

The New Superior General and the New General Council

Just after their elections, Celestino Fernández interviewed the Superior General and the Assistants General for publication in the Chronicles that he wrote and which were published on our website. We are including the interview in this special edition of *Vincentiana*, dedicated to the 40th General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission.

1. G. Gregory Gay, elected 24th Superior General on 15 July 2004

– *Tell us something about your life.*

– I was born in 1953 in the city of Baltimore, Maryland. I am the second of ten children, and my parents are still living. My connection to the Congregation began with an uncle who was a Vincentian and who worked in the Republic of Panama. When I was young, he used to tell me about his missionary experiences; and that was where my vocation began. I was ordained in 1980. I worked four years in formation at the philosophy level, at the same time serving as a teacher in Niagara University. In 1985 I went to Panama and worked in a missionary parish, and later on as a formator at the levels of philosophy and theology, and also as Novice Master. I also worked in another missionary parish. I served as coordinator of the Eastern Province's mission in Panama. In February of 2000 I was named Visitor of the Central American Province. Not long ago, I was reelected for a four-year term. And here I am.

– *Was it hard for you to say "yes" when the moderator asked you if you accepted the election?*

– Yes, it was, even though I was somewhat prepared. It was hard because Fr. Maloney has set the bar very high. But I love the Congregation and I am willing to do whatever God wants.

– *Does this new job and all its responsibility frighten you?*

– Well, I have only been in the job a few minutes. But I know from experience all the challenges involved with being provincial. You would have to multiply those challenges by more than 50 provinces and then throw in the Daughters of Charity and the Vincentian Family.

– *What are your first three wishes for the Congregation of the Mission?*

– Missionary zeal; deepening and strengthening our fraternal bonds, not just at the local level, but also at the provincial and interprovincial levels; and that our spirit of prayer attract many young men to the Mission.

– *The Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission is also the Superior General of the Daughters of Charity. What would be your first message for them?*

– Let me begin with an anecdote. My first pastoral assignment as a young priest was as chaplain to the Daughters of Charity. I am grateful to God for the example of prayer, humility and service of those Daughters. Ever since then, I have always had a special affection for the Daughters. And I wish that we, the Daughters and the Congregation of the Mission, can always work together effectively for the poor, our lords and masters.

– *And for the wider Vincentian Family?*

– One of the things that has energized me most in recent years has been the resurgence of the Vincentian lay movements. I was, until a few minutes ago, the National Director of the Vincentian Marian Youth in Guatemala. I came to this Assembly with the idea of doing everything possible to reaffirm our work in collaboration with lay people, and at the same time to promote their formation.

– *How do you feel right now?*

– I am calm and joyful. I feel loved and supported by the confreres. We have a beautiful Congregation.

2. Józef Kapuściak, elected Vicar General on 19 July 2004 (reelected)

– *Tell us something about your life.*

– I was born on 25 November 1950 in Podwik in Southern Poland, the fifth child of my parents who were simple and very religious country people. I passed my childhood in the countryside, going to school and taking care of the cows and sheep. When I was 18 years old, I entered the Congregation of the Mission, following the footsteps of two of my brothers who were already members of the Congregation. I made my novitiate (1968-1969) and philosophy and theology studies in Kraków between 1969 and 1975. I was ordained in 1975 and worked for two years (1975-1977) in youth ministry in a large parish. From 1977-1981 I did my specialized studies in the Gregorian University, receiving my Doctorate in Spirituality. Back in Poland I spent all my time in formation. I have been the Director of

our Major Seminary in Kraków, rector of the Diocesan Major Seminary in Gdansk, superior and rector of the Theology Institute of the Congregation of the Mission in Kraków. In 1998 I was elected Assistant General of the Congregation and I have been in this job for the last six years.

– *In your judgment, what would be the three biggest problems facing the Congregation right now?*

– The initial and ongoing formation of its members, above all, in the young provinces with a large number of vocations; the formation of our formators; the fidelity to our charism, that is, the transparency of our Vincentian identity; the lack of vocations and the aging of our confreres in the provinces of Western Europe and the United States.

– *Does the Congregation of the Mission have anything important to say to today's world?*

– I think it does. I want the Congregation of the Mission to show the world that the preferential option for the poor, professed by the Church, is not just a beautiful saying, but rather a reality.

3. José Antonio Ubillús, reelected Assistant General on 20 July 2004

– *Tell us something about your life.*

– I was born in Olmos, Lambayeque, Peru on 30 June 1942. I did my primary and secondary studies in the “Manuel Pardo School” in Chiclayo, run by the Vincentians. I became incorporated in the Congregation on 15 February 1969 and was ordained on 27 December of the same year. I studied philosophy in the Conciliar Seminary “St. Toribio de Mogrovejo” in Lima, and theology in the Pontifical Civil Faculty of Theology, Lima. I broadened my studies at the Gregorian University in Rome, obtaining a Doctorate in Theology in 1973. I have worked in parish ministry as a pastoral vicar, pastor and episcopal vicar. I have also worked in vocation ministry and the formation of our own students, besides being a professor at the Superior Institute of Theological Studies in Lima (1975-1978) and in the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (1974-1992). I have also served as Visitor of Peru (1990-1998) and Executive Secretary of the Episcopal Commission for Biblical Pastoral, Catechetical and Indigenous Pastoral for the Episcopal Conference of Peru (1996-1998). For the past six years I have been Assistant General. I accept this service to the Congregation from my Vincentian and gospel option for the poor.

**4. José María Nieto Varas, elected Assistant General
on 20 July 2004**

– *Tell us something about your life.*

– I was born on 18 July 1955 in Palencia, a city in northern Spain. I was the first of five children whom my parents educated in the Christian faith. Through the influence of my mother and the Daughters of Charity, at ten years of age I entered the minor seminary of the Congregation of the Mission in Tardajos (Burgos). I started my novitiate in Avila on 11 September 1972. I studied philosophy and theology in Madrid and in Burgos, and was ordained a priest on 25 January 1981. Shortly afterwards I was sent to Rome where I studied Dogmatic Theology (1981-1983). For the next ten years, I worked at the Internal Seminary in Avila and, at the same time, I was part of the Popular Mission Team of the Madrid Province. As a missionary, I have had the joy of working in Spain, Honduras and Puerto Rico. I have also had the privilege of participating as an invited guest in a General Assembly of the Daughters of Charity. I was named Secretary General of the Congregation of the Mission, a job I have carried out from 1999 until now. At the moment of accepting this new service, I want to thank God for all the people he has placed in my life, and I want to ask you to pray for me that I might be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and of St. Vincent de Paul.

**5. Gérard Du Tran Cong, elected Assistant General
on 20 July 2004**

– *Tell us something about your life.*

– I was born on 15 May 1945 in Nam Dinh, North Vietnam. I was ordained a priest on 4 June 1974. My ministries have been many and varied: pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Dalat, Vietnam; professor of Moral Theology in the seminary and in religious communities; Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity of the Vietnam Province; Director of the Novitiate and Director of the Vincentian students of the philosophy cycle. I am grateful for the confidence you have shown me. I leave aside my own interests and accept what the Congregation asks of me at this time.