



## CONGREGAZIONE DELLA MISSIONE CURIA GENERALIZIA

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### SUPERIORE GENERALE

Rome, 21 October 2018  
Mission Sunday

To all the Confreres of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Confreres,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be always with us!

With deep thankfulness to Jesus, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, the Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God of the Vincentian Family, we look back to the year 2017 when we celebrated the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, as well as the beginning of our “Little Company,” as Saint Vincent liked to call it.

Calling the Congregation of the Mission the “Little Company,” expresses Saint Vincent’s total conviction that whatever we are and whatever we do from beginning to end depends on Jesus, on His Providence. The name, “Little Company,” also expresses Vincent’s great humility in relation to other Congregations existing in the Church, to whom he looked up, highlighting their capabilities, knowledge, and talents.

Saint Vincent had a deep conviction of the mission Jesus entrusted to him and to all who belong to the Little Company. It is a call and a lifelong mission that begins at the time of entrance into consecrated life in the footsteps of Saint Vincent and ends on earth with our passage from this life to the next. It then continues in heaven as we will, God willing, join our confreres, as well as other members of the Vincentian Family, to continue our mission from above for all eternity. This deep conviction also is expressed so clearly in Saint Vincent’s desire to add the fourth vow, the vow of “perseverance to the end.”

The year 2018 is the beginning of the fifth century of the Vincentian Charism.

In the “Little Company’s” extraordinary history it achieved many wonderful things when its members put all their trust in Providence, acting with humility, recognizing that all its grace and comes from Jesus’s initiative, accompaniment, and vision. Therefore, we look forward with total trust, convinced that, if we keep walking along the same path, we will bring into the fifth century the mission that Jesus entrusted to Saint Vincent 400 years ago, keeping it going with the heartfelt desire to reach the farthest corners of the world.

As every year in the month of October, the Superior General writes a letter to all the confreres around the world with a specific focus, the missions “*ad Gentes*.” Our “Little Company” officially is called the “Congregation of the Mission.” The mission “*ad Gentes*” is part of our DNA. One of our five virtues is “zeal for souls” to help bring all peoples to salvation, redemption, heaven.

Pope Francis’s letter for World Mission Sunday 2018 is entitled, “Together with young people, let us bring the Gospel to all.” Pope Francis has announced that for next year, 2019, the month of October will be an “Extraordinary Missionary Month” on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Apostolic Letter “*Maximum illud*” of Pope Benedict XV, to reignite our ardor and passion for the mission of Jesus Christ. The theme for October 2019 is “Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on Mission in the World.”

The invitation and challenge of Pope Francis is directed also to all members of the “Little Company,” the “Congregation of the Mission.” The positive response to this call depends on a positive response from each of us, each member of the Congregation. The positive response to go on mission “*ad Gentes*” depends on the readiness of a particular confrere who feels the call, as well as on the openness of the province or vice-province to which the confrere belongs to send him to a mission “*ad Gentes*.”

It is clear that it is definitely easier for provinces and vice-provinces with a significant number of confreres to send some to a mission “*ad Gentes*.” However, it is likewise true that even where the numbers are smaller or with many commitments, ministries, and works in place, sending a missionary or missionaries to a mission “*ad Gentes*” becomes a source of tremendous grace for the mission where the confrere is sent, as well as for the province or vice-province which sends him. It brings renewed energy, fire, motivation to all, as we get directly or indirectly involved with the new mission. This also becomes a wonderful opportunity to renew the Culture of Vocations.

We have had extraordinary examples of confreres throughout the history of the “Little Company,” who went to the missions “*ad Gentes*,” and even became martyrs and saints. Likewise, today there are confreres in the missions “*ad Gentes*” and there are provinces and vice-provinces open to sending confreres to the missions “*ad Gentes*.” Reflecting on these gives as much hope that we will be able to reinforce already existing missions and open new missions in countries where we are not yet present.

In last year’s Mission Appeal Letter, I had invited all the confreres around the world to get involved in the initiative:

**“To send 1% of the members of the Congregation of the Mission to the missions *ad Gentes*.” The 1% of our overall membership of around 3000 confreres comes to 30 confreres, who would go as new missionaries to the missions “*ad Gentes*.”**

**The concrete invitation and challenge for the worldwide Congregation in the next year or so, in response to the invitation of Pope Francis for the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019, is to be able to present Pope Francis the following message in writing:**

*Holy Father, the Congregation of the Mission after praying, reflecting, and discussing the different possibilities within the Congregation, based on your invitation to the Universal Church, is delighted and overwhelmed with joy for God's mercy toward us. We are announcing, Your Holiness, in this month of October 2019, that our "Little Company" is sending 1% of its membership, that is, 30 confreres, as new missionaries to the missions "ad Gentes."*

The invitation is to make the commitment in the next year, which includes time for preparation and for concluding present ministry or work in which one is involved. The sendoff for some may happen after, perhaps, two years, but the commitment will be made between now and October 2019.

