

Rome, 3 December, 2002

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

I write today to thank you for your support of and participation in so many recent projects that our Vincentian Family has undertaken, particularly the campaign against hunger which we are engaging in together and also last July's Vincentian Month for the advisors of the lay groups of our Family.

The campaign against hunger has evoked a remarkable response. I have received letters describing a huge number of creative projects that have been initiated in almost all the countries where our Family exists: breakfast programs for children who would otherwise go to school hungry; self-help projects focusing on agriculture, animal husbandry, and fish farms; the drilling of wells, the constructing of irrigation systems, the purchase of tools, etc.

I am delighted at such wholehearted participation in the campaign, not only because of the large number of projects that have been undertaken, but also because of the inventiveness with which the members of our Family have found ways to attack the problem. A number of groups have also raised significant amounts of money to help finance projects in poorer countries.

The Vincentian Month for the Advisors of our Lay Groups, held in Paris on July 7-26, received very positive evaluations. Besides the formal written comments made at the end of the session, I have received many letters of thanks from the participants speaking about the lively interchange among the advisors themselves, the quality of the conferences, and the warm hospitality. One hundred ten advisors took part, coming from 46 countries throughout the world. The conferences, homilies, and final synthesis have already been published in a double issue of *Vincentiana* 46 (No. 4-5; July-October 2002). I am most grateful to those who put so much labor into organizing the month, particularly Frs. Benjamín Romo, Orlando Escobar, Roberto Lovera, Sr. Margaret Barrett, and Mrs. Marina Costa.

At this meeting we also presented a new document entitled, "Role and Functions of Advisors in the JMV," a copy of which I am enclosing. It is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French. This document, as you will see upon reading it, arose at the request of many of the advisors who took part in the First General Assembly of JMV in August 2000. A committee composed of Benjamín Romo, C.M., Jesús María Lusarreta, C.M., Pedro Castillo, C.M., Sr. Pilar Ramo,

D.C. and Miss Edurne Urdampilleta patiently worked through various drafts, seeking input at each step from the National Directors of JMV and from the members of the International Council. I highly recommend it to you. Further copies can be obtained, if you should wish, from the Editorial La Milagrosa, at the address indicated within the booklet or on the enclosed form.

Recently, on October 31, November 1 and 2, we also held, here in Rome, our first meeting of the International Coordinating Council of the Association of the Miraculous Medal. Its members are Fr. Charles Shelby (International Coordinator), Sr. Marie-Yonide Midy (from Haiti, living in Paris), Fr. Janusz Zwolinski (from Poland, living in the Congo) and Señorita Martha Tapia (from Mexico). The Association, as you know, has in recent years spread rapidly to a number of countries. It will soon begin an international web site on which it will publish a trimonthly newsletter in three languages and a monthly catechesis focusing on a re-reading of the Miraculous Medal today.

With you, I thank the Lord for the many blessings that he is pouring out on our Vincentian Family and ask him to help us be generous, creative servants of the poor. I thank you too, the Visitors, for all that you do as animators within your province and within our Family.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert P. Maloney, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General