

GENERAL CURIA

MISSION AWARD FOR 2010

Rome, 30 July 2010

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!

In the context of the 350th anniversary of the death of our Founders and our emphasis on “Charity and Mission” and through the example of St. Justin de Jacobis on whose feast we present these Awards, I announce to the worldwide Congregation the five projects that were granted the **Mission Award for 2010**. I want to thank the recipients of this award for their missionary creativity in their evangelization of the poor. I hope that all the projects presented will help to stimulate missionary creativity among confreres in other provinces.

Here is a brief description of each of the projects.

Curitiba, Brazil

Project to revive the faith and the life of the small farmers in the District of Jaciaba, Prudentópolis, Paraná

The parish of Saint John the Baptist in the Diocese of Guarapuava, the state of Paraná is ministered by four Vincentian priests of the Congregation of the Mission, the Province of Curitiba. The parish extends for 2,307,897 square kilometers and is composed of seventy-nine communities (chapels) which are about forty kilometers from the main parish center... 50% of the roads are gravel, another 40% are dirt roads and 10% are asphalt.

The parish is subdivided into ten pastoral sectors which enables the missionaries to better minister to the people. The District of Jaciaba has two sectors: Jaciaba and Erva Fraqueza with twenty-three communities... the closest community is 50 kilometers away and the most distant one is 113 kilometers and are very difficult to reach... when it rains the only means of travel is either by foot or horse.

The population of the district is approximately five thousand inhabitants who earn their living through the cultivation of beans, corn and rice. The people are experiencing a gradual process of material and spiritual impoverishment, victims of the lack of a farm policy that is geared toward agricultural workers who live and work on small parcels of land.

Each year the communities become smaller as people, especially adolescents and young adults, migrate to the urban centers in search of better living conditions. Young people in the rural areas see no future there because of the lack of political support, technical support and above all the lack of agricultural associations and cooperatives.

Because of this phenomenon of the exodus from the rural areas, the communities (chapels) have no structure and the pastoral activities and many other services become lifeless and lose sight of their objectives. Families are torn apart by alcoholism, drugs, domestic violence, prostitution and the disorder of the usual customs.

At the present time the parish has a plan for Biblical-pastoral formation and the preparation of leaders for different forms of ministry as well as leaders for the different movements and associations. All of this is an attempt at a gradual, integral promotion to call Catholic Christians within the framework of the Document of Aparecida, the fruit of the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops.

This plan offers: a theology course for lay people; a Biblical school with eight levels; a post-graduate course in philosophy, human, ethical and Christian values; shorter courses for the formation of catechists, ministers of the popular missions, coordinators of different pastoral models and coordinators of pastoral councils in the communities.

Guatemala, Central America
Saint Vincent de Paul Parish
Colonia Bethania

Woe is me if I do not evangelize!

Aware of the fact that evangelization is a fundamental task of the Christian and because this task has not been assumed with responsibility and love, people have wandered in directions different from those marked out by Jesus. Our parish wanted to set out in a new direction and five years ago initiated a parish reorganization based on a team approach to ministry. Beginning with the formation of pastoral agents we were able to engage in a missionary endeavor under the words: *Woe is me if I do not evangelize!*

The missionary work was initiated three years ago and in stages we reached out to every one of the sectors of Bethania which resulted in the creation of “mission houses” among the residences of those evangelized.

In the present year we are making efforts to clarify these bonds so that our parish can become a missionary parish par excellence, with a permanent and systematic evangelization process. In a one month period we plan to reach out to the main center of each sector where the popular mission has not yet been preached. This effort represents a great financial expense which we are unable to cover. Even though the missionaries are willing to engage in this evangelizing effort, we need to prepare them for said mission.

The purpose of the project is to form evangelizers so that as a result of the mission they become integrated into the “mission houses,” thus becoming pastoral agents. With this greater number of missionaries we will be able to evangelize those who have been baptized but who, for one reason or another, have distanced themselves from the Church. We hope to be able to integrate these individuals into the life of the parish as true Catholic Christians and also promote vocations in these different sectors.

El Alto, Bolivia
“A Mobile Platform for Internet-based Vincentian Formation”

- The project is primarily intended for use in missions *ad gentes*, where technology and infrastructure are rudimentary.
- The project is primarily new media-oriented, creatively capitalizing on advanced technology.

- The project is primarily a lay formation program — especially VMY (JMV), AIC, SSVDP and lay leaders of the parishes of Mocomoco and Italaque, but materials and technology will be utilized for Vincentian clergy and diocesan clergy formation.

I have been experimenting with different social media connections (Facebook and other social networking platforms, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr), and using VinFormation materials to resource and educate youth groups and Vincentian lay Missionaries-USA for several years now. Working as a volunteer technical advisor with Aymara youth who provide tri-lingual (Aymara, Spanish, English) cultural and political news here in Bolivia has encouraged me to think digitally along with the younger generation of Bolivians. The formation needs on the Altiplano are great, and responses to those needs are in their technological infancy in the diocese — mostly due to lack of experience and knowledge of what technologies are available and how cost effective they can be. As Bolivia slowly develops an internet infrastructure, its rural areas will lag considerably behind the developed regions. As the youth of the rural sectors continue to have both secondary and university level education in the city of La Paz, their expectations of formational experiences grow apace. Formation in the Vincentian charism, Church teaching, and pastoral practice are the needs identified in the Diocesan pastoral plan and our own community and parochial plans. This project is a response on all these levels of needs and expectations. The technology is available to deliver quality formation programs in heretofore inaccessible rural, poor areas. We envision a small unit that is easy to transport and assemble, durable and totally self-contained.