Based on the information that we have received, here are the missions that urgently need new confreres:

1. **Angola.** The Mission of Lombé in the Archdiocese of Malange has, as its main concern, involving and forming the laity and religious of the mission according to the pastoral plan of the Archdiocese (especially in the Biblical Commission and in Spiritual Direction in the Archdiocesan Seminary). Time is spent visiting the rural communities. The confreres collaborate in the formation of the archdiocese's sisters and lay missionaries through classes and retreats. They animate and accompany the development of the Vincentian Family branches. At this time, there are two confreres on the mission. However, there is need for two more confreres, because the area that their pastoral activities cover is large and the commitments and needs are many. On the mission, they speak Portuguese.

2. **Bolivia.** The mission is made up of three communities, "El Alto," "Kateri" (in the city of Trinidad, Beni) and "Huayllani" in Cochabamba. In these, we have six confreres evangelizing (two in each community), because the ideal that there be at least three missionaries in each community has yet to be realized.

The Mission of El Alto celebrates 25 years since its foundation and, today, has a much firmer structure. The original communities belonged mostly to the Aymara and some to the Quechua ethnic groups. The physical conditions of the mission are difficult, because of the altitude (between 2000 and 5000 meters about sea level), the treacherous terrain, and, above all, the poverty that is causing the peasants of this area to migrate to the cities.

The Mission of Kateri, Beni is the youngest of the three missions based in Bolivia. The missionaries are working on a project carried out for many years by the Daughters of Charity

and are adapting themselves to the multiple demands of the mission. It is a jungle area and between rivers (large, medium, and small), with a mostly hot and humid climate. Even though there are indigenous ethnic groups, it is not necessary to know the dialects; you can work very well with Spanish.

The Mission of Huayllani, Cochabamba is Quechua in its entirety. It has communities in towns and in the countryside. Its altitude also fluctuates between 2000 and 4000 meters. However, it does not present the same difficulties as the other two and opens up multiple possibilities for vocational promotion and formation.

We have talked about a **single mission in Bolivia**, because we are implementing a reconfiguration project: the three communities will be united in a single mission, but they will continue to serve the diverse needs of the three zones. The main idea is to take advantage of the presence of the missionaries in Bolivian lands, to “found the Congregation in Bolivia permanently.” For that, we need at least three more missionaries, who, above all, can and want to dedicate themselves to formation. However, missionaries with different dispositions of course can volunteer too.

3. **Punta Arenas.** This is a mission with particular characteristics due to its remoteness. Currently, the mission has two ministries. The community house and parish in the city of Punta Arenas served by a single confrere. Porvenir Island, which is located two and a half hours by boat from the city of Punta Arenas, has a parish in the city of Porvenir and another in Cerro Sombrero, at a considerable distance, although on the same island. It also is served by a single confrere. The main reason for this mission is the great lack of priests in the diocese. However, it also relies on the support of the Daughters of Charity and the Vincentian Family. The endeavor is to have four missionaries there, so that they can work in pairs at least. We have not achieved that and we only have two confreres working, each one, in a part of the mission. The ministries of this mission do not involve great effort, but one must support the climate that is very cold and variable. Missionaries, who have good health and can resist the cold, even if they are a little older, can serve there without any problem.

4. **Chad.** Begun in September 2011, in 2016 this mission was enlarged a bit. At present, we are in two missionary communities (Bebalem and Moundou), but have only one canonical house with a single Superior in the person of Father Léon Moninga. Our ministry in Moundou is principally “direction and formation” at the Minor Seminary of Saint John Paul II, while in Bebalem it is parish pastoral ministry and the direction of the parish primary school. This international mission, in collaboration between the General Curia and COVIAM, receives requests continuously from various Dioceses of Chad but, in principle for the time being, COVIAM, in agreement with the Superior General and his council, has accepted the request coming from the Archbishop of N’Djamena, who asks our Congregation for Vincentian formators for his minor seminary. We hope to find missionaries soon because the archbishop is waiting.

5. **Tunisia.** This international mission is such in name and in fact; that is, it is an international mission dependent on the Superior General. It was began in 2011. It is a somewhat different mission, with the features and nature of a particular missionary presence in a completely

Muslim country. This international mission also expanded in September 2016 with the opening of the Sousse mission. It is understaffed and needs an extra missionary. We appeal to everyone for someone to join this mission.

