

LINES OF ACTION 2010-2016

“CREATIVE FIDELITY FOR THE MISSION”

The XLI General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission, held in Paris, on the 350th anniversary of the fullness of life of St. Vincent de Paul and of St. Louise de Marillac (1660-2010), with the motto “Creative Fidelity for the Mission”

- recognizes its responsibility for a great heritage, from St. Vincent and the first missionaries up to our day
- docile to the Holy Spirit, wishes to make more dynamic its fidelity in creativity to the Mission
- commits itself to recreate the charism, attentive to the signs of our times

Followers of Jesus Christ, evangelizer of the poor, we let ourselves be formed by: the voice of the Word, creation and history; the face of the Word, Jesus Christ and the poor; the house of the Word, the church and the community; and the paths of the Word, the Mission (cf. XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “The Word of God in the life and in the mission of the Church,” Final message, Rome 2008).

I. FIDELITY

“...I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus.... Let us, with regard to what we have attained, continue on the same course” (Phil 3:13-16).

“While we are on the way” (Lk 24:13-14) like the disciples of Emmaus on Easter day we discovered Jesus, the Lord, the one who gives meaning to all we have lived in these last years:

1. At the social level

- the increase of poverty and misery
- the increase of vulnerability among the poor, children, women, young people and the aged

- the economic, ecological and human impact of the present day world wide financial crisis
- the influence of socio-cultural changes on the commitment to stability, the life of prayer and the community life of the missionaries
- the new awareness with regard to the Millennium Goals
- the search for peace with social justice

2. At the level of the Church

- the search for God outside the Church and outside the traditional religious experiences
- the hunger for the Word of God

3. At the level of the Congregation

- the revision of our life in the light of the Constitutions in the 2004 Assembly and the revision of the Statutes of the Congregation in the 2010 Assembly
- the compassion with and for confreres in difficulty
- the movement towards interprovincial formation experiences
- the interchange of missionaries, our greatest resource and economic resources among provinces
- the reflection on reconfiguration for the vitality of our Provinces
- the strengthening of the Conferences of Visitors
- the consolidation of economic resources for formation, the mission and the poor

II. CREATIVITY

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”
(Heb 13:8).

While listening to Jesus, the Lord, who has come to “evangelize the poor” (Lk 4:18) and thus “make all things new” (Rev 21:5), we renew our CONVICTION: “The Congregation of the Mission, always attentive to the gospel, the signs of the times, and the more urgent needs of the Church, will do its best to open new paths and apply means adapted to the circumstances of time and place, will also strive to evaluate and order its works and ministries, remaining always in a state of continual conversion” (C. 2).

The suffering faces of the poor are the suffering faces of Christ (cf. Mt 25:40). They question how we live the Vincentian charism, since whatever has to do with Christ passes through the evangelical option for the poor, and everything related to the poor calls for Jesus Christ.

Based on these CONVICTIONS, we dream about the future of the Congregation and the Congregation of the future: more deeply rooted in the experience of God; more committed to the lot of the poor and to the formation of priests and the laity; more identified with the unity and diversity in the Trinity (C. 20); more mystical and prophetic; more daring and inventive; smaller, but with a life style that gives greater witness and greater hope with the aim of constructing the Kingdom of God among the poor.

III. FOR THE MISSION

“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit... and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day.... He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free...’” (Lk 4:14-18).

“In this vocation, we are very much in conformity with our Lord Jesus Christ, who seems to have made his principal aim, in coming into the world, to assist poor people and to take care of them. And if we ask our Lord, ‘what did you come to do on earth?’ ‘to assist the poor...’ Would it not be it be a great honor for a missionary to be able to say with our Lord, Misit me evangelizare pauperi-bus? I am here to catechize, instruct, hear confessions and assist persons who are poor” (SV XI, pp. 98-99).

As missionaries, “disciples of the Lord” (cf. V General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops, Aparecida 2007) who have come “that all may have life and have it more abundantly” (Jn 10:10), the members of the Congregation of the Mission resolve to develop in the next six years, the following **LINES OF ACTION**:

1. Formation: (initial and ongoing)

- To place the Word of God and Jesus Christ, the Word, the *Rule of the Mission*, at the center of our life and mission as the axis of our formation, spirituality and evangelizing action (cf. CR II).