This project will:

- Present the Vincentian community as a contemporary community with an orientation toward the future — a likely place to live out one's vocation to the brotherhood or priesthood if God is calling.
- Provide the opportunity to demonstrate the utility of internet-based formation with a moderate capital infusion, considering the numbers of people who can be reached.

Goal

To provide continual Vincentian and Marian formation to the Vincentian Family and its collaborators in the Northern Zone of the Diocese of El Alto, Bolivia, and to resource the entire Vincentian Family with our products and experience.

Ethiopia

Popular Missions

Marking the 350th anniversary of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac and the 150th anniversary of St. Justin De Jacobis, the Ethiopian Province would like to dedicate its ministry by being involved in popular missions in two dioceses and three vicariates in Ethiopia all through the year assisting lay ministers and Diocesan priests to be interested in success and committed to effective mission.

Many of our local churches in Ethiopia have developed a preoccupation with their weaknesses, their problems, and their concerns. They are mostly focusing on their past and being reluctant to recognize the strengths God has shared with them that they might be in mission in this world.

As Vincentians and reflecting on these anniversaries of our saints, our hope in the year before us is in competency and mission. We need to work with diocesan priests and lay ministers who are willing to be *competent, compassionate, courageous and committed ministers*. That is to say, we need more ministers who are willing to be active within the programs and ministries of the local churches.

In our Ethiopian situation the range of hopes that cry out for mission is enormous. Regrettably, many of our churches grow in despair, because of other denominations taking away the faithful from them and the rapid growth and expansion of Moslems surrounding them, better than they are being nurtured with hope and strengthening their faith.

We need more local churches that are willing to be churches of the Good Shepherd. In the biblical narrative, Jesus refers to the Good Shepherd as the one who — with ninety-nine sheep in the fold — went out into the rough, rocky places to seek out that one sheep that was lost. Our dilemma — indeed, our opportunity and our being involved in popular mission — is that with fifty sheep in the fold, there are fifty who are lost in the rough and to help them with the hope of reviving their faith.

In our strategic long-range popular mission planning for our local churches, we thought four steps are important for effective, successful mission to take place during the times we start to implement the popular mission ministry and for many more years to come. During this period of time what we intend to do with the lay ministers and diocesan priests is

- Develop a realistic assessment of its present standing and size in relation to other churches

- Make fundamental decisions as to the primary direction for its future
- Study its strengths in relation to the central characteristics of effective, successful churches
- Decide those strategic objectives that will advance its long-range effectiveness in mission.

By following these steps, it will be possible to help our lay ministers and diocesan priests to develop thoughtful decisions that build on the parish's central strength and enable it to be decisively missionary in its community.

When we say long-range planning, at the end of one year of popular mission, it is to hand over the responsibility to the lay ministers and diocesan priests to lead the parish through these four key steps. At a certain interval of time both the diocesan priests and lay ministers would do well to organize their own recommendations into three groups: present initial strengths; the core strengths to be expanded; and foundational strengths to be added in the future. That is to say, effective, successful mission must build on those foundational strengths that are well in place, those that will be expanded, and those that are to be added in the coming two to five years.

In general our involvement in popular missions is to be able to deliver effective mission outreach, and equip lay ministers and diocesan priests with necessary knowledge and skill.

Mozambique Mission in Parishes

In 1975, after the independence of Mozambique, the greater number of the foreign missionaries returned to their native countries, leaving many missions abandoned. For many years several mission-parishes were attended by one missionary or a lay person and this situation continued until 1994 when a peace agreement was signed. From that time the number of foreign missionaries and native clergy has increased. Nevertheless we are far from resolving the missionary problem. The Vice Province of Mozambique ministers in eight mission-parishes in an area with many Christian communities. Great distances separate these communities and this impedes on-going and effective evangelization action. It is clear that we need to unite our efforts and define common criteria in a Vincentian process of evangelization so that Vincentian missionaries, lay members of the mission and members of the Vincentian Family

can come together in order to awaken the missionary spirit and strengthen the evangelization process.

In the main parishes there is better pastoral care and a more constant evangelizing action. Nevertheless in several or many Christian communities that are cared for, the structures for communion and participation in a ministerial Church are not adequate. It is sad to see that in these Christian communities there is no catechesis and even less, no on-going process of evangelization. How will we have catechists to teach Christian doctrine or how will we have evangelizers if we do not have people who proclaim the Word of God? We need missionaries, missionaries dedicated to their vocation and we also need lay missionaries. We need to inculcate the missionary spirit among the laity in the mission-parishes that we care for, as well as among the members of the Vincentian Family, so that all, with a renewed missionary spirit, might engage in a new evangelization.

In this regard the popular missions are an effective instrument to inspire laity and consecrated women and men with the missionary spirit.

To promote the popular missions is to promote the missionary spirit and thus multiply the number of people who proclaim the Word of God. Promoting the popular missions also cultivates participation and communion among the members of the Christian community and enables us to join together our efforts and ideas in a common work of evangelization.

The objective is to awaken the missionary spirit and strengthen the unity of the pastoral ministry through giving popular missions in the mission-parishes that are cared for by the Vice Province of Mozambique. This will enable us to change Christian communities into ministerial communities.

I pray that, through the intercession of St. Justin de Jacobis, God may give us the grace to continue to deepen our missionary spirit in the world where we are called to evangelize especially the most abandoned.

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