray that we might be able to respond as I present to you a mission appeal for 2011.

## INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

1. I begin with an update on our existing international missions where there is always an opportunity to volunteer if one feels called to do so. In **El Alto, Bolivia** this past year a new confrere, Emilio Torres, from the Province of Peru has joined the other three missionaries.

I recall for you the names of the other missionaries and ask you to pray that they might be successful in their mission: Cyril de Nanteuil of Paris, Diego Plá of Madrid and Aidan Rooney, superior of the mission from Eastern Province USA. As you recall, too, we began a new mission this past year in **Cochabamba** with confreres Joel Vásquez from Colombia and David Paniagua and Jorge Manríquez Castro from the Province of Chile. Both of these last confreres are from Bolivia. The language spoken in El Alto and Cochabamba is Spanish, and the native language of the people.

2. The mission in the **Solomon Islands**, is expanding to include not only a seminary for the three dioceses of Solomon Islands which is both a philosophy and theology seminary under our responsibility, but also a parish. In addition, they have expanded to another parish in one of the neighboring dioceses where the Bishop has invited us to participate. The confreres working in the Solomon Islands include Victor Bieler, our former Assistant General, who is an example to all of us because he continues to have that missionary spirit at 82 years of age. Newly arrived to the mission are Raul Castro from Argentina, Tewolde Negussie Teclemicael from the Province of St. Justin de Jacobis, Augustinus Marsup who has returned from Indonesia, Yohanes Agus Setyeno from Indonesia, and Joachin Nwaorgu Udochukwu from Nigeria. Ivica Gregurec from Slovenia continues in the mission. As we know the mission of Solomon Islands is under the responsibility of the General Curia with the special assistance of the APVC. The mission is coordinated by the services of its superior Greg Walsh from Australia. I want to thank at the same time Flaviano Caintic from the Philippines for his most generous service these last three years in the Solomon Islands.
3. In **Papua New Guinea** we have the mission going strong at this moment with four confreres; newly arrived is Emmanuel LaPaz from the Philippines, joining Justin Eke from Nigeria, Włodzimierz Molota from Poland. They are coordinated under the general services of Homero Marin from Colombia. Hopefully before the end of the year or the beginning of the new year Georges Maylaa from the Province of the Orient will join the mission in PNG as well as Jude Lemeh from the Province of Nigeria. The languages of Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea are English and Pidgin English.

## NEW MISSIONS

4. We have recently received a letter from the new Bishop of the **Diocese of Alotau Sideia in Papua New Guinea**, our confrere Bishop Rolly Santos, former longtime missionary in Papua New Guinea and one year as Visitor of the Province of the Philippines. Rolly writes to ask if we could include his diocese in the coming Mission Appeal letter. He says that it is probably one of the largest dioceses in the world in terms of geographic size and most of the parishes are separated by vast stretches of ocean. Some are so remote that it would take up to two days to reach by motorized boat. At present the diocese is in great need of priests. There are 21 priests to serve 17 parishes, but five of the priests are 75 years old and above. Some of the parishes have 20 or more substations or communities. He would particularly like two Vincentian priests and one brother if possible to go to Kiriwina in the Trobrand islands. There are two large parishes there with an active population of 2,500 people. Each of the parishes has six substations and three Catholic agencies, elementary and primary schools. He writes that it would be preferable if the confreres to be assigned are healthy and able to travel by sea if needed. Finally, he writes, the confrere to be assigned should know how to live simply and adjust to conditions of the place since there is no electricity and therefore no TV and no malls. This is one of our new requests to support an area of the world where we already have significant presence and at the same time emerging vocations. The language is English and the native language of the people.
5. Another project of the Curia for international missions is in **Chad** together with the collaboration of the Visitors Conference of Africa and Madagascar (COVIAM). At the present time there are three in the mission: Albert Atching Kitikil from the Province of Paris and the country of Cameroon, Onyeachi Sunday Ugwu from the Province of Nigeria and Roch Alexandre Ramiligaona from Madagascar. I visited the confreres in this mission who have joined a group of Daughters of Charity from the Province of San Sebastian. The Daughters have been working in this remote area for more than ten years. It is a simple mission, a difficult mission. It is not necessarily restricted to confreres from COVIAM, so anyone is welcome to consider this mission. The official language is French, but they also speak the language of the people.
6. I am happy to announce that on the first of September two confreres assigned to **Tunisia** have arrived: Father Fermin Mola Mbalo from the Province of Toulouse, originally from Congo, and Brother Henry Escurel from the Philippines.

7. Another new mission that we have initiated, at least in its beginning stages trying to find where it would be suitable that we serve, is in **Angola**. That mission investigation is being undertaken at the present moment by Father José María Nieto, former Assistant General, and Father José Martínez Ramírez, from the Province of Mexico. I have received word from the Daughters of Charity working in Angola as well as branches of the Vincentian Family how delighted they are that we are finally able to arrive and establish our presence among the Vincentian Family and peoples of this poor Portuguese-speaking country. Hopefully they will be joined by a third confrere once the mission station location is determined by the General Council. Father Nieto and Father Pepe will be investigating three requests that we have received from Angola, from the Diocese of **Malanje** the Diocese of **Sumbe** and the Diocese of **Mbanza Congo**.
8. We have several new requests made, one coming from the Diocese of **Mbaiki, Republic of Central Africa**. The bishop wrote with the following request which comes in the name of the entire Episcopal Conference of the Republic of Central Africa. The bishop mentions that this is a moment when the Central African church has suffered a great deal because of the crisis that we are all aware of in the last couple of years. The bishop's diocese, which was established in 1995, has only 10 parishes in the Region of Lobaye. What they most lack at this time are model priests. Because of the lack of spiritual formation in past years, a situation of weakness has emerged among the present-day priestly ministers in this country. The bishop knows of our charism, a congregation that has dedicated its life to the service of the clergy as was done in the time of Saint Vincent when the clergy also was considered in a period of weakness. I certainly would hope that we might be able to respond to this request. The language is French. We do have a presence in the country. Three confreres from the Province of Paris in the mission in Cameroon have established a mission in Bangui.
9. By way of the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal, a congregation with roots in Slovenia and a mission in our Vice-Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, I have received a request, not only from the Mother General but also from the Bishop of **N'Dali, Benin** that confreres of the Congregation of the Mission might make a presence there. The diocese has 800,000 people, 4 native priests of which only one is serving in the diocese, 16 seminarians, a small number of priests from Spain, Italy and Africa. Support for evangelization in this region is needed as Islam is prospering in spite of the hard work of the missionaries.

