

GENERAL CURIA

TEMPO FORTE CIRCULAR

(22-27 June 2009)

Rome, 9 July 2009

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Brothers,

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

“We must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and the global are linked. Everyone shares a responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence of the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.”

The Earth Charter

I would like to present for your reading pleasure and reflection some of the more important matters discussed in our most recent *tempo forte* meeting.

1. The first part of the meeting was an **ongoing formation** session by our Visitor from the Province of Eritrea wherein he shared with us the activities of the Province.
2. Then we dedicated a good amount of time speaking about the **General Assembly preparation**. Previously the Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly 2010 was present in the Curia and did a rework of the Directory for the Assembly as well

as a calendar that will be used throughout the three weeks that we will be in Paris. We proposed names for the Commission on the Postulata, as well as the Commission for Communication. At the same time we selected four apostolates of the Congregation to be presented in a panel, different ministries dealing with Service of the Poor, Popular Missions, Formation of the Clergy and Formation of the Laity. That panel presentation will be preceded by a video clip of different creative ministries of the Congregation. We also selected the confreres, one from each of the main official languages of the Congregation, to be synthesizers during the Assembly as well as naming the coordinator for the Commission for Social Recreative Activities and a list of possible translators for both simultaneous translation and written translation for the Assembly. All the names of these confreres will be revealed at a later date once we get a positive response from them.

3. We had an updated report on the **350th Anniversary** of our Holy Founders. Among other things regarding the 350th anniversary, we approved \$ 25,000 a year for the next five years seed money to contribute to the pilot project that the Vincentian Family will be carrying out, micro financing, in Haiti.

The Secretary General, who is part of the Commission of the Secretariate, shared with us information regarding the small booklet that has been prepared to celebrate the Anniversary, representing all the members of the Vincentian Family throughout the world, with contemporary images of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac. Claudio also shared with us the work that has been done so far on the web page window for the Vincentian Family. **We encourage each of the branches of the Family to make sure that they are linked to the famvin web page in the three official languages.**

4. We also reviewed a report on the **reconfiguration of the three provinces of the United States** to form the Western Province wherein they announce that beginning 1 July, Perry Henry (Southern Province) and his team will take over coordinating the remaining transition tasks leading to 25 January and the new Western Province. At this time the Assistant Provincial and the four Council members have been named by the Superior General; the Assistant is Mark Pranaitis (Midwest Province) and the Council Members Dick Benson (Province of the West), Tom Stehlik (Southern Province), Pat McDevitt (Midwest Province) and Jim Cormack (Midwest Province).

5. We had a report with the presence of Father Julio Suescun, the Director of Vincentiana, who shared with us the **evolution of Vincentiana** from its beginnings to the present time. The Council has asked Julio to include this documented history in one of the upcoming issues of Vincentiana for its historic value and interest.

The following affirmations and decisions were made considering Vincentiana. We will maintain Vincentiana as a way of stimulating and reflecting on the Vincentian charism. It will be left to the Director to prepare special numbers dealing with special themes which affect the whole of the Congregation of the Mission or any of its Conferences of Visitors. The Vincentiana frequency will be moved from six to four volumes a year. The Vincentiana will continue to be published in the three official languages, but once again, we encourage confreres to help in the translation of the different texts to the official languages. One of the most difficult materials for translation is into the French language. **If there are any French confreres out there who can translate from English or Spanish or other languages in which the original documents are written, please offer your services to Vincentiana.** We will continue to place Vincentiana on the internet, as well as publish it in paper form.

6. We reviewed a report from Father Alfredo Bercera who officially covers all matters dealing with **Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation**, an organization established by the Union of Superiors General. For your information, in 2008 the Congregation of the Mission adhered to the Declaration of the Rights of Children that was prepared by the International Catholic Office of Infancy. The communication that came out of this Declaration was sent to the Council of Human Rights and published on the official site of the High Commission of the United Nations. We also, in 2008, responded to a questionnaire regarding ecology, with the objective of constructing a bank of information of how religious communities promote the integrity of creation in their countries.

In 2009 with the approval of the Superior General, we as a Congregation subscribed to the Declaration of Organizations of Christian Inspiration and Other Beliefs calling for world food security as well as the challenges of climatic change. Also in 2008, after having consulted the different members of the General Council, the Superior General authorized the adhesion of the Congregation to the Worldwide Call for a New Mobilization in Favor of Infants remembering the 20th anniversary of

the Agreement of the United Nations regarding the rights of children.