- To strengthen in our spirituality and in our commitment the mystical-prophetic and communal dimensions.
- To create formation programs that strengthen our fidelity to the vocation and our response to the needs of the 21st century.
- To assume our ongoing formation as our daily commitment, embracing our prayer, our reflection on our experiences, our living out of our ministry.
- To foster openness to the opportunity offered by the new languages and the techniques of the digital world with a critical sense, and in view of the Communion and the Mission.
- To foster the interchange of formational experiences at the level of the Conferences of Visitors and of the whole Congregation.
- To reflect on, at the level of our local communities, Provinces and Conferences new ministerial spaces for the Brothers' vocation.

2. Reconfiguration

- To explore in our local communities, provincial government teams, provincial assemblies and Conferences the idea of reconfiguration in its "intra"-provincial and "inter"-provincial senses, and its importance for the future of the Congregation.
- To cultivate a vital and concrete sense of belonging to the Congregation that goes beyond the sense of belonging to a local and Provincial community.
- To create spaces for inter-provincial collaboration at the administrative level.
- To share human and financial resources.

3. Dialogue with the Poor and with the Vincentian Family

a) With the Poor

- To listen to the poor in every one of our ministries and make an effort to participate in their lives, sufferings and hopes.
- To make an effort to share with the poor the dynamics that can enable them to become subjects of their own history, protagonists of their destiny and agents of their own freedom.

b) With the Vincentian Family as Vincentian Family

- To foster theological reflection on the challenges and the good that arise from sharing the charism with the laity.

- To intensify the collaboration with the Vincentian Family in the area of formation, especially in relation to Vincentian spirituality, the social doctrine of the church and lay leadership so as to assure their transforming presence on behalf of the poor.
- To commit ourselves to work in the evangelization of the poor together with the members of the Vincentian Family and other ecclesial groups, and also participate with social organisms in the defense and promotion of the poor.

4. Creativity in our Ministries

- To review our ministries and the structures of our community life to enhance their missionary dimension.
- To foster personal availability and mobility to participate in new and challenging missionary projects.
- To undertake new forms of service to the clergy, from welcoming them, to pastoral and spiritual support, mutual collaboration and missionary formation.
- To support at the provincial level challenging works.
- To support pastoral practices centered on the Word of God, attention to the signs of the times and a central role for the laity.
- To undertake new works of evangelization in the area of new emerging cultures, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.
- To go to the most distant (*missions ad gentes*) and to draw near to the most withdrawn (*missions inter gentes*).
- To participate at the Provincial and Conference levels in commissions for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

5. The Methodology of Systemic Change

- To favor works that promote systemic change in society, develop local self-government, formation of self-help groups and indigenous micro-credit programs.
- To be attentive to the signs of the times in the present global context so that social realities may be pervaded by an evangelical orientation so that the civic participation is centered on the cry of the poor in fidelity to the style Vincent de Paul used during his lifetime.
- To favor team work and networking.
- To form missionaries with a methodology and a spirituality that favor personal conversion and pastoral and structural change.

- To provide legal assistance for the defense of the poor and the promotion of justice.
- To create programs that counteract human trafficking and assure the promotion of life, access to universal health care, care for the environment, the dignity of women and children, the rights of migrants and participation in civil society.

During the Assembly we have met in Continental groups, and after having considered these Lines of Action, we have proposed the following COMMITMENTS:

APVC

We commit ourselves to:

1. Ongoing Formation

- a) To continue the formation of formators deepening it with immersion experiences and themes relevant to the Asia-Pacific context.
- b) To put up an APVC website to help in the continuing formation of confreres and to foster dialogue among our communities.

2. Reconfiguration

- a) To explore possibilities of common initial formation among our candidates in different levels wherever and whenever possible.
- b) To explore possibilities of sharing our professional and human resources among our provinces.

3. Dialogue with the Poor and with the Vincentian Family

- a) To create structures that can really make us listen to the concrete stories of the poor and to share effective programs already practiced in our individual Provinces.
- b) To organize common formation activities among members of the Vincentian family facilitated by the CM continental representative to the Vincentian Family in the region.

4. Creativity in our Ministries

To explore new forms of popular mission relevant to the needs of our times and our differing contexts.

5. The Methodology of Systemic Change

To explore possibilities of a common ministry among displaced peoples and migrant workers in Asia-Pacific countries.

