

# GENERAL CURIA

## MISSION APPEAL

(October 2009)

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

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

In this Jubilee year of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of our Founders we have selected as our theme “Charity and Mission”. We are called to reflect upon and deepen our own Vincentian spirituality in and through the gift of charity for mission. It is my hope through this Mission Appeal Letter, confreres throughout the Congregation of the Mission will render their hearts and think seriously whether or not the Lord is calling them to fulfill their missionary vocation in one of the following missions where there is need.

As a young confrere wrote: “It is not easy to make a decision to choose to move on from one’s own particular province to a new mission experience.” It is important to pray, discern, listen carefully to what God is saying to one’s heart, and then to speak simply with the Visitor of the Province in order that he too might help you to discern the ways that God may be calling you to give of yourself in the Congregation of the Mission. The need for charity is vast throughout the world. Many of the missions that have been entrusted to us clamor for greater assistance and the presence of evangelizers. We have also received further requests from Bishops who are in dire need of pastoral agents.

I begin with our own international missions and some offshoots from those particular missions where requests are pouring in. Then as usual, we will present the needs of our provinces which have mission territories and yet lack personnel. If you are unable to give of yourself as gift in mission, we ask that you might express your charity in and through concrete donations. Further information can be found at the end of this message. Echoing the words of Bishop Helder Camara, another confrere recently said: “No one is so poor that he does not have something to spare; no one is so rich that he cannot receive something.”

## INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

### 1. Papua New Guinea:

a) Vladimir Malota writes: "I am the first priest residing permanently in Our Lady of Fatima parish in **Woitape** in 19 years. It has suffered structural and pastoral collapse. Today I am rebuilding first the pastoral system of the parish. I re-established regular visits to all our villages in the mountains and in the jungle. For the first time after 20 years many older people, with tears in their eyes, can receive the sacraments and die in the grace of God. I am also repairing the mission station that has deteriorated drastically during the last two decades."

"In a spiritual sense I am experiencing... raising from ashes a very poor parish in one of the most remote areas. Can there be something more Vincentian?"

"Woitape is located in Goilala Mountains and is accessible only by small plane or chopper. All supplies have to be airlifted. The catholic mission station is located in a beautiful valley; the villages are scattered in the mountains and can be reached only by foot."

"Weather reflects the dichotomy of dry/wet season mountain climate. During the day the temperature can reach 30°C, while during the night the temperature often falls to zero."

"Officially under our administration is also St. Martin de Porres parish in Kosipe. It can be reached only by foot, in a one-day walk from Woitape. The mission was destroyed completely by a wildfire in 1997. In a pastoral sense it is almost completely disintegrated and waits for a full-time parish priest. It was in Kosipe parish that I found a village that a priest last visited 60 years ago!"

"There are many more like that waiting for any Vincentian willing and fit to walk and preach the Gospel to the poorest of the poor in Papua New Guinea."

b) Holy Spirit Seminary, **Bomana**, is an interdiocesan Seminary located on the out-skirts of Port Moresby, the capital city of Papua New Guinea. Presently it is housing 38 seminarians and has only two formators. The need to have more priest formators here is very important and urgent as the work load has drastically increased. At this time last year, there were four resident priest formators: two were Vincentian confreres — Frs. Rolando Santos from the Philippines and Tulio Cordero from the Dominican Republic. Father Tulio left the seminary late last year to begin a new appointment as the provincial of the

Province of Puerto Rico while Father Rolando Santos left this year in June to assume the office of the General Secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. The second diocesan priest formator has since left for studies in Rome. The seminary has now only Father Justin Eke, our confrere from Nigeria and the rector of the seminary, Father Peter Artiken.

The church of PNG is growing with the challenges that a young church faces. One of these is the discipline and faithful commitment of the clergy. Recent experience reveals that a new dimension in the formation of the seminarians preparing for mission needs to be carried out. It is common in the Church of PNG to see a priest within the first three years suspended, laicized, or even to leave Holy Orders. This raises concern about the initial conviction of the persons involved.