The final action was to authorize, on the part of the Superior General, the sending of a series of documents to the president of COVIAM concerning the *instrumentum laboris* of the Synod for Africa. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Father Alfredo for fulfilling these responsibilities of connection with the world of justice and peace in an informal capacity, but which is truly beneficial and helpful for the Superior General, his Council and the worldwide Congregation.

7. We discussed a number of **financial matters**. We did the Mission Distribution for 2009. Because of the financial crisis that the world experienced this year and affected us as well, we were not able to distribute as much money to our developing provinces as we did last year. There was a 25% decline in the amount available for distribution. Nonetheless we were able to assist all our developing provinces, certainly not with what they probably need, but with a significant amount to help in the growing costs of ongoing formation, initial formation and care of the elderly confreres as well as responding to the needs of missionaries.

Also with regard to the economy we reviewed Statute 101 that deals with the assessment of provinces for Curia support. It is hoped that during the General Assembly we might be able to discuss this *per capita* tax as advice to the Superior General.

8. We reviewed the **Vincentian Solidarity Office Report** from Father Miles Heinen, the Director of the Vincentian Solidarity Office. Since our last *tempo forte* meeting in March, the Solidarity Office has received nine new projects as well as two micro project grants. The Superior General and Council approved the hiring of a new staff member of the VSO office who will begin in September of this year.
9. With the presence of Father Manny Ginete, the **Delegate for the Vincentian Family**, we reviewed the report to the Superior General and Council. Manny updated us on his trip to the Vincentian Family Gathering in Plymouth, Michigan that dealt with the question of systemic change, although it was not precisely one of the continental sessions on the topic of systemic change. The main focus tried to tackle the various needs of the urban poor, particularly in the aftermath of the economic crisis. Many of the topics were of an economic and sociological nature, but all throughout the basic orientation was how Vincentians

respond to the dizzying variety of needs on the part of the poor and how a systemic approach can help usher in this response more deeply. A total of 123 people participated in the event, representing more than 12 different branches of the Vincentian Family.

The other event that Father Ginete reported to us was the continental session for Vincentian leaders and advisors on systemic change that took place in Brasilia, Brazil 10-14 June. Father Ginete reported that overall this session on systemic change was outstanding from the level of preparation, conduct and response of participants. It showcased the vitality and dynamism of Brazil's Vincentian Family as a whole and the enduring commitment of the various branches to the charism and mission. There were a total of 114 participants representing 11 different branches of the Vincentian Family.

The upcoming activities for Father Ginete in July will be in Cameroon for an AIC seminar as well as another continental session for Vincentian Family leaders in Africa and then representing the Superior General in the Conferences of Visitors of Africa meeting following the continental session.

Many thanks to the members of the Commission on Promoting Systemic Change that had participated in these continental sessions.

10. On another matter dealing with the Vincentian Family, the Superior General and his council have officially appointed Father Hugh O'Donnell as the representative of the Congregation of the Mission on the Board of Trustees of DePaul International. That position was previously held by the former Vice-Visitor of the Vice-Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Father Paul Roche. I want to take this opportunity to thank Father Hugh O'Donnell for accepting this responsibility and Father Paul Roche for the many years of generous service he contributed to help support this new branch of the Vincentian Family to live more deeply the charism of serving the poor.
11. In the reports from the **CIF team** we had a series of **dates for 2010**. There will be a session for Brothers from 9 April - 4 June. More information concerning this workshop will be forthcoming. The regular CIF session will be 3 September - 27 November.
In 2011 we will have the Heritage Session 29 April - 28 May, and 2 September - 26 November, the regular CIF session. The CIF team hopes to organize another session regarding Leadership during 2011, most likely in June or July. The focus of this session will be members of Seminary staffs.

12. Next is the periodic report to the Superior General from the Vincentian **NGO Representative to the United Nations**. In his report, Father Foley shared with us the activities of two NGO committees that he is presently working on: the Ecumenical Working Group and the Committee on Migration. At the same time he gave us some observations on the way that the United Nations is dealing with the global financial crisis. We also discussed a suggestion that he made regarding better cooperation among the NGOs of the Vincentian Family, particularly with the Daughters of Charity.

June 5 the United Nations celebrated World Environmental Day. This year's theme was *Your Planet Needs You: Unite to Combat Climate Change*. The theme reflects the urgency for nations to agree on a new deal at the climate change convocation that will take place in Copenhagen in December.