CEVIM

We commit ourselves to:

1. Ongoing Formation

To continue our present sessions of ongoing formation especially for confreres working in Pastoral Ministry. Next session will be for confreres in Pastoral Work with Young People.

2. Reconfiguration

To explore the possibility of setting up an Interprovincial Theologate at a European level or at least for the Mediterranean Countries using a single language base.

3. Dialogue with the Poor and with the Vincentian Family

In Europe there is a great diversity of groups and experiences with their origin in the Vincentian charism. We intend to:

- assess the extent of this diversity
- take time to know them and their lives
- listen and dialogue and develop further links
- develop a follow up program.

It means organizing a European Meeting and inviting representatives of these groups sharing in our charism.

4. Creativity in our Ministries

Explore the possibility of setting up an Interprovincial Community at the level of CEVIM, to take on a 'Cutting Edge' ministry or ministries especially in our existing Vincentian Missions in Europe.

5. The Methodology of Systemic Change

To have 3 sessions in different languages (English, Spanish and Italian) on the Methodology of Systemic Change involving all the Vincentian Family living in the above language areas in Europe.

CLAPVI

We commit ourselves to:

1. Ongoing Formation:

To support and participate in the different opportunities of formation already existing in CLAPVI.

2. Reconfiguration

- a) To revise our works in order to be more available in supporting our essential ministries.
- b) To support projects of interprovincial collaboration already existing.

3. Dialogue with the Poor and with the Vincentian Family

- a) To promote direct relations with the poor to listen to them and to share in some way their destiny.
- b) To create in each province a school of formation for lay people open to the Vincentian Family.

4. Creativity in our Ministries

To create a web page to share the different ministries of the province.

5. The Methodology of Systemic Change

- a) To review our social works in the light of the criteria of Systemic Change.
- b) Create a team at the interprovincial level that can help us find and spread the contents and the dynamics of Systemic Change.

COVIAM

We commit ourselves to:

1. Ongoing Formation

- a) To continue the program of formation for formators and also opening it to include formation for other ministries.
- b) To deepen Vincentian spirituality in Africa/Madagascar through ongoing formation and encouraging confreres to be more involved in Vincentian studies.

2. Reconfiguration

To promote the already existing common interprovincial formation.

3. Dialogue with the Poor and with the Vincentian Family

To continue to collaborate with the Vincentian Family in the fight against malaria, HIV-AIDS and hunger.

4. Creativity in our Ministries

To deepen in our pastoral activities the reconciliation between tribes or different groups that fight each other and as far as

possible create ministries that promote peace according to the Second Synod of Africa.

5. The Methodology of Systemic Change

To work with the confreres in the UN and Vincentian family in finding possible ways to reduce the problem of women trafficking in Africa/Madagascar.

NCV

We commit ourselves to:

1. Ongoing Formation

Under the guidance of the NCV and their Councils:

- a) To offer regional presentations to the confreres on the topics and fruits of the General Assembly.
- b) To plan bi-annual ongoing formation sessions for members who are vowed/ordained from one to five years.

2. Reconfiguration

- a) To continue planning the National (Initial) Formation Program.
- b) To continue the Reconfiguration Process:
 - In USA West the creation of a new provincial culture and a wider understanding of reconfiguration.
 - In USA East, New England, and West continue dialogue on collaboration and future reconfiguration.

3. Dialogue with the Poor and with the Vincentian Family

On a provincial level, to reestablish regular communication with the leaders of the Vincentian Family in America.

4. Creativity in our Ministries

- a) To schedule gatherings of confreres in like ministries to evaluate their apostolates using the Lines of Action #4.
- b) Under the guidance of the NCV, to sponsor a new creative ministry based on Lines of Action #4.

5. Methodology of Systemic Change

- a) Using the “ZAFEN” Haiti micro-lending project, to encourage confreres to participate and learn more about Systemic Change.
- b) NCV will explore other Haiti Initiatives.

Lord God almighty, Father of the poor, help us to be a sign of hope for many, as were St. Vincent and St. Louise, simple companions on the journey through the sea of life. And may our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, *“who understood more deeply than any believers the teachings of the gospel and made them a reality in her life”* (C. 49) in whose house we have held our Assembly, encourage us on our way to creative fidelity to the Mission.