

TEMPO FORTE CIRCULAR
(7-12 December 2009)

Rome, 29 December 2009

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My dear Brothers in Saint Vincent,

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

I write to inform you of the different activities that we carried out in our *tempo forte* meeting 7-12 December. Our ongoing formation for this *tempo forte* dealt with the Synod of Africa presented by Father Gian Paolo Pezzi, a Camboni Father with many years of experience as a missionary in different parts of the world including Africa. The interchange was very lively and well appreciated by the members of the Curia.

As special guests this week we also had Dan Borlik, who reported to us on his canonical visit to the Province of North India, a visit that he carried out in the name of the Superior General during the month on November and a part of the month of December; and from the new Visitor of Congo, Father Stanislav Zonták who gave us an update on the situation in the province as he has begun his new role there accompanying the confreres.

1. During the whole week we had the company of the Preparatory Commission of the **General Assembly 2010**. We met with them at the beginning of the *tempo forte* session as well as at its closing to bring together the final preparations for the General Assembly. They worked specifically on updating the Directory, the calendar of events for the General Assembly and the liturgical preparations, as well as the *documentum laboris* which is now a ***documentum of consultation*** which will be sent to all the participants of the General Assembly in preparation for the General Assembly along with a cover letter from the Superior General. Other matters regarding the General Assembly were that we reviewed the list of participants and we determined the logo for the General Assembly 2010 which was done by our

confrere from the Province of Paris, Father Alexis Cerquera. We also had a report from the Statutes Committee. This Committee is headed by Father Alberto Vernaschi who was here prior to the beginning of the *tempo forte* to finalize the work, together with Father Giuseppe Turati who is also the coordinator of the Preparatory Commission of the General Assembly.

2. We discussed the **activities for the 350th anniversary** of the passage from earth to heaven of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac. We discussed the letter from Father Maloney regarding the Haiti project and the invitation to present names for the person who will be responsible for developing the micro project in Haiti. We read a report from the Secretariate Commission, particularly information received concerning the booklet that has been prepared for the 350th, but has had a very poor response from the different provinces throughout the Congregation. The booklet is intended to help us not only have a remembrance of the 350th, but as a concrete, simple way of sharing with others information about our Holy Founders and the charism as it is lived today. We studied two petitions from confreres from Brazil regarding ways of being able to celebrate more intensely the 350th. We congratulate these confreres on their creativity and hope that in one way or another their requests can be met.
3. We worked on the final details of the **New Visitors Meeting** which will take place 6-12 January when we hope for the participation of 17 new Visitors. The main objective of the meeting is to analyze and study the *Practical Guide for the Visitor* in order that they are prepared to give quality service in their mission as Visitors for the Congregation. The methodology will be mostly workshops in which each one will have the opportunity to participate in the different themes presented. The presenters will be the Superior General, the General Council and other members of the Curia as well as Corpus Delgado who will coordinate the workshop once again.
4. We discussed a memo from the Executive Secretary of **SIEV**, Father Julio Suescun, giving us an update on the different activities that were discussed at the last SIEV meeting. Among them is the intention to have another workshop for Vincentian investigators in 2011 and hopefully, at the same time, another workshop on Islam. Father Eugene Curran will organize an activity at All Hallows, in Dublin, concerning Saint Vincent de Paul in his social context.

5. We discussed a document from the **Union of Superiors General** on the theme of HIV/Aids and how that is to be dealt with in a pastoral manner. The Council decided to send a copy of this document for the internal use of the Visitors and their Councils. It is a theme that will be treated in one of the workshops that we will have during our General Assembly.

6. We treated a number of **economic matters** of which the longest discussion dealt with how to speak in the General Assembly about the need for a Common Fund for ongoing and initial formation, the needs of the missionaries and support of the elderly confreres. We want to move from simply presuming on good intentions and generosity of one province to another to a sense of solidarity that includes charity and justice.

We approved a number of budgets for the different offices of the Congregation of the Mission, including CIF, VSO, the Vincentian Family, our Vincentian Library and Archives in the Curia, the COVIAM Assistant, Vincentian Marian Youth International Secretariat, MISEVI International, the UN Representative and prioritizing extraordinary maintenance needs of the General Curia. The Curia building is beginning to show its age. The building is debilitating and the expenses for maintenance increase every year. We are concerned, not only about the conditions inside the house, but also around the house. As those of you who have visited the Curia know, we have a beautiful garden and yet some of the trees are growing out of control and becoming dangerous because of the proximity to the houses in the neighborhood. All such matters of maintenance, extraordinary or normal today, are a very high expense. Therefore we have to prioritize what we can do now and what can we put off until another year.