10. From the Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of **Bunda Tanzania**: There are 16 priests working in 14 parishes and other diocesan institutions and the Catholic population is growing. Part of the Diocese consists of some islands in Lake Victoria which the Diocese is not able to evangelize because of the scarcity of priests. He invites the Congregation of the Mission to serve in this diocese.
11. In last year's Mission Appeal Letter I had received a request also from the Bishop of **Kaolack in Senegal**, who says that "with confidence I solicit the presence of your Congregation for the works of evangelization in the Diocese of Kaolack." Unfortunately there was no response to that petition although he has a grave desire to reinforce the missionary presence in the diocese. The language is French.
12. The Bishop of **Punta Arenas** asks for priests for his diocese in southern **Chile** with a large area with almost no priests. He has supplemented with some deacons and there is a pastor who is 82 years old. There are two communities of Daughters of Charity assisted by local priests and once a year for a couple of days by the Visitor of Chile. The presence of the Congregation of the Mission would be a blessing for the Daughters and the Vincentian Family in this mission land. The climate has discouraged many with very cold winters and strong winds. There are also great distances but one can appreciate the solitude of the immensity of Patagonia.

## PROVINCIAL MISSIONS

13. I am most happy to announce that the **Vice-Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius** has been reinforced with two confreres: Anthony Ekpunobi from the Province of Nigeria, and Thomas Enchackal, a confrere from South India. They are serving the needs of peoples from their own countries as well as integrating into this Vice-Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. The needs of this province are great. I was able to make a visit there to Ukraine, Belarus and Western Siberia in Niznij Tagil. The confreres are doing fantastic work, but they are always in need of new missionaries to support them. The Russian language is difficult but we are called to be missionaries and so we learn difficult languages.
14. Once again I make an appeal for the **Province of China**. The language is Chinese. Many of the confreres coming to that Province come from around the world and there is always our continued hope of reinforcing especially the mission in mainland China. I am

happy to announce that there has been great collaboration on the part of lay Vincentians in the area of mainland China and hopefully we can reinforce that with the beginning of a community of MISEVI. It is a promising hope for the future in China.

15. The **Vice-Province of Mozambique** is a mission that continues to depend primarily on confreres from outside of the area. The long-standing missionaries are from Portugal as well as now from Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, Eritrea, Argentina, Spain and Congo. The language is Portuguese. The Vice-Province has recently assumed the responsibility of the mission of the Province of Salamanca in Nacala.
16. I also make an appeal to all the confreres to continue to help us support our **Province of Cuba**. The mission there has been reinforced over the last couple of years from confreres like Angel Garrido from the Province of Madrid coming from Madagascar; and Nicolas Salazar from the Province of Colombia. We continue to pray that the Lord might bless us with vocations in this mission.
17. I request missionaries for our **Province of Hungary**. The numbers continue to be small and yet the mission is alive with young confreres willing to serve in the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul. The language is Hungarian.
18. There is always a need for missionaries to reinforce the **Vice-Province of Costa Rica**, particularly its mission in **Santiago Apóstol, Amubri, Talamanca**, a very mountainous area where the confreres of this small Vice-Province of the Congregation have been making this request of the Superior General for the last number of years and which we have yet to fulfill, although they have been reinforced with the presence of personnel from the Province of Colombia in the area of formation. The language is Spanish and the native language.
19. I continue to include in the list a call for missionaries from around the world for our mission in **Honduras**, particularly the part that is under the responsibility of the Province of Barcelona. I am happy to announce that the Province of Slovakia has a new mission now underway in the Diocese of our confrere Bishop Luis Solé. Presently there are two confreres working in this mission. The language is Spanish and Moskitia. For those who might be interested in continuing to support the Province of Barcelona this is wonderful missionary endeavor.



20. As usual I would like to make an appeal to some of the provincial missions that we have as I have done in the past. Once again the Visitor of Puerto Rico asks if we might be able to supply missionaries for the **Region of Haiti** in order that confreres there might have the opportunity to go on for further studies and deepen their maturity in the Vincentian spirit. The languages are French and Creole.

*I conclude with some special missions*

- I take this opportunity to mention that we do have a missionary who came from Congo working in a special mission in **Haiti**. Father Jean-Pierre Mangulu is under the responsibility of the Curia working to help animate the Vincentian Family particularly with regard to creating projects for the **International Vincentian Family project of Zafen**. This past year, not only has this responsibility been confided to Jean-Pierre, but he has also been asked to be the Director of the Daughters of Charity in Haiti. This is a most needy and significant project of the Congregation.
- I would also like to make mention of the missionary spirit that has been expressed by Father Dan Borlik who has been named Assistant Director of our **CIF program**, helping to inspire the confreres in the charism of Vincent de Paul. Dan begins his period of transition this month. He will be replacing Father José Carlos Fonsatti who has done a tremendous job in moving forward the projects of the CIF program these last five years together with Father Marcello Manintim.
- Another special mission I would like to mention is that of Father Joseph Agostino who has been named by the **Vincentian Family Leadership Commission** to coordinate that Commission with another team to create a program for Vincentian Family Leaders. Father Joe Agostino is from the Eastern Province USA and has been involved in a number of different activities dealing with planning both for his own province and others as well. I thank Joe for that missionary spirit, willing to share his talents beyond the limits of his own particular province.
- And finally I mention a special mission of our former delegate of the Vincentian Family, Manuel Ginete. Father Ginete, in dialog with me and with the approval of his Visitor, is assuming a mission in **South-ern Sudan**, a mission that was initiated by the Union of Superiors General of men and women. It is an intercongregational mission where twenty missionaries, fifteen women and five men, from different congregation have gone in order to reinforce ministries with regard to health, education and pastoral activities. It is a mission



where they are not there to carry out these responsibilities themselves, but to prepare other in order to be the new ministers emerging in this new country of Southern Sudan. I congratulate Father Ginete for moving forward, and ask for the blessings and health he needs to respond faithfully to the call he has received.

The prayer that we recite daily asks that the Lord send laborers into his harvest. This is my prayer that there will be a generous response to the cries of those who are poor.