At this point our confreres are as much needed now, as it was at the beginning of our mission in the seminary, especially as it has been very difficult to get any local priest to occupy the positions held by Fathers Santos and Tulio. The seminary needs a Spiritual Director and a Counselor (Guidance Counselor / Psychologist). The Bishops of PNG look forward to our increasing presence to help build the church, starting as Vincent did, with the clergy.

c) Bishop Gilles writes from **Kiunga, Papua New Guinea**: "I come to you to follow-up on my two petitions presented some years ago after my visit to your generalate. Father Rolando Santos had told me he was to come to work in our diocese but then he got the job as General Secretary for our Bishops' Conference. So my two petitions are still the same; one priest to be a companion to my priests and one priest to care for the Formation House where we want to prepare candidates for the seminary life. I am aware that your needs and requests are many but the only way to obtain priests is to keep asking for priests. Please do not forget us." The language is English and pidgin English.

- 2. Solomon Islands.** Father Greg Walsh, superior in the Solomon Islands asks: "Would you like to serve in a vital vibrant Church and plant seeds to bear good fruit for years to come? Here in Solomon Islands the Congregation is privileged to be involved in forming a new generation of priests and serving a young community thirsting for more knowledge of their faith. The needs are great and we feel sure you will find joy in working here alongside your brothers. Come for a semester, for a few years or for

many! We badly need confreres willing to teach in the seminary, since it has expanded into a complete major seminary recently. Our biggest needs are Scripture and Moral Theology. We would dearly love to have a confrere willing to teach in these areas. There are also plenty of opportunities for pastoral ministry, adult education, CM vocations cultivation and popular missions to isolated communities. We warmly invite you. Primary apostolate: Holy Name of Mary Seminary; other apostolates in order of their importance as we see them: Red Beach Vocations House, Good Shepherd Parish, Nazareth Apostolic Center, Burns Creek Settlement, Honaira Prison. New possibilities: a parish in nearby **Auki** Diocese (Solomon Islands' most populated and vibrant diocese), CM formation (currently our students are sent to Fiji.) We are planning to offer a 'Solomon Islands Experience' to allow confreres to see the needs here, to discern their own response, and to spread the word." The language is English and pidgin English.

3. **El Alto, Bolivia.** Some may recall that in one of our past circulars for *tempo forte*, I announced a restructuring of our mission in El Alto, Bolivia. That restructuring is coming to a completion at this time. Our attempt has been to have confreres closer together so that they might support each other and might be able to live out what our Constitutions call us to, community for mission. As a result we have had to give up one of the three mission parishes that we have in El Alto. Two confreres will live together in one of the mission parishes and two in the other mission parish. One of the members of this team of four has recently arrived on 28 September, Father Aidan Rooney, from the Eastern Province of the United States. He joins Father Diego Plá in Mocomoco. The superior of the mission, Father Aníbal Vera will live together with Father Cyrille De La Barre de Nanteuil in Italaque. At the end of this year, one of the missionaries who has been there for ten years, Father Abdo Eid will be returning to his province of origin after having given ten generous years in the mission in El Alto and with the hope of resting up in order that he might assume yet another mission experience in the near future. I am very grateful to the generosity that Abdo has expressed throughout these years in El Alto with his special contribution being given to our seminarians, those of La Paz, El Alto, as well as his work with university students.
4. We are also opening a new mission as was mentioned in a former circular, in **Cochabamba**. On 7 October, we have had a visit from the Archbishop of Cochabamba to discuss further

details of this new mission where we hope to have at least three confreres, one of them being the Director of the Daughters of Charity of Bolivia. I write to request yet a fourth member for this house because as I listened to the Bishop, with his pastoral vicar, the needs are great and the work is vast. The confreres who will be working in this mission will collaborate also with the Daughters of Charity who have four houses in the area as well as other branches of the Vincentian Family, particularly a community of the Vincentian Marian Youth from Spain. The language in both El Alto and Cochabamba is Spanish plus Aymara and Quechua respectively.

