

# Daily Chronicle

by Julio Suescun Olcoz, C.M.

## **Monday, 4 June 2007: A warm welcome**

The meeting of the CM Visitors began, as usual, with the celebration of the Eucharist. Around the table of the Lord, listening to his word and strengthening ourselves by communing with his body and blood, we felt like a community called together by the Lord to carry out his plan of love for the poor of today.

In his homily, the Superior General urged the Visitors to examine carefully the development of their responsibilities in order to guarantee that the ministries of their respective provinces would be an expression of fidelity to our vocation as followers of Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor, to promote the spiritual well-being of the confreres under their responsibility, to be coherent that what we do mirrors our words, and to take great care in the formation of our local communities.

This was, without doubt, a mutual warm welcome of all of us before the Lord, who has summoned and assembled us.

Then, the morning was spent in many other signs of welcome in our own community circumstances.

The Visitor of Mexico, Father Luis Arreola, presented to us the land that welcomes us, the Church that inhabits this land and the reality of the province that is hosting this gathering. His words were full of realism and open to hope. He expressed in them the joy and the privilege with which his province welcomes the presence of such an important representation of the entire Congregation, coming from all over the world.

The president of the Preparatory Commission made some practical observations for the good order of the meeting in a house which is practically unknown to everyone. This was also the moment to acknowledge the silent and difficult work of all those who made up the Technical Commission, done to facilitate the entry of everyone into Mexico, and to be sure that the house of the Episcopal Conference of Mexico (CEM) would be ready in the best possible way.

The Vice-Visitor of Nigeria, Father Michael Ngoka, following the analysis of the replies of the Visitors to the letter of the Preparatory Commission, explained the importance, need and urgency of Ongoing Formation, always in process.

Father Francisco Solás explained the methodology of the meeting by recalling its goals as set forth in the letter of the Superior General that convoked it, and Father Solás pointed out the four tasks that had to be accomplished to arrive at the goals: to deepen the theme of Ongoing Formation and to find the tools to carry it out in practice; to work on the agenda of the Superior General, by suggesting in open dialogue with him and his council, ideas for the good government of the Congregation; to meet in Conferences; and to develop mutual relations in moments of common prayer, work, and rest. He described the different kinds of groups in which the Visitors would meet, and finished by noting the committees that are still active, as well as certain duties, such as the synthesizers or the chronicler who would help in gathering ideas or in communicating with the provinces by means of <http://cmglobal.org/es> and <http://cmglobal.org/en/news>

The Superior General introduced each of the new Visitors, the ones who had begun their service since the last General Assembly, along with other participants in the meeting, who are not Visitors, but who are giving some service to the Congregation on the general level.

The various Conferences had a festive presentation. Father Yves Bouchet, the Visitor of Toulouse, accompanying himself on the guitar, sang a few verses in which were described the various Vincentian activities and concerns that were then attributed to each of the Conferences, and which the chorus received with a refrain. He watched the raised hands in an invitation to work together to make effective the service of the poor, which is the service of Jesus Christ. In this way the various conferences, APVC, CEVIM, COVIAM, CLAPVI, NCV, were presented as bearers of the love of the Congregation, and desirous of sharing and realizing the hopes of the men of today, hopes burdened with the diversity of cultural riches, and ready to reflect and celebrate, being faithful to the spirit of Saint Vincent.

In the second part of the morning, the theme of Ongoing Formation made its appearance in the main hall through the well constructed and well presented conference of Father Hugh O'Donnell, Director of CIF. With this conference we began the first task of this meeting, of deepening and advancing in our appreciation, understanding and planning of Ongoing Formation. The afternoon was filled with group work under the expert and informed guidance of Father Patrick J. McDevitt, professor at DePaul University, Chicago.

**Tuesday, 5 June 2007: Formation as job number one**

The theme of ongoing formation, which already began in the main hall during the afternoon of Monday, 4 June, was developed today, the 5<sup>th</sup>, at two levels. The professorial presentations were by Father Hugh O'Donnell and the process of construction on the basis of the groups took place under the technical guidance of Father Patrick McDevitt.