*Exspectatio Israel, Salvator eius in tempore tribulationis, propitius de caelo respice, vide et visita vineam istam, rivus eius inebria, multiplica genimina eius et perfice quam plantavit dextera tua. Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci. Rogamus ergo te, Dominum messis, ut mittas operarios in messem tuam. Multiplica gentem et magnifica laetitiam, ut aedificentur muri Jerusalem. Domus tua haec, Domine Deus; domus tua haec: non sit in ea, quaesumus, lapis quem manus tua sanctissima non posuerit. Quos autem vocasti, serva eos in nomine tuo et sanctifica eos in veritate. Amen.*

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

### INFORMATION AND CRITERIA FOR THOSE WHO WRITE

1. After a period of serious discernment, if you should feel moved to volunteer, please send your letter or e-mail to Rome no later than 27 November 2011 or again by February 27, 2012 so that we might review the requests in our *tempo forte* meetings of December and March.
2. It is, of course, helpful to know the language beforehand, but it is not absolutely necessary. A period of cultural and language training will be provided for the missionaries.
3. While we have decided that no automatic age cutoff would be established, it is surely necessary that the missionary have reasonably good health and the flexibility needed for inculturation.
4. Confreres who volunteer should inform the Visitor that they have done so. I will also dialogue with the Visitor about the matter.
5. Your letter should give some background about your person, your ministerial experience, your languages, and your training. It should also express any particular interests that you have, such as the mission in which you would like to take part.
6. Even if you have already written in the past, please contact me again. Experience has demonstrated that confreres who are not available at one moment might be available at another.
7. **If you cannot go to the missions, perhaps your monetary contribution can represent your zeal for the mission. Every year about 15 eligible provinces needing help to realize their mission, seek a micro-project grant of \$5,000 or less from the Vincentian Solidarity fund. These grants can be awarded by the VSO (through the Curia) quickly and with minimal paperwork. The VSO reports on the wonderful fruits of these grants in its quarterly bulletin (available at [www.famvian.org/vso](http://www.famvian.org/vso)). The well for the micro-project grants is going dry. Donations to the Vincentian Solidarity Fund are the only source of funding for these micro-project grants.**

**VINCENTIAN SOLIDARITY FUND:  
TO MAKE A CONTRIBUITION**

***Provincial, House and Individual Contributions***

1. Checks made payable to: "Congregazione della Missione" and with "Deposit Only" written on the back. These should be sent to:

Treasurer General  
Via dei Capasso, 30  
00164 Roma - Italy

2. Other possibilities for bank transfers can be discussed with the Treasurer General.
3. **Clearly indicate that the funds are for the Vincentian Solidarity Fund (VSF).**

***In every case***

1. All gifts received will be acknowledged. (If your contribution is not acknowledged in a reasonable time, please contact us for clarification)
2. Please inform us if you are making any transfer of money, as described above.

# The Season of Advent, 2011



*“The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

(John 1:5)

## *To all members of the Vincentian Family*

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

The above scripture, taken from St. John’s Gospel, is an appropriate way to begin our Advent reflection. At this time of year, much of the world moves from long, bright days to shorter, darker times. The year’s end approaches, giving us pause to reflect not just on what has passed, but on what lies ahead for us. The reality of change is palpable both in the weather and on the calendar, but also deep within the horizon of our hearts.

That is why, I believe, the Church gives us Advent: in seasons of change, it reminds us of God’s enduring love. Through the incarnation of Jesus, God assures us of his abiding presence in our world. In Jesus, we have a God who always accompanies us in times of light and darkness, in the settled center and uncertain edges of our lives. Yet, it is on the edge, the “outer limits” of life, that the Lord Jesus is often revealed to us.

The Advent stories show us lives lived on the edge: Mary’s stunning annunciation to be mother of the Lord; Joseph’s noble struggle to

accept this awesome reality; Jesus' birth in the simplicity of the stable; the shepherds' humble homage; the sudden uprooting of the Holy Family to escape the wrath of Herod's hands; all these Advent stories show us a God, though centered in Trinitarian love, who "emptied himself" (Phil 2:7), by becoming human. In choosing to live at the edge, Jesus ushered in the Reign of God, and paradoxically drew us closer to the center point of God's love.

As Superior General, I have the privilege and responsibility of visiting with my Vincentian confreres, the Daughters of Charity, and members of the Vincentian family world-wide to spread the charism of St. Vincent de Paul. When doing this, I offer my support and encouragement to those who leave their safe, secure world to go to the edge and outer limits and serve the poor. I am edified by so many of my confreres, Daughters of Charity, and Vincentian Family members who courageously enter the world's dark corners to illuminate them with the light of Christ. Let me share some examples to illustrate how they live the Advent journey of light and hope.

In the Republic of Chad, one of Africa's poorest countries, Daughters of Charity from Spain serving with Vincentians from Cameroon, Madagascar, and Nigeria work in a remote, rural area without any Church presence. Their "mission church" is a wooden stage with a makeshift tent, protected by large mango trees. In this neglected region, they bring Jesus and our charism to a people whose hunger and thirst is satisfied by the Word of God and the charity of Christ.

In the United Kingdom, I met with Vincentians in Partnership, a coalition of service providers for the poor made up of ten core and thirteen affiliated groups. We prayed, reflected, and discussed ways to imbibe and impart the Vincentian charism of love of God and service to the poor. Their work is with the urban poor, homeless youth, mentally ill, and addicted; in short, those on the margins of society. Their reach of care and compassion goes beyond their borders to Ireland, Eastern Europe and the USA. A descriptive website tells their story: <http://www.vip-gb.org>

After an eight-hour flight from Moscow, I arrived in Magadan Russia, a place which seemed to be geographically at the end of the earth. This mission is staffed by Daughters of Charity from the USA and Poland. Once in Magadan, I was transported into a forgotten world of closed prison camps, meeting people who were subject to decades of inhumane treatment. In the Stalin era, Magadan was the final stop for hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens, labeled "enemies of the people."

