



**CONGREGAZIONE DELLA MISSIONE  
CURIA GENERALIZIA**

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**SUPERIOR GENERAL**

Rome, 19 June 2020

To all the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My dear confreres,

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

In the letter to all the confreres of 30 March entitled, “Behold, I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5), related to the dramatic developments of COVID-19 around the world, I quoted Saint Vincent’s words at the beginning, “How sorry I am about your suffering,”<sup>1</sup> using the same words myself as I wrote to each of you, to try to express with the same personal emotion “How sorry I am about your suffering,” adding “We bear the suffering of each other!”

As the weeks and months pass, as the pandemic in some countries diminishes, but in others keeps growing, where the pain and suffering in the world are so very present, we want to remain on the frontlines, in total harmony with our charism, being inventive and seeing what else can be done in favor of our brothers and sisters.

In recent weeks at the General Curia, the Office of Communications organized an initiative through social media, a live transmission with several Visitors to listen to how the confreres, the other members the Vincentian Family, and the people they serve are experiencing this time of pandemic. Through the official website of the Congregation, [cmglobal.org](http://cmglobal.org), and social media, many articles, news items, reflections, and initiatives are being published and posted related to the pandemic from everywhere the Congregation is present.

The Assistants General have contacted every province, vice-province, region, and international mission to express our closeness with each other, to find out firsthand how the confreres are experiencing these challenging times, how they are personally, how the communities are, as well as finding out the different initiatives that have been put into action on the ground in this time of pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> *Saint Vincent, Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, Volume I, page 138; Letter 92, To Saint Louise, [1631].

Reading all the reports, articles, reflections, and posts on social media, I am deeply touched by the extraordinary involvement of the confreres in the different areas and the ways of alleviating the suffering and pain of the people we are called to serve. Dear confreres, thank you so very much for your wonderful witness.

It is so clear that, on one hand, we need to keep doing everything possible to respond here and now to the tremendous needs of the people: materially, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. On the other hand, we must start or continue planning the response to the needs of the people in the so-called period after COVID-19.

For those provinces and vice-provinces that already are experiencing financial shortfalls and are struggling to cope with the new needs that come their way as a consequence of COVID-19, the Vincentian International Mission Services (VIMS), the newly founded office of the Congregation of the Mission under the coordination of the Executive Director, Father Mark Pranaitis, is expanding its fundraising, which typically focuses on VSO projects, to include a new campaign designed to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. It is called, “When Did We See You?” and is rooted in the gospel passage of Matthew 25:31-46. The General Curia, together with Father Pranaitis, is preparing a three-stage project with short and long-term help.

The first stage is the immediate response to the many needs around the world related to the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the General Curia is putting forward 250,000 USD to be available immediately to the less-resourced provinces and vice-provinces that have the greatest needs. The receiving provinces and vice-provinces, in turn, will provide stories of the people they serve so that VIMS can reach out to its donors and encourage additional, and hopefully larger, gifts for us to be able to help further the different areas in need, where the confreres serve. VIMS has designed a new social media campaign to reach new donors too.

VIMS donors are presently all in the United States and, for the foreseeable future, it will probably remain that way. However, VIMS would gladly work with any donor in your province whom you think would want to support this campaign. Similarly, if your province wants to contribute, VIMS will be happy to receive your gift. You can contact Father Pranaitis at [mp@vims1617.org](mailto:mp@vims1617.org) or Father Paul Parackal, Treasurer General, at [econgen@cmglobal.org](mailto:econgen@cmglobal.org) to learn more or to contribute. Father Pranaitis will make sure you are included in the reports that come to us from the provinces and vice-provinces, so that you can share these stories of effective love with your confreres and other collaborators.

Reading the reports of the confreres who serve all over the world, I came across one in which the Visitor, describing the present situation of the pandemic, wrote the following words, “The pandemic is a gift from God.” The letter of Saint Paul to the Romans echoes the same sentiments, expresses the same feelings, and comes to the same conclusion, “We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

As I shared in the letter of 30 March, using words taken from the book of Revelation, “I make all things new,” it is in this specific moment of grace that has been given to us here and now that we are invited to reflect, pray, and meditate what Jesus does by His words, what “I make all things new” means for me personally, for my community, for the Little Company.

Almost at the same time as we were experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic with all its present realities and seeing its future consequences around the world, we began the preparations for our 43<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly. It will be held from 27 June to 15 July 2022 with the theme: “Revitalizing our identity at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century of the Congregation of the Mission.” In recent weeks, we finished the first phase of preparation by individually responding to the questionnaire sent by the Preparatory Commission through Google Forms. Soon we will start the second phase of preparation, our community assemblies, followed by the third phase of preparation, the Provincial Assemblies, that will bring us, God willing, to the General Assembly in June 2022.

The unfolding preparation for our next General Assembly is in a way parallel with this time of struggle, pain, suffering, and uncertainties that the pandemic is bringing around the world. Saint Paul’s words come very much to life and to heart, that all things work together for good for those who love God, as well as Jesus’s words, “I make all things new.” In this special time of pandemic that has embraced the whole world, Providence is offering us a unique opportunity at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century of the foundation of our Little Company to bring about as fully as we humanly can the dream that Jesus dreams here and now for our Congregation.

We also are discovering that, because of the pandemic, something different, new, and fresh is coming to life within us individually, within our communities, and within the Congregation. Concrete signs of a new springtime within our Little Company are starting to emerge. We keep deepening our spiritual life, we keep growing in openness to one another, we keep intensifying the search for common solutions to the drastic situations we are experiencing, etc.

With the time of preparation for the General Assembly happening during the pandemic that we could neither foresee nor plan in advance, we have a sign of Providence, of God’s gift to our Little Company in view of revitalizing our identity: our spirituality and charism, revitalizing Jesus’s dream for our Congregation at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century of its foundation.

In the fourth chapter, no. 42 of our Constitutions, we read, “Through the intimate union of prayer and apostolate a missionary becomes a contemplative in action and an apostle in prayer.” Monsieur Vincent said several times, ‘The life of a Missionary ought to be the life of a Carthusian in the house, and an apostle in the countryside.’”<sup>2</sup>

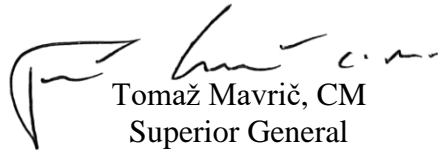
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<sup>2</sup> Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, English translation of the 1664 edition, Book 2, Chapter 1, Section 1, Part 3, page 24.

Together we are facing the reality and responding as well as we can to the COVID-19 pandemic regardless of where we serve in the world. We are likewise together on the pilgrimage toward the 2022 General Assembly. The best way we, as members of the Little Company, can get involved and respond in both cases is to descend to the deepest sources of our identity: our spirituality and charism. Saint Vincent let Jesus's dream about himself become a reality. Vincent became a Mystic of Charity.

May we too, members of the Congregation of the Mission in this 21<sup>st</sup> century and the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century of our foundation, in which we have set for ourselves the goal of revitalizing our own identity, become more and more Mystics of Charity.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tomaž Mavrič, CM'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'T' on the left and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tomaž Mavrič, CM  
Superior General