Father O'Donnell yesterday presented Ongoing Formation as a process that has to move from what is basic. He indicated how this should be done without losing the good that we have already attained, that we should not be confined within it, without being always attentive to the signs of our time, but advancing to other new realities. He based his reflection on our Constitutions, which present to us the following of Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor, as the goal of our Congregation. These Constitutions always affirm that the Congregation, ever attentive to the Gospel, to the signs of the times and to the more urgent calls of the Church, should open new ways and apply means adapted to the circumstances of time and place, and should try besides to examine and order our works and ministries, thereby remaining at all times in a state of continual renewal.

Today, Father O'Donnell described for us the way of Saint Vincent, the process of developing a life, which is a process of ongoing formation. His person continually makes real for us the ideal of following Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor. His way is also our way, our path.

The process for group study is moving along slowly, but surely. Starting from what we live and from our hopes for the future, we are refining the principles that have to be the foundation of our ongoing formation, in the various steps of our own personal development. In a scholarly presentation of developmental psychology, Father McDevitt presented to us today the various stages of personal development, so that we could keep them in mind when we describe a process for ongoing formation. The communications from the small groups and in the large group were very abundant and rich. Let us hope that the process will continue to go well.

The program of the meeting also includes other activities, among which is what is being called the Agenda of the Superior General. Today the Superior General wished to present two activities that, with his council, he is making his own.

First, he gave the floor to Father John Rybolt, who presented the status of the History Project of the Congregation as of April 2007. It is moving along well, and it allows us to hope that in the near future we will have a complete History of the Congregation.

Then, the Superior General presented CIF as the most important institution that the Congregation has for the ongoing formation of our members. Recalling that it is an institute depending on the Curia, which has as its delegate one of the Assistants General, Father Ubillús, he then left the presentation in the hands of Fathers Hugh O'Donnell and Juan Julián Díaz Catalán, who presented to us what it is, what it does, what it costs, and what CIF can accomplish for the Congregation. They did this with clarity and beauty.

### **Wednesday, 6 June 2007: Under the banner containing the logo**

Wednesday, the third day of the Visitors' Meeting, did not have any special character. During the morning, before the usual period of prayer, the members assembled for an official photo, and then the ordinary routine of the other days began. Father Hugh O'Donnell laid out the various resources that we could use to advance on this voyage that we want to take, moving from our own reality to the ideal that we are pursuing, to move, as Saint Vincent did, from being a self-centered seeker after benefits to being a great organizer of all the resources that he encountered in the service of the poor. Father O'Donnell kept inviting us to value what had already been accomplished in the Community and the Church, to recognize the value of the very persons of the confreres, to appreciate the potential



good that ongoing formation offers us, to discover a positive attitude toward change and conversion, to be grateful for the goodwill of the confreres, and finally to know how to take advantage of the rich and varied collaboration that people of good will offer us.

Then Father Patrick McDevitt continued his work of directing to a safe harbor the search that we have begun. First, the group listed various concrete resources that we can count on, then in small groups, and finally in the plenary session, it worked to lay out the concrete lines of action that should be developed out of what we perceive in our own reality and leading to the expectations that we have to bring something to our provinces. It was not an easy task. Just when it seemed that the door was open, a new intervention made us think that there was a long way to go to get out of here. All the interventions were very important, but each one made the way a little more difficult. Where were we going? What are we supposed to do? Tomorrow may bring a solution. As with all procedures, this too needs some time to mature in order to arrive at the result for which we are hoping.

Amid all the comings and goings, this chronicler had time again to examine the fine logo that greets us everywhere, and which the readers can see in the opening image of this chronicle. It is the graphic design of a theological student in the Province of Paris, Alexis Cerquera. He has a real sense of pre-Columbian cultures. There is a diversity of forms which all together give an impression of unity. So we could read that the theme is "To inculturate unity amid diversity in the Aztec lands." But after the fatigue of today's sessions, we could also understand the logo as the labyrinth in which we find ourselves, and from which we are anxious to exit.

In the final session of the afternoon, we had the continuation of what we are calling the Agenda of the Superior General. We had presentations today about SIEV and the Office of Communications.