The Daughters accompany the survivors (called "the repressed") of the prison camps, assisting in their healing by helping them to "tell their stories." Along with the presence of the region's only Catho-

lic Church, these former prisoners now have a welcoming community of faith. The beauty of the Church of the Nativity with its Martyr's Chapel, which honors untold numbers of people who perished in prison camps, and actual stories of surviving prisoners, can be seen on their web site: <http://magadancatholic.org>

Each of these three experiences – Chad, Vincentians in Partnership, and Magadan – hold a place in my heart as we celebrate the season of Advent. They remind us that the light of Christ overcame the darkness of a world filled with sin and suffering. The four Advent Sunday Gospels all help us focus on what is essential for Christian discipleship: being “watchful for Christ” (Mk 13:33); “preparing the way of the Lord” (Mk 1:2); trusting that “nothing is impossible for God” (Lk 1:35); and “testifying to the light” (Jn 1:7). Taken together, these Gospel stories provide a formula for putting faith into action all year long.

This Advent way, a watchful, willing, trusting, and testifying gospel faith, was pivotal in the life of St. Vincent de Paul, who found Christ where he least expected: on the edge, the “outer limits” of life. In his two pivotal conversion experiences; hearing the confession of a sick man, and successfully exhorting his flock to provide food and medicine for a desperately ill family; both experiences led Vincent to Christ in the poor. Once he entered the world of the poor, it transformed his life. From that time on, he organized and inspired his followers to do the same:

*“Do not limit your vision any longer to yourself, but see the Lord around you and in you, ready to put his hand to the work as soon as you ask for his help. You will see that all will go well” (SV, V, 488, 1655 - English Edition).*

As we prepare heart and home for the Christmas coming of the Lord, let the words of Jesus and the charism of St. Vincent de Paul resonate more deeply in your hearts and lives. The Advent and Christmas stories vividly remind us of One who was born, lived, and died on the “edge.” John’s Gospel poignantly reminds us that Jesus “came to his own and his own did not receive him” (Jn 1:10). This was true for the Holy Family. Often portrayed in paintings and holy cards as sedate and serene, in reality they trod the path of poor, vagrant refugees.

That sad reality continues today. The Christ who was poor lives on in the poor, who often possess little more than the clothes on their backs, lacking food, shelter, and human dignity. Yet, as St. Vincent said, the poor have the “true faith” as can be seen their unwaveringly, steady trust in God. Their lives and those of the Vincentian Family who accompany them tell the Advent story of hope every day.

I suggest each of us carve out some time from our busy schedules in these Advent weeks to reflect on the scriptures and the life of

St. Vincent, so we may be “watchful, willing, trusting, and testifying” disciples of Jesus, true to our vocation as members of the Vincentian Family. As we take time to encounter the Lord in prayer, scripture, and the Eucharist, we will gain courage, as did St. Vincent, to ask the Lord to direct us to his poor, often unnoticed and on the edge of our lives. In doing so, we will enter into solidarity with them as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Let me close with a powerful image appropriate for Advent. As I noted earlier, the Church of the Nativity in Magadan offers a community of healing and hope for former Soviet camp prisoners and the poor. This small Church is a feast for the eyes: a stunning, symbolic Martyr’s Chapel, the Stations of the Cross, striking stained-glass windows, and iconography too vivid to forget. Yet, the icon of the Nativity (which is reprinted at the beginning of this letter) above the altar is most striking when one first enters the Church. Its placement there is certainly liturgically appropriate.

But for me, this icon illustrates so much more. It shows us how discipleship with Jesus and the Vincentian charism bear witness to the power and presence of God in our world today. Despite Magadan’s death-dealing past, both the icon and the Church of the Nativity confirm that Christ is born again. The Church of the Nativity and all the works of the world-wide Vincentian Family are daily living reminders to us that *“The light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

May the Lord be born in you anew this Christmas and bless you in this coming year!

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "G. Gregory Gay, C.M.". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "G." and "C.M." clearly visible.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

# 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](http://www.cmglobal.org/en)

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

# Letter of the Superior General and Assistants General to Visitors and their Councils: On Dealing with Confreres in Difficulty

Rome, 13 January 2012

*To all the Visitors and their Councils*

Dear Confreres,

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

I hope you have enjoyed the beautiful Christmas season, which was an opportunity to live more deeply the mystery we celebrated for a better service of the poor. I also hope you were able to rest a little. For the confreres present in the Curia and myself, Christmas Day was a graced-filled time as we gathered with the Community of Sant'Egidio in the Trastevere section of Rome to serve dinner to more than 400 poor people. We returned full of joy and spiritually enriched.

I am writing today to share with you a concern that has bothered me and the members of my Council for a long time. It is the very large number of confreres who, in various ways, live their vocation and their belonging to the Congregation of the Mission in difficult situations. I am referring both to confreres who are absent, legitimately or illegitimately, and those who continue to live in community.

This concern was embodied in a reflection I made together with the members of my Council, which resulted in the attached document. I am sending it to you, asking you to read it, meditate on it, discuss it with your respective Councils, and put it into practice according to the specific needs of your provinces. Then, send me the results of your reflection before 31 July 2012.

I think this reflection, conducted in a serious and thorough way by everyone, is extremely important for the future of the entire Congrega-

tion, both the oldest and the youngest provinces. This conviction makes me turn to you, because our future is not only in God's hands, but also is entrusted to the responsibility of us all.

May Mary, Mother of the Congregation, intercede for us and bless our work.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. Gregory Gay, C.M.". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

***Reflection for Visitors and Provincial Councils  
of the Congregation of the Mission***

**CONFRERES IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

This is not the first time that we are reflecting on and writing about confreres in difficult situations. In 1996, Father Maloney wrote a letter to all the Visitors and presented very precise guidelines. In the same year, Father Modesto López, in his role as Procurator General, spoke to all the Visitors who were meeting in Salamanca and there, addressed the subject of *Difficult Cases* (cf. *Vincentiana* 40 [1996], pp. 353-362). On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Father Gregory wrote a letter to the Visitors and the local superiors with the purpose of creating a greater awareness of the problem of absences and departures from the Congregation.

This document can be found in *Vincentiana* (2006), pp. 3-8. In 2007, there was a gathering in Rome for the specific purpose of empowering confreres from different provinces to help the Visitors and their respective councils in resolving the cases of absences and departures. All the presentations of the different specialists and the confreres can be found in *Vincentiana* 51, number 1-2. In this present reflection, we are mindful of these previous documents, but here we attempt to broaden our scope. For this reason we speak about confreres in difficult situations, and not just about confreres who have absented themselves from or departed the Congregation in a definitive manner. In this document, we will recommend specific operational measures in order to confront this multi-faceted and complex reality.