## NEW MISSIONS

5. I recently received a letter from a Bishop in **Angola**. He says the following: "I was recently named Bishop of the Diocese of Mbanza Congo, Angola. Visiting the diocese I was struck by the lack of diocesan clergy and missionaries as well. Some information concerning the diocese that is situated in the north of Angola, area in km<sup>2</sup> 39,459. Inhabitants 676,400. Catholics 339,300. Parishes 6. Diocesan priests 6, religious priests 12, religious women 33. As you can tell, missionary personnel is very limited. In order to assist the Catholic population present in the diocese and not only them I confidently and humbly write, looking to your congregation with the possibility of opening a presence in our diocese having as the principal reason, the evangelization *ad gentes*, or the direction of our minor seminary. With the hope of having a positive response, I renew my sentiments of respect and consideration with regard to your person. And I thank you ahead of time for your generosity and availability. In faith, Vicente Carlos Kiaziku, OFM Cap. Bishop of Mbanza Congo." The language is Portuguese.

## PROVINCIAL MISSIONS

6. Parish-Mission Santiago Apóstol, Amubri, Talamanca, **Costa Rica**. William Benavides Araya tells us: "The parish is in a mountainous area of Talamanca. It is inhabited by 10,000 indigenous Bribris and 3,000 Cabécares. The region has 33 communities in the district of Bratsi and Telire. The parish center is in Amubri and in order to get there you must go to a place called Suretka (canton Talamanca, province of Limón), and cross the river Telire and Lari by boat and then on foot 8 kilometers

(actually there is a bus) to the parish center. There are in Amubri means of communication, public transport, electric lights, running water, radio stations, a school, a college, a health center and internet access. The character of our people is very simple: they are open and generous, but at the same time careful in the way they act and reserved in their customs. The typical family is made up of a mother and children or grandmother and grandchildren; the father is usually absent. The young people are drawn into the consumer society: hedonistic, conformist, quickly losing their customs and traditions. We rely on pastoral agents in the different communities; their leadership is fundamental. In the area of religion, Catholicism still is followed for the most part although the sects 'attack' each time with more strength. The Church is weak and the commitment of the Christian community is misunderstood. Nevertheless we encounter expressions of faith and willingness to go forward. The vice-province of Costa Rica makes a call to the Congregation throughout the world for some missionaries who want to share this way of faith with the indigenous of Talamanca so that our brothers may also enjoy the privilege of knowing deeply the Reign of God in them." The language is Spanish.

7. We have received a request from the vice-visitor of **Costa Rica**, Oscar Mata, for an experienced formator to accompany the seminarians in the formation residence in Ipís. The language in Costa Rica is Spanish. The house of formation is located in a poor section of the town, providing ample places for pastoral activities on the part of the students as well as the formator. Also living in the house is the director of the lay missionary movement and the director for vocations.
8. **Cuba.** Once again I make an appeal for our small province of Cuba, which is always in need of further missionary support. Thank God, this year we have a new missionary in place there, Father Angel Garrido, former missionary for many years in Madagascar, originally from the province of Madrid, Spain. As you know we have very few confreres there but they are hard-working and good men, and yet advancing in age and needing assistance and support from younger confreres. The language in Cuba is Spanish, but one has to learn to live within the limits of a political, social structure that is unique unto itself.
9. **Honduras.** The province of Barcelona requests assistance in their mission in Honduras. At the present time we have the support of two confreres from other provinces, Father Miguel

Angel Renes from the Province of Madrid and Alexander Cortez from the province of Central America. The need for accompaniment on the part of the people is particularly important in these times of turmoil and political unrest in the country. The mission involves a great deal of work with lay missionaries and pastoral team ministry. The language is Spanish and Moskitia.