Concerning SIEV and its plans, both long-term and short-term, Father Elie Delplace, the Visitor of Paris and a member of SIEV, gave a well-ordered, rousing and enthusiastic presentation. To situate this institution in its trajectory, which is somewhat unknown among the confreres, Father Julio Suescun, the Executive Secretary of SIEV, noted some small historical details and pointed out some of the results inspired by SIEV.

*Vincentiana, Nuntia* and the website were presented by Father Alfredo Becerra, until recently the director of these efforts in the Curia. In a fine PowerPoint presentation, he gave a report on his work, and asked the participants to give their collaboration to the new director, Father Julio Suescun. The latter took the occasion to present the situation of reorganization of the website, with one exclusively for the CM, and which will have a common address:

<http://cmglobal.org>, from which one can access the various versions. Until now, only the Spanish and English versions are up and working. The English one has, for now, the address: <http://cmglobal.org/en/news/>.

### **Thursday, 7 June 2007: The journey's end**

I am not talking about the journey that brought us to Mexico. The Meeting of the Visitors is still in its first third. But Father O'Donnell today held the last of his four conferences. He described the process of Ongoing Formation as a journey that we all have to make, just as Saint Vincent did. This journey brings us to the interior of ourselves to recognize our reality and to move us toward converting ourselves into a man realized in Christ, conformed to the ideal of our vocation. Saint Vincent made this journey that brought him from his ambitious search for benefices to being the great saint of charity. We have, then, come to the end, not perhaps because we have reached the goal of our journey, but because we have seen the end of its description as outlined by Father O'Donnell. Our technical experts, Father McDevitt and Miss María José Pacheco, who were the facilitators of our studies, both completed their work. We sent them off with grateful applause.

The group did not arrive at any precise goal, but at various times new plans were presented that, in the end, were not satisfactory. Certainly the theme needs much more reflection to come to maturity. But the materials are all here. We then can finish what we have begun.

During the afternoon, the "Agenda of the Superior General" continued. Today, it was the turn of the Vincentian Family. Father Manuel Ginete, Delegate of the Superior General for the Vincentian Family, laid out the development of the Family during the last few years, as well as the participation by the Office of the Vincentian Family in this development. He described his work and that of Sister María Pilar López, a Daughter of Charity from the Province of Barcelona, as persons serving this office full-time. Father Ginete relied on a PowerPoint presentation to keep the attention and interest of all in the hall during the long tour of his well-outlined and clear presentation.

**Ecofavi** is the name that is used for the Coordinating Team of the Vincentian Family of Mexico. The entire group, composed of various representatives of each branch of the Family, attended Father Ginete's presentation, and then, after the recess, it was their turn. They were introduced by Father Benjamín Romo, a member of the team as a representative of the C.M., and each one presented the origin, current status and future perspectives of the branches of the Vincentian Family in Mexico. It was a lengthy presentation, since



there was a lot to talk about, but, despite its length, it was well done, entertaining and varied.

These presentations certainly helped to affirm in us the love for a vocation that is supported through the Vincentian charism, shared today by so many lay people, committed to and engaged in the service of Christ in the poor of our time, following the inspiration and the thought of Saint Vincent, and who are commended to his care.

### **Friday, 8 June 2007: Full agenda**

The day was very full and varied. After the work in language groups, the day began with a revision of the synthesis prepared by the synthesizers, Fathers Manuel Ginete and Giuseppe Turati. They presented their work and the members of the assembly pointed out some gaps and imprecision. That was precisely what the synthesizers were looking for — that the group help them to complete their synthesis which will be presented at a later moment. Afterwards the whole day was devoted to the Superior General's Agenda, i.e., to what he wanted to share with the Visitors.

First came an open dialogue about the Vincentian places, introduced by the Superior General and then followed by the

Assistants who have the most knowledge of these matters. It was easy to see that the group was in agreement with making these sites more adequate as places of pilgrimage and encounter for the whole Vincentian Family.

Afterwards the Superior General presented Brother Peter Campbell and the Vincentian Solidarity Office. In a clear and orderly way, Brother Peter presented the office and its work at the service of the Congregation. He invited us to visit the website and to get to know the projects and mini-projects that are being carried out, as well as the conditions and the ways to apply for new grants. The assembly received his intervention with grateful satisfaction.