To begin with, we should be mindful of the fact that as we speak about confreres “in difficult situations” we are, in a sense, speaking about each one of us because, at some moment in our life, we have all experienced difficult moments or phases. At the same time we all have some aspect of our personality that our companions in community find difficult to deal with and that, at a given moment, has caused pain to our confreres.

In this reflection it is not our intention to speak about these difficulties that are more or less normal in community life but rather to refer to those confreres who present “great difficulties” and in this sense, make it difficult for them to live out their vocation. Our pastoral sensitivity should remind us of the fact that behind each “difficult situation” and behind every “great difficulty” there is always a person, a confrere who suffers and who can causes others to suffer.

We cannot consider the confreres in difficult situations without also considering the communities where they reside, where they suffer,



and where they also create difficulties. Confreres in difficult situations contribute to the creation of communities in difficult situations and vice versa. In fact, there are difficult confreres who themselves foment “difficult situations” and there can also be communities and authority figures (visitors and superiors) who, because of their leadership style, can provoke difficult situations. This reality is pointed out in number 21 of the document: *The Service of Authority and Obedience*. In light of the above reference, all who exercise authority in the Congregation ought to constantly examine how they exercise the authority that has been entrusted to them.

## II. VARIOUS SITUATIONS

In this section, we outline the various situations that we encounter in the Congregation and in the Provinces, situations that demand the attention of the Visitors and their respective councils.

### 1. Confreres who live in community and there, in the midst of the community, struggle with their difficulties

These are confreres who are integrated into the community and are active participants in the community life and apostolic life of the local community, but experience moments or phases of difficulty. These difficulties can be quite diverse, even though they all produce personal weariness. Following the presentation that was made by Father José María Nieto during the 2007 gathering in Rome, we can group these difficulties into three categories:

- *Personal difficulties*: physical illness; psychological, affective, and sexual imbalance; difficulties with family of origin; and problems in their spiritual life and living the vows.
- *Difficulties in living community life resulting in personal weariness*: dissatisfaction with the local community (with the superior or confreres); problems in carrying out the community ministry of visitor, provincial treasurer, local superior; and difficulty in finding a sense of meaning as a member of the community.
- *Difficulties in ministry*: physical exhaustion because of excessive work; disappointment, weariness or great difficulty in carrying out the ministry that has been entrusted to one; lack of preparation or qualifications in carrying out the ministry.

All our confreres who live through and experience these difficulties and struggle to overcome them deserve our respect, our solidarity, our accompaniment and our support. As Saint Paul states: a great sign

of our fraternity is to *bear one another's burdens*. These confreres hope to find in authority (on all levels: general curia, the provincial level and the local level) the "good shepherd" who speaks a word of encouragement and who, as described in the gospel of Saint John (cf. John 10:1-21), intervenes on behalf of each one. It would be good to recall here the words that Pope Benedict XVI addressed to the Superior Generals in the audience of May 22, 2006: *I ask that you, Major Superiors, transmit a word of special kindness to those who are in difficulty, the elderly and sick, to those who are living moments of crisis and solitude, to those who suffer and feel lost....*

## **2. Confreres who are present in community but who, in reality, are absent from the community**

These are confreres who are present but absent, or if you will, only physically present. These confreres at times experience serious difficulties and in turn create difficulties for the community. These confreres are members of every province. Some are found moving from house to house. In some provinces, especially in the larger provinces, special houses have been established where confreres can be sent and their negative impact on others is thus diluted.

How many confreres are "present but absent"? There is no doubt that the Visitors are well aware of these confreres in their respective provinces but on the level of the international Congregation, we have no specific number for this category. In the Curia we do not have statistics to account for this reality, a reality which has a great impact on the Congregation and the provinces.

As has been noted previously, this is a situation in which confreres live in community but in reality are spiritually, physically and/or emotionally absent from the community. Using the image of an "iceberg" we would say that the "present but absent" confreres are like the large masses of submerged ice, invisible but nonetheless real and sustaining the ice that is floating on the surface. At times these confreres who are "present but absent" lack the courage or the honesty to take leave of the Congregation in a definitive manner. They prefer to live in the community even though they bring to the community difficult and/or uncomfortable situations. We know that Saint Vincent spoke harsh words when referring to such confreres. Indeed, when he spoke about the incorrigible and ungovernable confreres he said: *You tell me that it is necessary to put up with such people at the start because the Company has such a need of men, and that, in time, we could purge the Company of them. It is true, Monsieur, that the Company does need men; but it would be much better to have fewer men than to have a number of dif-*

*ficult individuals and deeds of that sort. Ten good men will do more for God than a hundred of those people* (CCD: II: 421).

It seems that later Vincent softened his previous radical attitude, even though his basic conviction did not change: *It would be doing justice to the Company to amputate its gangrenous members.... However, because we have to allow for the practice of all the virtues, we are now exercising patience, long-suffering, and charity itself, in the hope that they will mend their ways... this does not mean that in the end we may not have to rid of them; that is a necessity* (CCD: IV: 42).

Here are some situations in which the “present but absent confreres” live:

- Confreres living in self-isolation and who lack a sense of belonging to the Province and the Congregation.
- Confreres living on the margin of community and do so according to their own criteria.
- Confreres who are unaware of the impact of their own actions.
- Even more serious are those confreres who lead a double life with regard to the vow of poverty or chastity.

### 3. Confreres absent from the community

According to the present documentation at the Curia, 211 confreres are absent from the community at this time. We include in this number all those confreres who have the permission of their Visitor for a leave of absence (cf., Constitutions 67), those confreres who are living outside the community with the permission of the Superior General (cf., Constitutions 70), and those confreres who are illegitimately outside the Congregation, which constitute the majority of the cases. The ages of the majority of those confreres who are absent from the community are between 40 and 60. Looking at the different continental groups, Latin America has the largest number of confreres absent from the community. The most often stated reasons for these absences are: “*vocational discernment*”, “*seeking to be incardinated in a diocese*”, “*disagreements and problems with the institution*”.

Some reflections on this data:

a) The Congregation, that is, all of us, are faced with an important problem. The percentage of absent confreres is too high. The number began to increase in 2002, and has risen every year as the total number of confreres in the Congregation has decreased.