7. We studied the **VSO report** from Father Miles Heinen, its Executive Director. Since our last *tempo forte*, VSO has taken on two new projects: one in the international mission of Papua New Guinea and the other in the Vice-Province of Nigeria. In his report Father Miles also spoke about two VSF micro project grants, one for the Province of Southern India in Tanzania and the other for the Vice-Province of Mozambique. The VSO is promoting an Advent appeal to the confreres of the United States in favor of two projects in Ethiopia. The VSO is also working together with Father Bob Maloney concerning the micro finance project in Haiti. Father Miles provided us with a chart that included a breakdown of projects by type, projects by activity and

total financing of projects by province. We recommend that you check out the Vincentian Solidarity Office Bulletin that can be found on their web page, www.famvin.org/vso.

8. We received reports from the **CIF program**: one by Father José Antonio Ubillús, the Assistant who is the liaison between CIF and the General Council, and one from its Director, Marcelo Manimtim. In the most recent CIF session all of the participants were from developing countries. There were no participants from either Europe or the United States, which is a trend in the CIF program itself. The difficulty we have is not being able to provide half-scholarships for the different participants. A request will be made with the assistance of the Vincentian Solidarity Office and provinces providing scholarships for confreres. In the past, we received pledges of assistance; as of the last year, we had received pledges only from two provinces. Therefore the fund for scholarships is dwindling. Every year the CIF program, although we consider it a very valuable means for the Congregation of the Mission regarding ongoing formation at an international level, becomes an expensive item in the General Curia budget. We are doing our best to sustain this project. We count on the assistance of provinces that are able to support it financially.

We studied the program for the sessions for Brothers that will be held 9 April - 4 June 2010. The program is well developed with a number of different conferences focused on the identity of members of the Congregation in general and particularly the identity of Brothers. We have also approved to open this workshop for Brothers from other religious Congregations of Brothers who share our Vincentian charism. I encourage all Visitors to consider the possibility of sending at least a representation of their Brothers to this workshop which will be beneficial for their ongoing formation as well as for their being able to share that information with the other Brothers of the provinces.

We also approved the possible shift in schedules for the program by recommending that the larger program be from April to June, the heritage session from September to October, and the Servant Leadership workshops be in February and/or July. The reason for the shift is that since the majority of the participants are coming from the Southern Hemisphere and tropical climates, it is more preferable that they be in Paris in the seasons that are more tolerable for them.

9. We received a report from Father Manny Ginete. He participated in **Vincentian Family** formation sessions in three cities in the Philippines from 16-18 October. He was there to animate the regional Vincentian Family coordinating Councils in regard to the 350th anniversary celebrations. In all he had a total of 300+ participants in the three cities, from various branches of the Vincentian Family. The outcome of these discussions was a resolution to have continuing formation sessions on the Vincentian charism once a month.

Father Ginete also reported on the AIC Asian meeting in Bangkok from 6-8 November prior to the continental session for the Vincentian Family Leaders and Advisors. The continental session, held 9-13 November in Bangkok with a focus on systemic change, brought together just under 80 participants from 12 Asian countries. The various branches present agreed to form a Vincentian Family Coordinating Council for Asia-Oceania. According to Father Ginete, the greatest achievement of the meeting was the sense of being Vincentian Family in Asia.

Father Ginete also reported his participation in a few of the days of the AMM International Assembly which was held in Paris 16-20 November. There were 66 delegates from 27 countries present. The Assembly had the objective of consolidating the Association of the Miraculous Medal through the elaboration of new General Statutes. The Assembly was timed to coincide with the closing of the centenary of the Pontifical approval of the AMM Statutes in 1909.

Father Ginete then reported on his participation in the CIF session 20-21 November, focusing on the two collaborative projects, namely the continental sessions and the 350th anniversary celebration.