Then came the presentation of Father Carl Pieber and the new International Development Office. The Superior General noted that, although this office is located in the same building and on the same floor as the Vincentian Solidarity Office, it is a different entity. In this case it has the task of gathering funds to create a patrimony for the subsistence of the poorer provinces. Father Pieber referred us to a longer document of his on how we should understand the idea of development. Then he opened his arms to receive any kind of support which would further the objective of his office. After a brief dialogue, Father Pieber finished up to a round of applause.

Following the instructions received in the last General Assembly, the Superior General presented and distributed a possible Process for the Election of the Superior General. This project was listened to and debated in groups and in the plenary session. Later on the process will be presented again taking into account the suggestions made.

On our desks we found five reports: from the Procurator General to the Holy See and the Postulator General, Father Giuseppe Guerra; the Commission for Systemic Change; the Vincentian representative to the United Nations; and Father John Freund, on the internet as an instrument for our mission. The Superior General told us these documents were not for discussion, but rather as a basis for a future open dialogue, just as the program for this meeting contemplates.

The intense pace of the work cried out for some down time, for a party. We had just that after supper. The participation of the different Visitors' Conferences showed clearly the great richness and cultural and folkloric diversity we have in the Congregation, much to the delight of all.

### **Saturday, 9 June 2007: Looking inside myself**

Following the established program, Saturday was designated as a retreat day. Daniel Vásquez, the Visitor of Colombia, led the reflections. As usual, morning prayer was done in language groups. At 9:00 a.m. we concelebrated the Eucharist with Father Daniel as

the principal celebrant; he preached his homily using the texts of 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 and Luke 4:16-30. He urged us to be prophets of the Spirit and the word, men moved by the Spirit to find in God's word, in our Constitutions and Statutes and in the rich Vincentian tradition the perennial newness and richness of our charism; men who make the word the norm of their lives, learning to discern by its light the signs of the times; men rooted in the love which never passes away, which preserves us from hypocrisy, frees us from whatever springs from selfishness and allows us to be seen as men who love.

Later, in his conference, he continued exhorting us to center ourselves on the two poles of our vocation — Christ and the poor. United to Christ we can be the living, active presence of the love of God for the poor.

The Blessed Sacrament was exposed all morning to allow the confreres to contemplate this presence that expresses a love that is infinitely inventive.

At noon, Father Vasquez led us in a serious examination of conscience and at 1:00 p.m., we had repetition of prayer in which several confreres participated. To set the mood for this, a beautiful graphic presentation of the Vincentian virtues, drawn from a mural depicting these virtues that was recently hung in the Madrid Provincial House, was shown. The morning of retreat was a truly brotherly encounter, which provided a space of serene joy for all.

In the afternoon, following the dynamic of shared communication, the Visitors met in groups to interchange their experiences of their jobs. They were invited to respond to two questions: "Challenges the Visitor has to face today" and "Internal and external challenges which the province must face." It was a peaceful dialogue whose results were later shared in the plenary session.

Tomorrow the Virgin of Guadalupe awaits us in her Basilica. There we will concelebrate the Eucharist and present to the Lord, through her intercession, all our personal and apostolic intentions.

### **Sunday, 10 June 2007: At the foot of Tepeyac**

Today, Sunday, was a day to take a rest from our labors and enjoy ourselves. We left our work place and went to noisy Mexico City. After being closed in for a week, we were thankful to see new faces. At 9:00 a.m. two buses took us to a place near the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In that immense and lovely basilica, other members of the Vincentian Family awaited us. Together with them and many other people, who had come together to celebrate the Lord's Day under the protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we celebrate a joyful Eucharist. The basilica was full, and in the

sanctuary there were about one hundred priests with the Superior General. It was a beautiful celebration prepared in detail by the various Vincentian Family groups.

In his homily, based on the first and third readings of the day, the Superior General insisted that God has revealed himself and wants to continue revealing himself as the God of Life. Like Elijah and like Jesus himself, we have been called and sent as prophets and witnesses of the God of Life. Our Christian and Vincentian vocation impels us to approach so many people marginalized from life in order to place in them the “breath of life” and to welcome them into our embrace and present them, thus renewed, to their mother. We are called to bring them back from the margin and accompany them in their reintegration into the human family, to the family of the Church which, under Mary’s protection, celebrates Christ’s presence in its midst.