The Justice, Peace and Integrity Commission of the Union of Superiors General in Rome has issued a prayer service and letters suggesting actions in and around the Copenhagen meeting. It is alarming that the world development, economic and consumption patterns are leading to the depletion of critical natural resources.

An additional note: The book, *Seeds of Hope* that was promoted by the Commission on the Promotion of Systemic Change, is now available not only in English, and Spanish, but also French due to the assistance and generosity of the Daughters of Charity. If you are interested in getting copies of this book in French you can contact either the rue du Bac or the Commission for Systemic Change.

13. The Council reviewed a report from John Freund, the web master for the Vincentian Family. His report focused on the web page **cmglobal.org** of the Congregation of the Mission, stating that the basic information and documents about the Congregation have been added across all three sites. The General Council have asked Father Freund to continue to post Vincentiana on the web page as well. The General Council has asked Father Suescun and Brother Adam to be the on-site people at the General Assembly in Paris for the internet web page, with constant contact in the States with John Freund with the hope of being able to promote the Assembly widely even prior to its initiation in June 2010.
14. The Council reviewed the minutes and reports from the various **Conferences of Visitors**. The Presidents of the Conferences of Visitors and Provinces participated in a meeting with the

Superior General and his Council on Monday, 29 June. Each of the Conferences spoke about their strengths and weaknesses as well as major concerns in the area of reconfiguration of provinces and different projects of collaboration. There was a review of each of the different commitments that the Conferences made at the General Assembly 2004. There was an exchange on the proposal of the Commission of the Statutes about the Conferences of Visitors and a discussion of different offices of the Curia that are at the service of the Congregation of the Mission.

15. We reviewed **reports from our International Missions**. Father José Maria Nieto gave us an update on his visit to Bolivia 2-12 May. As a Congregation we commit ourselves to staying in Bolivia while modifying the makeup of the mission in **El Alto** because of reduced numbers of personnel. It has been decided that one of the volunteers from the Mission Appeal Letter will begin his mission in El Alto, Bolivia in September 2009. His name is Aiden Rooney; he is a confrere from the Eastern Province of the United States.
16. In a report from our mission in **Papua New Guinea** Father Rolly Santos the superior of the mission, was unanimously approved as the Secretary General of the Conference of Bishops for Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Father Justin Eke from Nigeria is also in the mission working as a staff member of the Seminary and teaching at the theological institute. Father Vladimir, the most recently arrived member of the team, works in the mission territory of Woitape and Father Homero is the pastor of the parish in Bomana. They wrote to ask that once again the confreres be encouraged to participate in this international mission.
17. From the international mission in the **Solomon Islands** we received a number of correspondences from the mission superior, Father Greg Walsh. The most significant was the minutes of a major meeting that they had wherein they discussed what their vision for the Congregation of the Mission in the Solomon Islands was, including the future of the candidates that are applying for the Congregation of the Mission. Most important of all is the stabilization of the mission, and fulfilling the original purpose, to run the major seminary for the Bishops and then the other activities that support that, work with the formation of the laity and parish activities. They too request more volunteers to help staff the seminary as well as the other pastoral activities that the mission includes. Presently there are

six confreres in the Solomon Islands, Father Victor Bieler, Father Ivica Gregurec, Father Flaviano Caintic, Father Joeli Nabogi, Father Emanuel Prasetyono, and Father Greg Walsh. In mid-year they hope that Father Augustinus Marsup will return as well as Father Antonius Abimantrono from Indonesia. For the next semester, Father Drago Ocvirk, from the Province of Slovenia, and one confrere from the Philippines will be present.

18. We reviewed a request from a volunteer, and the Superior General will be writing to him regarding the different points to be reflected on in preparation for *missiones ad gentes*.
19. We finished up with a general **review of our calendars** from now until June 2010. Regarding canonical visits: remaining are Austria which will be done by the Superior General and the Secretary General in September 2009; Chile, which Father José Maria Nieto, will do in October and November 2009; and Father Joseph Kapusciak, the Province of Turin in October and November 2009. Father Gerard Du will be accompanying Father Gregory to a visit to Viet Nam in October and he will make a canonical visit, in February 2010, of the Province of Germany.

The next tempo forte will be 5-9 October 2009.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." with a stylized flourish at the end.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General