6. **Alaska.** The Alaska Mission is organized into four major missionary positions: Superior, Pastor of the Co-Cathedral Parish, Coordinator of the Hispanic Outreach Ministry, and Missionary (or Missionaries) assigned to the Hispanic Outreach Ministry. All of these positions require missionaries who are bilingual in English and Spanish. They must have robust health, high energy levels and initiative, and a strong desire to go out of their comfort zone to serve the poor in a harsh climate. All missionaries must hold a valid driver's license from the USA or their last place of mission. If not from the USA, the missionary must be under 60 years of age.

7. **Papua New Guinea.** The population of PNG is around eight million. Considered a Christian nation, its Catholics number around two million. The Church in PNG is comparatively young, facing many challenges. It needs the help of missionaries to grow and develop. Our mission there began in 2001. The Vincentians are engaged in several ministries: spiritual formation of diocesan seminarians at Holy Spirit Seminary to which we have contributed substantially since 2001, pastoral care of the faithful, social development activities, and managing the Melanesian Institute. Eight committed confreres are rendering their services to the PNG mission: three in formation ministry, four in parochial and social development activities, and one as manager of the Melanesian Institute. The confreres working in PNG would like to have more members. There are many possibilities for evangelization and social development. Anyone with full commitment and willing to face challenges is most welcome to join our efforts in PNG.

8. **Solomon Islands.** The oldest of our International Missions has a new administrative arrangement, which became operative at the end of last year. The Province of Indonesia is staffing Holy Name of Mary Seminary and, in partnership with the Province of Oceania, the Parish of the Good Shepherd. Presently, these two provinces are able to supply the personnel needed for the ministries in the Solomon Islands.

9. **Tefé (Brazil).** It is one of our newest International Missions and our confrere, Bishop Fernando Barbosa dos Santos, is its Prelate. We are responsible for a parish on the outskirts of Tefé that has three communities. One of them is already the result of our presence. The confreres there are beginning to develop the mission. Our desires are: leadership training, implantation of new branches of the Vincentian Family (VMY, SSVP, AIC), development of new ecclesial communities, promotion of emerging vocational groups, pastoral ministry for the indigenous peoples, and prioritizing youth.

10. **Mozambique.** It is a small Vice-Province with about 20 confreres, although it has a good group of vocations. This makes us think that, in the near future, it will have more personnel. Currently it is in need of missionaries, because the personnel it has is not enough to take care of the works entrusted to it and which it cannot easily leave. The Vice-Province asks help from three missionaries. One missionary is needed to work in the parish of Johannesburg (South

Africa), a parish that belongs to the Vice-Province of Mozambique. Father Miguel Moreira de Lemos, CM, is the current pastor and he is 90 years old. The ability to speak English is essential to work in this parish. Two missionaries are needed to work in Popular Missions and in rural missionary parishes. The ability to speak or willingness to learn Portuguese is required.

11. **Cuba.** It is in the process of reconfiguration. We have only three communities there. The central one is in Havana, the Church of Our Lady of Mercy, which has magnificent facilities, but next year only one confrere will remain. The Parish of the Miraculous Medal in Havana, known as the work of Father Jesús María Lusarreta, is very diversified in pastoral requirements. Three confreres are there, but only one is full time (another is very old and the other is awaiting a final destination). The Parish of Saint Louis in Santiago de Cuba is the one with the most personnel (4 confreres), but no fewer difficulties. It requires a quick restructuring. There is a lot of hope that new times can begin for the Island. However, it will be necessary to put forth personal and community effort to achieve a renewal in every sense. It needs missionaries for formation, among other services. There are good vocational perspectives for us, but we need at least four more confreres to be able to start the reconfiguration project.

12. **Costa Rica.** Our Mission of Talamanca in the Diocese of Limón needs confreres. It is a missionary parish. Its extension is extremely large, approximately 56 communities, and most of difficult access. In this very poor indigenous area, we currently have only a priest and a Vincentian brother, so the pastoral care is very demanding for them both. We try to support them to the extent we can, but, for this reason, we turn to the entire Congregation of the Mission for volunteers for this mission. The language is Spanish. It is a humid tropical zone, a hot area with basically two seasons, summer and winter.

13. **Honduras.** We are particularly concerned about the missions of “La Mosquitia” for which Bishop Luis Solé Fa (CM), of the Diocese of Trujillo, is responsible. It is a diocese with a very large area and very difficult access to the places where the confreres have worked so far. Male communities – for example, the Franciscans – and female communities have withdrawn. Several missionaries of the Congregation of the Mission have left, greatly reducing the number of missionaries who remain in La Mosquitia (3). The four or five diocesan priests are barely enough to fill the parishes of Trujillo and some neighboring parishes. We should not lose sight of a truly regrettable situation, because it calls for a greater missionary commitment on our part. Even though the Province of Saint Vincent (Spain) took charge of these missions (San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, and La Mosquitia), they cannot, for now, make more personnel available to help. The mission of San Pedro Sula has large works and very soon only two priests will be in charge of everything. The seminary in Tegucigalpa also has limited staff. We pray to God to send “workers to this harvest.”