There was almost no time to walk around the basilica and investigate the many expressions of popular religiosity found there. There were many family groups who approached the basilica to visit their Mother to implore her favor or give her thanks for her protection. There were a surprising number of mothers, with children in their arms, who asked for our blessing.

Later, in the Provincial House, the party continued, now very much a family affair. The community’s ability to receive and welcome us all in a limited space with such attention and affection is something for which to be grateful and to admire. A group of mariachis came to enliven the gathering; and they made the Mexican souls of Fathers Arreola, Roma and Muñoz thrill to the music. They were so moved, they put on Mexican sombreros and sang for us.

After lunch a bus tour allowed us to discover, most of us for the first time, a modern, well-constructed city with wide avenues and spacious parks. The commentary we heard from the guide made everyone want to prolong his/her stay in this charming city, not with another bus tour, but rather taking time to delve into its history and culture.

After the tour we boarded other buses and returned to our meeting place for supper because tomorrow will be another work day in our temporary Mexican home.

### **Tuesday, 12 June 2007: Implementation of a plan of solidarity**

One of the tasks indicated on the program for the Visitors’ Meeting was to provide time for the Visitors to meet by Conferences. This was done all day Monday and on Tuesday morning. This chronicler can attest, judging by the time passed in the Conference meetings, that the work was intense. Up until now no information

from these Conference meetings has come to the assembly hall. That was why there was no chronicle on Monday. One thing did come out of the Europe and Middle East Conference; they announced they had signed the Statute for the Interprovincial Internal Seminary. But this was in overtime and it went through a rather singular route as was described in the information published on cmglobal.

Tuesday afternoon brought other matters. The whole assembly began an open dialogue with the Superior General. In this session the first point was to respond to the written questions that had been presented. They were very few, only two; they centered on the relationship between the autonomy of the provinces and the authority of the Superior General over the whole Congregation and the vision the Superior General has after his many visits to the various provinces and missions. He commented on the spirit of faith with which the whole Congregation and the Vincentian Family receive the successor of Saint Vincent; he blessed God for the zeal and the love of the poor he found in the missionaries. But he questioned an excess of activism and the loss of a more contemplative spirit. The questions from the floor were also few in number, and, in general, they expressed gratitude for the impulse to the Vincentian spirit that the visits of the Superior General brought to the different provinces.

After the break came a wonderful lesson on the implementation of the Vincentian solidarity plan by the Treasurer General, Father John Gouldrick. With the help of some PowerPoint slides, so we could keep track of the numbers and the structure, he laid out for us the Financial Plan being directed from the General Curia.

He pointed out the three objectives for this plan: increase the cash flow so that all the provinces can meet their ordinary basic and pastoral needs; make capital improvements; and establish endowment funds for the long-term needs of the provinces.

He reminded us that the plan was set in motion in the generalate of Father Maloney, and that the three objectives were being pursued by three different structures responsible to the General Curia. The first of these is the IMF:2000. This was established in Father Maloney's time with the help of a charitable foundation, which required that the Congregation supply matching funds to the foundation's grant. This was done through the generous help of the provinces, especially of Europe and the United States. Lately other provinces have become donor provinces as well, and two former recipient provinces have now become donor provinces. To respond to the second objective the Vincentian Solidarity Office (VSO) was created. In this meeting, Brother Peter Campbell presented a clear and detailed report about his work. To respond to the third objective the International Development Office was created. Father Carl Pieber,

together with the Superior General and the Treasurer General informed us that the goals of this office (namely, the establishment of patrimonial or endowment funds for the provinces) will be pursued with the help of all. Father Gouldrick emphasized that this financial plan wants to give concrete expression to a desire to share the responsibility of being the stewards of the patrimony of the poor. Father Gouldrick's intervention ended with applause that expressed everyone's satisfaction with his report.

Afterwards came three brief reports by the Superior General: insistence on the creation of Financial Councils in the provinces, the need to unify the system of communication between the Curia and the provinces through the internet, and the report of the Commission for Systemic Change.

At the end of the session came a presentation from the Commission on the Revision of the Statutes of the C.M. This report will be taken up later by the Visitors.