It is difficult to find the causes for this phenomenon. Perhaps there is some connection to the aversion to anything that is institutional and/or that hints at “control” and therefore there is a current tendency that

invites people to work and to live in a free and individualistic manner. The fact is that there are many Missionaries who are seeking incardination into a Diocese because in such an environment they hope to be able to live and to work with more freedom and also hope to obtain greater economic independence.

Perhaps the cause of this can be found in the fact that many young confreres find themselves in stagnant, middle-class communities where living out the charism no longer attracts them. Our young confreres, even though they might be inconsistent, find mediocre communities to be unbearable and as a result of being in the midst of such a community will often become disillusioned.

The cause for such absences might be found in the psychological imbalance of many of our younger members who easily tire and become exhausted. This psychological imbalance can be the result of several factors, including the result of disintegrated family structures and difficult childhood experiences; inadequate formation that failed to distinguish between what is fundamental and what is relative; a formation that did not give sufficient significance to the meaning of belonging to a Congregation; or insufficient vocational discernment and/or accompaniment. It is very probable that in many cases a number of the causes that have been pointed out have played a role.

b) This problem of a high number of absences is having a negative effect on the Provinces and, as a result, on the Congregation. It is like a cancer in which there is the risk that the cancerous cells will infect the good cells. We see situations in which stipulated time frames are not respected. Thus, a legitimate absence becomes an illegitimate one. As a result, the individual remains outside the control of the Congregation for many years. This gives the confreres a message that, in the Congregation, one can do as one pleases.

Continuing with the image of cancer, we believe that, as Vincent de Paul said, we have to use the scalpel and cut those bonds that cannot be recovered. Therefore, we have to put order into the chaotic situation of absences and maintain this order. To do this will mean that we must control the time frame of the absences of the confreres on leave.

c) When considering the individuals who are absent, the Congregation and the Provinces ought to be very sensitive and merciful toward each confrere. At the same time, they ought to seek the good of the whole Congregation. Here, we seek to strike a balance between the institution and the individual, because while it is certain that the person is the highest good, yet it is also true that the common good of the community as well as that of the province and the Congregation cannot be given lesser weight.

How can this balance be applied to the theme that we are dealing with? Each confrere who is absent has to be treated with the greatest respect, even in those situations when the attitudes of the confrere seem to be unclear and self-serving. Through dialogue, we must seek that which is best for the individual confrere and for the Congregation, and we must express this clearly. Finally, we must be firm with regard to the time period of the absence. This should be communicated to the person whom the Visitor will designate to accompany the confrere during the time of his absence.

In some cases, the best for all involved would be that the individual confrere leaves the Congregation.

### **III. SOME REFLECTIONS THAT LEAD US TO TAKE ACTION**

Clearly the situation of confreres in difficult situations demands the joint action of everyone: the Superior General, the General Council, the Visitor, the Visitor's Council, the local superior, the Missionaries and experts in different matters. The General Council has become aware of this problem and has agreed on certain criteria for action. Throughout this presentation, these criteria will be made very clear and during the coming years these same criteria will guide the members of the General Council. On the provincial level, it seems that the provincial council should reflect on ways in which they can help these confreres. In those provinces where there is a large number of absent members, it might be best for the Visitor to appoint a delegate to deal with these matters which often require much time, which Visitors do not have. It is also clear that the Office of the Procurator General is important, notably in those cases that demand a dispensation.

#### **1. Here we are dealing with all those confreres in difficult situations**

Those who are present and those who are absent from the community. These are some suggestions that can be very useful:

- Attention should be given to formation, to the formators, and to the processes of initial formation. This can be seen as a preventative action that, in the long term, produces very positive results. We all know that a good process of accompaniment during the period of vocational discernment and the initial period of community involvement is the best way to avoid some future difficult situations.

During the stage of initial formation Vincent was always demanding with regard to the candidates who desired to enter the Congregation.

To support what we have been saying we simply have to listen to the advice that Vincent gave to Father Louis Depont, the superior in Tréguier, with regard to the reception of postulants: *During this trial period you can send us the following information: his name, age, situation, level of studies, whether his parents are still alive and whether they are poor or well-off, if he has his title or the means of obtaining it, if he has practiced virtue in the past or has been depraved, his motives for leaving the world and for becoming a Missionary, if he is well-balanced, has no physical deformity and is in good health, can speak clearly, has good eyesight, and, in a word, is disposed to do and suffer everything, and to come and go everywhere for the service of God, as will be indicated to him by holy obedience. You must sound them out on everything* (CCD: VII: 120).

It is best to prevent something now than to have to heal something more seriously later. Perhaps this phrase is especially applicable to these situations. Prevention can be applied to the processes of initial discernment, initial formation, and on-going formation. It is necessary to learn from the past because we know that frequently the most serious difficulties could have been prevented if we had given more attention to initial discernment; a period when, with the help of other experts, we might have recognized the indication of some future problem.

- *Specific attention should be given to each case.* There are basic general regulations (lines of action), but in reality, each person and situation requires specific individual treatment. We are aware of the fact that what is helpful and useful for one person may be of no help and useless for another person. Here are some basic Vincentian lines of action: the chapter in our Constitution on community life (#19-27); number 65-76 of our Constitutions; confreres who are obliged to live alone because of their ministry (Statute #14); *A Practical Guide for the Visitor* (2005), #123-203; *Practical Guide for the Local Superior*, #69-73.

In the beginning, hope must be given to the individual. This should be done by offering the possibility of appropriate assistance (spiritual, psychological, or both). The confrere must show some openness; otherwise solutions can become very difficult to attain.

- *The role of the local community.* There is no doubt that the local community, in the person of the superior and the confreres, plays a fundamental role in accompanying confreres in difficult situations. In many cases, the local community is the umbilical cord between the confrere and the Congregation. We should remember here that the "absent" confreres should be assigned to a house and belong to a community (*A Practical Guide for the Visitor*, #128).

• *The role of the Visitor or confrere appointed by the Visitor.* The mission of the Visitor or his delegate should be that of seeking the prompt return of the confrere, utilizing all the available means. Therefore, the case should not be too easily classified as a "lost cause." Some means that can be used are: a sabbatical year, on-going formation, spiritual accompaniment, medical-psychological treatment, etc. In the case of a departure, the Visitor must help the confrere and guide him through the process whether this be incardination into a diocese or dispensation from the obligations of the priestly state. Later, when the confrere is settled in his new situation economic assistance should be provided to help the confrere become settled in this new state; the now former confrere might need assistance in finding employment or in adjusting to life in society and/or his new role in the Church....