14. **Guatemala.** The Mission of Sayaxché is in an indigenous territory with diverse ethnicities of Mayan culture and dialectical divisions. For many years, the Province of Central America has been responsible for it. However, now, because of difficulties, a single missionary cares for it. It is located near Petén, in a jungle area, with difficulty accessing the populations of the interior, especially in rainy weather. The province is restructuring its ministries, but not with

good portents for these missions that are an excellent ground for the missionary formation of its seminarians. At one time, the confreres of the Eastern USA Province helped, but their possibilities of support are diminishing. We need at least two more confreres here, who could support such a missionary and Vincentian work.

15. **Argentina.** Msgr. Vicente Bokalic, our confrere, is Bishop of the Diocese of Santiago del Estero. The diocese has many needs. At present, the confreres of the Province of Argentina have a very small community dedicated to giving popular missions, plus the ordinary work of a parish is its responsibility. In order to complete it, two more confreres are needed.

New missions that have been opened recently or will be opened in the near future:

A. **Central African Republic.** The mission of Boganangone came about on 2 April 2017 from a common dream of the Province of Colombia (through the Region of Rwanda-Burundi) and the Vice-Province of Cameroon. In general, the country is one of the poorest in the world. The mission is truly Vincentian, where one lives poorly with the poor and for the poor.

Missions of the Province of Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the provinces in Africa with strong growth. At the request of the ordinaries, it opened two new missions in Africa:

B. **Sierra Leone.** At the invitation of Archbishop Charles Campbell, last year, 2017, the province ensured, for the first time, the presence of the Congregation of the Mission in Sierra Leone. Two missionaries are there. The Bishop of the Diocese of Bo invited us for parish ministry, educational ministry, and ministry in prisons.

C. **Ghana.** In this year, 2018, the Bishop of the Diocese of Navrongo-Bolgatanga invited us for parish ministry and chaplaincy in the diocesan school. Two confreres have been assigned to this mission but they have not yet gone there because the bishop has asked for a bit of time. He is doing some work in the house where they will be staying. It is a matter of a few weeks or months for this mission to begin too.

D. **Sri Lanka.** The Province of South India is preparing to open a mission in the bordering country of Sri Lanka.

E. **Myanmar.** The Province of North India is preparing to open a mission in the bordering country of Myanmar.

F. **Laos.** In collaboration between the Province of the Philippines and the Province of Vietnam, preparations are being made to open a mission in Laos.

G. **Cambodia.** In collaboration between the Province of the Philippines and the Province of Vietnam, preparations are being made to open a mission in Cambodia.

The different missions “*ad Gentes*” where we are serving already and future missions we plan to open need a tremendous amount of financial help. I would like to take this opportunity to thank profoundly all the individual confreres, as well as provinces, who are so wonderfully helping the missions financially. I would like to turn to all those confreres and provinces who can help finance those missions that are presently in great need and do not have enough resources for the overwhelming needs. You can indicate what particular mission “*ad Gentes*” you would like to help or simply donate to the general fund for the needs that are presently most pressing.

If you donate to the Vincentian Solidarity Office (VSO), please indicate that the funds are for the projects of the Vincentian Solidarity Fund (VSF).

Contributions from individuals and provinces can be made as follows:

- Checks only and those checks should be made out to the Congregazione della Missione. The bank will not accept checks with any other name.
- Checks should be sent to:

Treasurer General  
Congregazione della Missione  
Via dei Capasso, 30  
00164 Roma  
Italy
- Possibilities for bank transfers can be discussed with the Treasurer General.
- All gifts received will be acknowledged (if your contribution is not acknowledged in a reasonable length of time, please contact us for clarification).
- Please inform us if you are making, as described above, any transfer of money.

**As Saint Vincent reminded us, “I belong neither here nor there, but wherever God wants me to be.”<sup>1</sup>**

Your brother in Saint Vincent,



Tomaž Mavrič, CM  
Superior General

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<sup>1</sup> *Vincent de Paul, Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, IX, 10; Conference 1, Explanation of the Regulations, 31 July 1634; translated and edited by Jacqueline Kilar, DC; and Marie Poole, DC; et al; annotated by John W. Carven, CM; New City Press, Brooklyn and Hyde Park, 1985-2014.