### **Wednesday, 13 June 2007: Brotherhood in work and in celebration**

One of the aspects of the agenda of this Visitors' Meeting consisted in just meeting and fraternizing. There were prayer meetings, in particular the morning prayer ending with the celebration of the Eucharist, and the evening Vespers, and several other short but intense prayers at the beginning and at the end of the different sessions. We should also include here the morning retreat, which we mentioned in a previous chronicle. The work sessions have taken up most of the time. Whether in plenary sessions or meeting by linguistic groups, the Visitors have had the opportunity of listening to one another and of feeling close to one another in the ideals of the same missionary vocation.

But now I would like to inform about meetings in festive celebrations. We could say that in this field the experiences have also developed by degrees, beginning with the short periods of time after dinner, accompanied by mariachis or by an instrumental wind quintet, other times using our modest personal resources, until the explosive show of brotherhood on our Wednesday excursion. This excursion appeared on the program as reserved for a visit to Teotihuacán. This word, which to many of us was a real tongue-twister, but which later on would become still more of a twister through the names of gods and goddesses, did not say much to most of us. But the visit itself went way beyond what we could have imagined. We found ourselves submerged in the prehistory of Mexico, amidst a people that lived there from 500 BC to 600 AD, and who, although they never discovered writing, were capable of leaving numerous and great showings of amazing buildings and urban complexes, of their religious feelings, of their knowledge of the

heavenly bodies, and their great capacity for commercial activities. Regretfully, it seems that they also fell into the vices of our times, and their desire for instant enjoyment impeded their perpetuation in those lands. Deforestation brought about climatic change, and the subsequent scarcity of rainfall changed their rich lands into dry desert which they were obliged to abandon under threat of dying from hunger. When the Aztecs arrived there, a place already uninhabited, they named it "abode of the gods," Teotihuacán.

All the walking under the sun, and going up and down the steep steps of the Pyramid of the Moon, an effort reserved for the more daring, caused us to desire a much needed rest. We found it in the restaurant where a good repast had been prepared: an abundant buffet menu, accompanied once more by the mariachis and a pre-Hispanic dance which brought to mind again the long cultural history of this nation.

We went back home early, after a short visit to the former convent of the Augustinians in Acolman. This was another contact with the religious history of Mexico, in a convent that saw the birth of the "Misas de aguinaldo," or "Posadas" (a nine-day popular celebration before Christmas Day), that later on would spread all over the continent in order to replace the celebrations of the native populations in honor of the birth of the god Huitzilopochtli from his mother Coatlicue.

At the end of the meeting, it is time to recognize and to thank the confreres of the Province of Mexico for their excellent work in preparing all the aspects of this meeting. We have to thank, once more, the great work of Father Silvestre Sánchez and his team, Brother Marcelino, Brother Rafael, and the students Toribio and Joel. They do not miss a single detail. They have literally foreseen everything. Still more to be admired, they never give the least sign of ill humor or of being tired, even if they might very well wish that this whole celebration come to its end.

### **Thursday, 14 June 2007: As the meeting nears its end**

This time the Latin proverb "post festum pestum" — which implies that after a celebration there is not much craving for work — has not come true, because on the day following the excursion, in spite of some cramps, the agenda has been kept in its entirety.

A paper was given out with several questions in order to evaluate the meeting, paper to be given back, duly completed, to the secretariat. In the name of the Commission on the Revision of the Statutes, which had already made its presentation on Monday, Father Turati kept us busy the whole morning. In the first place, he explained briefly the procedure. Afterwards, first in small groups and then in plenary session, corrections and recommendations were

presented so that a better and more detailed presentation could be ready for the 2010 General Assembly. A few other recommendations and remarks also were offered spontaneously in the plenary session.

In the afternoon, Father Thomas F. McKenna, Visitor of the Eastern Province of the United Status, presented, along the same lines as the main purpose of this meeting, an instrument for helping in Ongoing Formation. It consists in an online study of the Constitutions prepared under the direction of Father John B. Freund, which is being studied in different sessions to the great satisfaction of those who peruse it. There is also a CD in English and in Spanish with the first six sessions to which further sessions could be added if the users consider it useful.