10. We studied the minutes of the second meeting of the Commission for the **Vincentian Family Youth Gathering** which will take place 13-15 August prior to the World Youth Day in 2011 in Madrid, Spain. The theme selected is *Vincentians: A Style of Life for Today*. Three aspects will be reflected on over these three days: To be and not to pretend to be; rooted in Christ by example of Saint Vincent de Paul; with Mary we are called to be sowers of hope. Among the objectives are to deepen the specific knowledge of the life and spirituality of Saint Vincent de Paul and other witnesses from the Vincentian Family; to improve the knowledge and experience of the Vincentian charism as well as Marian spirituality; to come to know the Vincentian Family from

different points of the world; to deepen our relationships with one another; to celebrate the richness of our charism in the Church; to allow for a meeting with oneself, with others and with God. The Gathering will be significant for growth in faith of all youth and also provide space for meeting, sharing, establishing relationships both personal and institutional. The planners are preparing for some 2000 Vincentian Youth members. During the World Youth Week there will also be another Vincentian Gathering on 17 August. The Committee will be soliciting a space on the famvin web page in order to share more information and encourage participation in this activity.

11. We received a report from John Freund, the coordinator of the **web page** for the Vincentian Family. Some of the discussion was around the question of how to make the General Assembly available to the members of the Congregation of the Mission. There is a good possibility that much of the presentations and the round table discussions can be presented live and also through the use of You Tube. Father Freund, through the Vincentian Family web page, has also expanded some activities, one is creating maps of the different provinces of the Congregation of the Mission. Check out the web page to see the different initiatives to give us a greater knowledge of the Congregation and the Vincentian Family (<http://vinformation.famvin.org>).
12. We reviewed reports from **CLAPVI**, **COVIAM**, and **NVC** (the National Visitors Conference of the United States). We reviewed the situation in our three international missions. Regarding El Alto, Bolivia we spoke about the expansion of that mission which will take place in the near future in Cochabamba. At this time we have two confreres with the hope of finding a third and perhaps a fourth to help minister in this area. With regard to the mission in the Solomon Islands, we studied their community plan and admired their enthusiasm to move this mission forward not only as a seminary but also to different other pastoral activities linked with the seminary. At present there are only six confreres in this mission and we desperately need personnel to maintain the philosophy/theology seminary, the formation for our own candidates, as well as formation of the catechists and other ministries in the area that the confreres are involved in. In other aspects regarding the missions, we received from the Visitor of China, an update on the state of the Province of China with a growing number of candidates for the Congregation both discerners and diocesan priests who desire to become part of the

Congregation of the Mission. This year the Province of China celebrates the 310th anniversary of the presence of missionaries in China. We encourage confreres to get to know the province and different aspects of its works and to consider being part of the effort to prepare for mission in mainland China.

We received a letter from the Bishop of Asmara, Eritrea, inviting the availability of confreres that would be able to deal with the diaspora of Eritrean refugees. That information was passed on to the Visitor of Eritrea. The Vice-Province of St. Justin de Jacobis is doing a number of different things related to its fellow countrymen living in extreme situations of suffering hunger and the like. We made a decision as a General Curia to contribute to a fund to help feed the poor in Eritrea and we invite any and all provinces and confreres within the provinces to consider a donation to help curb this most immediate need since there has been a drought and now an extended famine in Eritrea.

We received requests from six confreres to participate in the international missions. Of those six, hopefully three will be able to be placed within the next year.

13. We shared our **calendars** from January, February and March 2010. The members of the General Council and the Superior General will be participating in the New Visitors Meeting. The Superior General will also be involved in the international meeting of the Vincentian Marian Youth. He will participate in the establishment of the new Western Province in the United States. He will gather with other members of the Vincentian Family at the end of January for their session of ongoing formation. He will participate in February in the General Assembly of MISEVI in Bogota, Colombia. He hopes to visit the Vice-Province of Mozambique and the Daughters of Charity in Angola to finish out the month of February. In March he will be participating in an activity in Madrid for the Vincentian Family, in Paris for the feast of Saint Louise de Marillac, Lebanon for the anniversary of the high school in Antoura, in Paris for the Vows of the Daughters of Charity and he will share Holy Week with a confrere who works on the Indian Reservation in the United States and hopes to have the opportunity to visit some of the Daughters of Charity who work in that area.

Tempo forte this time took longer than usual. It was six days with sessions every morning and two days with sessions in the afternoon. We are working hard for the well being of the Congregation of the

Mission and its participation in the Vincentian Family. We appreciate your support and your prayers, and you can be assured that you are in our prayers as we try to live our Vincentian charism.

I take this opportunity to wish all of you a most holy and happy Christmas season, welcoming once again in the midst of our lives the Child God with us.

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, sweeping underline.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General