10. Recently I received a request from the new visitor of the Province of **Congo**, Father Stanislav Zontak, appealing for a mature confrere with experience in formation. The province of Congo is very blessed with vocations but the men in general are very young and lacking in experience in formation. So he puts out this urgent appeal. The language spoken in French.
11. **China** continually makes this appeal for the very international community of the province in Taiwan; but I want to make a more special appeal for confreres to participate in a new experience in mainland China where presently the province has three confreres: one Polish confrere, Pawel Wierzbicki, an American confrere, Tom Sendlein, and a Dutch confrere, Henk De Cuijper. This past year there has been a new volunteer from the Province of the Philippines, Father Francis Cruz, who has also been working in a special ministry in mainland China, as well as a confrere from the province of Ireland, Father Pdraig Regan who generously gave six months to the mission in mainland China. I have asked, together with the Province of China, the Conference of Asia Pacific, to study the situation of preparation for evangelization in mainland China as many religious congregations throughout the world are doing. Father Pdraig wrote and told me that there are vocations. With patience, good guidance, and a mature vocation plan in process we can attract young Chinese men who are being called to give their lives to evangelize the poor.
12. Another regular request is from the **vice-province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius**, an area that is challenging and yet promising for evangelizers. Gradually the vice-province is nurturing vocations from the Ukraine as well as Belarus and yet not fast enough to be able to respond to the various needs that the vice-province has, since a number of the missionaries who have served there are returning to their provinces of origin. Members of the Congregation of the Mission can learn much from the former vice-visitor, a veteran missionary, Father Paul Roche who after having finished his term as vice-visitor, continues to remain

in the mission, offering himself to serve in Siberia. Would that there be other young men in the Congregation of the Mission willing to make this sacrifice to serve an area of the world that clambers to know God's love in the Christian Catholic faith. The common language of the confreres in the vice-province is Russian.

13. Another province that is certainly a missionary territory and has requested assistance, being one of the first territories Saint Vincent de Paul began to send missionaries, is **Madagascar**. The Province of Madagascar has requested from the province of Paris possible missionaries from Vietnam where God has blessed this region with an abundance of vocations. The languages are French and Malagasy.
14. Another missionary province that is always in need of assistance is **Mozambique**. It has a number of confreres from Portugal as well as from Mexico and we are delighted to be able to say that other provinces and vice-provinces in Africa have also been supporting the mission in Mozambique. There are recently arrived two young confreres from the province of Nigeria, Gabriel Ugwunwangwu and Nicholas Ikpeme as well as confreres from Ethiopia, Brazil and Congo. Also in Mozambique is the mission of the province of Salamanca, in Nacala, where presently there is a community of Vincentian Marian Youth and two confreres, one from Spain and the other from Eritrea. It is a mission that needs at least one more confrere in order to make the experience more viable and less stressing for those who make up the mission team. The languages are Portuguese and other local languages.
15. Possibly **Equatorial Guinea**. MISEVI, Spain has initiated steps towards opening a new community. They will be supported by the Daughters who are there. They would hope that the CM too would join the missionary effort. The language is Spanish.

I conclude with the initial part of our prayer for 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth into heaven of our Founders:

Lord God Almighty, Father of the poor, you give us the grace to celebrate this year the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St. Vincent and St. Louise. Through their intercession grant that we allow ourselves to be transformed more fully by the Spirit you gave them. May the Spirit of Charity so fill our hearts

and minds that our love for our brothers and sisters, who are marginalized and rejected by society, be gentle, attentive, compassionate, proactive and inventive unto infinity.

Help us make our faith strong and humble in a world that seems so far away from you yet that thirsts so much for you. Make us become a sign of hope for many, as were Vincent and Louise.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

Please see next page for important information

### 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 2009.
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. Details will vary according to the particular place to which a confrere is sent.
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.famvin.org/vso](http://www.famvin.org/vso)). The well for the micro-project grants is going dry. There is less than one year of funding left. Donations to the Vincentian Solidarity Fund are the only source of funding for these micro-project grants.**

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

**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:

John Gouldrick, C.M.  
Treasurer General  
Via dei Capasso, 30  
00164 Roma Italy

2. Other possibilities for bank transfers can be discussed with the Treasurer General.

**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.