It was the turn afterwards for what we had been calling the "Agenda of the Superior General." It was a question once more of the Process for the Election of the Superior General. The document, which included all the suggestions received after its first redaction, was delivered in the three official languages, and it was shown also on the screen in three parallel columns. A count was taken by raising hands on the different possible solutions that were presented. Even if it seemed, at first sight, that the topic was already well defined for the 2010 Assembly, the different interventions made it plain that a consensus had not been yet reached.

Finally, a working document was presented to help reflection on this topic for the next General Assembly. The document seemed well structured and it insisted on the idea that the General Assembly is for other things in addition to the business of electing the Superior General. It has to try, as is stated in the Constitutions, to invigorate the spiritual life and the pastoral activity of the whole Congregation. A few additional topics were added which might be of interest for the next General Assembly in line with the ideas exposed by some of the Curia members and other missionaries; in addition, some questions were presented as to how often General Assemblies should be held, their duration and their contents.

There were many other very interesting interventions about the purpose of the Assemblies, and about how we could make them an instrument for revision and for the animation of our life and of our apostolate, which would endow with an added dynamism all our provinces, all the communities, and all the missionaries.

### **Friday, 15 June: Finally, it was all over**

The day was centered on the Eucharist, to be celebrated at five p.m., as the closing act of the meeting. Up to that moment it was time to collect things, formulate conclusions and pack up the luggage not only with one's personal belongings but also with the pills and



the cordials that the Visitors were to take with them to invigorate the life of their provinces. The plenary session opened with the ways of proceeding for the approval of the final redaction of the synthesis prepared by those to whom it had been entrusted, Fathers Ginete and Turati. The latter read the document in Spanish. The truth is that the contents sounded so good that very soon all those present realized that the corrections would be few. We got the impression that we had not wasted our time. We were hearing what we had said, but now very well redacted and in due order. We then went out to read and meditate the document, with the intention of making known to the authors of the synthesis our eventual remarks.

We went back to the hall at 12:30 and Father Daniel P. Borlik, who was the moderator, said that we had some time at our disposal to present some of the points that had been raised in the meeting.

The question of solidarity was raised once more, but this time centered on sharing also the resources of personnel. If the provinces with greater economic means share them with those provinces with fewer resources, then the provinces which do not experience as yet a scarcity of vocations could share them with those that are short of personnel. It was pointed out that it was necessary to recover the missionary spirit of service to the universal Church in a missionary Congregation spread all over the world, thereby avoiding limiting the vision to the narrow confines of one province.

The Superior General asked about the usefulness of these international meetings midway between General Assemblies, particularly if we keep in mind the growing importance of the Visitors' Conferences and other inter-provincial meetings on different topics. But there immediately arose a powerful choral song of praise to the glorious nature of these meetings and to their formative value as regards the consciousness of being a member of an international community, with the additional remark that meeting confreres from all over the world gives the Congregation a concrete human face.

There was still time left for other spontaneous remarks. Once more it was a question of the Process for the Election of the Superior General, the availability for this job and for others in the service of the Congregation, and even the convenience of having or not having a common logo for the whole Congregation that could be easily shown on the lapel. Naturally none of these themes received a definite answer. But really, it was not a question of getting a definite solution for them, but only of making them heard and known in public.

The clock struck the fifth hour when we met for the Eucharist. Since it was the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Superior General spoke to us about God's love which shows itself in the figure of the Good Shepherd as described in the liturgical readings. He reminded the Visitors and the Assistants that it is written in our Constitutions that all those with authority in our communities should incarnate the figure of the Good Shepherd by having mercy towards all. He added an emphasis on the need to work for the problems of justice and peace, making thereby effective merciful love towards the poor.

Such was our thanksgiving to God in our communion in Christ, signified and realized in the Eucharist. It was now the moment to extend our thanksgiving to those who, through their service, had made this Visitors' Meeting possible. We have already mentioned several times the Province of Mexico, which has received us with fraternal solicitude. We should also mention all those who have taken part in the different commissions, represented by the three men shown in the picture at the beginning of this chronicle: the Superior General, the Secretary General and Father Daniel P. Borlik, President of the Preparatory Commission.

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