At times the Visitor might find himself in a situation where he feels it best to utilize another confrere who is a friend or has a close relationship with the absent confrere. Such a confrere can be used as a bridge between the absent confrere and the community and can take on the role of a spiritual guide, one who accompanies the absent confrere and remains in contact with him.... It is clear that on many occasions such a confrere can be helpful to the absent confrere and well as to the community as a whole.

## **2. With regard to those confreres who are absent from the community**

Here are some lines of action that require, on the one hand, the consent of the Superior General and his council and, on the other hand, the consent of the Visitor and his council.

a) After having evaluated the 211 absences from the Congregation, we believe that a process of expulsion should be initiated with regard to some of the confreres. Here we are referring to those more or less younger confreres who are absent illegitimately, are not waiting to be incardinated into a diocese and are, in reality, outside the Congregation even though their names appear in the catalogue and juridically are still part of the Congregation. These confreres, however, have no intention of returning to the community and live in a personal situation that is contrary to our spirit and our priestly style of life: inclusion such realities as secular profession, life of a spouse, or children.

b) There is another group of confreres absent from the community, but minister and live in a diocese and desire to be incardinated into the diocese at some time. Some of these confreres have not gone beyond the time granted them for said process (five years). Therefore



they are legitimately absent from the community. Other confreres have begun to work in a diocese with the permission of their respective Visitor (one year), but have continued living and ministering in said diocese without the permission of the Superior General. Therefore, these confreres are illegitimately absent from the community.

With this latter group of confreres it will be necessary to control the time frame of their absence, and thus regularize their situation so that the number of illegitimate absences be kept at a minimum.

c) There are some Missionaries in this group who desire a dispensation from priesthood. This is a complex process, and is described in #163 of *A Practical Guide for the Visitor*. In those cases the Visitor ought to appoint a judge instructor and a notary in order to question the interested individual. The General Council should collaborate with the Visitor and the Procurator General.

d) A fourth group is composed of older confreres who have lived in this condition for many years, and who cannot live in community because of psychological problems. Others are absent from community because of some very complicated and particular situations. In these cases, it is clear no single criteria can be established. Rather, each case must be treated individually while always being mindful of the good of the individual person and the good of the Congregation.

e) As a preventative measure it is necessary to examine the situation of the confreres who request a leave of absence and grant this absence to those confreres who present a serious and just cause (as indicated in the Constitutions and *A Practical Guide for the Visitor* [#123, 127]). Not just any motive is sufficient reason to grant something that is so serious and that involves significant consequences. At times it is preferable to place the confrere in a situation in which he has to opt either to belong to the Congregation or to leave the congregation. This is true in those cases where it is obvious that to grant permission for an absence is to enter a process that will inevitably lead to a slow agony. We must keep in mind that recourse to a temporary absence is not some panacea that magically resolves every difficulty, even though at a given moment it might appear to be a solution. In all of this we are saying that is necessary to engage in a process of discernment in order to know who should be granted this permission and under what conditions this permission should be granted.

It is very possible that in the Congregation of the Mission we are too quick to use #67 of our Constitutions to grant permission to be absent from the community for one year. This permission ought to fulfill certain requirements. For example, the confrere ought to have a "just reason", ought to be assigned to a house, and a confrere in dif-



difficulty should be accompanied by another confrere. If this is not done, then legitimate absences, instead of being a means to confront and resolve a particular situation, become a type of “morphine” which leads to euthanasia; that is, the legitimate absence becomes a path that leads to an illegitimate absence and then to departure from the community.

f) In the long run, preventive action is necessary but, as we have already pointed out, greater effectiveness is obtained by treating initial formation in a serious manner. This formation ought to be profound, clear and demanding. The formators ought to be well prepared and wherever possible a program of on-going formation should be offered to the confreres. We are convinced that a good process of accompanying the candidates, a good process of vocational discernment and initiation into community life provide a solid foundation in order to avoid some of the difficult situations in the future.

### **3. With regard to those confreres who are living a double life**

The following applies whether the situation involves the vow of poverty (confreres who do not submit the fruit of their work to the Community, confreres who give no accounting of their expenses) or the vow of chastity (confreres who have a relationship with a woman and perhaps have children... and continue to live in community). It is possible that these confreres do not have the courage to abandon the Congregation nor the strength to correct their wrongs. It should be remembered that these disorders degrade and destroy all connected to the institution, in other words, degrade and destroy the Province and the Congregation. At the same time, we must also be mindful of the negative example that is given to young generations in a Province.

In this case, the Visitor and the local superior ought to confront the confrere, offering him the option of engaging in a process of radical conversion or entering a process of leaving the Congregation. In these cases there are no other alternatives. If the confrere does not react then there is no other solution than that of initiating the process of expulsion from the Congregation.

## **IV. FINAL ADVISE**

The theme of confreres in difficult situations affects everyone; Visitors with their respective council, local communities, and naturally, the Superior General and his Council. From this present document, we want to initiate a dialogue with Visitors and members of their council with the purpose of helping to clarify different situations and

make decisions. The Congregation as a whole (and the level of the General Curia, provincial level and local community) cannot remain indifferent before this reality which affects the whole Congregational body and the provinces. Is this a theme that should be treated during the general meeting of the Visitors in 2013?

We request that this document be carefully studied during the meetings of the different Provincial Councils. We ask that you review what you are doing for the different confreres in difficult situations (using the categories that we have pointed out in this document) and consider what more you could do for these confreres. Finally, we ask that you communicate the results of your reflection to us by **July 31, 2012.**

We send you our cordial greetings, and be assured of our prayers.

Fr G. Gregory Gay and the General Council

Rome, 13 January 2012

# 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](http://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 21<sup>st</sup> 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?

# STUDIES

## Report on the International Missions in 2012

International Missions are those missions taken up by the Superior General in the name of the entire Congregation, at the request of the local ordinaries. When the invitation comes from various parts of the world, the Superior General, after studying and verifying the need and the Vincentian character of the possible mission, invites volunteers from the entire Congregation. When the volunteers are selected after consulting the visitors, they are sent to the respective missions after or for enculturation and language learning. A proper contract is made with the local ordinaries concerning the support, maintenance and other important aspects of the mission and missionaries.

The mission could be of short term or of a long term period. Normally it is under the direct responsibility of the Curia, but some missions could be under the responsibility of some provinces, or of continental conferences (Eg S.I. to APVC, Chad to COVIAM). It could later be entrusted to a province (Tanzania to South India), raised to a Region, vice-province and province. When a particular province need missionaries and request the Superior General, the SG could also send volunteers there, who also are considered to be under the international missions (e.g. Mozambique, Cuba, Sts. Cyril and Methodius). In prospective places, we begin our own formation program with the view of having our permanent presence there (Eg. Tanzania, Solomon Islands).

The curia takes care of the financial matters of the international missions from the Mission Fund and according to the contract made with the local ordinaries. There is also a pension plan for the international missionaries who stays at least 5 years in the mission, so that when they return back to their province, the province gets an amount as remuneration.

When one province alone is not able to respond to a call, the International mission gives opportunity for missionaries from various provinces come together and respond to a call. Some provinces respond by giving personnel and others do by financial assistance. It gives missionaries also opportunity to open up their work beyond the geograph-

ical confines of their provinces and a beautiful experience of living together with persons of other cultures and languages. The international missions gives the Congregation the identity of truly being international and missionary.

### The Present Picture of the International Missions

Mission	Missionaries	Economic Responsibility	Administrative Responsibility
Bolivia El Alto	DE NANTEUIL Cyrille (Par) PLA Diego (Mat) ROONEY Aidan (Orl) TORRES Emilio (Per)	Curia	Curia
Bolivia Cochabamba	VASQUEZ Joel (Col) PANIAGUA David (Chil) MANRIQUE Castro Jorge (Chil)		
Salomon Islands	BIELER Víctor (Ids) CASTRO Raúl (Arg) MARSUP Augustinus (Ids) WALSH Greg (Aul) TECLEMICAEL Tewolde (SJJ) SETYONO Agus (Ids) NWAORGU Joachin (Nig)	Curia	Curia, APVC
Papua New-Guinea	EKE Justin (Nig) MARIN Homero (Col) MALOTA Vladimir (Pol) LAPAZ Emmanuel (Fil) MAYLAA Georges (Ornt) <i>Needs Visa</i> LEMEH Jude (Nig) <i>Needs Visa</i>	Curia	Curia
Tunisia	MOLA MBALA Firmin (Tol) ESCUREL Henry (Phil)	Curia	Curia
Haiti	MANGULU M.J. Pierre (Cong)	Curia	Curia
Cuba	GARRIDO Ángel (Mat) SALAZAR N. Nicolás María (Col) QUINTERO S. Ramiro (Col)	Cuba	Cuba

Mission	Missionaries	Economic Responsibility	Administrative Responsibility
Mozambique	GUMIEIRO Marcos (Cur) IKPEME Nicholas (Nig) IYONGO M. José (Cng) UGWUNWANGWU Gabriel (Nig) AMINE Woldemicael (SJJ) BOGLIOLO Daniel (Arg)	Mozambique	Mozambique
Chad	ATCHINGKITIKIL Albert (Par-Cam) UGWU O. Sunday (Nig) RAMILJAONA R. Alexander (Mds)	Curia	Curia-COVIAM
Angola	NIETO José-María (Mat) RAMIREZ M. José (Mex)	Curia	Curia
SS Cyril & Methodius	EKPUNOBI Anthony (Nig) ENCHACKAL Tomas (India South)	Curia	Curia

# A Brief Outline to Begin Provincial Planning

Joseph Agostino, C.M.

*“Where there is no vision, the people perish.  
If you do not plan, you plan to fail!”*

The purpose of the Congregation of the Mission is to follow Christ evangelizing the poor (C & S, 1). The Provincial Plan will enable the Visitor, working in collaboration with his Council and the confreres of the province, to identify and prioritize its provincial commitments, utilizing both long and short term goals.

Provincial planning is a multi-faceted process by which fundamental decisions are made and concrete actions are taken which will shape and guide the community as it grows into its future.

## **Rationale**

Provincial planning is an essential task for the future vitality and viability of the provinces of the Congregation of the Mission.

We are called to create new ways and to use new means (C & S, 2) to renew our energies and thus enable us to fulfill our mission into the next generations of Vincentians.

The Provincial Plan, by which this will be accomplished, will unite a province even more closely to the Paschal Mystery, for it will involve both a dying to what is now so that it might rise with Christ to a new life. As St. Vincent told us: “And that was the beginning of your Company. As it was not then what it is now, there is reason to believe that it is still not what it will be when God has perfected it as he wants it.”

## **Desired Outcomes**

The implementation of the Provincial Plan will facilitate a province's evaluation of its works and ministries so that it may remain in a continual state of renewal (C & S, 2).

The Provincial Plan will enable the confreres to seek, as a province, the will of the Father. Through an ongoing process of dialogue and consultation common directions will surface and develop, which will lead to making decisions about the future ministries of the province. (C & S, 37) Thus confreres will choose their future and not have it simply thrust upon them.

The Provincial Plan affirms that all of our confreres are our most valuable resource.

The Provincial Plan will empower community life, fostered by the mission, and thus promote both personal formation and communal development for the work of the evangelization of the poor (C & S, 21.2).

### **Methodology; *See, Judge, Act***

#### ***See***

The process begins with the involvement of all the confreres, giving their input into the general themes that has been chosen as the focus of a plan.

The incorporation of as many confreres as possible in all stages of the planning process is essential for the buy-in of the province in the plan that will be promulgated.

#### ***Judge***

There are many possible strategies that can be utilized in the drafting of a plan. Right the start, it is important to make clear:

- How the process will work.
- The parameters (mandate) within which the confreres are asked to work.
- The “untouchables” which are not to come to the table for discussion, and
- The fact that the recommendations received are advisory, dependent upon the Visitor’s approval.

#### ***Act***

It is important to give the confreres an opportunity to respond to a proposed plan before its promulgation.

A Provincial Convocation or Meeting is a good vehicle for such a process. It is also important that the confreres see a concrete plan for

implementation, with those responsible for implementation clearly named and empowered to do this work.

Professionals in this field would usually advise that any plan, to be effective, should not last more than three to five years.